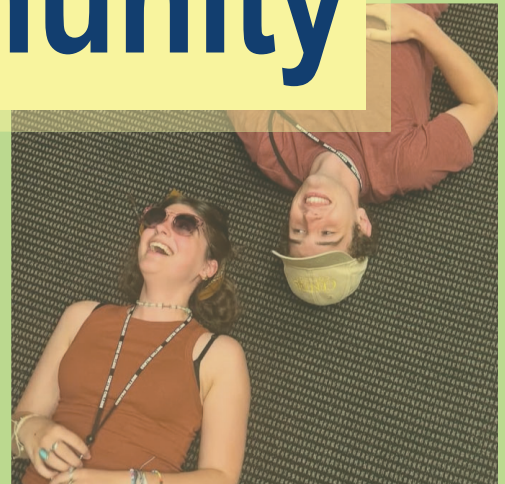


**Where**



**Community**



**Blooms**



**Governor's Scholars Program  
2025 Academic Report**



**“At GSP, I didn’t just find scholars.**

**I found voices, stories, and sparks  
that reminded me why growth  
doesn’t happen alone.**

**It blooms in community.”**

**Maleah Wilson**

*Martha Layne Collins High School*





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In my eyes, the GSP functions like a tree. It plants a seed in each of its scholars, and its starts by sprouting deep roots of morals, ethics, and self-understanding. The Program then nurtures each scholar, and grows a foundation of exposure and awareness. Each scholar, through classes and activities, spreads limbs of leadership, compassion, and experience. Physical, mental, and intellectual challenges encourage this generation of leaders to bear fruit across all communities throughout the commonwealth

Preston Koeninger  
*Newport Central Catholic High School*

# Letter from the Executive Director

There's a well-known psychological theorist named Abraham Maslow who is credited for popularizing a way of understanding human motivation based on physical, social, and psychological needs. The way Maslow sees it, humans need to satisfy basic needs such as hunger and safety before being able to prioritize higher needs such as belongingness and the need to know and understand. Ultimately, Maslow believed we are always in pursuit of self-actualization which would result from having all our needs fully satisfied – a theoretical concept not truly achievable because needs are continually resurfacing.

I believe that part of the GSP magic is that it pushes us to live each day of our summer in the highest part of Maslow's pyramid. At GSP, our basic physiological and safety needs should be consistently met (although we all know sleep may be lacking at times!). We live in a community where everyone belongs, and that belongingness is stressed as a basic element of the Program. Everyone at GSP was accepted into the program because of their merit, thus satisfying our esteem needs. Having these foundational and mid-level needs sufficiently satisfied, allows every member of the GSP community to turn our attention to the highest levels of Maslow's hierarchy – aesthetic and cognitive needs. We can produce art. We can admire the beauty around us. We can be curious. We can search for understanding. As Carl Rogers, another humanistic theorist would say, we can become human. It is the honor of my life to be a part of a Program that allows space for the youth of Kentucky to pursue these highest needs, one that enables me (and my colleagues) to do the same. As we do so, we grow. And growth, while invigorating, can be scary. But we face our fears with each intellectual risk we take.



I am deeply grateful to grow each day with other members of the GSP community – those from the summer of 2025 and from all the summers prior. And I can't wait to welcome future scholars into our shared community in the summers to come.

**“One can choose to go back toward safety or forward toward growth. Growth must be chosen again and again; fear must be overcome again and again.”**

Abraham Maslow

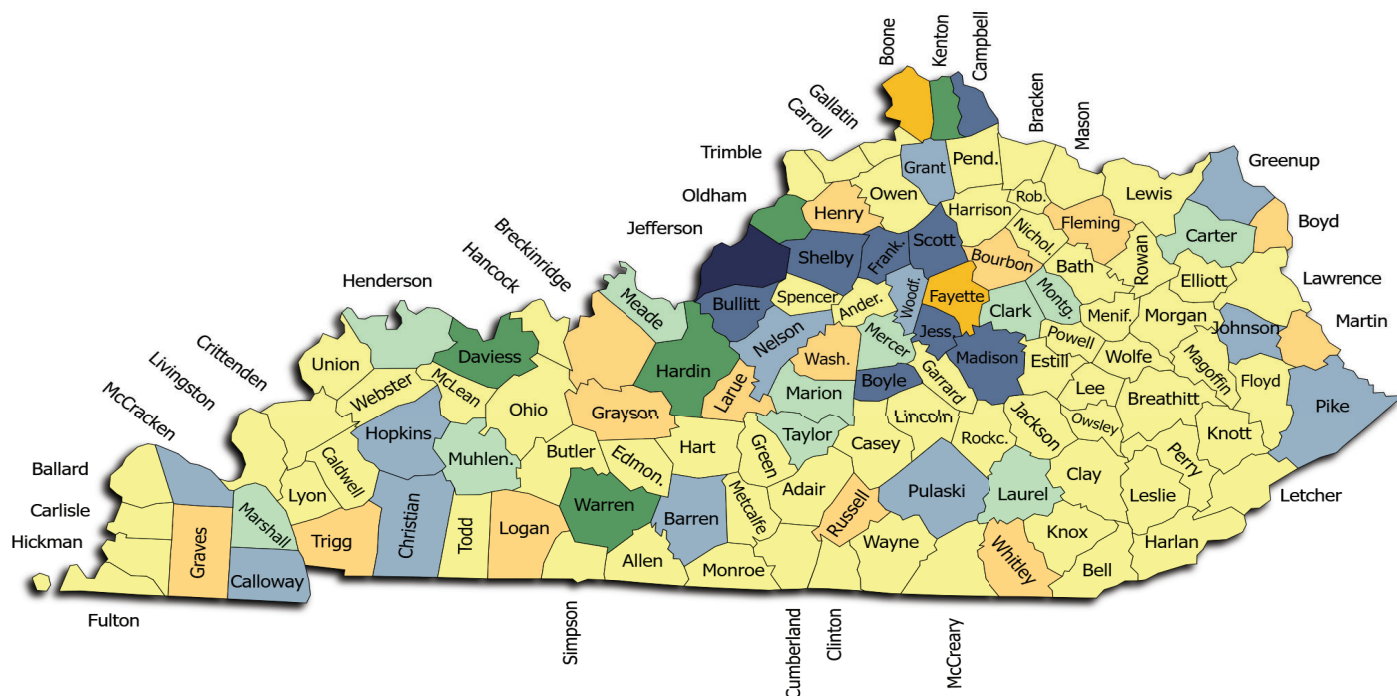
A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Jen Price".

Jen Price  
Executive Director & Academic Dean



# Scholars by County

For the summer of 2025, scholars were accepted from 117 counties.



## Counties with up to 3 Governor's Scholars in 2025

Adair	Carlisle	Floyd	Jackson	Lyon	Ohio	Spencer
Allen	Carroll	Fulton	Knott	Magoffin	Owen	Todd
Anderson	Casey	Gallatin	Knox	Mason	Owsley*	Trimble
Ballard	Clay	Garrard	Lawrence	McCreary	Pendleton	Union
Bath	Clinton	Green	Lee	McLean	Perry	Wayne
Bell	Crittenden	Hancock	Leslie	Menifee	Powell	Webster
Bracken*	Cumberland	Harlan	Letcher	Metcalfe	Robertson*	Wolfe
Breathitt	Edmonson	Harrison	Lewis	Monroe	Rockcastle	
Butler	Elliott	Hart	Lincoln	Morgan	Rowan	
Caldwell	Estill	Hickman	Livingston	Nicholas	Simpson	

## 4 to 6

Bourbon	LaRue
Boyd	Logan
Breckinridge	Martin
Fleming	Russell
Graves	Trigg
Grayson	Washington
Henry	Whitley

## 7 to 9

Carter	Meade
Clark	Mercer
Henderson	Montgomery
Laurel	Muhlenberg
Marion	Taylor
Marshall	

## 10 to 14

Barren	Johnson
Calloway	McCracken
Christian	Nelson
Grant	Pike
Greenup	Pulaski
Hopkins	Woodford

## 15 to 25

Boyle	Jessamine
Bullitt	Madison
Campbell	Scott
Franklin	Shelby

## 26 to 50

Daviess	Oldham
Hardin	Warren
Kenton	

## 51 to 100

Boone
Fayette

## 150+

Jefferson
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\* indicates county not represented



# Focus Areas

Scholars pursue a particular topic in depth as members of small groups, stressing the development of ideas within that topic and its interrelatedness to other content areas.

At the GSP, Focus Area courses intellectually expose scholars to their course topic broadly through both traditional and non-traditional methods. Throughout the five weeks, scholars learn about the content through enriching experiences, including but not limited to, insightful texts and discussions, hands-on group and community projects, and guest speakers.

The following section of this report provides insight into each Focus Area course offered during the summer of 2025.

## Agribusiness & Biotechnology

### Morehead State University

Scholars in **Bethany Lay's** Agribusiness and Biotechnology Focus Area had an immersive learning experience studying the importance of agriculture and how Kentucky agriculture contributes to the world. Scholars experienced field trips in various locations including the Olive Branch Market, Evans Orchard, Bluegrass Stockyards, and Keeneland. These experiences gave scholars a real-life connection beyond the classroom to better their understanding of the topics studied. Guest speakers included the Rowan County Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent, the owner of Evans Orchard, and the Innovation and Analytics Manager of Alltech. Scholars worked on two main projects this past summer. First, scholars created a business and marketing plan for a business concept in a small group culminating in a business pitch presentation. Second, scholars developed a concept called the GSP County Fair, where they selected a set of topics for booths to educate the community on the different areas to which Kentucky contributes. Topics included equine, agribusiness, pests and pollinators, flowers, crop production, and livestock. Scholars completed research on each of their topics in small groups, created presentation boards, and crafted a photo op for each booth for fellow scholars to experience.

### Murray State University

**lin Handayani's** scholars learned various aspects of agriculture including plant biotechnology, GMO crops, agribusiness, land restoration, rotational grazing, smart agriculture, pasture management, healthy soil, animal science, agribusiness law, statistics and international agriculture. The application of agribusiness related to horticulture and soil management was explored through visiting local facilities such as Pullen Farm and the Arboretum, and nearby greenhouses as well as the local garden store and hearing from the owner of "Pink Petunia." Scholars also learned about mulching and Fall mum planting in the university's farm. For hands-on agricultural education, scholars had an opportunity to make "hot sauce" using local peppers and learn about fermentation during the process. The class also observed various soil profiles and soil colors from different soil types using monoliths. Other educational trips were to Colston Farm to learn about the process of making maple syrup and The Farmers Basket to learn various types of garden, exotic plants, and commercial greenhouse management. Through these activities, the class explored the factors controlling sustainable agriculture and food sustainability as well as global climate change.



*Scholars in the Agribusiness & Biotechnology Focus Area made hot sauce in the lab.*



**“This class has challenged my knowledge and opinions, teaching me valuable lessons not just about architecture, but history, society, and myself.”**

**Abigail Travis**  
Garrard County High School



*Scholars in the Architectural Design and the Psychology Focus Areas exploring the Marler Home in Kuttawa, Kentucky, questioning the assumed purposes of designed spaces and investigating the interaction of Architecture with time.*

## Architectural Design

### Centre College

Scholars in **Ethan Morris's** Architectural Design Focus Area analyzed the development of modern cities. They learned about nineteenth century industrialization and urbanization and the resulting problems of poor sanitation, regular epidemics, income inequality, civil unrest, and crime. Scholars then explored responses to these problems: they analyzed Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* with its focus on public service, discussed the unifying impact of Gothic architecture on industrial England with a Centre College English professor, and visited nearby Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill to see how nineteenth century utopian movements used religion and craftsmanship as antidotes to urban ills. As the class moved into the twentieth century, they studied Frank Lloyd Wright's emphasis on nature, Jane Jacob's obsession with pedestrian cities, and Le Corbusier's interest in combining size, style, and affordability. The scholars also recognized the extent to which urban planning impacts every aspect of their lived experience during talks with Danville's city engineer and Centre's chaplain. For their final project, scholars identified urban planning problems within their own communities and wrote letters to local and state officials to suggest solutions.

### Murray State University

This summer, **Zach Standley's** Architectural Design Focus Area explored the many disciplines of design alongside architecture. Each week, the class covered a different design discipline, including Interior Design, Landscape Architecture, Product Design, Urban Planning, and Immersive Design. The class consisted of many group discussions, starting with the flaws of each design discipline to establish a baseline of what not to do within design, then moving forward to making design more inviting, accessible, and collaborative. The scholars traversed Murray State's campus each week, observing historical monuments, taking note of architectural styles and themes throughout the campus buildings, and experiencing the impact of nature, weather, and humanity on designed undertakings. Alongside discussing a new discipline every week, the scholars also progressed on a working 3-dimensional model to illustrate the disciplines they had learned, which culminated in a class presentation of their differing projects, such as residential homesteads, public amenities, or private corporate spaces. Through this progression, scholars were not only able to open their minds to the prevalence of design throughout their world, but were also encouraged to bring light, art, innovation, and personal perspective into an ever-changing landscape.



# Astronomy

## Centre College

**Breezy Sergent's** Astronomy Focus Area immersed scholars in the wonders of the summer night sky through hands-on experiences and guided inquiry. They built telescopes, explored the structure and content of the universe, and participated in night observations that introduced them to stellar astronomy. Scholars learned to identify summer constellations and investigated their cultural and historical significance. Lunar observations prompted discussions about the moon's formation and inspired a creative challenge to design potential lunar colonies. In their study of astrophysics, scholars examined the concepts of black holes, gravity, and time dilation. Additionally, scholars investigated the causes and consequences of light pollution, exploring types such as sky glow, light trespass, and glare. They conducted real-world calculations to estimate the daily electricity use, monetary cost, and coal consumption associated with street lighting around Centre College. To raise awareness, scholars created various forms of media advocating for reduced light pollution and its benefits to both human health and the environment. Scholars left the Astronomy Focus Area with a deeper appreciation of our night sky and a sense of responsibility to protect it within their own communities.



