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# VENERATIO

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Monday, April 29, 2024

The Honors College Newsletter

Spring Semester, Vol No. 7

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## A SOLAR SHOW AND STUDENTS ON-THE-GO



*Mini-Poppy Amongst the Flowers*

### An Ideal UTA Campus

A college campus, the place most students accept as their home for four long years, is where they share their joy and sorrows, and form healthy habits as they blossom into young adults. We asked our students what they would love to see more of on campus and here is what they had to say.

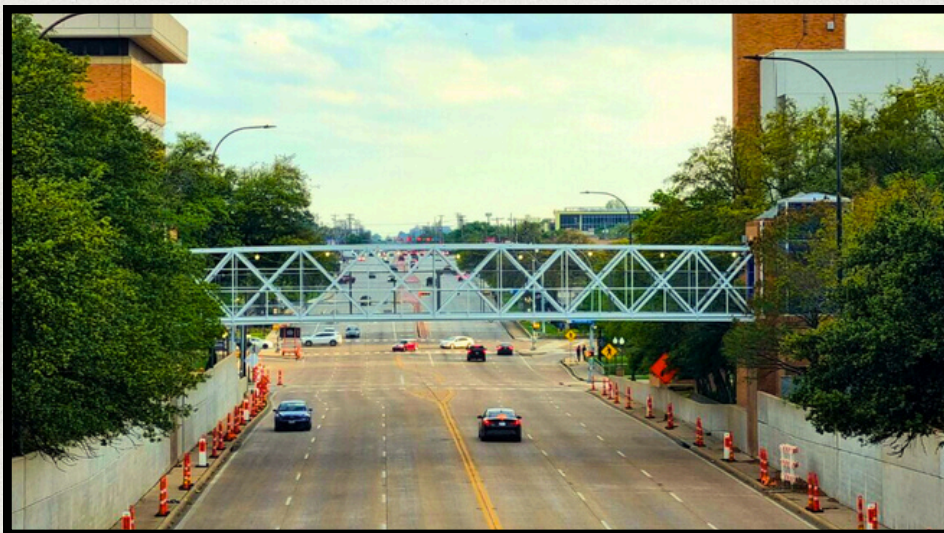
Landscaping is indeed a vital part of a campus's visual impression. Makayla Thompson, an Interdisciplinary Studies major, says, "Incorporating nature and green spaces into our design would make our campus more appealing." Studying amongst the trees and roses by the picnic table can motivate students and harvest intellectual growth. As a primarily commuter school, study-friendly spaces to finish



*The Natural Beauty of UTA | Image by Michelle Izuwah*

assignments are crucial for students who may not have a dorm on campus and need a lounging area between classes. Multiple students have voiced the need for better Wi-Fi connectivity while others recognize the need for an increase in the diversity of flora seen around campus. Tatum Sculley, an English major recounts, "I love the flowers and benches around, and I wish there were more."

While study spaces are important, better nutrition is another advocacy students commonly voice. Most students are full-time and have additional responsibilities, like work or extracurriculars, so having quick access to healthy meals should be an essential part of their daily routine. Rachel Goodner, a Biomedical Engineering major says, "I wish for more healthier food options on campus that are eligible for



*The Bridge Across Campus | Image by Michelle Izuwah*

meal exchange.” While Subway, Panda Express, and Chick-fil-A are certainly great options, certain items on the menu are not accessible through meal exchanges.

A strong campus can indeed be a strong motivator and shape key moments in a young adult's life. We see tours passing by on our way to class with prospective students waiting to make their decisions. Taking small steps can make these decisions easier and improve the college experience for current students by creating a safe space and fostering a community for years to come.

## **Building the Future or Building Resentment? How UTA's Renovation Projects Impact Student Experience**

Anyone who has stepped foot on UTA's campus in recent months will have noticed the numerous construction projects occupying campus.

The largest project currently is the renovation of the Life Science building, which houses the majority of UTA's science labs. A portion of this building



*Construction on the Life Science Building | Image by Sejal Dulal*

and its main courtyard have been closed for renovations for some time. However, the construction zone has not been contained to that area and has sprawled into necessary walkways.

