

Lateral entry Honors students share their experience

BY VANESSA EVELETH ('23)

Students who enter the Honors college after their first year of college are part of the lateral entry cohort. The lateral entry pathway allows students to pursue Honors as internal transfers or as external transfers from outside of Westminster College.

Honorable Mention editor, Vanessa Eveleth, sought to learn more about lateral entry experiences and asked Akary Herrera and Paulina Martinez-Koury about their journeys transitioning into Honors.

The following Q&A has been lightly edited for brevity and clarity.

Paulina Martinez-Koury

Paulina Martinez-Koury is a junior biology and neuroscience major and transferred from outside Westminster into the Honors college. Martinez-Koury joined Honors because she wanted a balanced schedule of science and humanities.

Q: What has been your experience coming into the Honors college as a lateral entry student?

A: I've had an amazing experience, transitioning from community college to Westminster. The transition itself was fairly smooth and it certainly helped to be a part of an Honors cohort, especially during the pandemic. Being a part of a cohort made me feel a lot more connected—even if the connection was virtual. I had an amazing peer mentor who provided great advice and support and was always available to answer questions about resources on campus, writing, and homework in Welcome to Thinking III.

Q: Was it difficult to adjust to the Honors-style classes?

A: I came into Honors knowing it would be a challenging course load. But I found the overall structure (which was discussion-based) made all my Honors classes a lot less intimidating and daunting. Writing has always been a challenge for me, but I received constructive feedback from my professors that helped me become a better and more confident writer.

Q: How has being in the Honors college impacted your college experience?

A: Honors classes helped me be a more outspoken and engaged student. I'm a pretty introverted person but after participating in discussions weekly, I found expressing my opinions and questions during class comes a lot more naturally than it used to.

Q: What advice do you have for students transitioning to the Honors classes?

A: Don't be intimidated! Honors classes may have a different structure than other classes but Welcome to Thinking will prepare you for all future Honors seminars. If you find that you are struggling, reach out to your professors, pop into their office, and let them know. Honors is a small community and it's been my experience that professors are always happy to chat and lend support in a variety of ways.

Akary Herrera

Akary Herrera is a sophomore sociology major and an internal transfer to the Honors college. Herrera said she joined Honors because of justice studies professor Connie Etter's encouragement. Etter said Herrera would be a good fit within the Honors college.

Q: Was it difficult to adjust to the Honors-style classes?

A: I think what was most challenging for me was to actually get my thoughts into words to share with my peers. I rarely felt the need to share with others what I read and how I interpreted readings. To actually share what was going on in my mind was intimidating because I didn't want my intellect to be judged. But my favorite thing about Honors is that there are no wrong answers.

Q: How has being in the Honors college impacted your college experience?

A: Before Honors, I came to college without the slightest idea of what I wanted to do with my life. I mean, I don't have it all mapped out to the dot, but I at least know what path I'm heading towards. Honors has also gotten me out of my shell a bit. Now, I'm applying to leadership positions and putting myself "out there" when I feel it's right. I am motivated to make changes in what I see is flawed. And I have met amazing professors and faculty members who genuinely support me and want me to succeed.

Q: Why should others consider entering the Honors college, even after their first year?

A: I would especially recommend the Honors college to students who don't exactly know what they want to do in college. I think Honors would be beneficial to help students narrow down what they want to study. You get all these professors from different fields in courses where they bring in their expertise. And each student also brings in what they know about their major and applies it to the class. It's just such a fun experience and to see the course unravel. You will never walk out of an honors class without learning something new. *H.M.*