

Alpha Nu Sigma 2013 Honors in Action Hallmark Award Entry
Honors Study Topic: "The Culture of Competition"

Provide a brief abstract or summary of your Honors in Action project including the following components: academic research and analysis, leadership roles, leadership development, action, collaboration, reflection and outcomes.

What do the arts do for us? According to Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, "The arts significantly boost student achievement, reduce discipline problems, and increase the odds students will go on to graduate from college." Our research indicated the arts expand imagination, foster critical thinking and develop cognitive skills. These are necessary life skills, especially in a global economy where "the need for knowledge[able] workers, to innovate and create new products and services" are fundamental to compete in today's economy. Unfortunately, we found a disturbing downward trend in art education in America, especially after No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was enacted in 2002. This inspired our chapter to create Arts for Starts: two days of art instruction and activities for children in our community. We collaborated with school administrators, a local art instructor, and a sister Phi Theta Kappa chapter, to develop art lessons that would be fun and challenging for children ranging in age from five to seventeen. We utilized the SMART (Simple, Measurable, Accountable, Realistic, Timely) goal-setting process to develop objectives for our project and created committees so chapter members could share responsibility. All thirty children who participated experienced new art techniques and were provided a means to continue art exploration at home. Through our project we learned how to teach others, the importance of communication, and the necessity of being flexible when challenges arise.

What theme in the current Honors Program Guide did your chapter focus on? Why did you choose this theme?

Although we had a lively and spirited discussion regarding which theme to research, there was unanimous agreement among the officers and members of Alpha Nu Sigma to work with children this year. During one of these discussions several members commented on the disparity of program offerings at their child's school, specifically, the abundance of sports programming versus other programs, such as art. After investigating, we discovered that some schools provide sports year round with art instruction once per week and other schools offer art instruction daily. These comments led us to question why there is a difference in course offerings within the same school district. Through extensive research we found a correlation between funding cuts and a decrease in arts education programming. This research led our chapter to focus on Theme 9 and what positive impact we could have on local children who suffer from these funding cuts.

List the 8 academic/expert sources that were most valuable to you in your examination of the Honors Study Topic Theme you selected. Briefly explain why these were the most important sources and what you learned from each of them as you researched your Theme.

Catterall, James S., Susan A. Dumais, and Gillian Hampden-Thompson. *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies*. 2012.

This meta-analysis relates early arts involvement to socioeconomic status and academic achievement. They conclude students with extensive arts involvement are more academically successful and have higher college enrollment. This correlation inspired our members to work with at-risk youth.

Ellerson, Noelle M. *Weathering the Storm: How the Economic Recession Continues to Impact School Districts*. 2012.

Ellerson highlights the impact of the economy on school budgets and the decisions school administrators make to keep schools running on fewer dollars. This report led us to do further research on a local level.

Owen, Bert. Learning Specialist for Fine Arts, Horry County Schools. BOwen@horrycountyschools.net

Mr. Owen provided an administrative perspective about issues related to art program design, funding, and outreach for Horry County, SC. This interview directly contradicted some of our research regarding the adverse impact of NCLB on art program funding and instruction time.

Parsad, Basmat, Maura Spiegelman, and Jared Coopersmith. *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools 1999-2000 and 2009-2010*. 2012.

This report emphasizes the growing necessity to expose children to art at an early age. Parsad, Spiegelman and Coopersmith examine trends in the availability and characteristics of arts education programs which include extracurricular activities.

Psilos, Phil. "The Impact of Arts Education on Workforce Preparation" in *Economic & Technology Policy Studies*. 2002.

This journal article illustrates the various skills acquired by studying the arts. Psilos redefines the role of "human capital" in a global economy and demonstrates how an arts education can be cost efficient due to its ability to prepare young people for the workforce.

Ruppert, Sandra S. *Critical Evidence: How the Arts Benefit Student Achievement*. 2006.

Ruppert reports on the benefits of the arts in education. In addition to enhancing cognitive skills, art promotes a positive school environment and motivation to learn. This helped us understand the link between art and improved academic outcomes.

Sparks, Erin and Mary Jo Waits. Editors. *New Engines of Growth: Five Roles for Arts, Culture, and Design*. 2012.

This report presents new findings on the importance of the arts and art related learning in the re-establishment of state economies and urban centers. This report showed our members that the arts can boost a local economy and motivated us to explore this connection.

Spivey, Richard. Fine Arts instructor, Academy for Arts, Science and Technology (AAST), Horry County Schools. RSpivey@horrycountyschools.net

Mr. Spivey highlighted the challenges a teacher faces with funding, resources and instruction time. Parts of the interview directly contradicted Mr. Owen especially with the impact of NCLB and program funding.

