**Honors in Action Project Award - Application**

Question 1

**Provide a brief abstract or summary of your Honors in Action project including the Scholarship, Leadership, Service and Fellowship components.**

***Word Count Limit:*** *The essay responses for the entire application cannot exceed 2600 words. No limit is given for each essay question, but to the application as a whole.*

Answer:

We examined The Democratization of Information: Power, Peril, and Promise with a focus on "Issue 2: Technology" for our Honors in Action project. We researched the effect technology and the digital world has on our daily lives. In light of the current economic environment, we refined this focus to the impact of the digital world on finding a job.

We discussed issues such as employers being able to "spy" on their potential employees through social networking sites and their expectations of employees in relation to technology. Upon reflection of these issues, we decided to hold a seminar, "Finding a Job in a Digital World," for students and community members which highlighted the special issues of the job search in today's technology-based society. We collaborated with school administrators, faculty, and local and regional community members in order to set up, advertise, and find presenters for the seminar. Through the seminar we were also able to develop our leadership skills through the organization of the event itself and actually getting up in front of a group and presenting what we learned.

Question 2

**What issue in the current Honors Program Guide did your chapter focus on?**

Choose one answer.



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|  | Issue 1: Definition  |  |
|  | Issue 2: Technology  |  |
|  | Issue 3: The Individual and Community  |  |
|  | Issue 4: Language and Communication  |  |
|  | Issue 5: Education  |  |
|  | Issue 6: Economy and Business  |  |
|  | Issue 7: Government and Public Policy  |  |
|  | Issue 8: The Arts  |  |
|  | Issue 9: Science  |  |
|  | Issue 10: History and the Future  |  |

Question 3

**Why did you choose this issue?**

Answer:

Our journey to this issue was actually a major part of the learning process for us.

When we began planning research for the Honors in Action project, we collectively decided Issue 4: Language and Communication was the topic we wanted to study. Once this decision was reached, we divided the study questions found in the Honors Program Guide among our officers and decided the officers would research their questions and present their research in our monthly general meetings.

At our second general meeting, the Vice-President of Leadership presented a PowerPoint presentation with a compilation of the research found on Issue 4. This compilation of research did not specifically address one of the study questions as initially planned, but instead concerned the issue of how the digital world was affecting our everyday communication from texting affecting the way we speak to digital media overtaking print media.

At a later meeting, Rhonda Crabtree, who works for the Arkansas Career Pathways Program, came and presented information about finding a job.

From there, we combined our interest in the way the digital world impacts our daily lives with the information Ms. Crabtree presented and began discussing how the Internet impacts the job search.

It was not until one of our officers planned to present our work on the project at a Regional meeting that we began to realize that we had switched topics without realizing it. After a discussion with our Chapter Relations Manager, we realized we were actually working on Issue 2.

Although we were reluctant to change our topics at first, we soon realized change was just part of the process.

Question 4

**Briefly summarize the resources used to research your chapter's Honors Program Guide issue (may include media and individuals/organizations).**

Answer:

**Dahlstrom, Harry. *The Job Hunting Handbook*. 2010.**This straightforward and easy to read handbook by Dahlstrom is a necessity for anyone looking for a job. The handbook covers everything from choosing the types of jobs you should apply for to following up with an interview and everything in between. For each step of the job hunting process, Dahlstrom clearly outlines any potential difficulties and provides worksheets to help clarify any issues you might be having. This handbook is clearly written for the masses, but contains a plethora of vital information in its user-friendly format.

**Fountain, Christine. *Finding a Job in the Internet Age*. 2005.**In this article, Fountain attempts to assess whether or not the Internet increases a job searcher's possibility of finding a job. She discusses the idea that a job searcher who uses the Internet trades quality for quantity and concludes that the advantage to searching for a job on the Internet is that other job searchers are not using the Internet. Although there is some helpful research concerning the economics of information and the Internet, much of the research is outdated considering the current domination of the Internet.

**Fujita, Shigeru and Garey Ramey. *The Cyclicality of Separation and Job Finding Rates*. 2008.**Fujita and Ramey attempt to analyze the cyclical nature of unemployment rates. They examine the relation between unemployment and productivity and worker transitions. Through a detailed analysis of unemployment, transition, and business cycle data, they conclude that there is a strong correlation between separation rates and the cyclical behavior of unemployment.