*Scholars in the Astronomy Focus Area proudly pose with the telescopes they built in class using simple materials.*

**“We shot for the stars with our handmade telescopes and unraveled a few of the observable universe’s mysteries. After going through this class, I look up at the night sky with wonder, understanding, and appreciating the universe more than I ever thought I could.”**

**Benjamin Swartz**  
*West Jessamine High School*

## Morehead State University

In **Joshua Qualls's** Astronomy Focus Area, scholars explored the universe and their place within it. Scholars examined how humans have studied the sky for millennia and how modern tools like telescopes continue to expand our cosmic perspective. From the Earth-Moon-Sun system, scholars began to understand the night sky, seasons, and eclipses then continued with investigations of planetary features and small solar system objects. After constructing their own telescopes, scholars spent many late nights observing constellations and practicing how to navigate the night sky. They learned about the formation of our solar system as well as the life cycle of stars and galaxy formation. This deeper understanding required learning about electromagnetic radiation, special relativity, introductory quantum mechanics, and thermodynamics. Scholars then learned about thermonuclear fusion, stellar spectroscopy, and the redshifted universe around them. They examined the cosmic perspective of both time and space using activities like the Cosmic Calendar and the Cosmic Distance Ladder, and explored topics such as general relativity, exoplanet detection, astrobiology, cosmology, and black holes. After a course full of wonder and curiosity, scholars gained an appreciation for the scale, beauty, and mystery of the universe.



## Murray State University

**Rico Tyler's** Astronomy Focus Area devoted the first week of the summer to each scholar building their own 60 mm F/11.7 refracting telescope and base. During late night evening sessions, astronomy scholars practiced Lunar and planetary observations, incorporating Lunar astrophotography as well. During daytime classes, astronomy scholars built solar filters and learned safe solar viewing methods. Throughout, scholars learned how to improve telescope performance by modifying the telescopes they made. Astronomy scholars learned how the sky moves and ways to identify constellations. This in turn led to celestial navigation and the important historical role astronomy played in surveying Kentucky. The astronomers visited Hardin Planetarium and the WKU campus observatory and made dark sky observations from the Land Between the Lakes. Scholars learned how to process their Lunar images, and those images were used to recreate the Moon's long geologic history. Further activities introduced the origin and development of the Solar System including examining the ways astronomers study stellar evolution and the origin of the universe.

**“Astronomical observation is humbling not because it reminds me of how vast the universe is but because I am confronted by what I am yet to learn.”**

**Myna Nguyen**  
*duPont Manual High School*

## Biological & Environmental Issues

### Centre College

**Thomas Reed's** Biological and Environmental Issues scholars conducted extensive research on pressing biological and environmental issues, focusing on sustainability, regenerative farming, climate change, and genetic engineering. Each scholar participated in an aquaponics project to gain hands-on experience with sustainable farming, exploring the intricate balance between bacteria, fish, and plants. Additionally, they collected soil samples from various locations across the campus to determine which native species could thrive in their local conditions. The scholars engaged in lively debates about the benefits and drawbacks of genetic editing while investigating its historical applications and implications. Their studies included visits to FoodChain and Covey Chase farms in Kentucky, where they gained firsthand insight into modern agricultural practices. This combination of rigorous research and practical experience not only deepened the scholars' understanding of vital environmental issues but also empowered them to make meaningful contributions to their communities and the environment.

### Morehead State University

This summer, **Greg Jacobelli's** Biological and Environmental Issues Focus Area explored our place in the environment. “Our Place” refers to humans' role in the ecosystem as well as humans' responsibility within ecosystems we inhabit. After discussing where they believe people fit into the ecosystem, scholars visited with the Kentucky Division of Fish and Wildlife, working on how they tag and monitor some of Kentucky's native bird species including the Purple Martin. Students also explored the history of the American Chestnut and how and why people are trying to bring the tree back from the brink of extinction. Scholars then looked at their own health and how practices have evolved. The class toured both the wastewater treatment plant and the recently completed 55-million-dollar potable water pump station in Rowan County. Students experienced firsthand how humans have learned to efficiently clean and recycle the water we use and how we responsibly deal with our waste. The class invited Amanda Potter from the Rowan Co. extension office to learn about invasive plant species and what our place is in their mitigation. To give back and help raise awareness, scholars produced four informational videos on invasives and posted them on the environmentalissues\_gsp Instagram account.



*Biological & Environmental Issues scholars at a regenerative farm interacting with various animals.*



## Business, Accounting & Entrepreneurship

### Centre College

The scholars in **David Asher's** Business, Accounting, and Entrepreneurship Focus Area studied relationships, bias, and ethics and how to better use these concepts to be more successful in the business world. They learned using traditional games of Monopoly (with additional layers of taxes, shipping, and utility costs). They used balance sheets to keep track of assets and cash on hand and to predict accounts payable and receivable to promote their ability to be a stronger partner in their business dealings. They performed audits to ensure that each player's record keeping was accurate and ethical. Audits revealed "clean" balance sheets and identified irregularities that were investigated to discover the cause. Scholars worked in groups to create an entrepreneurial presentation to identify an entrepreneurial solution, maximize value propositions and customer segments, and how to build effective cost structures and revenue streams. These groups created posters and presentations to show how they would produce, finance, and market their solutions.



*JC Phelps's Business, Accounting, and Entrepreneurship scholars visit Sunhouse Craft in Berea, Kentucky, to learn about ethical entrepreneurship from founder Cynthia Main.*

**“Being a part of the Business class at GSP allowed me to see the business world as more than just statistics and profit; it’s a vehicle for creating real change in my community.”**

**Elsie Husband**  
*Oldham County High School*

### Morehead State University

**JC Phelps's** Business, Accounting, and Entrepreneurship Focus Area explored the foundations of business development through an experiential lens. Grounded in the theory of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), as popularized by Archie Carroll, the course emphasized the importance of ethical decision-making in business. Scholars examined core concepts including marketing, finance, operations, and strategic leadership, with a focus on entrepreneurship as a vehicle for societal change. To complement classroom learning, the class participated in off-campus experiences such as attending a live capital pitch competition in Lexington, Kentucky, and visiting two mission-driven small businesses in Berea that exemplify CSR in action. These opportunities allowed scholars to connect business theory with real-world practice and to reflect on the broader impact of entrepreneurship. Throughout the course, scholars developed original business ideas and prepared to present them in a culminating pitch competition judged by three professionals in the field. Collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity were central to the experience, alongside meaningful discussions on leadership and generational impact. The course aimed to equip scholars with the tools to build businesses that are both profitable and purposeful.



## Murray State University

**Scott Takacs's** Business, Accounting, and Entrepreneurship Focus Area started with a question: how should one invest ten million dollars? Scholars looked at business options, including developing business plans for businesses that target high school and college students. They discussed other entrepreneurial pitches and did the famous real estate simulation (including the “buy everything” variation of Monopoly) and explored the origins of the heavy machinery industry. They learned from the Kentucky Society of CPAs about careers in accounting and took trips to Mantiques to explore target marketing as well as to a local building center to understand the costs of building a location. They also took time to see how the sports business was transformed through better statistical analysis and how the stock market can be simulated using playing cards.

## Communication & Social Theory

### Centre College

The scholars in **Jim Grayson's** Communication and Social Theory class used rhetorical framing—the ways we describe something, which become the ways we define that thing—as a guiding topic for the summer. Readings from *The Bright Ages* by Professors Perry and Gabriele reframed popular understandings of medieval European history to demonstrate that the period was more complex and enlightened than popular culture may concede. The scholars used documentary films curated in part through the Southern Circuit of Independent Filmmakers to examine social issues and to explore ways these issues can intersect in the life of an individual. A project that lasted several weeks involved Story Exchange, an exercise developed by the nonprofit Narrative 4, in which the scholars retold a partner's personal story in the first-person point of view as a means of building empathy. The scholars later rewrote their own stories, reframing their own role in terms of one or more of the social issues they had discussed and exploring the universality of their experience even as the details of the story shifted to match the new framework. Throughout, the scholars were encouraged to be observant of their own habits in interpersonal communication, whether face-to-face or through a digital medium.

**“Communication and Social Theory exposed me to conversations with people of different perspectives. I learned to listen to understand rather than to come up with a rebuttal. I’m grateful for the empathy, compassion and willingness to compromise I’ve developed here in my effort to become better at creating strong communities around me.”**

**Gabby Gampper**  
*Woodford County High School*

### Morehead State University

Using former US Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy's book *Together* as the foundation, scholars in **Allie Millay's** Focus Area uncovered the science of the loneliness crisis and engaged with stories of people who have come together in hope and compassion to solve it in their communities. Focusing on humans' innate desire to connect in meaningful ways, scholars in Communication and Social Theory explored this feeling that is both exceptionally common, but infrequently discussed, to better understand why many people feel disconnected. Based on Murthy's recommendations, scholars developed and executed a service-learning project to connect with other scholars in the community and support those in the Morehead community at large. Scholars also collaborated with their peers in Public Policy and Administration to meet with community leaders, such as the mayors of Morehead and West Liberty, and to analyze Governor Beshear's speech to the GSP, to learn how they used their platforms as civil servants to intentionally create a sense of belonging and connection in their communities following disasters like the COVID-19 pandemic and catastrophic tornados. Scholars found that when leaders prioritize the needs of their constituents and focus on helping people feel connected and united after a tragedy that people come together with resilience and vision for a brighter future.





*Scholars in the Creative Writing & Literary Studies Focus Area complete writing exercises at the Murray Arboretum.*

### Centre College

The scholars in **Jay Crocker's** Creative Writing and Literary Studies class focused on stories built upon the concept of spaces in our homes and out in our world. Each week they focused on a separate part of a house/home/building/space. They began with foundations, basements, and subterranean areas - those places which our lives are purposely built upon. The second and third weeks focused on the ground level where we tend to live the social parts of our lives. Here they focused their writing on community and spaces that help develop us into the people we want to be - the living room, the den, theaters, parks, gardens, and religious spaces. The scholars took a walking field trip into downtown Danville to meet people and write about their observations of the community. The fourth week focused on private spaces - bedrooms, the woods, the library, and other spaces humans occupy when they want to be alone. There was much discussion on how alone time has an effect on personality and how quiet reflection shapes people into better versions of themselves. In the last week of the program, scholars revisited all of the locales written about and experienced and pieced them together as they prepared to return to their homes and spaces. Each week, the work was informed by rules from *Writing Tools* by Roy Peter Clark. The scholars used this text to practice particular ideas within their own writing and reflected on their use each time they shared in class.

### Morehead State University

**Matt Sutton's** Creative Writing and Literary Studies Focus Area concentrated their efforts on community and Commonwealth alike. In a college-seminar format, scholars discussed works by a cohort of contemporary Kentucky writers—Wendell Berry, bell hooks, Silas House, Crystal Wilkinson—and sat in on a graduate-level Zoom class on folktales led by Spalding University professor and current Kentucky Poet Laureate Kathleen Driskell. Using writing prompts and essays like House's "A Place for Us All" and hooks's "Kentucky Is My Fate" as models, scholars challenged traditional "classroom" reading strategies to explore how creative writing and literature articulate their own experiences and impressions. Off-campus activities emphasized the sense of place that distinguishes Kentucky poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. A guided tour and roundtable colloquium at the Berry Center in New Castle reinforced the connection between writing, citizenship, and land stewardship. A hands-on demonstration of printing presses and an examination of rare books at the University of Kentucky's King Library presented scholars with insight on the history of the book and Kentucky's lesser-known literary resources. For further inspiration, the class visited the Kentucky Folk Art Center and the Rowan County Public Library and wrote nature-themed haiku at Morehead State University's Eagle Lake. As their culminating project, scholars collaborated to write, edit, and publish a literary journal, titled *Synecdoche*, reflecting their individual and shared Governor's Scholars experiences, and gave a reading at Coffee Tree Books in downtown Morehead.



**“I not only learned of many qualities of other people but also myself as I wrote and shared in ways I never had before. I learned how creative writing may be a possible path for me to follow in my future. I came to understand more parts of Kentucky history as we went on multiple engaging field trips. Every day presented a different idea and way to understand writing and I feel that I’ll carry these newly developed skills with me forever.”**

**Daniel Patterson**  
*Louisville Male High School*

## **Murray State University**

This summer **Megan Sampson’s** Creative Writing and Literary Studies class focused on nature. They explored the ideas of Transcendentalism and the impact nature has on writing, writers, and well-being. Through this class, scholars read a variety of nature literature—from Robert Frost’s poems, to Margaret Fuller’s essays, to short stories by Isabel Allende and Sabrina Imbler. The works read by scholars spanned hundreds of years and had a variety of perspectives on nature and its impact on humanity. They discussed nature’s positive impacts, but they also had deep and important discussions on natural disasters and climate-focused science fiction (cli-fi). Scholars also got out into nature for a variety of nature-based writing activities and field trips. The scholars took two field trips to the Murray Arboretum and Land Between the Lakes. Throughout the Arboretum, scholars described a new-to-them setting—one they did not pass on their way to classes or while spending time with friends between classes. This encouraged scholars to be both detail-oriented and creative. During the field trip to the Elk and Bison Prairie, scholars observed wildlife up close and wrote about the experience at a nearby picnic area. Through exploring Murray State University’s campus, scholars were able to write short reflective pieces as well as longer prompts. They overwhelmingly agreed that writing outside in the sunshine and open air had a different effect on them and their writing than doing the same activity inside of a classroom, which led to many classes spent observing outside and completing writing exercises outside.



*Scholars in Creative Writing, Music, and Dramatic Expression listen as Steve Hoffman of The Norton Center, at Centre, discusses careers in the arts.*



# Cultural Anthropology

## Morehead State University

**Haley Gray's** Cultural Anthropology Focus Area explored superstitions in Kentucky and around the world in pursuit of commonalities. Scholars realized that superstitions stem from the innate desire for control and protection. They discussed the human need for explanation and the inclination to create stories to establish understanding of the unknown. This led them to address common misconceptions and judgments that result from looking at unusual practices within other cultures. Scholars read the *Body Ritual Among the Nacirema* to expose the tendency to view one's own culture as the norm. This propelled the class into an exploration of the frequently misunderstood Appalachian culture. In the heart of Appalachia in Morehead, scholars connected with local artists, visited the Kentucky Folk Art Center, the Rowan County Art Center, and the Cora Wilson Stewart Moonlight School. Appalachian scholars in the class shared their anecdotes to enhance their peers' understanding and dismantle stereotypes. The class partnered with the International Relations Focus Area to address the overarching misrepresentation of Africa as a homogenous culture despite its rich diversity. Scholars paired up to discuss the importance of confronting these stigmas. In culmination, scholars each selected an underrepresented culture they felt connected to or a culture they were interested in but not fully knowledgeable about and they conducted research on these cultures. They prepared lessons to teach the class and the Psychology & Behavioral Studies Focus Area to highlight the impact that culture has on so many parts of our lived experiences.

