



THE HONORS COLLEGE Q&A

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with Maegan Stephens

AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE LIFE OF A
GEORGIA COLLEGE HONORS
STUDENT



An Introduction

MAEGAN STEPHENS

Hi, I'm Maegan Stephens! I'm originally from Buford, Georgia and have been part of the John E. Sallstrom Honors College (formerly the Honors Program) my entire college career.

I'll be graduating from Georgia College this month with my Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and Liberal Studies, with a minor in Rhetoric.

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What initially drew you to Georgia College?

Well, in high school, I was initially planning to major in music therapy, and Georgia College has one of only two music therapy programs in the state. I visited GC in the spring of my senior year during Spring Fest, and I immediately fell in love with the campus and the environment as a whole - so much so that I didn't even realize I actually had strep throat at the time. When I toured Bell Hall and was able to meet current students in Honors, I felt so welcomed and right at home.



I was really intrigued by the lunch and dinner seminars and the opportunities that the students were speaking about. I knew then that I had to apply to Honors.

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Pictured above is Bell Hall, the residence hall designated for Honors College students. Situated a 2-minute walk away from all of the main campus amenities (library, classroom buildings, dining hall, etc.), Bell Hall is the perfect spot to settle down during your time as a student.

Did you have any reservations about Honors? If so, how were those questions answered/issues resolved?

The only reservation I had about Honors was the 18 credit hour course requirement. Originally, I thought I'd have to take 18 credit hours outside of my program of study, and I was imagining the classes to be significantly more difficult since they were Honors level - just as they would have been in high school. But after going to an Honors Information Session, I learned that this requirement actually works right alongside your core/major requirements, and Honors courses aren't necessarily "harder" than on-level sections of the same course. The Honors courses are the same material, just alongside your Honors peers in a smaller, more academically intimate space that allows for more intellectual discussion and a deeper understanding of the material.



If you could give one piece of advice to incoming freshmen considering the Honors College, what would it be?

Apply, apply, apply!

Over the past three and a half years in Honors, I can wholeheartedly say it's one of the most valuable opportunities on campus. I've loved every second of it, and anyone in any major can be successful in Honors. This program allows students to be curious about the world both inside and outside the classroom and values the holistic, liberal arts experience.

Tell us a little about your first year in Honors. What did a typical week look like for you? Did you choose to live in Bell Hall? What Honors courses did you take and what was the time commitment like?

My freshman year was honestly a blast, and I truly owe it to Honors. I lived in Bell Hall (and loved it so much I even stayed for sophomore year). Getting to hang out with other Honors students who were also in my Honors classes made studying and projects so much more fun, and I was just across the sidewalk from my 8 a.m. class. I cannot explain how much of a difference that can make in your morning!

"I still keep in touch with everyone in that group, and that class truly shaped my start at GC."

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A typical week for me consisted of going to class Monday through Friday, eating almost every meal at the Max, studying on front campus or at the library with friends (those 3rd-floor study rooms are amazing, by the way), and simply enjoying college life. I tried to go to Honors and Eta Sigma Alpha events once every two weeks or so to meet more people, and the themes of the events were always so interesting it was hard to not want to go. In terms of Honors courses, I took ENGL 1101 and THEA 1105 during the fall and RELI 1111 in the spring. My entire Honors friend group came from a group project in that theatre class where we had to direct, act, and block out a 10-minute scene from a play, and my friends and I chose *Steel Magnolias*. I still keep in touch with everyone in that group, and that class truly shaped my start at GC.



Do you feel that your time with the Honors College impacted your future plans/opportunities?



Absolutely. If it weren't for the networking opportunities and the countless other experiences I've had through Honors, I wouldn't have had the confidence to apply to scholarships like Fullbright, which I'll be waiting to hear back from over the next few months - fingers crossed! Anna Whiteside, the Honors College Assistant Director and National Scholarship Coordinator, was a huge help not only with seeking out and applying to scholarships for my next step in my life, but with the entire experience as a whole. With Honors being so adaptable, I was able to tailor my experiences to first, explore other majors, which actually led me to realize that I want to be a teacher, and then I was able to tailor it from there to fit my career goals.

"It's honestly pretty difficult to put into words how much Honors has meant to my GC experience".

What has been the most impactful experience you've had through the Honors College?