The continued expansion of this construction zone over the last few months has severely limited mobility options for pedestrians around the Central Library, University Hall, and the SEIR building. This not only inconveniences students and staff, but also hinders the ability of students with mobility impairments to move freely in these areas due to denser foot traffic and lack of accessible routes. This issue has been exacerbated by periodic closures of the North and South bridges over Cooper Street. These bridges were certainly due for renovations, but the timing of these closures has further impacted

mobility options in these crucial areas. When I began this story, I was certain that I was not the only student affected by these closures, so I decided to collect some data. I conducted a brief survey to

find out how other Honors college students felt on the matter. From the results, I found that a staggering 75% of students remarked that campus construction affects them daily. Most respondents argued that their walking paths had been affected by the construction, the most common issue identified in my research. Other responses

I asked students about their feelings on the construction, most said that they were frustrated with the lack of walking space and the forced rerouting of typical paths. Foot traffic is an integral part of life on campus and this construction is disrupting this crucial part of many students' daily lives. Only a small minority claimed that they have

mean even more construction on campus with an even larger disruption to student life.

Current students will never see this new UC and will have to deal with the disruption that comes with its construction. Some of the issues students have with this decision is that the resulting construction zones will make campus a more difficult place to live and work. For many students, UTA's campus is their home, where they spend a large part of their day working and living. We just want to be able to comfortably exist in the spaces meant for us. The youngest current students will not even be at UTA long enough to see the completion of the Life Science building renovation and new UC, yet they will have to deal with this construction for their entire UTA career.

Of course, anyone would agree that progress and advancement of UTA is beneficial in the long term. Nonetheless, my hope is that for future construction projects, UTA will place more emphasis on accessibility and comfort for its students. There has been a growing resentment among the students on campus towards the administration because of these construction areas. The comments I received in my survey were particularly unpleasant, and there is palpable tension in the way students talk about their experiences on campus. Thus, the consensus among students is that UTA's focus on its renovations should not dismiss or invalidate students'



*Warning Signs Around Construction Site | Image by Sejal Dulal*

included that such construction had affected students' commute on and off campus, class experience, and overall issues with campus experience. One comment I got from an Honors student was that the noise from the construction "interrupts my conversations and distracts me from my classes" in and around the Life Science building. When

experienced little to no impact from the renovations. With a recent student body vote, changes are coming to UTA. With nearly 2,000 votes on the issue, a majority of 1,191 votes were cast in favor of moving forward with the "New UC" project. Though a largely updated and improved University Center will benefit future students, it will also

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concerns for comfort and adaptability. This is the inevitable increase in fees to compensate for the UC overhaul, which will place greater financial stress on some students. In fact, the 2023-2024 academic year accompanies one of the largest student bodies in the university's history. A larger student population signifies a greater voice, and this warrants the need for UTA to better accommodate our quickly growing, diverse population.

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## Engaging Commuter Students

UTA is in a unique location. Arlington is part of the greater Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex and in between that, there is a cluster of small cities and towns, like Plano, Frisco, and Mansfield. That said, students who attend UTA come from all over the North Texas area, and many commute to school, rather than living on campus, to save money.

With over 80% of students living off campus, UTA is considered a commuter school. However, simply because one commutes to campus does not mean that they must be any less involved in the university's culture. In fact, many commuters seek to make the most of their time on campus and are immensely engaged with school business. Unfortunately, these students often face obstacles that prevent them from being as engaged with or motivated to



*The Students of UTA | Image by Sejal Dulal*

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remain on campus. The long drive home is just one issue, but also the limited study and lounging spaces to pass the time in between classes are a problem many face.

Additionally, off-campus students who want to be more involved around the university may not always be aware of events and organizations due to the lack of accessible information. As a commuter university, UTA must adapt to the needs of its commuting students by incorporating better study areas, lounges, and broadcasting of school events and organizations.

A pivotal part of the college experience is opening yourself to student organizations that meet your interests. This is how you engage with your passions and meet others with

similar interests. Commuter students, however, have voiced that they often feel excluded from school organizations and clubs because there is not enough information posted around campus. One commuter student, information systems major Jason Echevierra, explains how the school “could spread the word a little bit more. Maybe encourage non-commuter students to go out and spread the information to everyone, especially [to] commuter students.”

He explains how, oftentimes, the university seems to prioritize the on-campus students and wishes there was greater communication of school events and activities in order to “increase community bonds and unity around the

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students.” Moreover, students want to be involved in their school, and providing more accessible information, such as flyers or club tabling, could help commuter students explore their school’s community.

