

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors  
Council –Online Archive

National Collegiate Honors Council

---

2022

## Staying Connected

Jonna Nunez

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nchcjournl>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), [Higher Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Liberal Studies Commons](#)

---

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the National Collegiate Honors Council at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council –Online Archive by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

# Staying Connected

JONNA NUNEZ

Community College of Baltimore County, 2013–2015

Senior Accountant, Technical Accounting & Policies, Graham Holdings Company

**Abstract:** As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

**Keywords:** higher education—honors programs & colleges; transformative education; Community College of Baltimore County (MD)—Honors College

**Citation:** *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 105–06

I'm submitting this assignment on its due date because I was unsure how far my writing has declined since college. I was afraid that preparing technical accounting memos all day had made me forget how to write about a real-world, non-seemingly-made-up topic rather than the five steps of revenue recognition or acquisition accounting. One thing is for certain—I still know how to write an intro and here it is: The things about Honors that I'm grateful for most are getting me to where I am today, giving me some of the most precious people in my life, teaching me how to be a real human with adult skills, and telling me the greatest, most necessary stories I've been told.

Honors sling-shot me from an average high school student all the way to where I am today, full speed, no stop. Our director, Rae Rosenthal, loves to say, "We don't just find honors students; we create them." I can attest to this statement. My goal at the community college was to get in, get average grades as I have my entire life, and get out. But what I got was an experience much more rewarding. I became a good student, straight As even, and invested more in the experience, paving me a path to a full-tuition scholarship to business school and landing a job at a global accounting firm. That was the dream destination of my high school self, and Honors was my ride there. Through

the smaller, more discussion-based classes and the handpicked professors, I was nurtured to be a true honors student: going to class with intention, doing my readings, contributing to discussions, and learning from my sixteen classmates, each with unique stories that shaped their analysis, thus mine. Turns out it's easy to excel when you're in an environment that facilitates going all-in.

It's also easy to excel when in a fun, accepting environment. Many of my classmates quickly became friends, and professors became mentors. As I write this, my friend Jei is putting her baby to sleep in our spare room. Our level of friendship has grown from honors classmates to having automatic access to each other's homes when in town. She and the rest of our batch are some of the friendships I hold tightest. The culture that Honors fostered extended to our relationships outside the classroom. It was a culture of learning, accepting, storytelling, and raising each other up. Honors, itself, is a network of students, professors, advisors, and alumni who offer *their* network, opening doors for all of us.

Honors also shaped us to be lifelong learners and leaders. The value it placed on credible sources, analytical thinking, self-reflection, and leaning in to others' analysis and reflection allowed us irrevocable, quality-learning skills. The college and community-wide opportunities Honors presented also allowed us to enhance leadership skills that have boosted me well beyond the dazzle they added to my résumé.

My view of the world was transformed in Honors. I'm certain a lot of agents contributed to this transformation, but the most distinct is how Honors taught me to absorb stories. The story of Jei growing up in Kenya that wasn't too different from how I grew up in the Philippines. The story of Dr. Rae building the Honors Program from a single file cabinet operation to a three-campus system. The story of Sagar immigrating from the mountains of Nepal. The stories of Traci and Glory and Jenna and Steve. The stories my women's studies professor compiled into a textbook. The stories of Angela Davis and MLK, Jr., and Malcolm X. All these stories are gifts, and they hold power. Power to transform us and, more importantly, power to connect us beyond our differences and beyond time. And that is what I'm grateful for most—connection.

---

The author may be contacted at

[jonnanunez2@gmail.com](mailto:jonnanunez2@gmail.com).