## Murray State University

This summer **Anne Justice** and her scholars thoroughly examined food culture, studying topics such as how our food is grown, prepared, and marketed, how we interact with our food as individuals and as a society, and the influence the food we consume has in every aspect of our lives from day to day activities to our relationships. Scholars studied values derived from fast and slow food culture and engaged in lively discussions of the personal and societal implications of participating in both forms of food culture, uncovering the true impact food has on our cultural identities. To further enrich the scholars' understanding of how powerful food can be, they practiced slow food culture, preparing meals from scratch in a weekly culinary workshop. Scholars learned new skills, tried new foods, developed a sense of camaraderie, and gained a newfound appreciation for those who prepare their meals as they worked in the kitchen to create a meal to share together. This hands-on experience allowed scholars to understand what it means to be intentional, collaborate effectively, own their choices, and share with others. Scholars learned that food is more than just something that satisfies a physical need, but rather a force that connects us to one another and our environment.

*Scholars in the Cultural Anthropology Focus Area proudly pose with the taco bar they prepared from scratch.*





## Dramatic Expression

**“Working so hard with talented, passionate actors to pull together a whole show in just a few weeks has been an amazing lesson in teamwork and professionalism. I can’t wait to bring the skills I’ve learned back to my theater at home.”**

Lane Foster  
Daviness County High School



*By week two, roles were assigned and scholars in Dramatic Expression were hard at work learning their lines, studying and analyzing the text together.*

### Centre College

**Carmen Caldera-Brzoska's** Dramatic Expression scholars focused on theatre as a means of storytelling and giving voice to stories that need to be told. Scholars read the script *Radium Girls* and discussed why this was a story that needed to be told. Scholars viewed a production of *1984* with four other Focus Areas and discussed the themes and George Orwell's inspiration for the story, including post-war England, as well as its relevance today through the lenses of biological warfare, government control, philosophy, and, of course, theatre. Scholars performed *Inherit the Wind* and discussed theatre as a way of inspiring conversations and social change. This was supplemented with discussions of theatre history, technical theatre, musical theatre, playwriting, and improvisation work.

Scholars attended a production of *The Stephen Foster Story* and were given a backstage tour by a leading cast member who is also a GSP alum. The next day they enjoyed a visit with two of the actors from the show who are currently writing a new musical, one of whom is also a GSP alum. Later that same day they learned special effects make-up techniques from a visiting artist. The class received a technical tour of the Norton Center for the Arts by the Technical Director. Technical theatre was also explored by scholars through designing sets and costumes for a children's play and working backstage, lights, and sound for all campus showcases. Scholars finished the program with prepared scenes or monologues, tips for college auditions, playwriting skills, and experience with different acting methods.

### Morehead State University

Scholars in **Jason Meenach's** Dramatic Expression Focus Area put on their own performance of *The Odyssey*, adapted by R.N. Sandberg based upon Homer's epic poem. Scholars were immersed in a fully collaborative creative process where they were actors, designers, and technical crew members. Scholars designed the costumes, the set, the props, they taught the choreography, had a voice in casting, and even wrote original music for their performance! Their main guiding parameter was to think of creative and original ways to tell the story without traditional production resources. This guidance helped scholars focus on the artistry of their storytelling and the visioning that is required in theatre arts. The scholars performed their play for the GSP-Morehead community during week five. While most of class time was spent in some aspect of rehearsal and production process, scholars also had time to learn about different topics in theatre history, acting styles, and vocal production for the stage. Scholars enjoyed learning from each other about their favorite older or obscure musicals that are not well known to their generation. Scholars also visited Bryan Station High School in Lexington, where they enjoyed seeing a dress rehearsal of *Mamma Mia!* put on by students from all six of Lexington's high schools.

**“This class has been everything I wanted it to be and more. My favorite part of this class, the cardboard boat building project, helped me work together with other scholars that I had not connected with before. Our class gave me the opportunity to create, problem solve, and demonstrate my leadership skills.”**

**Gracie Egner**  
*Marshall County High School*

**“In engineering, I’ve found several of my interests: psychology, architecture, design, cost engineering, and building. We come together as a class to complete projects such as designing a dunk tank & building a boat. I’ve made lifelong friends as well as honed my skills in design, communication, and leadership.”**

**Kelsie Burden**  
*Bullitt East High School*

## Centre College

**Marie Price’s** Engineering Focus Area provided scholars with a comprehensive exploration of the many disciplines within the engineering field and examined the essential role engineers play in modern society. Throughout the program, scholars engaged in hands-on projects that challenged their creativity, problem-solving skills, and collaboration. Early projects included constructing freestanding towers and designing small, functional cars, all while applying the engineering design process. The culminating challenge was to design and construct a boat made solely of cardboard and tape, capable of carrying at least two team members across a swimming pool—a test of both engineering acumen and teamwork. Beyond the classroom, scholars broadened their understanding through a series of immersive field experiences. At Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky, they toured the assembly line, participated in a panel discussion with engineers from diverse disciplines, and visited on-site engineering facilities to observe advanced manufacturing processes in action. A visit to East Kentucky Power and Electric introduced them to large-scale energy production, where engineers explained the challenges of grid maintenance and the integration of renewable energy sources such as solar power. Additionally, scholars traveled to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers training facility at McAlpine Lock and Dam, where they took part in a real-world road and bridge design simulation, applying engineering principles to infrastructure planning. By the end of the course, scholars gained a deeper appreciation for engineering’s impact on society and were equipped with both the technical knowledge and collaborative skills essential to the profession.

*Engineering scholars learn how to use surveyor’s tools to help plan and design a bridge that could be built to connect an island in the Ohio River to the Kentucky mainland.*





## Morehead State University

**Ryan Blood's** Engineering Focus Area was where math and science met the real world through tangible, purposeful application. In this course, scholars explored the discipline by engaging with engineering environments firsthand—visiting university campuses, power generation sites, research and development laboratories, and large-scale civil infrastructure projects. These immersive experiences allowed scholars to see how theory translated into real-world systems and shaped the built environment. The course emphasized cultivating an engineering mindset: framing problems clearly, leveraging existing knowledge, identifying knowledge gaps, and devising effective, scalable solutions. Scholars learned to combine the precision of first principles with the practicality of heuristics—rules of thumb engineers use to estimate, simplify, and guide decisions in complex systems. They practiced identifying key variables and explored how systems fail, succeed, or scale under constraints. Through both thought experiments and real-world case studies, scholars examined the boundaries of engineering decisions. How much magnesium could be added to a sports car tire before it compromised safety? How far could a structure extend before wind loads overtook material strength? These kinds of questions anchored the curriculum in the balance between innovation and responsibility. Ultimately, engineering was presented as both measured and imaginative: a discipline grounded in reality but driven by vision. Scholars left with a clearer sense of how engineers think, plan, and build—not just in theory, but in the messy, fascinating complexity of the physical world.



*Engineering scholars design and construct cardboard boats to carry at least two team members across the campus pool.*

The Engineering Focus Area scholars, led by **Michael Feedback**, spent much of their time investigating the engineering process and exploring the different types of engineering careers available. Scholars modeled the engineering process by building projects of their choice, including musical instruments (using PVC pipe, string, and duct tape) and clothing (using duct tape and string). Scholars were also able to visit high-profile engineering businesses to see what opportunities await them in the future. Scholars visited Toyota Manufacturing in Georgetown, touring the facilities and speaking with a number of different team members. Scholars were able to see processes and opportunities awaiting engineering students. The class traveled to the Army Corps of Engineers' McAlpine Dam facility on the Ohio River in Louisville to see how engineers allow river traffic to flow on the river around the Falls of the Ohio, and scholars visited East Kentucky Power to see how engineers generate electricity while keeping the state's citizens safe and working.

## Film Studies

### Centre College

**Brandon Clay's** Film Studies class learned that cinema is a universal experience, and it is an art form that combines almost all others. This course involved not only the study of film and its applications around the world, but the theory and creation of it as well. During the first week, scholars focused on learning early film history and common film terminology. This knowledge equipped scholars to view films through a critical lens. During week two, scholars used critical analysis skills to discuss genre studies and the basics of film production. In week three, scholars learned the value of consuming global cinema, supporting movie theaters, and paying attention to awards shows and film festivals. Scholars then learned about film theory and how psychology factors into filmmaking during week four. This culminated in conversations the fifth week about the state of film today. Across all five weeks, scholars worked to create short films that were screened by the community. Scholars left this course with experience in, enthusiasm for, and a more thorough understanding of film and the filmmaking process.

## Film Studies (cont.)

### Murray State University

**Brenna Sherill's** Film Studies Focus Area at GSP-Murray provided opportunities for both film analysis and hands-on filmmaking experiences to scholars this summer. The class served in part as an introduction to film studies, providing scholars the opportunity to learn the basics in terminology and approaches to such film techniques as editing, cinematography, and narrative structure, all of which were discussed and analyzed through weekly class film screenings. The course film screenings were chosen to represent international narratives from across the globe. Scholars watched such films as *Rififi* (Jules Dassin, 1955), *The Lunchbox* (Ritesh Batra, 2013), *Life is Beautiful* (Roberto Benigni, 1997), and *Parasite* (Bong Joon Ho, 2019) to consider the various approaches to filmmaking used by artists across the globe. In addition to introductory film studies, this class allowed scholars to create and produce their own films. Scholars produced several short film projects in genres such as a mockumentary reality television show about their time in the program, a hard-boiled detective mystery, and a coming-of-age drama. Additionally, scholars created various other smaller projects through the summer, such as six-shot horror films in a collaboration with one of the Psychology Focus Area classes and their own versions of the Kuleshov effect to discuss graphic relations in visual media.



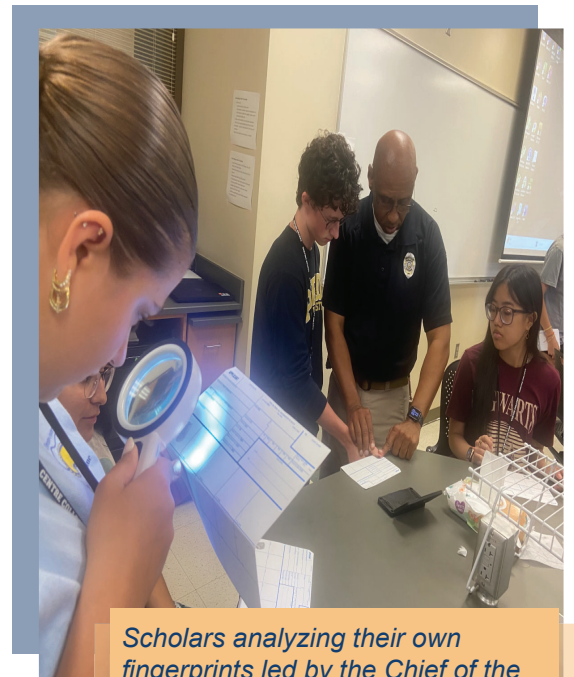
*Film Studies scholars edit their short films.*

These short films all reflected the scholars' desires to work creatively and collaboratively within the class and the community at large. In producing these films, scholars developed their acting, directing, and editorial skills to make several polished and sophisticated projects that were shared with the GSP-Murray community.

## Forensic Science

### Centre College

The scholars in **Lovence Ainembabazi's** Forensic Science Focus Area examined forensic science by reading books, role playing to solve mock crime mysteries, taking field trips to a crime lab, and talking to experts in the field. At the start of week one, scholars focused on the basics of forensics, its role within the criminal justice system, and skills required in forensic science. Scholars learned about careers in forensic science and some public misconceptions about the field. Scholars read about the history of forensic science and its breakthroughs and examined cases in which forensic evidence both exonerated convicted individuals and helped to convict people who were previously found innocent. They read *What Bugs, Burns, Prints, DNA and More Tell Us about Crime* by Val McDermid and presented what they learned to the whole class. Scholars were introduced to how evidence is collected, protected, processed, and examined/analyzed in areas of blood spatter, fingerprints, and impressions from a crime scene and the use of canines. They also learned about the role of the crime scene in solving crime and why it is a "no go" zone for the public. A mock crime scene was created and scholars role played in finding evidence, analyzing it, and solving the mystery. The class was also immersed in processing and analyzing evidence practically, starting with fingerprints, blood and blood spatter, analysis of evidence using alternative sources of light, odontology, and digital forensics. They also learned from guest speakers with expertise in these areas and visited the state's forensic lab in Frankfort where they interacted with forensic scientists and got a chance to see analysis of evidence in real time.



*Scholars analyzing their own fingerprints led by the Chief of the Danville Police department.*



## Morehead State University

Scholars in **Abir El Hirsch's** Forensic Science Focus Area began by exploring the key elements of forensic science such as the significance of the chain of custody, proper courtroom etiquette, and how to distinguish between different types of evidence. To bring these concepts to life, scholars participated in a mock trial. Each scholar was assigned a courtroom role and worked through a simulated case, gaining firsthand insight into how forensic evidence is presented and used in a judicial setting. The learning extended beyond the classroom through field experiences and guest speakers. Scholars visited the Kentucky State Police Forensic Laboratory, where they learned about the use of toxicology and its real-world applications. In addition, guest speakers from the FBI shared their experience as federal agents, providing information about evidence response procedures and providing a polygraph demonstration. Scholars also learned about the KSP Central Forensic Laboratory and the role of trace evidence in solving crimes. Hands-on labs were also a key part of the curriculum. Scholars explored multiple methods for identifying fingerprints at crime scenes, using fingerprint powder, iodine crystals, ninhydrin, and

Gentian Violet. They tested paper currency for traces of cocaine and methamphetamine, learning practical applications of scientific procedures.

