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Stephen J. Jerome

Monroe College, sjerome@monroecollege.edu

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Unique Academic Skillsets

STEPHEN J. JEROME, PRESIDENT

Monroe College

HONORS COORDINATOR: KATHRYN M. MACDONALD

For the past eighty-two years, Monroe College has been committed to being a national leader in urban and international education. Established in the fall of 2004, the honors program has been transformative for the college, bringing together a wide range of professionals from across disciplines to provide innovative academic offerings. The program has had a significant impact in helping the institution meet its mission of providing wide access and strong outcomes to both local and international students, and at an institution whose mission is to provide career-oriented education, the honors program has energized our liberal arts and sciences offerings.

The first honors class had thirty-seven students, and the first course offered focused on the hundredth anniversary of the New York City subway system and was heavily based in experiential learning. In 2005, the first class of ten students graduated with honors, and since then over 250 students have earned their honors diplomas.

The best way to describe the value of honors at Monroe is in the words of our graduates, from whom three themes emerge: the challenging nature of

earning an honors diploma, the fond memories of field trips and social activities, and the sense of pride in being part of a special community.

SELINA SUAREZ, CLASS OF 2005

“I joined the Honors Program because I wanted to take advanced courses, I wanted a challenge,” says Selina Suarez, a graduate in business management. Selina was there when it all started eleven years ago and was part of the first official class of students to graduate with an honors diploma. While a student, she began her career in the education sector by working at Monroe College. She gained an understanding of how a college works from top to bottom while taking honors courses that she says allowed her to “branch out.” Today, she is a successful entrepreneur who runs Glasswing Solutions, a venture that creates education technology to help schools succeed. “I started my company in May 2013 and now our product is in 32 schools and programs.” To get to this career landmark, Selina earned her MBA from St. John’s University Tobin School of Business, where she studied management and computer science statistics. Her introduction to computer science came in the honors program. “The Web Design course I took for Honors allowed me to branch outside my major and exposed me to this field, which has ultimately given me an edge.” For her, honors “opened the door” to a successful life and career.

OMAR NEWELL, CLASS OF 2007

Omar Newell graduated from the honors program with a bachelor’s degree in business management. He went on to earn his law degree from Northwestern University in 2011 and has had a distinguished career since graduation. One of his many achievements has been starting NCG Legal. Omar networks with multiple law firms throughout the United States, including one in New Rochelle, and assists these firms in cost-effective legal management. At the same time, Omar is a humanitarian. Serving his community is, as he says, “second nature.” Today, he serves as Director of Community Services for the National Youth Service in his home country of Jamaica. When asked about his honors experience, he says it was “transformational”: “Honors allowed me to interact with so many people. And my experience in HN250 [the American Presidency] really impacted my own perception of what makes a leader. I believe leaders create situations and not the other way around.” Omar also attributes his fondness for public speaking to honors and urges current students to develop and hone their public speaking skills.

JOHANN MENDOZA, CLASS OF 2006

Johann Mendoza radiates gratitude for all that the honors program exposed him to when he was a student. Johann earned his bachelor's degree in business management with a minor in hospitality management. "HN150 allowed me to learn so much about New York City. The course allowed me to better understand the area where I was making my home while in college." The native of Trinidad and Tobago went on to say, "Honors provided me with an exciting challenge. I was surrounded by intelligent people and I wanted to prove myself and stand out." And stand out he did. After graduating from Monroe, Johann went on to earn his MBA in operations management from the University of Toledo. He has had a robust career in the food manufacturing industry and now serves as a warehouse manager for Holiday Snacks Limited in Trinidad and Tobago. Johann says that honors allowed him to develop his creativity, particularly in how he sees and solves problems, which is important in his professional role.

THRUPTHY KRISHNAN, CLASS OF 2014

Only a few short months after graduation, Thrupthy Krishnan was offered a full-time position at KPMG, LLC as an audit associate. The skills the program developed that she finds invaluable are proper writing and precise communication. These skills were developed during her preparation for several NCHC and NRHC conferences where she represented the honors program. Thrupthy has earned her chartered financial analyst (CFA) certification recently and is currently enrolled in New York University's MBA program. She is also embarking on new adventures: she will be traveling to Dublin for six months to audit for KPMG and then will make her new home with the company in the Bahamas. Thrupthy says that honors has been "motivational." She adds, "Nothing is impossible; every challenge can be met."

The Monroe College Honors Program has built a legacy that continues to thrive because of its student members. As the above graduates have noted, honors brings out the best in our students. With careful guidance from faculty and staff, honors students develop unique academic skillsets, learning much about their own abilities along the way. Their efforts and dedication lift up not only them but Monroe as well.

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President Jerome may be contacted at
sjerome@monroecollege.edu.