


News & Events 

A Liberal Dose of Confidence

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TIFFANY NGUYEN



Photo by Jacob Van Blarcom, CLAgency student

A fresh start, new perspectives, and different lenses. Lauren Holly was looking for all of these when she left her hometown in Illinois and came to the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. She is currently a senior majoring in technical writing & communication (TWC) with a sub-plan of biology and health sciences.

Searching for the Right Education

Although Holly came from Illinois, Minnesota and the Twin Cities campus were not completely unfamiliar to her. Her mother is originally from Minnesota. She knew she wanted something more than just “the standard,” and she knew she wanted a liberal arts education. “Minnesota has one of the best,” she says.

The TWC major has helped her unlock her potential through the [CLA Core Competencies](http://get-ready.cla.umn.edu/) (<http://get-ready.cla.umn.edu/>). CLA has 10 different Core Competencies that are integrated into UMN’s college experience, helping students develop, engage, and challenge themselves on and off campus. These Core Competencies have helped Holly in the classroom, where she “actually feel[s] like [she’s] learning something new.” Oral & Written Communication is one such competency she feels has flourished in a TWC major.

She is currently taking the course Writing With Digital Technologies with Jason Tham, a PhD candidate in the writing studies department, which has taught her real-life digital tools and helped build her Digital Literacy competency. She is able to “step out of [her] comfort zone” with the course because of the opportunity she is given to further her knowledge of such tools.

Innovation & Creativity has also been an important competency for Lauren because she believes that creativity is important to her education as well as for her as a person and also helped her become a better writer.

Looking back, knowledge of these core competencies enhanced her college experience. “My liberal arts education gives me confidence; even if I don’t pursue a job within my degree, I know I will do well in anything because of the different perspectives I was given.”

Success in Diversity

Outside of class, Holly has been involved in the University Technical and Professional Association of Writing (UTAPAW), a student-led group that helps students improve their writing skills by providing workshops, professional presentations, and campus events. The group has connected her with peers, whom she worked with to create several events, like bringing in professionals for panels.

Over the summer, Holly and her peers worked with an external client. Jim Hall reached out to them for help with FreeDOS, an operating system that Hall had created 23 years ago. To celebrate his creation, he wanted to publish an ebook with highlights from when he first launched the system and stories from some of its first users of their experiences and memories. “It was a cool experience. It was almost like an internship and really helped add to my portfolio. The importance of the experience for me was the opportunity to work with a client and produce a product, and to get to take what I have learned and have real-life applications.”

Additionally, she has also been an undergraduate representative for writing studies, which helped her build personal connections with faculty members and professors, even giving her perspective on department decisions.

In addition to UTAPAW, Holly is involved with the Multicultural Student Union as an officer, which has helped her develop her identity outside of academics. “Before coming to college, identity was something I never really thought about. But this group has provided personal and emotional support and has been critical to my college experience,” she says. The organization aims to build a collective of people that share experiences despite coming from different backgrounds.

Although Holly is still considering what she wants to pursue after graduation, she is confident she will excel in any field. She has worked hard to achieve the position she is in now, a confident, enterprising, and proud liberal arts student.



[View the ebook 23 Years of FreeDOS.](http://www.ibiblio.org/pub/micro/pc-stuff/freedos/files/ebook/23-years-of-freedos/23-years-of-freedos.pdf) (<http://www.ibiblio.org/pub/micro/pc-stuff/freedos/files/ebook/23-years-of-freedos/23-years-of-freedos.pdf>).





This story was written by an undergraduate student content creator in CLAgency. [Meet the team.](#) ([/backpack/people](#)).

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COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

Department of Writing Studies

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