**Kirkley, Beth.** **beth@peoplesourceok.com****. 870-336-7800. Staffing Consultant. People Source Staffing Agency.**Ms. Kirkley was able to provide us with information about the role of a staffing agency and the importance of the actual application in the process of finding a job. Through our discussions with Ms. Kirkley, we learned tips and tricks for filling out blank spots in job histories and the importance of answering all questions on a job application.

**Matthews, Karman and Ashley K. Hall. *Job Search Data Survey*. 2011.**This survey, given to students at Black River Technical College and community members of Northeast Arkansas, was created by our Vice-President of Leadership and one of our advisers. It was created and used to demonstrate the need for a seminar about finding a job in a digital world. This survey also helped us to address misconceptions held by the general public about the job search process.

**Sowards, Alexis.** **asowards@prestolitewire.com****. Human Resources Coordinator. Prestolite Wire.**As the Human Resources Coordinator, Ms. Sowards had many useful tips for successful interviews. She discussed information about preparing for an interview, such as anticipating potential questions; the interview itself, such as basing your attire on the type of job for which you are applying; and interview follow-up such as mentioning the things the employers were looking for which shows you were listening during the interview.

**Zibluk, Jack.** **jzibluk@astate.edu****. Photojournalism & Journalism Professor. Arkansas State University.**We approached Dr. Zibluk when we were looking at the role of the newspaper in the digital world. While we were ultimately unable to use much of the information provided in our discussion with Dr. Zibluk, he provided an opportunity for a few of us to speak to a professional who has worked for newspapers and magazines all over the country about the role print media will play in the future.

**Zuckerman, Mortimer. *Why the Jobs Situation Is Worse than it Looks*. 2011.**
According to Zuckerman, the current rate of unemployment is even more alarming than it seems. He claims the projected numbers of unemployment rates are grossly underestimated and economists who talk about the jobs being created are naively disregarding other pertinent information. He mentions the cycle of unemployment our country has seen in the past and concludes we have broken this cycle and it seems as though we will be unable to get out of our current predicament.

Question 5

**What conclusions did your chapter reach based on your research?**

Answer:

When we began our research in February of 2011, we decided as a group we wanted to discuss Issue 4: Language and Communication. The research we did on Issue 4 was concentrated around the study question, “How can newspapers remain relevant in a digital world.” In our discussions of the way the digital world was changing our everyday lives, we hit upon the topic of the digital world’s effect on searching for a job. This topic was one our group was very interested in since many of us would be searching for jobs in a very short time. Therefore, we changed our focus to Issue 2: Technology, and through changing our topic, we discovered the research you start with can lead you in a direction you never thought you would go.

We also discovered the controversial nature of research. When it comes to the job market, especially in the current political climate, much of what can be found is opinion, and extremely political opinion at that. This led to many discussions among our members about personal bias and how it affects the way articles should be read.

Early on we decided to create a survey of our own so we would have some experience with primary research. Although the survey was completely revamped once we changed issues, it taught us a lot about the validity of research. Previously, when we found research results, we never thought to question research methods, how long research was done, and how many participants were involved in the research.

Question 6

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

Answer:

Initially, our primary objectives were rather broad. We wanted to look at how technology impacted communication and to better our community in some way.

We had many discussions about the different ways technology has impacted communication. We looked at the phenomenon of "text speak" and what it meant to youth as well as discussing how texting was affecting inter-personal communication and relationships. From there we looked our digital image and how individuals portrayed themselves differently on social networking sites than in person. Eventually, we narrowed this objective down to determining how technology relates to finding a job and the interplay between an employer and a potential employee.

From the beginning we knew we wanted to provide a service to our community through the project, and we decided the best way to do that would be to present the information we gleaned through our research in a format which would benefit the community.

Question 7

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

Answer:

There was significant collaboration with the administration and faculty of the college, individuals in the community, and individuals in the region for this project.

One of the first steps when beginning the project was collaborating with the administration of Black River Technical College. One of our officers worked closely with the administration to get permission to do the project and to establish a date and location for the project.