What conclusions did your chapter reach based on your research?

"What is not tested is not valued," an implication from numerous sources, is the thread that weaves our findings together. Our research led us to conclude exposure to art increases academic, economic and social success. High school students with extensive exposure to the arts have higher GPAs and SAT scores and are more inclined to enroll in competitive colleges. Several sources affirmed students with arts rich elementary years achieved higher scores on standardized tests. Yet, increased emphasis on test scores resulting from No Child Left Behind regulations directly correlates to lower funding for art programs. Consequently, at-risk youth are increasingly denied access to an intensive arts education, because, statistically, schools that serve lower socioeconomic status children also have the highest rate of art program cuts. Nationally, greater constraints on school budgets force schools and teachers to supplement art programs by seeking community support and competing for grant funding. Our interview with Rick Spivey confirmed that although his arts program at the Academy of Arts, Science and Technology is a top ten program in South Carolina, he receives little funding from the county and relies heavily on community support. Our conclusions led us to create opportunities to positively expose local children to art and to provide them with means to continue their artistic exploration.

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Summarize your objectives for this Honors in Action project and the process by which the chapter set these objectives.

As we brainstormed, several ideas emerged and they all focused on children. Chapter members explored various themes and presented their discoveries, resulting in numerous open discussion forums. The information gathered led to our decision to focus on the arts. We implemented SMART goal-setting skills to refine our ideas into realistic and measurable objectives. Individual committee members researched national data which indicated a strong relationship between art education and future success. Research also revealed a downward trend of funding for arts education. Our objective then became to investigate whether local statistics reflected national data by exploring art curricula in Horry County, SC. We quickly determined that our chapter members did not want to focus on advocacy. We wanted to positively influence children in Horry County by supplementing their involvement with art by providing funding or art supplies. Another objective was to identify an organization involved with at-risk youth to provide exposure to arts. The focus became providing support to local schools and at-risk students through collaboration and community involvement.

With whom did you collaborate for this Honors in Action project?

Initial collaboration included two research librarians at Horry Georgetown Technical College, Jennifer Williams and Chris Williams, who provided tutorials about using databases effectively. Rene Smith, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, and our Information Technology department created a special non-credit course in Desire2Learn, our online learning management system, to facilitate information exchange among committee members. The Children's Education Coordinator at the Burroughs and Chapin Art Museum, Arielle Fatuov, was contacted for assistance in designing the Arts for Starts events. Bert Owen, Fine Arts Specialist for Horry County Schools, assisted with marketing for our first event, Art for A Day. Rick Spivey, Fine Arts instructor from the Academy of Arts, Science and Technology, and six of his advanced art students provided art expertise for both events. Additional collaborators for our second event, Celebrate Christmas Through Art, included Kenny Dixon, Director of Operations for Seacoast Youth Academy, a behavioral modification home for at-risk children in Horry County, SC, and the Alpha Sigma Gamma chapter from Williamsburg Technical College. These individuals helped us successfully impact the lives of thirty children.

Describe the leadership roles undertaken by the chapter that contributed to the development and implementation of this Honors in Action project. Leadership roles are not necessarily those that come with "titles".

Our project required four primary and numerous secondary leadership roles. Jessica Hinson filled the role of Arts for Starts committee chairperson and oversaw the direction of all project components. The research coordinator was Janet Risley, who ensured research was diverse and developed interview questions based on our findings. She also served as the Art for A Day committee chairperson. Her responsibilities were leading the committee to design and market the event. Integral components of this committee were the flyer design and distribution team, headed by Roxanne Felan and the activities team, led by Jessica Minton. Roxanne and her team designed the flyer and developed marketing strategies for the event. The activities team researched and selected art projects, developed a list of necessary supplies and recruited volunteers to work the event. Jessica Hinson unexpectedly resigned her chairmanship due to family concerns one month prior to project implementation, and Janet assumed her responsibilities. The committee manager for the Celebrate Christmas Through Art event was Katlin Wood. She recognized the need for a liaison with Seacoast Youth Academy, and Regina Carr volunteered to fill this position. Additionally, Katlin delegated responsibility for a community art supply drive to new member Dayna Kelsey. Katlin also recruited volunteers to wrap the art-related gifts and assist with Celebrate Christmas Through Art.

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Describe specific leadership development actions taken that helped chapter members be more effective leaders for this Honors in Action project.