## Murray State University

**Mary Leigh Lewis's** Forensic Science scholars conducted a number of hands-on activities to learn more about the field. They buried dead feeder rats in potting soil under different conditions to monitor the rate of decomposition. Peer reviewed literature was studied to determine how decomposition occurred while insect life cycle stages were examined under dissection microscopes. Scholars performed DNA analysis using gel electrophoresis and a crime scene storyline and determined the DNA of suspect 3 matched the crime scene DNA. Scholars completed chromatography, blood typing, shoe print castings, bite mark impressions, simulated blood spatter analysis, fingerprint analysis, and microscopic hair analysis. Error rates for these forms of trace evidence were analyzed. Guest speakers from the Madisonville forensics lab presented information and hands-on activities for toxicology, DNA analysis, and drug analysis using gas chromatography and mass spectrometry. Scholars learned the seven steps of crime scene investigation and used these steps to develop, set up, and investigate their own simulated crime scenes. They worked with Murray State Police on this project as well as the Focus Areas of Journalism and Historical Analysis. An FBI agent from Paducah provided information on crime scene investigation. Scholars studied the photography of Sally Mann using the book, *What Remains*, and watched the documentary about how Sally Mann photographed decomposing bodies at the University of Tennessee Anthropological Research Facility using large-format cameras with antique lenses and the wet-plate collodion process to create the photos in the book. Scholars successfully escaped three escape rooms on a field trip to Paducah using critical analysis and collaborative strategies.



*Scholars micropipeting restriction enzymes into DNA samples to prepare for electrophoresis.*

**“This program provided me with an in-depth understanding of how forensic science truly works. I explored the challenges of evidence collection, crime scene reconstruction, and the role of forensics in law. It was eye-opening to compare media portrayals to actual scientific practice, and it helped me develop critical thinking skills that are essential in today’s information-driven society.”**

**Luke Powell**

*Paul Laurence Dunbar High School*



# Healthcare Industry

## Centre College

This summer, scholars in **James Bland's** Healthcare Industry Focus Area embarked on an immersive exploration of human physiology, uncovering the intricate systems that make up the human body, from the cellular level to fully integrated organ systems. The course provided a dynamic look at how the body functions, adapts, and maintains balance amid ever-changing environments. Through a blend of interactive discussions, clinical presentations, and hands-on learning, scholars examined the structure and function of the body while exploring the connections between its systems. They participated in clinical case studies, physiological simulations, and hospital rotations, gaining a holistic understanding of anatomy, physiology, and their roles in health, disease, and wellness. Hands-on activities included suturing, manually taking blood pressure, conducting a urinalysis lab, and rotating through departments at Ephraim McDowell Hospital. Scholars also engaged with the broader healthcare community through site visits to the University of Kentucky College of Medicine, the University of Louisville School of Dentistry, and simulations with Boyle County EMS. By fostering critical thinking and scientific curiosity, this Focus Area inspired scholars to pursue further studies in healthcare professions, biomedical research, and related fields.



*A Healthcare Industry scholar practices essential suturing techniques.*

## Morehead State University

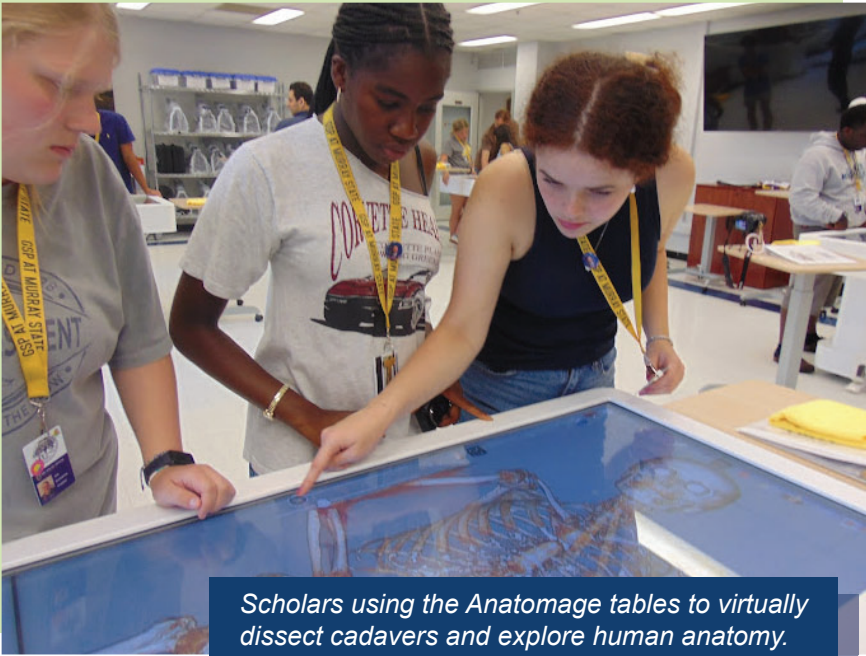
**Cindy Brainard's** Healthcare Industry scholars' focus this summer was the human brain highlighted by an in-depth look at Alzheimer's Disease. Using the book, *The End of Alzheimer's* by Dale E. Bredesen, MD, scholars were surprised and excited to learn that there is an effective and successful treatment for this heartbreaking disease called the Reboot Protocol. Through their reading and class discussion, scholars explored the three types of Alzheimer's and the treatment plans for each type. To explore the healthcare industry on a larger scale, scholars researched and compared healthcare systems in several different countries to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of each. Scholars also enjoyed field trips to the UK Outreach Center with Dr. Frasier, MD and the Midway Clinic with Dr. Roach, MD. With Dr. Frasier, the scholars had the opportunity to handle human brains, lungs, and other preserved organs and learn how the human metabolic systems interact to keep us alive. With Dr. Roach, scholars were exposed to a homeopathic approach to medicine focusing on prevention. To continue exploration of brain structure and function, scholars dissected and labeled the sections of a sheep brain and noted its similarity to human brain anatomy. To experience more specific hands-on activities, scholars spent a day at St. Claire Hospital. They engaged in several activities including suturing technique, disease spreading simulation and tracking, blood typing, pharmaceutical production, and fetal pig dissection. Scholars in the Healthcare Industry Focus Area enjoyed two amazing guest speakers this summer. The first speaker, Dr. Jen Price, discussed the close connection between mental and physical health and diagnostic practices to differentiate the two. The second speaker, Mrs. Annette Murphy, shared her experiences as a hospice nurse along with the joys and sorrows of her job.

**“The kind of learning done in these classes is far beyond listening, copying, and memorizing information. Primarily it was expressing new ideas while using others' thoughts to process and think about how they relate to mine. The learning was blissful, allowing growth without stress and forced learning.”**

**Hasini Ambati**  
*Ballard High School*

## Murray State University

**Tate Renzenbrink's** scholars embarked on an in-depth exploration of healthcare, beginning with hands-on demonstrations of miasma theory and germ theory while discussing the societal challenges that have historically hindered medical progress. Guided by William Bynum's *The History of Medicine: A Very Short Introduction*, they traced medicine's evolution from bedside traditions to laboratory science. Building on this foundation, the Healthcare Industry scholars conducted their own microbiology investigations—collecting, culturing, and staining bacteria colonies to analyze public health implications. They also gained practical experience in mammalian anatomy through dissections of specimens including brains, hearts, and a pregnant pig uterus. A highlight of the program was a visit to the Murray State School of Nursing and Health Professions, where scholars practiced CPR, physical exams, and intubation on advanced medical mannequins. They further expanded their skills



*Scholars using the Anatomage tables to virtually dissect cadavers and explore human anatomy.*

by virtually dissecting cadavers using the school's state-of-the-art Anatomage tables. These diverse studies culminated in thoughtful global comparisons of healthcare systems and imaginative proposals for both utopian and dystopian medical futures.

## Historical Analysis

### Centre College

Scholars in **Hayden Osborne's** Historical Analysis Focus Area sought to view history from a first-person perspective rather than a textbook. The summer began with a debate about when history begins and ends, with scholars determining that "history starts when people start." From there, scholars focused on the people that compose history and the stories they have to share. Throughout the Program, scholars utilized library research to participate in a variety of creative projects, including Epic Rap Battles of History, where scholars chose a historical feud to write and record a rap battle between the two figures, and a cooking exercise where scholars chose historical recipes from eras ranging between Ancient Greece and the 1950's and prepared their recipes using only the culinary innovations available to the average person at the time. Scholars ended the summer by designing, executing, and reflecting on an oral history project. They identified research questions, developed interview questions, arranged interviews, and conducted over 40 interviews with members of the GSP-Centre community and beyond, including owners and patrons of businesses in downtown Lexington on a field trip. Beginning this fall, these interviews will be housed at the University of Kentucky's Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History for historians, university students, and the general public to access. Through this process, they learned social science research techniques, interview skills, and project coordination. From this project, scholars determined that history affects people by shaping their viewpoints and providing a common cultural experience for people as they navigate the world.

### Murray State University

**Francis Musoni's** Historical Analysis Focus Area spent the summer exploring the relevance of history in everyday life, with a special focus on African societies. Through discussions of oral traditions, material culture, and indigenous knowledge systems, scholars examined how African communities remember and reshape their pasts. Using a variety of sources—including the book *I Will Always Write Back*, and films such as *Kentucky in Africa* and *Iron Ladies of Liberia*—students practiced interpreting different types of historical evidence. A highlight of the course was a joint Crime Scene Simulation with the Forensic Science class, where scholars learned how historical thinking plays a role in criminal investigations and explored law enforcement as a potential career path. The class also visited the Homeplace 1850s Farm, a living history museum in Tennessee, where they interacted with local historians, engaged with 19th-century artifacts, and observed historical interpretation in action. A Zimbabwean cooking experience further deepened their understanding of African cultures. For their final project, scholars analyzed recorded interviews from the "African Immigrants in the Bluegrass Oral History Project" at the University of Kentucky. Rather than summarizing the interviews, they applied key historical methods to interpret the experiences of African migrants to Kentucky. Through these diverse activities, scholars developed a deeper understanding of historical analysis while gaining insight into African cultures and the experiences of immigrant communities in the United States.



# International Relations

## Morehead State University

In **Ogechi Anyanwu's** Focus Area, scholars explored the pursuit of interests driving the behaviors of state and non-state actors in international relations. Reading Joseph Goldstein's *International Relations Step by Step: Fundamentals of World Politics, International Affairs, and Global Diplomacy*, scholars gained profound insights into the various dimensions of international relations. The scholars engaged in thoughtful discussions surrounding selected global conflicts and created group poster boards that highlighted the origins and ramifications of the disputes between Israel and Palestine, Russia and Ukraine, India and Pakistan, Kenya and the British, Afghanistan and external forces, Colombia and rebel groups, Cuba and the West, and the US and North Korea. During the summer, the scholars visited the Kentucky Refugee Ministries in Louisville to gain a deeper understanding of the push-out factors driving immigration to the Western world. The insights from the visit helped them effectively discuss the pros and cons of the current immigration policy by the Trump administration and present their thoughts on a poster board, which they shared with the GSP-Morehead community. The class hosted an FBI agent who spoke about the agency's delicate yet crucial role in combating selected international crimes. Through the thought-provoking documentaries scholars watched throughout the summer and the class readings, discussions, presentations, and debates, scholars had a unique opportunity to appreciate complex driving forces for conflicts and diplomatic engagements since the Cold War, and the merits, challenges, and outcomes of conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace enforcement, and peacebuilding principles.

## Murray State University

Led by **Lauren Hines**, scholars in the International Relations Focus Area examined conflict and economic development through an international lens with an emphasis on understanding the varied approaches to foreign policy and the major actors in both government and private sectors. Scholars used the book *Factfulness* by Hans Rosling to reframe instincts when thinking about the world and to learn measures of economic development while applying these skills to topics such as global health outcomes, aspects of daily life that differ according to resources and development, and the role of technology. During the five weeks, scholars were asked to present historical context and analysis for US foreign policy, research and discuss past and ongoing conflicts, and to think about the world from new and varying perspectives. Scholars learned more about culture through making pasta by hand and discussing the role of food in diplomacy and culture, and participated in a trade simulation in which their countries had variance in terms of resources and technology, forcing them to work together to trade or cooperate to sell their products on the global market. Through activities, readings, and discussions, scholars deepened their knowledge to better understand the goals and behaviors of major actors in IR in the United States and worldwide. They had the opportunity to apply their learning at the end of the program through a crisis simulation where each scholar represented one of these actors to collaborate and enact policy decisions regarding a threat to United States security.



*International Relations scholars working on a group presentation in class.*

# Journalism & Mass Media

## Centre College

**Hayley Hoffman's** Journalism & Mass Media Focus Area documented the GSP-Centre community through a variety of storytelling modes (i.e., writing, podcasting, videography, and photography). The scholars built their own newspaper, *In the Centre*, from the ground up and pitched their stories during weekly editorial meetings. Throughout the program, the four published editions of *In the Centre* included weekly podcast episodes, photo galleries, interviews with RAs and administrators, and Focus Area spotlights. Using John Green's *The Anthropocene Reviewed* as a model, scholars also wrote weekly reviews on communal aspects of the human experience. They reviewed communal experiences they'd participated in before GSP, communal experiences or rituals with their families, and communal experiences at GSP before finally reviewing the program itself. Additionally, scholars visited the University of Kentucky's Media Depot to record podcast episodes and use the green screen and portrait studios during week four. The content they generated continues to live on at <https://inthecentre.weebly.com> and on Spotify.

## Murray State University

Scholars in **Bella Ezumah's** Journalism and Mass Media class explored the nature of journalism in the digital age theoretically and through hands-on activities, emphasizing the various forms of change in the field due to emergent technologies. The scholars spent time reviewing articles on the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on content creation, dissemination, and consumption as well as the ethical challenges brought about by AI. Additionally, they dissected what constitutes news and what is gossip, critiquing some articles from the standpoint of journalistic ethical values of accuracy, fairness, the public's right to know, the need for independence, integrity, respect, and honesty. To put these concepts into practice, scholars gathered news stories from the campus community, wrote articles, shot videos, and edited the contents. They also designed and published a website, *The Scholars Times* (<https://thescholarstimes.mymurraystate.com/>), which showcased various segments consisting of interviews, news stories, video coverage of convocations,



*Scholars record a news broadcast in the University of Kentucky's Media Depot's green screen studio.*

celebrations such as the Fourth of July celebration by the city of Murray, and extra-curricular activities in the GSP-Murray community. Scholars received a firsthand experience as they interacted with media professionals including a Pulitzer Prize Award winner and GSP alum, Dennis K. Berman. Also, with a visit to the WKDZ (106.5 FM) Radio Station in Cadiz, the Journalism scholars learned how a media industry operates from a managerial standpoint to the behind the scenes elements and news anchors. They also interacted with the staff from the business sector as well as those that manage the public relations and social media engagements. The highlight of the radio station visit was the scholars' participation in a LIVE Morning Show, an opportunity that allowed them to share their GSP experience and some highlights of their various hometowns.

