

Reflection Essay: My College Career in the Honors Program

By Ian Condon

Throughout my time in the Honors Program at NC State, I have been shaped by a variety of experiences that highlight not only my growth as a computer scientist but also my development as a leader, a creative, and a global citizen. The portfolio I have assembled comprises seven academic projects and three high-impact experiences, serving as evidence of how I have integrated learning across disciplines, applied knowledge in diverse settings, and connected my passions to my professional goals.

Integrating Academic and Creative Pursuits

Several of my artifacts demonstrate how I combine technical expertise and creativity. For example, PotLuck, my CSC 342 final project, is a full-stack peer-to-peer wagering application that I continue to refine outside of class. The skills I gained in database design, API development, and interface design helped me build a tool that was both functional and user-focused. At the same time, my HON 290 video essay on Kanye West's "New Slaves" allowed me to explore how art and music function in movements for social justice. In this work, I applied analytical skills to structure arguments and evidence while engaging with creativity and critical thinking within a digital art medium. Similarly, my MUS 306 final project, a music composition using a few digital audio manipulation techniques, shows how I applied computational thinking in an artistic medium. These experiences reflect integrative learning where I used one discipline's skills to deepen my understanding and expression in another.

Growth Through Collaboration and Applied Learning

Many of my academic projects highlight the importance of collaboration and the iterative process of building software. My CSC 326 CoffeeMaker application was my first experience building a fully functional full-stack app within a team. Working with version control, testing frameworks, and team communication taught me the fundamentals of professional software development. I used these same fundamentals in Eye2Eye, my undergraduate research project, which uses dual webcams and spatial audio to reduce "Zoom fatigue." Developing Eye2Eye across CSC 498 and 499 gave me a chance to ask original research questions, test hypotheses, and work toward publishing results that may impact how people connect virtually. It was also my first app that I built that is currently used in a real-world setting. These projects helped me see that computer science is not just about coding but about solving real human problems.

Leadership and Service as Learning

My high-impact experiences helped me grow as a leader and apply academic skills in new contexts. Serving as President of 180 Degrees Consulting was transformative in my college career. Leading ~60 consultants across 8 project teams required not just organizational ability but empathy, communication, and a commitment to service. I learned how to guide others,

balance competing priorities, and foster a culture of high-quality work. Similarly, my internship at Gilbarco Veeder-Root gave me hands-on experience in professional software engineering, where I applied classroom knowledge to large-scale systems and learned the value of mentorship and accountability in industry.

Broadening Perspectives Through Global Experience

Studying abroad in Prague was the single most impactful experience of my college career. Living in another culture challenged me to step outside my comfort zone, embrace difference, and see myself as part of a global community. This experience not only enriched me personally but also shaped how I think about collaboration, problem-solving, and empathy, which are also skills that extend into both my professional and academic life.

Innovation and Exploration

In addition to structured coursework and leadership roles, I sought out hackathons as opportunities to test ideas quickly and creatively. Gridchat and Deepquestion are two projects that exemplify my curiosity and drive to innovate. Gridchat explored the limits of geospatial communication, while Deepquestion, which won a prize at HackDuke, focused on mental health and self-reflection. These projects remind me that computer science is a powerful tool for creativity and social good.

Conclusion

My portfolio tells a story of integrative growth. I am not just a computer science student who codes, I am a leader who guides teams, a musician who experiments with sound, a traveler who seeks perspective, and a creator who enjoys building ideas into reality. Through my time in the Honors Program, I have learned to connect experiences across academic, personal, and professional contexts. These 10 artifacts demonstrate not only the skills I have acquired but also the person I have become: adaptable, curious, and committed to using my talents for impact.