Chapter members participated in leadership development exercises throughout the year. During officer training, our advisor Beth Carraway, a Certified Leadership Development Studies instructor, provided several exercises on communication, SMART goal-setting and teambuilding techniques to build a cohesive unit. Another opportunity occurred when the research coordinator contacted Horry Georgetown Technical College librarians to provide a workshop on efficient database usage and to create an electronic library guide specific to our project, accessible through a link in our Desire2Learn course. Additionally, the Art for A Day committee met to gain hands-on experience with the activities to determine if allotted time and materials would be sufficient. Moreover, lessons learned during the Art for A Day event were used to strengthen the Celebrate Christmas Through Art event, such as including three dimensional art and incorporating unusual materials.

Describe the service or "action" components of this Honors in Action project that were inspired by your Honors Study Topic research.

Our service component included two separate events: Art for A Day and Celebrate Christmas Through Art. The Art for A Day event, held on October 20th, targeted elementary students within Horry County, SC. Eight stations, including watercolors, tie dye and bead art were led by either a chapter member or an advanced art student from the Academy of Arts, Science and Technology (AAST). Parents received a recipe folder which was personalized by their child. These folders contained low budget craft ideas and art supply recipes such as sand casting and easy craft clay to encourage further exploration of art at home. Following the event, the remaining art supplies were donated to the AAST. The Celebrate Christmas Through Art event was held on December 15th for the at-risk children of Seacoast Youth Academy. This event included six art stations such as origami and cookie design, manned by chapter volunteers, AAST Fine Arts instructor Rick Spivey and our sister chapter Alpha Sigma Gamma. The children also received an art-related gift and a stocking full of art supplies to further encourage their creativity. Seacoast Youth Academy was the recipient of a community art supply drive organized by the chapter.

What were the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of your project, including the lessons learned by your chapter members and others?

Chapter members grew as scholar-servant-leaders as a result of this project. We were unaware of the impact of local art education funding disparities until we did our research. We experienced first-hand the thrill of giving to others without expecting anything in return. The children were such a joy to work with, and we experienced a deep sense of satisfaction while watching them use their imaginations. We served a total of seventeen children, with their parents, from ten different elementary schools during the Art for A Day event. Additionally, we donated a tub of art supplies valued at \$200 to the Academy for Arts, Science and Technology. Exit interviews included questions about what the children liked best (overwhelmingly the beading), what they liked least (decorating the art recipe folders) and if they enjoyed themselves (unanimously, yes). The chapter received feedback from the student helpers and art instructor which provided insights for us to use at future events. For instance, the art students suggested that we should "include more 3-D projects" and work with "unusual materials" to inspire the imagination of the participants. Mr. Spivey stated, "As an educator I find it rewarding and reassuring that groups like Phi Theta Kappa take the time and effort to produce artistic and educational opportunities for the younger students." He also said that our event was "well thought out and planned to accommodate all of the participants." Christi Scott, a parent who attended the event with her three daughters, told us how the days after the Art for A Day event were "filled with giggles when [her children] realized that by hiding in a closet they could see their beads glowing." The flyer committee met with the challenge of notifying area art instructors about the event. We did not have access to a comprehensive listing of art instructors in Horry County, so the committee printed 400 copies of the flyer and hand-delivered them to thirteen elementary schools. However, due to school safety

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measures, we were only allowed to leave the flyers at the front office. The committee contacted Mr. Owen who agreed to e-mail the flyer to the art instructors in all Horry County elementary schools. Committee members were unable to verify delivery of the flyers which we believe impacted attendance at the event. We learned a valuable lesson that we should have been more rigorous in our verification process. A marketing strategy we should have used was to include the phrase "free event" on the flyers, which we believe also impacted attendance. We invited Seacoast Youth Academy to attend the Art for A Day event. However, they were unable to attend, so we created Celebrate Christmas Through Art to reach at-risk youth. In preparation for this event, the committee incorporated the feedback from Art for A Day exit interviews by including three dimensional movable art and materials such as duct tape and foam. In total, thirteen children attended the Christmas event. Additionally, we collected two tubs of art supplies valued at approximately \$300 for Seacoast Youth Academy. Every child in attendance told us that they "really enjoyed" the day and expressed gratitude for providing the experience. We are confident our influence on these thirty children will result in greater academic achievement.

What is left undone or what opportunities remain for the future?

Karissa, a student volunteer from the Academy of Arts, Science and Technology, expressed, "I really enjoyed my involvement in this and [will] more than happily participate in this endeavor again." Her comment revealed an opportunity to continue Art for A Day in Horry County and expand into Georgetown County, SC. This is a neighboring county serviced by Horry Georgetown Technical College, and many of its residents fall into the lower socioeconomic category. Another opportunity is one of community awareness. The website Donorschoose.org is an online forum for teachers to request monetary donations to purchase classroom materials, but review of the site indicates few local teachers are utilizing this resource. We could inform teachers and the community of what Oprah Winfrey calls "a revolutionary charity."