## Modes of Mathematical Thinking

### Morehead State University

**Brad Elliott's** Focus Area this summer focused on combinatorics: the study of counting principles. The class learned when and how to use combinations and permutations, among other tools, to count possible arrangements of people and things. The scholars applied these techniques to study probability. They practiced calculating the likelihood of different events and used their new probability knowledge to find optimal strategies for games of chance. They learned to calculate expected values of different random processes and to use them to improve their decision-making. Scholars in this Focus Area learned the basics of Python programming, since mastering computer coding requires mathematical, logical thinking. They practiced the syntax of Python, then progressed to writing code to implement or test the theories of combinatorics discussed in class. They also visited the MSU Space Science Center to hear about applications of math, science, and computing in studying space. The class read the book *Weapons of Math Destruction* by Cathy O'Neil, which describes ways that math can be used to improve people's lives, but is sometimes used to make them worse. The book describes many systemic issues caused by applications of math and algorithms. Scholars read about and discussed problems like the self-reinforcing US News & World Report college rankings, and the heavily debated recruitment practices used by for-profit colleges. Ultimately, they developed a healthy skepticism for software or systems that are marketed as "objective" but are still impacted by human bias.

**"The Modes of Mathematical Thinking Focus Area not only expanded my knowledge of math, but also changed the way I face and tackle problems both in real life and on paper."**

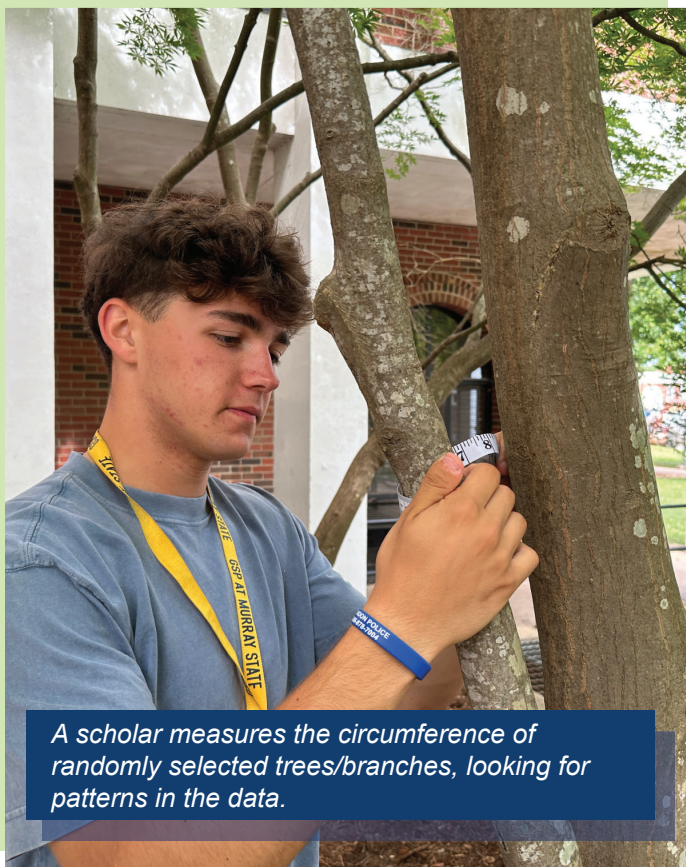
**Sarah Grace Benz**  
Walden School



## Modes of Mathematical Thinking (cont.)

### Murray State University

**Kristian Klaene's** Modes of Mathematical Thinking scholars studied a variety of challenging investigations emphasizing problem solving techniques. The class managed to solve what at first seemed like intimidating and/or unanswerable questions through perseverance, trusting each other, as well as learning to expect setbacks. Modes of Mathematical Thinking also scaled simple problems up, moving from "What is the answer to this problem?" to "Under what circumstances would this problem have the same answer?" Much time was spent looking at probabilities and data. The class collected data from online, as well as from around the campus (weights of rocks, lengths of sidewalk cracks, and tree circumferences), to learn about Benford's Law. They analyzed the probabilities of the board game Yahtzee and Plinko from the Price is Right. Modes of Mathematical Thinking also hosted an evening event outside of class time for other scholars to attend. Entitled GSTimes, it included mathematical versions of popular New York Times Games and other classic mathematical games that the students designed themselves. Scholars that attended this fun session competed to finish as many games as they could in the time allowed. Other topics studied in Modes of Mathematical Thinking were calculator programs, some coding in C++; John Conway's *Game of Life*; ancient methods of estimating square roots; the many cardinalities of infinity; and the past, present, and future of data analytics through a guest speaker presentation.



*A scholar measures the circumference of randomly selected trees/branches, looking for patterns in the data.*

## Music Theory & Performance

### Centre College

Scholars in **Jordan Boggess's** Music Theory and Performance class learned how to mix and match their individual talents to create a variety of musical ensembles. Scholars learned to step out of their comfort zones and engage with music through non-traditional methods while being encouraged to create music in a manner that brings them joy. Scholars crafted their own guitars using common materials before embarking to Eastern Kentucky where they visited Troublesome Creek String Instruments to learn more about the hand craftsmanship of guitars.

### Murray State University

Scholars in **Tana Field's** Music Theory and Performance class considered the possibilities of music as a collaborative art form, focusing on composition and the creative process. Throughout several composition projects, scholars explored various aspects of musical theory such as scale types, harmonic progressions, melodic writing, transposition, voicing, form, and counterpoint. Scholars also pondered musical traditions and the concept of storytelling in music. They explored the history of the commedia dell'arte, stock characters, and operatic traditions while also investigating the connections between music and film. Through exploration of film score and opera, scholars considered the means by which music enhances the emotional and visual aspects of a story. Music scholars contemplated the value of silence, leitmotif, and diegetic vs. non-diegetic music. They also explored underscoring, and the role of psychology and extra-musical associations in musical works. Additionally, scholars pondered connections between literature, visual art, and music, considering stylistic movements such as impressionism and expressionism and how those movements were reflected in musical compositions. Scholars considered performance practices, production challenges of presenting staged works to the public, as well as performance anxiety strategies for various types of presentations. They discussed marching band customs and formed a kazoo band for the city of Murray Fourth of July parade. Music scholars explored the rich musical history of Kentucky, with particular attention given to the Country Music Highway and bluegrass artists. Finally, they met with professionals in the arts industry to discuss challenges within music business, arts management, and performance.

## Centre College

Scholars in **Kenny Barrese's** Philosophy Focus Area explored thoughts grouped into four main topics: epistemology, the study of what we know and how we can know it; moral philosophy, the study of what we should do; political philosophy, the study of how we should live together; and aesthetics, the study of what art is and what its function should be. The class closed with a consideration of the meaning of life and how their GSP experience could be considered meaningful to them. Throughout the program scholars read and responded to a wide range of thinkers from throughout time and around the world, including Confucius, Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Descartes, Locke, Heidegger, Camus, Peter Singer, Nel Noddings, and bell hooks. In each module, scholars were encouraged to engage with the thoughts as active agents who may or may not agree with a given author's writing.

## Morehead State University

Scholars in **John Wilcox's** Philosophy Focus Area explored various philosophical topics, including the basis of morality, the relationship of the mind or soul to the world that appears to our senses, and whether the human will is free or determined. Class discussions were based upon classic philosophical texts. They read Plato's defense of Socrates, who believed that the most important project in life is to take care of the soul by pursuing moral virtue. They also read Plato's myth of the cave and reflected upon whether the world is fundamentally physical and material or whether there is a reality beyond the material world. The scholars examined Descartes' famous argument that he knows himself as a "thinking thing" that can exist separate from his body, or, as Descartes says, "I think, therefore I am." The scholars also studied David Hume's argument against Descartes, with Hume maintaining that all ideas refer back to original sense perceptions and cannot extend beyond what our senses can perceive. The scholars considered the implications for free will, personal identity, and the basis of morality.

## Murray State University

Scholars in **Sarah Beach's** Philosophy Focus Area surveyed the history and approaches to philosophy in the Western world with an emphasis on philosophy of technology. Scholars explored various thinkers, from Plato to Foucault, and engaged in discussions about the nature of reality, the meaning of existence, and the value of knowledge, particularly in the areas of technological advancement. Several philosophical viewpoints were discussed, including Stoicism, Utilitarianism, Kantian deontology, Existentialism, Cartesian dualism, and others. In particular, scholars were asked to reflect on questions like what is a technology, how can we use technology ethically, and how do we understand the philosophical underpinnings of society as related to technology? Class discussions emphasized scholars' ability to

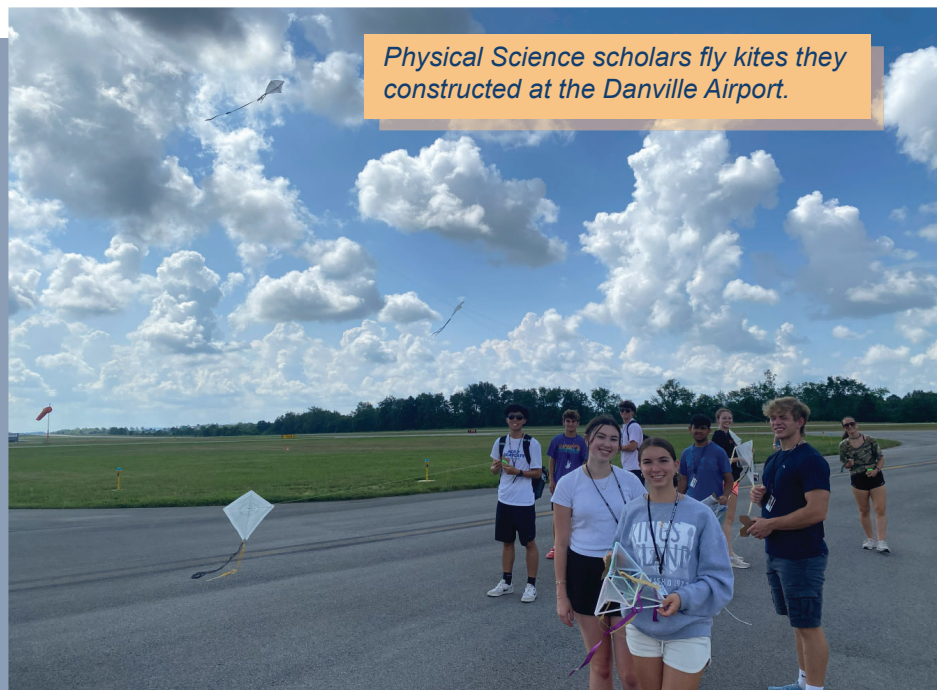
articulate their own perspectives more clearly by first understanding the perspectives of others, particularly through unpacking inherent narratives in the world around them. Scholars visited Waterfield Library to view the artifacts in the Greek and Roman collection with Dr. Aaron Irvin, who described the ancient underpinnings of Western philosophy within material objects. Scholars also joined with the Architecture Focus Area to build a large-size scale model of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, which enabled them to discuss Foucault's concept of surveillance in the digital age. At the end of the summer, scholars shared their own piece of philosophical writing with their fellow scholars as a way to explore their own perspectives on class materials and other philosophical concepts.



*Philosophy scholars join with the Architecture Focus Area to build a large scale model Panopticon and discuss digital surveillance in the social media age.*



## Physical Science



*Physical Science scholars fly kites they constructed at the Danville Airport.*

**“Physical Science gave me a deeper understanding of the world. It wasn’t just about the textbook definitions and formulas but instead focused on engaging experiences which revealed the interactions of how objects and materials shape life around us.”**

**Sydnee Bailey**  
*Hickman County High School*

### Centre College

**Will Garcia’s** Physical Science class invited scholars to discover how the world works through inquiry-driven exploration. Scholars built, tested, and questioned their way to understanding Physical Science. Scholars constructed kites and flew them at the Danville Airport. They built siphons and pushed the limits of how high water could climb (reaching 8.6 meters high!) While studying sound and waves, the scholars built their own guitars then traveled to Eastern Kentucky to Troublesome Creek Guitars. The scholars assembled rockets powered by bicycle pumps, experimenting with pressure and thrust, and they also used mirrors to guide a beam of sunlight through the classroom building. Along the way scholars were challenged to explain what they had observed and why it happened, fostering a deeper connection between hands-on experience and scientific understanding. The class embraced a philosophy of learning through doing, where scholars explored what it truly meant to engage with science beyond textbooks and lectures. Together, they questioned assumptions about how things work. This collaborative approach challenged scholars’ prior understanding and created a community of learners united by shared curiosity.

### Morehead State University

Scholars in **John Hooker’s** Physical Science Focus Area learned about the unseen atomic and molecular worlds which explain why all of Earth’s most important materials behave the way they do. From the organized crystals of metals and ceramics to the chaos of polymer strands and glasses, scholars used modeling as a means for discovery. Scholars also learned from professionals in the field of materials science, witnessing firsthand how new materials are made, tested, and used. With the aid of Mark Miodownik’s *Stuff Matters*, scholars analyzed and assessed the ways in which humans interact and rely on materials. In the final week of the course, scholars collaborated with others to investigate the cosmos and question the nature of reality itself. Scholars returned home to their own corners of the Commonwealth with a fresh set of scientific eyes, able to more critically and systematically categorize the materials in the world around them. They possessed a new appreciation for those materials, a more intricate understanding of where materials come from, and why they behave the way they do.



