

There's a new art piece in Building 1 at Black Hawk College's Quad-Cities Campus –an 8-feet by 16-feet mural titled, "Limitless." It was painted by 10 art students with the help of faculty members Terrance Gray and Annie Oldenburg and hangs in the lower lobby above the registration counters.



This project started in Fall 2022 when BHC President Tim Wynes sent an email to Gray and Oldenburg asking about artwork for the administrative offices.

The two discussed a plan for a project and decided it would be a good opportunity for Gray's painting class with assistance from Oldenburg's 2D painting class.

They decided on doing a mural that was movable instead of a painting directly on a wall.

"One thing that drew us to do panels was the opportunity to change out the space over time," Oldenburg said. "The next generation of students will have the chance to participate in a project like this one."

## Finding the right students

The search for students interested in participating began with an application. The students had to be committed to the project to be considered.

"We were really trying to be fair, from the talent to the drive. This was a really big project, and I needed people who were going to be dedicated," Gray said.



The requirements included a one-page essay on why they should be chosen for the project, a few painting samples, and one thumbnail sample.

Once the applications were turned in, the 10 students were selected – Alondra Alegre, Grace

Doucette, Brooke Gatter, Shakira'a Gbenyo, Belle Hart, Hailey Martin, Atticus Norman, Zoe Petersen, Savannah Platt and Emma Shoemaker.

As instructors, both Gray and Oldenburg couldn't help but look at it as a learning experience for the students.

"I think one of the best parts of the project was the students having to communicate with each other. Talking to each other, combining ideas and working things out. Now the next time they have to do this, they will have a better understanding of how it works," Gray said.

## Collaboration is key

The collaboration was a big part of why the students enjoyed working on the project.

"What I liked most about this project was collaborating with a group of very talented artists and putting all of our ideas together into a piece we can say we all took part in," Brooke Gatter said.

Each student made a proposal to present to President Wynes. From there, the students were put into two groups to come up with two ideas that were blended together for the final project.

"We had to learn how to communicate our ideas, even branching out into smaller groups at times in order to better convey our concepts," Zoe Peterson said. "Thankfully it paid off in the end, as we were able to create a meaningful and engaging mural that we are excited to share with the community."

## Getting the mural finished

With the approval from President Wynes, the students got to work building the panels. They primed each of the panels before others sketched out the design.

Once the sketch was laid out, it was all hands-on deck according to Gray and Oldenburg. Each student had their own strengths and that is how they tackled the big project.

"Shakira'a is really good with portraits so she began with the people. We had four students working on getting the books laid out," Oldenburg said. "Alondra started on the hands, Atticus worked on the background with the gears, and Emma started on the text. We had everybody everywhere."

For the students, not only did they get the experience of working on a large project, they now get to see their work hanging up for all of the campus to see for years to come.

"I feel beyond blessed to have something that I helped work on being displayed in Black Hawk," Emma Shoemaker said. "This mural tells a story to each of us who worked on it, so it is amazing that others get to interpret their own story from it as they walk by it each day."

Another student artist, Isabella Hart, says every student should get involved in a project like this if they can.

"It's a good way to make friends and to share ideas with others," she said. "Although at times the mural was overwhelming it was a very fulfilling process that if given the choice I would do it again."

President Wynes says the mural is exactly what the college needs to help motivate students.

"The title says it all - 'Limitless.' Our art students have beautifully captured the impact Black Hawk can have on individual lives and as a result, the entire community." Wynes said. "Professors Terrence Gray and Annie Oldenburg gracefully guided their artists to a beautiful, lasting result."

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