Another issue many off-campus students experience is the limited parking. Commuter students routinely take into account the amount of time it will take to reach campus, and on top of that, must consider the time it will take to find parking. “I feel like there are way too many reserved parking spots,” says Ashley Garza, a criminology major, “and not enough [spots] for the actual students.” Ashley, a sophomore, explained how if she got to school after 10am, it could take up to 15 minutes to find a parking spot. Students who drive to school pay up to \$234 annually for a parking permit, but that does not guarantee them easy access to a parking spot.

The school has enough parking spots for commuter students to utilize, it is just a matter of eliminating some of the “reserved” spots. It is not uncommon for students to have a few hours between classes, and many dedicate this time to catching up on homework or squeezing in some studying. On-campus students have the luxury to decide between staying on campus or walking back to their dorm. Most commuter students, however, are subjected to staying on campus due to the time constraint of driving home and back. Furthermore, off-campus students have expressed a desire for more study and lounging spaces around the university to pass the time between classes.

“The Commons and the library are good study spaces, they just fill up so quickly.” states Delilah Amori, a biology major. “I wish the second floor of UC had more tables or desks, you

know? Somewhere that I can just sit and get some homework done.” With the University Center’s upcoming renovation, it seems that Delilah’s wish might just come true.

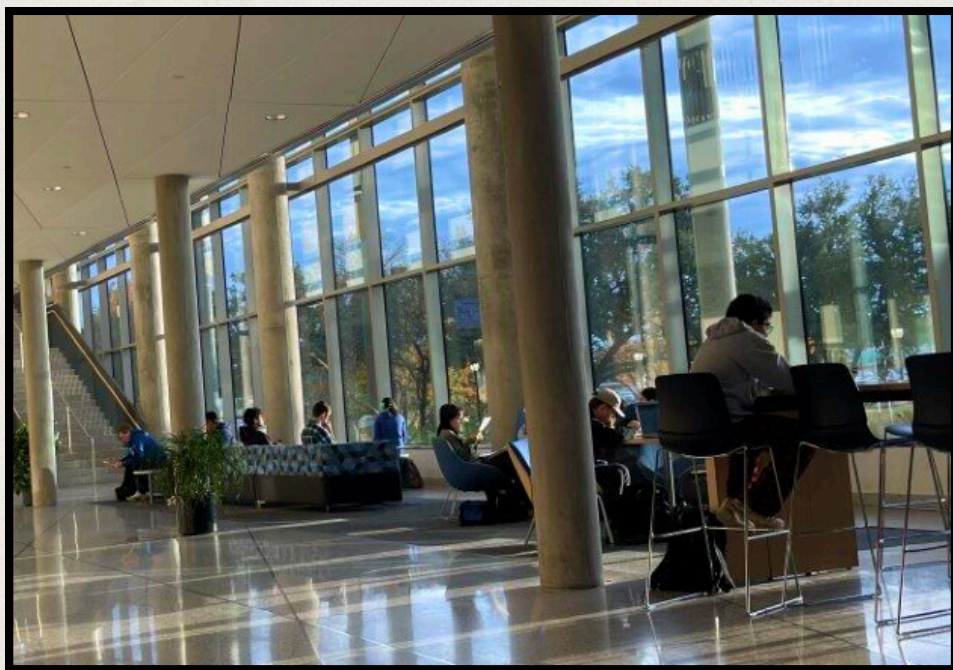
At UTA, commuter students make up a large amount of the student body. They are a crucial part of this community, and deserve to express their commuter needs, like more parking spots and study spaces. Just like on-campus students, commuter students seek to be involved with the university’s culture, and desire to play a greater part in their school’s community. As an on-campus student myself, I wrote this article with the aim to capture the voices of off-campus students, and hopefully, highlight their place on campus.

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## From COVID to Commencement *An Honors College Student’s Testimony*

After having spent about three and a half years in the Honors College, I wanted to share my personal experience and explain how much the Honors College has helped me both in my personal life and my career development.