*A scholar creates a model illustrating the crystalline nature of ionic compounds.*

## Political & Legal Issues

### Centre College

This summer scholars in **John Powell's** Political & Legal Issues Focus Area were encouraged to reflect on the implications of America's evolving concept of democracy, and to consider that politics involves both a formal structure of institutions and a seamless interaction between private citizens and the institutions through which they are represented. They began with an introduction to Jonathan Haidt's "Moral Roots of Liberals and Conservatives," and explored this natural divide through a careful examination of "the American Dream" -- both in its image and its reality. They were introduced to the uses of propaganda in support of parties, and how this gradually transformed the very meaning of the word "politics." The current insistence on alternative "realities" was contextualized through a viewing of a theater version of George Orwell's *1984*, and an investigation as to whether  $2 + 2$  should ever be made to equal 5. Scholars learned from Ken Burns that the country was from the time of the American Revolution more divided and more violent than we usually allow, helping them to better understand that our country's present moment is not unique. As a part of the goal to encourage critical thinking in real time, scholars were asked to evaluate breaking political and legal stories as they happened, most notably the US Supreme Court's ruling in *Trump v. Casa* regarding birthright citizenship, and the U.S. attack on Iran's nuclear facilities.

**"This class has shown me that debate and politics isn't about checkmates or shutting down the opposing side, but about listening to the other side, having a respectful, open debate, and then not always coming to an agreement; that it is ok to disagree. And with the current political polarization happening in the world right now, I needed that. It really helped me not fear politics."**

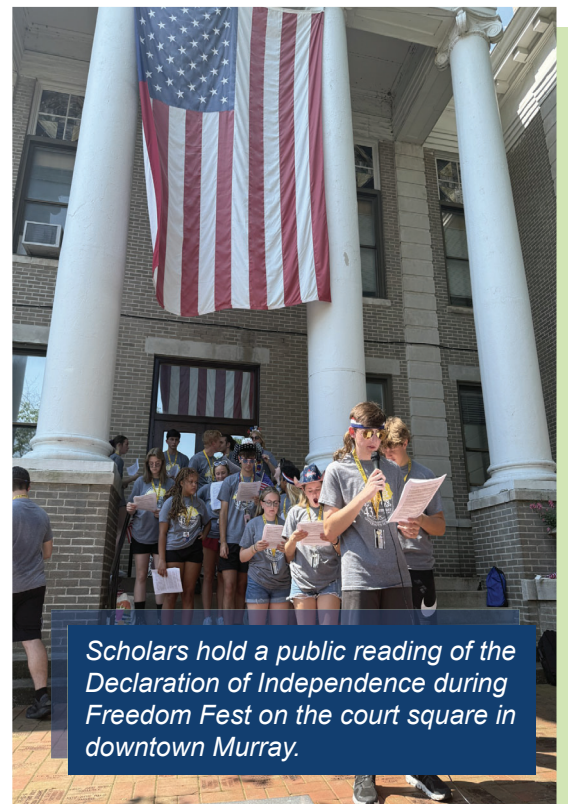
**Abby Schlosser**  
Grayson County High School

### Morehead State University

In **Justin Grindstaff's** Focus Area, scholars engaged in an intensive exploration of political rhetoric, debate, and policy creation to better understand the complexities of modern governance. A central theme was the analysis of debate strategy and reenactment, allowing scholars to experience firsthand how arguments can either bridge or deepen divides. Scholars tackled gerrymandering, designing their own redistricting maps for states of choice, and participated in policy creation and redesign exercises, using collaborative methods to improve or reimagine existing laws. In collaboration with the Public Policy and Administration Focus Area, scholars broadened their understanding of local policy challenges and solutions. Guest speakers enriched the scholar experience. They heard from two different FBI agents, who led conversations on cybersecurity and polygraph examinations. Additionally, attorney Kim Reeder, provided insights into running for office, attending law school, and practicing law. They also analyzed political and financial connections in the stock market, fostering discussions about ethics and power. Activities included drawing political spectrums to visualize ideological shifts and reading works like *Harrison Bergeron*, sparking debates about the consequences of enforced equality. Ultimately, the class focused on respectful dialogue, crafting thoughtful questions, and learning to "judge ideas, not people," which was a critical step toward becoming effective, collaborative leaders.

### Murray State University

The Political and Legal Issues class, led by **Drew Thompson** and titled *Fundamental Issues of Politics*, explored the conceptual bases of political ideas and their development. Students brainstormed relevant topics of interest and discussed readings based on those topics. The arrival of Independence Day during week two of the program offered scholars a unique opportunity for public service by taking course content out into the public square. Reinvigorating a dormant local tradition, scholars boldly stepped up to a microphone and read the Declaration of Independence on the courthouse steps following the local parade.



*Scholars hold a public reading of the Declaration of Independence during Freedom Fest on the court square in downtown Murray.*



## Centre College

Scholars in **Jodi Treadway's** Psychology and Behavioral Studies class explored the intriguing field of personality psychology. They examined the various theoretical approaches to the study of personality, including biologically-based theories, psychodynamics, humanism, cognitive learning models, and trait theory. Scholars were introduced to the array of personality traits currently studied by psychologists, with particular attention paid to the Big Five traits of neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience. Scholars also learned about several individual traits and trait groupings of note, such as narcissism, the Dark Triad, and the Light Triad. They also considered the stability of personality, comparing the traits and behaviors that stay stable our whole lives, the ones that change over time, and the ones that change day-to-day and moment-to-moment. Scholars examined the dynamics of the biology-and-environment relationship, and how these dual forces shape and are shaped by the personality. This included learning about temperament; the biological tendencies and sensitivities that go on to shape the personality. They examined the difficulties psychologists face in measuring, or even defining, the personality, especially across cultures. This included learning about culture-bound syndromes, which are mental health conditions which seem to be limited to particular cultures. Scholars also learned about personality disorders and the features that make them especially distinctive, as well as difficult to diagnose and to treat. These explorations culminated in the scholars learning the process of creating scientific personality measures and using that knowledge to create and administer a questionnaire measuring the maturity level of their fellow scholars.

## Morehead State University

**Kylie Qualls's** Psychology and Behavioral Studies Focus Area explored the cultural construction of mental illness. Throughout the program, scholars read *Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche* and examined how the exportation of the DSM has shaped global perceptions of mental health. This course included an overview of the DSM and key diagnostic criteria for common mental disorders. Class discussions addressed current mental health challenges and the ethical implications of diagnosing and treating psychological conditions across diverse cultural contexts. Scholars researched different mental illnesses in other countries and shared their research through peer presentations. To connect theory with practice, students visited local mental health facilities, Revived Recovery in Morehead and The Ridge in Lexington, where they observed different approaches to psychological care. This Focus Area provided foundational knowledge in abnormal psychology, emphasized critical thinking, and encouraged scholars to question assumptions and broaden their understanding of mental health in a global and ethical framework.

## Murray State University

**Clay Johnson's** scholars dedicated their summer to an in-depth exploration of the psychology of fear. They investigated the brain's response mechanisms to threats, emphasizing the amygdala's role in triggering physiological changes. The curriculum included research on specific phobias and their treatments, focusing on exposure therapy techniques. Scholars also examined the concept of the uncanny and the liminal, analyzing why familiar yet altered objects and locations provoke fear. A field trip to the abandoned Marler Home at Land Between the Lakes provided a practical case study, allowing scholars to explore how abandoned spaces viewed outside of their perceived context can evoke fear. Additionally, scholars surveyed campus fears to design GSPhobias, a horror attraction based on common fears such as heights and tight spaces. This attraction used interactive elements and psychological principles to create a controlled environment where participants could confront their fears. This comprehensive approach to the psychology of fear enabled scholars to investigate fear from various perspectives, fostering a profound understanding of its complexities.

Led by **Mary Price**, the Psychology and Behavioral Studies Focus Area offered scholars an in-depth exploration of the history of mental illness and psychiatric care in the United States. Scholars in this Focus Area examined how the concept of "crazy" has evolved—culturally, medically, and politically—from the early days of institutionalization to today's complex landscape of mental health treatment. Topics covered over the course of the program included 18th- and 19th-century asylums, moral therapy, criminal psychology, the development of psychoanalysis, somatic treatments like lobotomy and electroconvulsive therapy, and the emergence of psychopharmacology, the DSM, and evidence-based treatment. Scholars engaged with a range of materials including historical documents, patient memoirs, scholarly texts, and media portrayals to better understand how psychiatric diagnoses have been shaped not only by science, but also by societal forces such as race, gender, class, and shifting political values. The course emphasized both critical analysis and empathy, encouraging scholars to consider the lived experiences of those labeled mentally ill across different historical moments. As a culminating project, scholars participated in the creation of the GSPsych Ward, an immersive, scholar-designed exhibit that traced the transformation of psychiatric care in America. Through this final showcase, scholars synthesized their learning in a creative and thought-provoking format that invited the broader community to reflect on the past, present, and future of mental health in society.

## Morehead State University

**Blake Neumann's** Public Policy and Administration Focus Area studied public administration through the lens of local government. Scholars focused on various local issues and probed how the discretion of "street-level bureaucrats" has major implications on how public policy functions. Scholars reflected that being immersed in the activities of local government (as well as groups that intersect with local government) through field trips and simulations was eye-opening for understanding how these systems function. Scholars got a holistic picture of the government sphere, as well as what lay outside it, through their experiences at the wastewater treatment plant, a conversation with the mayor of Morehead, a visit with local leaders of West Liberty, a simulation with Fayette County Public Schools, a day of trail work with a local conservation group, and various opportunities to engage with other Focus Areas, including Communication and Social Theory, as well as Political and Legal Issues. Scholars unanimously agreed that they enjoyed the class's internal discussions and felt that they were essential to exploring why they believe what they do about government, and that the open-minded nature of these discussions either shifted their perspectives or reinforced existing beliefs, but that the discussions were robust as a result of mutual respect and trust in one another. Additionally, scholars appreciated the diversity and nuance they were exposed to via others' knowledge of their respective local governments and came away with an improved understanding of the different constraints and inputs that inform decision-making processes for local government.

## Murray State University

Scholars in **Dalton York's** Public Policy and Administration Focus Area explored legislative advocacy by discovering the inner workings of the Kentucky General Assembly. The capstone project for the Public Policy scholars included writing legislative bill proposals in small groups. The scholars researched and wrote their legislation, prepared lobbying speeches, practiced advocacy skills, and studied the process of passing a bill in the state of Kentucky. This project culminated with a trip to the Kentucky State Capitol in Frankfort. There, scholars presented their bills to a "committee" comprised of legislators, Legislative Research Commission staff, policy professionals, law students, and other guests. The panel listened to the bill proposals, asked engaging questions of the scholars, and took a committee vote on each piece of legislation (three out of the four scholar-composed bills were voted favorably by the committee!) During this trip, scholars also had the opportunity to tour the Old Kentucky State Capitol and the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History. In addition to the summer-long project, GSP-Murray Public Policy scholars enjoyed stand-alone lessons on topics such as public sector budgeting, historical types of legislative bodies, and judicial policy-making in the court systems. The scholars have fresh perspectives on Kentucky leadership and the skills to advocate for their priorities when they return to their communities.

## Spanish Language & Culture

### Centre College

Scholars in **Clint Hendrix's** Spanish Language and Culture Focus Area practiced their language skills and explored Hispanic culture by reading English, Spanglish, and Spanish-language poetry, short stories, and recipes as they learned to make Spanish tapas and analyze authentic cultural texts in varying historical contexts. After learning about the long tradition of muralism and public art in Mexico and its influence on U.S. culture, scholars took a walking tour of downtown Lexington's vast array of murals and discussed the contrasting experience of this with the private viewing of art at the University of Kentucky Art Museum and the 21C Museum. Other activities that complemented their practice of grammar and speaking the Spanish language included historical analysis, viewing and discussing short films about immigration, analysis of classic Spanish art and the creation of scholars' own pieces, and talking about a documentary featuring migrant students of the same age as the scholars who were facing unique obstacles as they faced their college choice decisions.

*Scholars gather before the Final Banquet and reflect upon their experiences throughout the summer.*





# General Studies

General Studies classes emphasize inquiry, creative thinking, problem solving, service-learning, civic engagement, and resolution development. Scholars are assigned to a class that takes a different learning approach than their Focus Area.

The content taught in these courses is often non-traditional to allow students to explore a topic that is not often considered a main subject in a traditional educational setting.

These General Studies courses contribute to the comprehensive educational experience scholars receive while attending the GSP. The following section of this report provides insight into a sampling of General Studies courses offered during the summer of 2025.

## Between a Rock and Hard Place

### Centre College

The scholars in **Will Garcia's** General Studies found themselves caught between a rock and a hard place as they dove headlong into Homer's *Odyssey* during this intensive five-week exploration. Throughout their journey, they examined complex themes of heroism and masculinity while tracing the archetypal hero's journey that has resonated across cultures for millennia. Together, the scholars engaged in thoughtful discussions about pressing contemporary issues, often finding themselves navigating difficult terrain as they questioned how to dismantle patriarchal structures without demonizing boys and men. They grappled with the fundamental challenge of learning to care for others while simultaneously caring for themselves, creating a safe environment where they could address the urgent concerns of their time through the lens of ancient literature. The class discovered that humanity's core experiences remained unchanged across three thousand years, revealing timeless truths about the human condition. Scholars explored what it meant to belong to a culture, diving deep into the Greek concepts of *xenia* (hospitality) and *nostos* (homecoming). They examined how the hero's journey paralleled their own experiences at GSP, drawing connections between ancient narratives and modern personal growth. Through their study of Odysseus's quest, the scholars reflected on their own desired legacies and how they related to the hero's ultimate goals in the epic. They questioned what kind of mark they wanted to leave on the world and how their personal journeys might echo the themes of honor, wisdom, and transformation found in Homer's masterpiece. The course ultimately challenged them to consider their place in the continuing human story.



Scholars have a deep discussion about Homer's *Odyssey*.