I know this is cliché, but there are too many to name. From the American Experience trip to Eta Sigma Alpha formal to meeting some of the best people the world has to offer, the Honors College has shaped me into the student, and person, that I am today. The holistic experience that you can tailor to your interests and academic needs makes Honors so special and invaluable. It's honestly pretty difficult to put into words how much Honors has meant to my GC experience.



"I went on the American Experience trip...It was a life-changing experience."

What kind of social programs do you take part in throughout your experience?

During freshman year, I went on the American Experience trip through Honors, where I spent fall break with six other Honors students in Utah exploring some of the National Parks. It was a life-changing experience (and not just because it was my first time flying on a plane or eating at In-and-Out). In relation to Eta Sigma Alpha, the Honors Student Association, I have gone to many different fundraising events for Do Good Health, gotten to dress up and dance with my friends at semi-formal and formal dances, go on field trips around Milledgeville, and continue to meet new people through Honors.



What other things have you been involved with beyond Honors?

Over the past three and a half years, I have been a member of the Council of Student Ambassadors, president of the Spanish Club, a member of Swipe Out Hunger and Campus Catholics, was inducted into Phi Kappa Phi and Sigma Delta Pi, and I will be inducted into Omicron Delta Kappa in February. I was also a Spanish tutor in the Language Lab and was a Student Instructor for the Learning Center for a couple of semesters.

Did you arrange "Honors options" for any of your regular courses? If so, can you share with us what that was like? How did you talk with your professor about making it an Honors option, and what did you do in addition to the coursework to make it so?

I chose to complete three Honors options. It can be stressful at first when you decide to take on a new project because you worry about how it will balance with your normal coursework and how much time it may end up taking you to complete it. But please don't stress about that! I would recommend setting up check-points with your professor to have one-on-one meetings with them to talk about your progress with the project and how you're doing. This is YOUR work and YOUR chance to delve deeper into the content, so make sure you're enjoying it!

My Honors options consisted of a small research paper for Sociology, more in-depth analyses of text readings for Religion, and a hypothetical, pedagogically-based lesson plan for Spanish Grammar. All of these helped me work on critical thinking skills and allowed me to broaden my horizons with academic experiences. They were so fun!



What has been your biggest challenge in college? What did you do to overcome it? What did you learn from it?

I had to learn to prioritize. I had to start saying "no" to things that I wasn't overly joyed about and focus on making decisions based on my well-being, rather than pleasing others. I started investing my time in things I truly enjoyed - academically, socially, and emotionally. I've learned how to be appropriately selfish with my time, and it's truly made all the difference.

How do you think your experience would have been different had you decided not to participate in the Honors College?

Without participating in Honors, I'm not really sure I would have become as involved on campus as I have been over the past three years. The seminars pushed me to attend extracurricular events and meet new people that I otherwise probably wouldn't have. Living in Bell Hall allowed me to meet so many different people and really form a community - I joke that I owe my whole social life to Honors and Bell Hall. I had the opportunity to truly get to know my Honors professors much better because of the smaller class sizes. As a student assistant for Honors, I was able to work closely with the Director and Dean, as well as help other students make the most out of their Honors experience.

If you could go back and do one thing differently during your time at Georgia College, what would it be?

I would take more advantage of the resources at hand! The Research Center in the library, the Career Center,



The Humber-White House, home to the John E. Sallstrom Honors College

Counseling and Health Services, the Writing and Learning Centers, everything. Having all of this at the tip of your fingers is such a privilege, and I wish I would've made more use of these opportunities. Not only would it have helped me more in times of need, but it also would have helped me a lot transitioning out of college.

"Without participating in Honors, I'm not really sure I would have become as involved on campus as I have been..."

Would you say a student could balance being part of the Honors College and having a part-time job? What would be your advice to a student considering this?

Absolutely! I worked for three years as a student assistant for Honors and know of so many other Honors students who worked on and off-campus during the semesters. It's absolutely doable if you're willing to commit to studying during your time off, but it's worth it seeing what all you're capable of accomplishing. My advice to a student considering this would be to look for opportunities on campus first because you never know what may be available. On-campus jobs are much more flexible with hours since they recognize that you're a student first, and they provide so many more opportunities for you to grow and expand your reach on campus.



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