Honors program aids students in job hunt

By Pamela Powers
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MENOMONIE — UW-Stout senior Jenessa Humphrey joined the campus honors program when she was a freshman, seeing it as an opportunity to get involved with activities outside the classroom.

As she prepares to graduate in May with a dietetics degree, Humphrey said she believes being part of what is now called the school's Honors College will help her land a job.

Last week the university celebrated the transition of the honors program, which challenges high-achieving students with additional academic pursuits to its new title, the Honors College.

The honors program started in 1994. This fall 430 students are enrolled in the Honors College.

"UW-Stout is the second university in the UW System to have an Honors College," said Lopa Basu, Honors College director. "This transition to an Honors College demonstrates the commitment of the institution to honors education."

The other UW System university with an Honors College is UW-Milwaukee.

Basu said the program had doubled its number of participating students in the last three years.

"Participation in Honors College gives (students) a well-rounded education," Basu said. "It's an additional advantage at a time of economic downturn when jobs are at a premium students are looking for ways to distinguish themselves from their peers."

Students with high ACT scores, grade-point averages and class rank are invited to join. Once admitted, students are required to complete eight honors units that can be a combination of honors courses, study abroad experiences or independent study projects. In addition, all students must attend a colloquium or book discussion forum every semester.

Recently, Honors College freshmen were introduced to Menomonie by exploring sights and businesses in the city. They took photos, spoke to area residents and wrote reflective essays about
their observations. Later this month, Honors College students will discuss Paul Krugman's book, "The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008."

Mallory Cina, a senior majoring in retail, said being part of the honors program helped her land a job prior to graduating in December. She will work for Target as an executive team leader.

"It definitely just adds a little pizzazz to your resume," she said. "It lets people know you go the extra mile."

Chancellor Charles Sorensen said the Honors College will enhance the image of the university for student and faculty research. It also will help with student recruitment and grant applications.

"The creation of an Honors College will bring additional attention to the bright and hard-working students we have at UW-Stout who seek the most challenging curriculum we can provide," Sorensen said. "The Honors College also fits well with our polytechnic designation."

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