**“This class welcomed the opinions and experiences of others and gave us the opportunity to discuss life through different perspectives.”**

Emerson Odom  
Marshall County High School

## A Different Angle

### Morehead State University

**Brad Elliott's** General Studies "A Different Angle" studied the connections between mathematics and art. To start, they learned about mathematical objects and structures that led to beautiful designs. For example, they saw that the pattern of even and odd numbers in Pascal's Triangle, when colored, created a fractal that builds and grows forever. Similarly, they studied properties of regular polygons, then they saw how some of them fit together to create perfect geometric tilings. The class studied origami, tessellations, and other art forms that derive from principles of math. Conversely, the class had the chance to view art through the lens of math. They visited the



University of Kentucky Art Museum, where they received a tour of the collection. They were able to identify principles of math, like perspective and pattern, in the works they saw. This allowed the scholars to deepen their appreciation of art. The class also met with a mathematician at the University of Kentucky who, along with a group, creates quilts with a mathematical basis. They were able to learn about both community quilting and mathematical visualization. As a final project, each scholar created a piece of art based on one of the mathematical artforms they had studied. They displayed their works at a final exhibition, along with a written description of the math principles exemplified by their creations.

*Scholars discover which regular polygons work together to create tiling with no gaps or overlaps called "tessellations."*

## A (e) I, Oh, and You

### Murray State University

The scholars in **Kristian Klaene's** "A (e) I, Oh, and You" studied artificial intelligence in multiple ways throughout the program including readings, podcasts, hands-on experiences, discussions, and films. In order to better understand what AI is doing, the class spent time in the lab learning to code in C++. They wrote a series of programs that allowed them to get hands-on experience with what goes into programming machines; the most fun being a collective Madlib game. A (e) I, Oh, and You learned about the history of chatbots and the Turing test through a podcast, spending time "chatting" with multiple generations of online chatbots comparing/contrasting not only their experience, but the underlying design of chatbots over time. The class also coded games of Tic Tac Toe played on paper, attempting to teach a computer program to make choices based on their data set of games played by humans. Periodically, A (e) I, Oh, and You viewed an important portrayal of AI in film. The class followed up with discussions and comparisons of those portrayals and how they related to other topics of study during the week. Other activities included acting out sorting algorithms, debating challenging social issues such as who and how choices for "no win" situations will be made by self-driving cars, having a guest speaker who discussed new groundbreaking AI tools for filmmaking, and gained insight into how simple rules can create complex and unexpected structures through studying John Conway's *Game of Life*.

**"In A(e) I, Oh, and You we learned the intricacies of AI, its applications, and future promises. We explored its history through books and movies, spoke with various people in different fields who use AI, and dived deep into the ethics and moral questions of this new technology. This class was immensely enjoyable and informative."**

**Caden Wang**  
*Kentucky Country Day School*



# Music and the Soul of America

## Centre College

In **John Powell's** "Music and the Soul of America," scholars used Martin Luther King, Jr.'s reflection that freedom songs were "the soul" of the Civil Rights movement as the starting point for thinking about music as an essential art form. The class focused on the blended music of America, with Americans early on preferring folk and common styles to the Court and Church music so popular in Europe. The egalitarian culture of the United States produced more open access for cultural transmission. Blues and jazz better reflected the reality of the collective historical experience and the common human condition. Scholars collectively examined specific songs for their qualities of music, including the use of various forms of figurative language, and the distinctive impact of choices regarding melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, and instrumentation. Scholars were introduced to the new to them technologies of radio, phonograph, reel-to-reel tape, 8-track tapes, cassette tapes, and compact discs, and asked to think critically about the nature of streaming services, and to identify how each of these technologies changed the nature and quality of music and impacted the ability of musicians to make a living. Scholars were left with two provocative questions: where exactly does music come from and what difference does it make?



*Scholars explore different media of music and compare sound quality.*

## Roots and Threads

### Morehead State University

Inspired by American Girl's historical characters collection, scholars in **Allie Millay's** General Studies created their own Kentuckian historical character and brought them to life. After conducting thorough research on Kentucky history, scholars selected a time period, historical event, or cultural experience present in Kentucky's heritage of their interest and studied the culture and lives of Kentuckians at the heart of those moments. They developed fictionalized stories to share their chosen facet of Kentucky's heritage in a simple, yet robust way, ultimately creating a story that's accessible to Kentuckians of all ages. As they wrote, scholars considered the historical details they should include, what perspective they should focus on, and whose voices to highlight to best reflect the nuance of Kentucky's storied past. Using basic fiber arts skills like simple patchwork and embroidery, scholars worked together to create a collection of dolls called "Commonwealth Threads" that showcase the stories of Kentuckians through time and offer perspectives on the resilience, pride, and heart that stitch our communities together and persist from our past into the present and future.



*Scholars work on dyeing their dolls to represent the Kentuckians they based their characters on: an early civil rights leader from Louisville in the late 1890s and an Affrilachian poet from the 1990s.*



## Nourish

*Scholars using their dichotomous keys to identify Kentucky deciduous tree species in the classroom from collected branches.*



## Murray State University

Scholars in **Mary Leigh Lewis's** "Nourish" General Studies planted various seeds to monitor growth over the five weeks of the program. These grew into radishes, spinach, marigolds, and zinnias. On walking tours, scholars used dichotomous keys to identify trees around Murray State University. Scholars studied the impact of PFOA and C8 compounds on water and humans by reading peer reviewed articles and watching *Dark Waters*. Scholars used macroinvertebrate identification to study water quality at MSU and on a field trip to Land Between the Lakes (LBL). The identification of a nonvenomous water snake while scholars were wading Long Creek was quite the adventure! The LBL Nature Center provided a lesson on local amphibians and reptiles, and scholars observed many rescued animals in the nature center while learning about the breeding program of the endangered Red Wolf. Scholars loved nourishing their bodies and spirit through yoga classes at the MSU Wellness Center and Mindful Art at the Murray Art Guild. The Saturday Murray Market provided peaches to make peach cobbler. Scholars learned how the market nourishes the community with fresh fruits and vegetables but also provides revenue as well as a time and place for members of the community to socialize. Scholars watched *Wild Hope*, a film showing how Pat Brown, professor emeritus of biochemistry at Stanford University, founded Impossible Foods Inc. to reduce the carbon footprint of the meat industry. His current project is buying ranching land to reforest with trees for the purpose of carbon capture through photosynthesis. This inspired scholars to grill out and taste test the Impossible Burger against ground sirloin; they were impressed!

## The 3 C's: Color, Culture, and Creation

### Centre College

Scholars in Clint Hendrix's "3 C's: Color, Culture, and Creation" General Studies class explored the world of color theory, color perception, and their history through the lens of Kassia St. Clair's *The Secret Lives of Color* (2017) alongside the documentary "Life in Color". Using St. Clair's engaging narratives as a springboard for artistic creation and broader discussions, scholars investigated the scientific principles of color theory, light, and perception; delved into the historical significance of pigments, dyes, and color symbolism across cultures and time periods; and engaged in artistic experimentation with various media to understand how color shapes expression and meaning. To give back to the community that welcomed them so warmly, scholars implemented a fundraising campaign to draw attention to the 100th year celebration of Lake Herrington, which had recently been harmed by a blue-green algae bloom. After local artist and lake resident David Farmer taught scholars to paint the lake at the Art Center of the Bluegrass, scholars' acrylic paintings were auctioned off alongside donated items they collected from downtown Danville businesses and Centre College, exceeding their \$1000 fundraising goal by nearly 25%!



*Scholars with their paintings after a lesson with Danville artist David Farmer.*



# Scholar Survey

Each summer, during the final week of the Program, all Governor's Scholars are asked to complete a Scholar Experience Survey. This survey consists of approximately 30 questions related to various aspects of the GSP and their scholar experience. Program staff use the survey results to help gauge the success of the summer, evaluate faculty and staff performance, understand the Program's impact on the scholars themselves, and plan for the upcoming summer.

The following are samples of results from the 2025 Scholar Experience Survey. For a complete list of questions and results, visit the GSP website at [gsp.ky.gov](https://gsp.ky.gov).

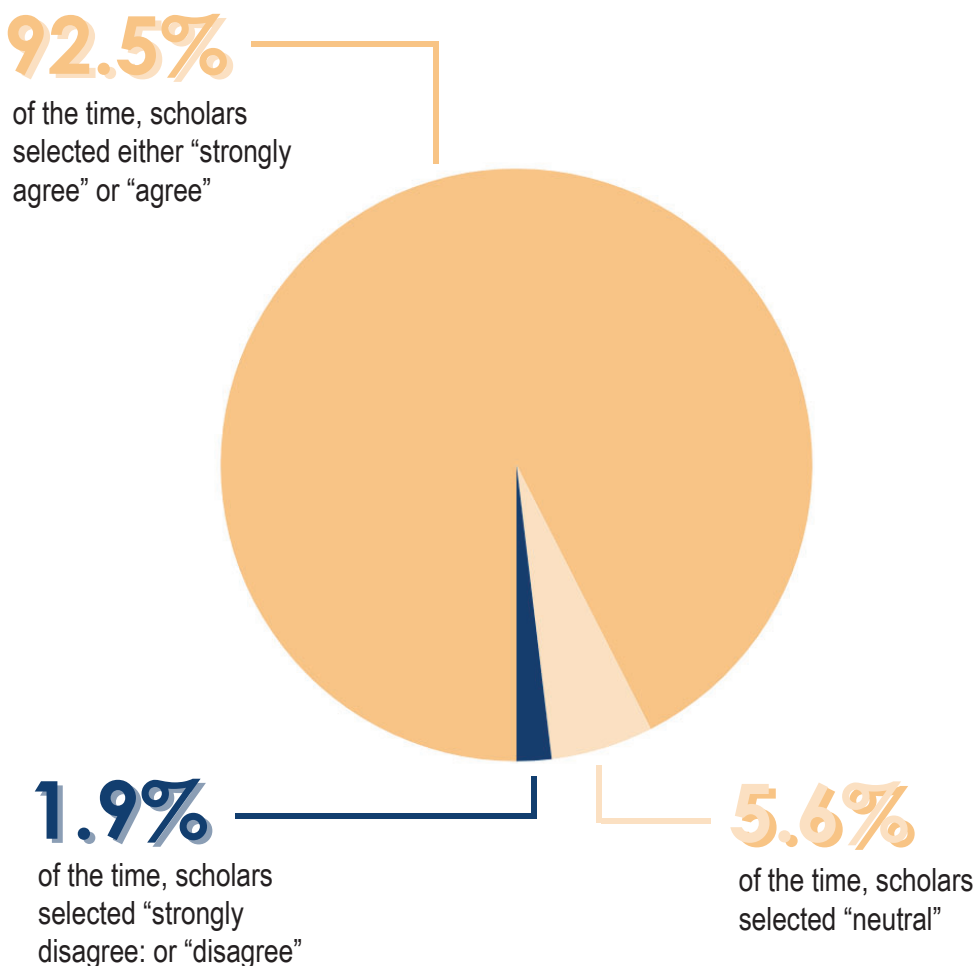
## Overall Results

Ninety-nine percent of Scholars completed the Scholar Experience Survey. Scholar responses regarding their experience at the GSP this summer were overwhelmingly positive. Overall, participants selected either "strongly agree" or "agree" 92.5% of the time.

The average overall score was 4.57 out of 5 possible points.

**"The Governor's Scholars Program is more than just a few weeks in the summer-it's a transformative experience that opens minds, builds lasting friendships, and inspires a deeper sense of purpose, reminding us that leadership begins with curiosity, compassion, and community."**

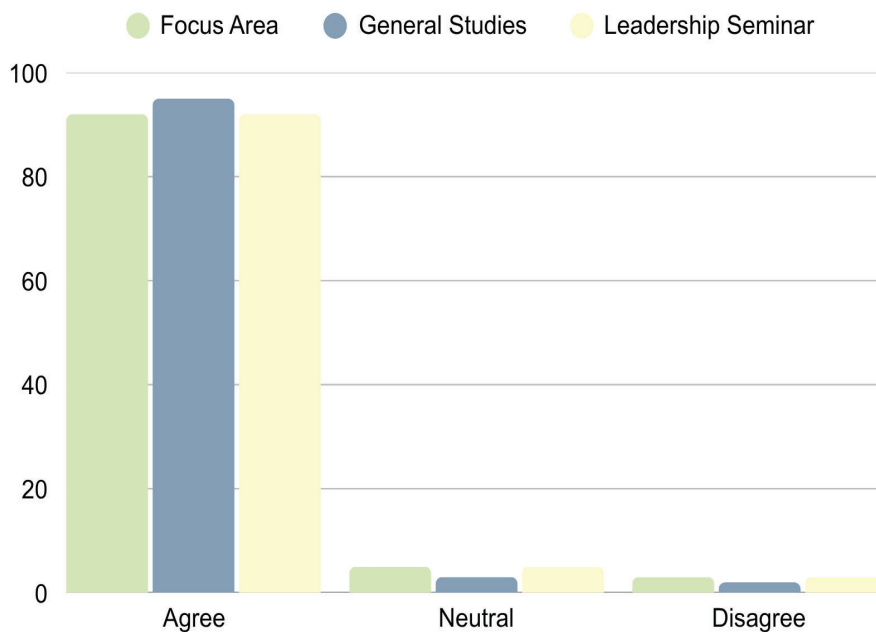
Isabel Bakker  
*Beechwood High School*



## Meaningful Intellect

During the GSP, scholars have the opportunity to learn from faculty, each other, and other members of the community. Between their classes, convocation speakers, guest speakers, field trips, and campus activities, scholars can grow intellectually in numerous ways during their time on campus.