We also worked with many different organizations while finding presenters for our project. Our presenters were Alexis Sowards, the Human Resources Coordinator at Prestolite Wire in Paragould; Julie Matthews, the store manager at Belk Department Store in Paragould; Beth Kirkley, a staffing consultant at People Source Staffing Agency in Jonesboro; and Joan Linnstaedter, an English Instructor at Black River Technical College in Paragould. Collaboration with these individuals from the community, region, and faculty provided us with specialized information which enriched the experience not only for the Phi Theta Kappa members, but students and community members who were able to attend the seminar.

Question 8

**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."**

Answer:

Our first step was dividing up the research. We took the study questions from the first issue we examined, and divided those study questions among our officers. From there, the officers had to present their research to the organization. It did not take long for us to realize that someone was going to have to take a leadership role and compile all of the research to make it something more manageable, so one of our officers stepped up and worked on making sense out of a variety of research and presented that research to the organization. Another leadership role was taken by an officer who acted as an intermediary between the organization and the school administration. Two officers shared the role of finding presenters for the seminar which involved collaborating with local and regional job search agencies and human resource personnel. Finally, one of the officers worked with one of the advisers to create a survey which would both establish a need for the seminar and advertise the seminar to the students and community.

Question 9

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

Answer:

In one of our general meetings after our Honors in Action Project had been decided, we had the President of Black River Technical College, Dr. Wayne Hatcher, come and speak to the members and officers about leadership as well as to provide information about finding a job which would prove to be useful in the seminar.

Our primary form of leadership development occurred at the Regional Honors Institute when our Vice-President of Leadership, Karman Matthews, did a presentation on our upcoming Honors in Action project. She utilized this opportunity to present not only the process of our Honors in Action project, but she used the attendees as somewhat of a test audience for the seminar presentation. During her presentation, she shared the information which would later be presented at the seminar and then spent the remainder of her presentation time in a discussion with the attendees about ways to improve the seminar.

Question 10

**Describe the service or "action" components of this Honors in Action project. (Action can also include advocacy.)**

Answer:

The culmination of this project was the "Finding a Job in a Digital World" seminar to which we invited the Phi Theta Kappa members and students from both Black River Technical College campuses as well as the community and region at large. At the seminar, we began with a presentation about the role of a staffing agency in finding a job and the importance of correctly filling out a job application. From there a presenter discussed the resume and cover letter and how technology has changed expectations in relation to these essentials elements of finding a job. We then moved on to a presentation about the interview and how to present oneself both physically and digitally. We ended the seminar with a resume workshop in which English faculty from the campus reviewed resumes and cover letters for those who attended the seminar.

Through this seminar, we were able to share the information we learned from our research, and we feel as though we were able to provide the students and community members with resources which will aid them in any future job searches.

Question 11

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

Answer:

Through this project, we learned about current problems facing the individuals who are seeking employment. Although much of the information seemed fairly obvious, we learned details are what distinguish potential job candidates.

Another thing we learned was the importance of effective advertising. Due to a lack of effective advertising, we did not have as many attendees as we hoped we would. While this worked out to our advantage during the workshoping session, we concluded that in the future there should be one specific person in charge of all forms of advertising.

After the seminar, we asked attendees for quotes about what they learned from the seminar. Their feedback included:

"The class helped me with my resume. Usually you would put work experience first, but in my case I put my education first because that is more related to the job I am applying for. Also I learned some helpful pointers about the interview process such as what to wear, warmers in your pocket if your hands are usually cold, and they could ask some off the wall questions, so be prepared and don't look at them like they are crazy to have asked you." --Phi Theta Kappa member

"I was surprised by how much I don't know about applying for a job. I guess it's been a long time since I have applied for a job because I wouldn't have thought about things like making sure my facebook didn't have things on it I wouldn't want a future employer to see." --community member

On a broader spectrum, we learned about change and teamwork. We learned that, although accepting change can be difficult, it is often imperative in order to grow. Finally, we learned the importance of teamwork. Although at times it may seem easier to work alone, we know teamwork and open communication are the only ways to successfully achieve goals.

Question 12

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

Answer:

After we finished our seminar, we thought we were done with the project. However, about a month ago, we were approached by Audra Howerton, the Business Outreach Coordinator at Black River Technical College. Ms. Howerton asked if we would consider presenting the information from the seminar in a class specifically for members of the community who are having difficulty finding a job in the current economy.

For this class, we will be condensing the information from the presenters into one presentation given by one of our officers, and we will be eliminating the resume workshop portion of the seminar. We will be presenting the class again on March 9 and March 13 of this year.