### My class was a positive learning experience.



**“GSP has been the most valuable learning experience of my life thus far. Not just learning through my classes but learning how to do things like manage my time, cooperate with others, and stay well rested on my own. I was able to make life long connections here that I value deeply and would not have been able to make if it wasn’t for this program. I love GSP and I cannot wait for the next wave of scholars to get the same or more out of this amazingly awesome experience.”**

**Wesley Buchanan**  
*Atherton High School*

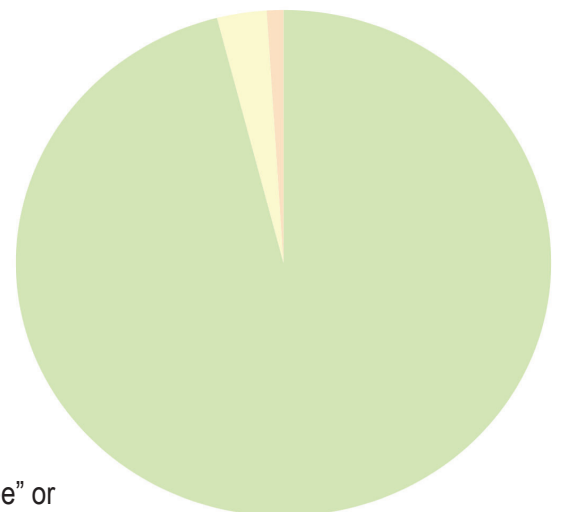
**“I have loved the way that the Governor’s Scholars Program has inspired me to step into the next phase of higher learning, provided me with the toolbox to think critically and engage with the material in my next profession, and the deep relationships to support me as I go out into the world.”**

**Sarah Margaret Ebel**  
*Lexington Christian Academy*

**GSP challenged me to think in new ways and do new things, both inside and outside of the classroom.**

**95.8%**

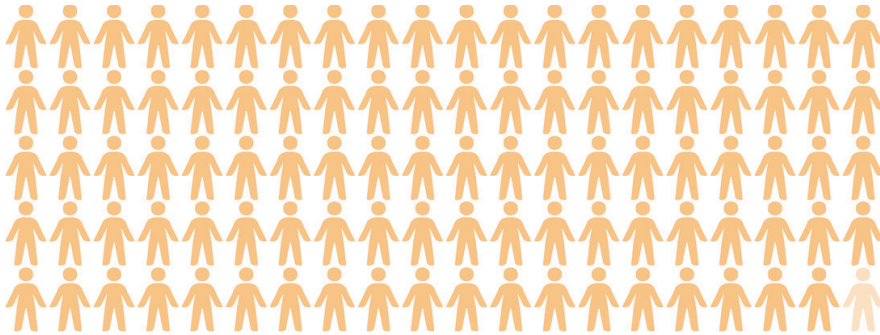
of scholars selected either “strongly agree” or “agree”





## Sense of Community

During the GSP, scholars have the opportunity and are encouraged to get to know individuals in their classes and on their hall. Scholars also have opportunities through programming and scholar-led activities and clubs to make new connections and develop strong relationships. These relationships are the heart of the community formed on campus and will have a lasting impact.



98.4%

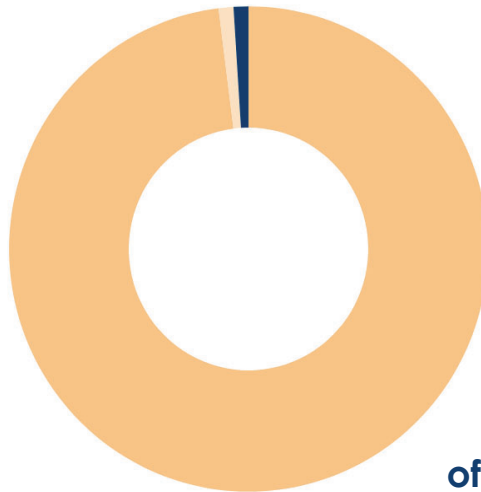
of scholars feel that GSP facilitated the development of positive and meaningful friendships and a sense of community.

**“The Governor’s Scholars Program truly changed my life for the better, and I now cannot imagine who I would be if I had not attended this program. I have made lifelong friends, who I am certain I will be in touch with for the rest of my life. And, most of all, I have become part of a community - a family - of scholars that I will cherish for the rest of my life.”**

**Sophia Barondeau**  
*Christian Academy of Louisville*

**“This place has been a remarkable chapter in my life, where every connection formed is a thread in the tapestry of unforgettable memories. The friendships and experiences shared here have truly made it the best of times.”**

**David Niyigena**  
*Doss High School*



98.5%

of scholars feel that GSP gave them the opportunity to interact with other bright students in meaningful ways.

94.6%

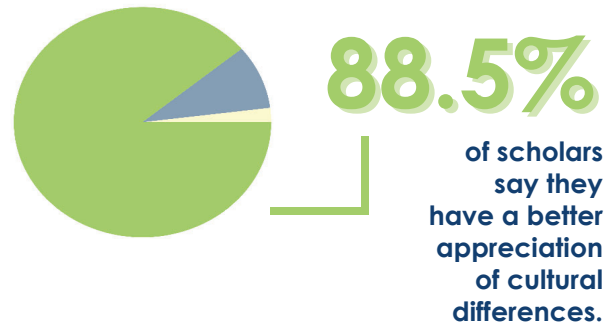
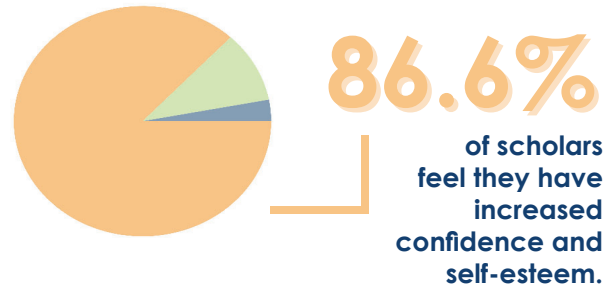
of scholars feel they have made long-lasting friendships

## Individual Growth

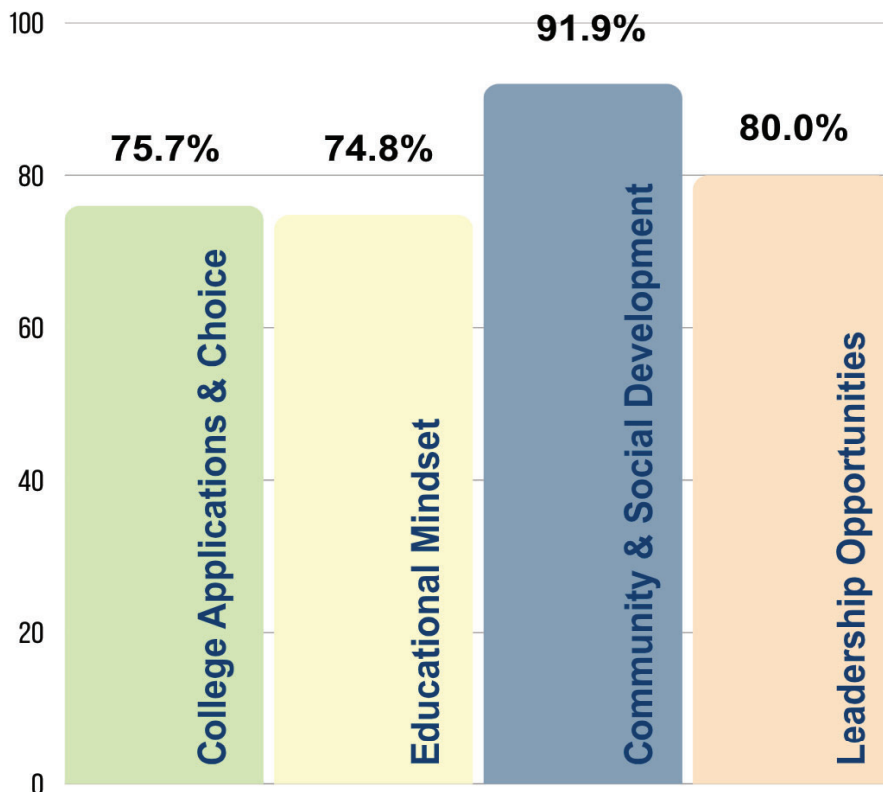
By the end of the five weeks, scholars often report they have grown intellectually and personally. Throughout the summer scholars are challenged, introduced to new concepts, encouraged to reflect about what they have learned and experienced, and have the opportunity to try new activities. When they return to their communities, they carry this growth with them.

**"I felt connected to the world and to people around me in a way I've never experienced before. This was an environment where I felt completely supported and seen, and everyone was open to engaging in new and challenging ideas."**

Bee Zigler  
Fort Knox High School



**GSP helped to prepare me for one or more of the following aspects of life in college and beyond.**



**"The Governor's Scholars Program gave me a chance to fully be myself. Everyone here has been so open to me about their lives and experiences and I can do the same. It has truly changed my life. Not only have I learned so much about myself but I have also learned more about what it means to be human and the value of true connection."**

Jude Turner  
Trinity High School

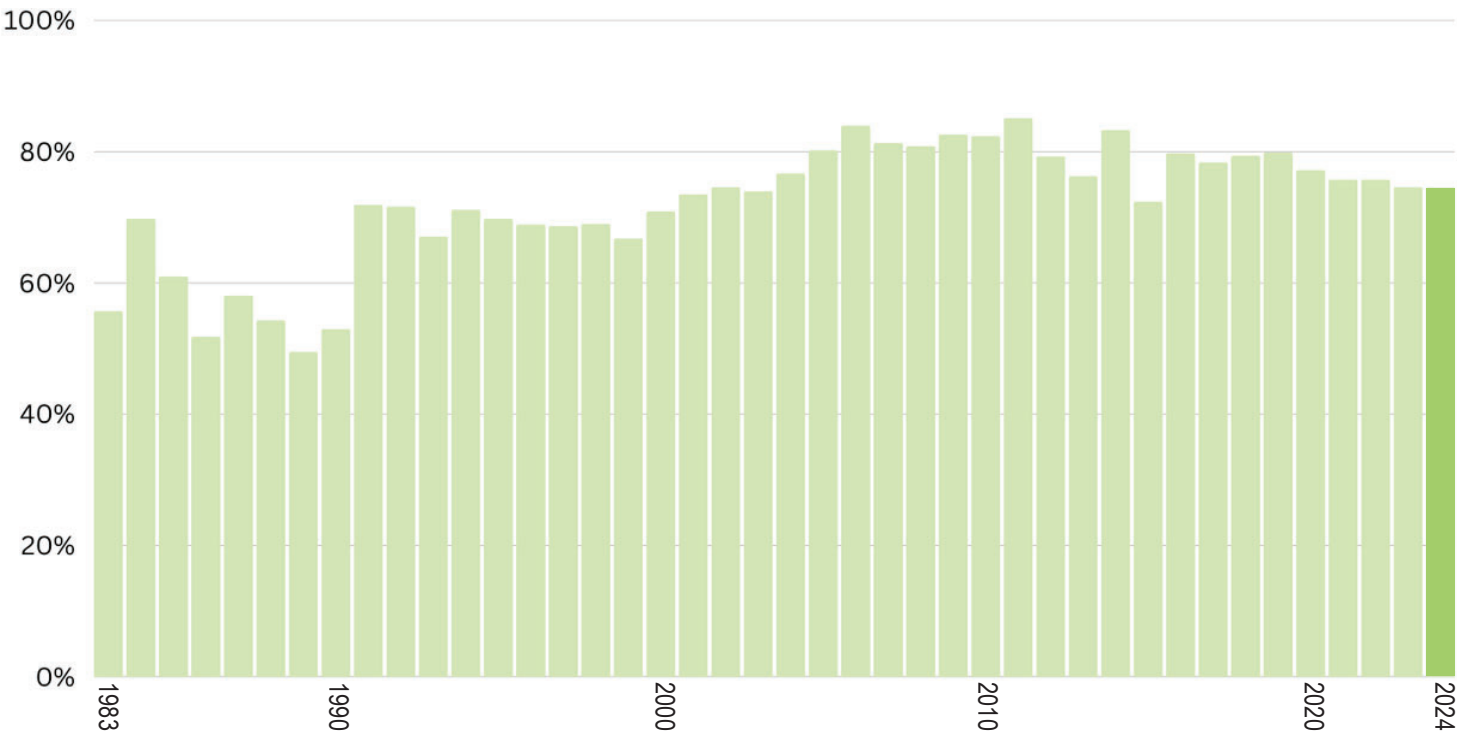


# Scholar In-State Data

## College Enrollment

The Governor’s Scholars Program, with the help of the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, tracks the number of scholars who choose to attend a Kentucky college or university in pursuit of higher education. The graph below shows the percentage of scholars, by Program year, who enrolled at a college or university in the Commonwealth after completing high school.

Of the 2023 scholars, the most recent year for which data is available, **74.55%** enrolled at a Kentucky college or university in the fall of 2024.



# Additional Information

## Governor’s Scholars Program, Inc.



### Frankfort Staff

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*Executive Director & Academic Dean*

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## GSP Foundation

By partnering with the Governor's Scholars Program Foundation, Inc., Kentucky businesses and organizations support and fund various aspects of the Governor's Scholars Program. It is through these partnerships that extraordinary intellectual opportunities are brought to campuses to enrich the scholar experience.

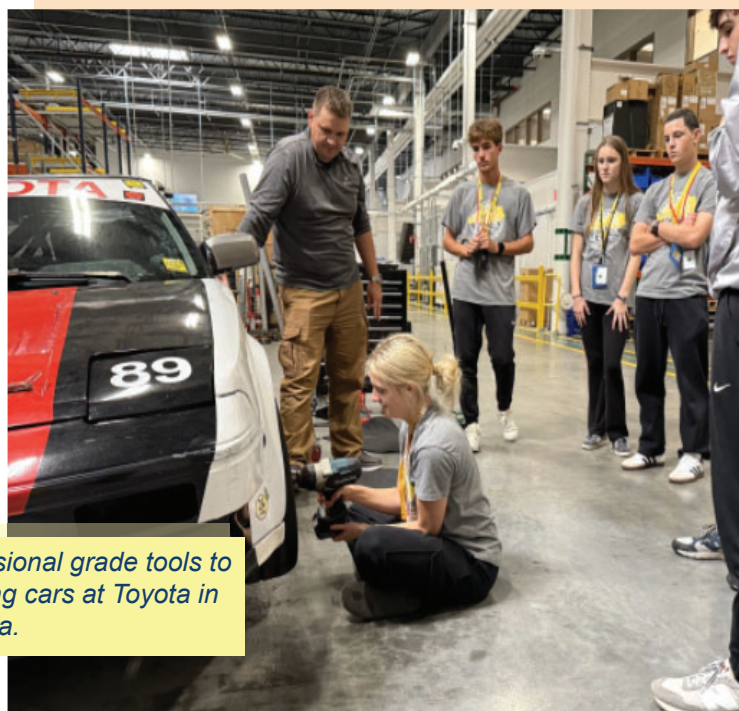
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For more information or to make a contribution, contact:

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*Scholars got to use professional grade tools to change tires of actual racing cars at Toyota in the Engineering Focus Area.*





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