To begin, I joined UT Arlington as a full-time student in Fall 2020 as a Biochemistry major, right after graduating high school amidst the pandemic. UT Arlington was not my first choice; originally, I planned to go to DePaul University in



*Studying on Campus | Image by Sejal Dulal*

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Chicago. I was ready to be very far away from home as I had grown up in Arlington. However, I ultimately decided to stay at UTA because I wanted to remain close to my family. Almost immediately after choosing to stay at UTA, I applied for the Honors College and was accepted for the Spring 2021 semester.

The first two semesters of my time in the Honors College were relatively slow. Most of the events were still online at the time, so I primarily met other Honors students through Microsoft Teams at HCC meetings and other events. However, the biggest part of my first semester was contracting PHYS 1444, my second General Technical Physics class. The class was fully online, so I emailed the professor, Dr. Barry Spurlock, more than a couple of times asking for help with my Honors contract. As the semester went on, we developed a strong, professional student-professor relationship, and he tried, more than once, to convince me to change my major to Physics. I consistently said no, and laughed about it to my parents: "I would never be a Physics major, are you kidding? I'm terrible at it, and I'm so ready to be done with it."

Of course, he did end up convincing me after 1) I had such a good time in his class and 2) he told me that I had done extremely well in the class compared to most others. So, I ended up changing my major to Chemistry with a 2nd Major in Physics. Dr. Spurlock then connected me with another

physics professor, Dr. Ben Jones, who allowed me to be in his research lab for the following summer. Dr. Jones was collaborating with Dr. Frank Foss, an organic chemistry professor, and my project focused on a biochemistry technique with physical applications. **This experience is ultimately what helped me fall in love with physics as a science**, but I was torn between wanting to do physics or chemistry as a career, so I put physics research on the back burner at the end of the summer to focus on my upcoming chemistry courses. I did find out, however, that much of the work I did in this lab ended up being presented to other scientific communities through my professors. After about a year, in Spring 2022, I decided to run in a special election for Honors College Council Vice President and ended up winning the election! This started the path to my serious involvement within Honors; I jumped right into my role, spoke at meetings, and participated in HCC and campus-wide events, such as the Bed Races. At the end of that semester, I won the election for President of the Honors College Council. As President, along with the rest of the Executive Board, - and of course, our staff advisor, Emily Spaulding - we reinstated HCC committees after they had been gone for several years, and, with the Constitution Committee's help, heavily revised the Honors College Council's

Constitution to be completely up-to-date.

While President of the HCC, I was also in the process of completing my Honors Capstone in Chemistry with Dr. Foss after having taken a break from research to focus on my courses. However, I was still very torn between chemistry and physics as two different career paths. I knew that I had not been enjoying chemistry nearly as much as my physics courses, which I consistently looked forward to. Chemistry had never felt right to me, and after thinking about it and talking with the professors who had mentored, I ultimately decided to fully commit to physics as my career plan. This led to the delay of my graduation to Spring 2024 so that I could have plenty of time to complete a full Honors Bachelor of Science in Physics, rather than an Honors Bachelor of Science in Chemistry.

This also meant that I needed to find a new professor to do research with so that I could complete the Capstone project. Since I had been in contact with her recently due to grading for her PHYS 2311 class - which only happened because I had contracted her class for Honors and had done well in the class overall - I reached out to Dr. Haleh Hadavand and asked if I could join her research lab, and she agreed! As I continued in her lab, in June 2023, she messaged something to me on Teams:

"When do you graduate? I'm thinking if you want to spend a year at CERN after you

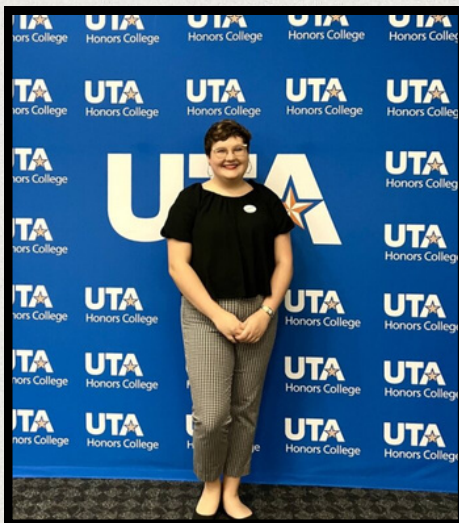
graduate working on the Tile Calorimeter.

The Chicago group has this tech program and I thought you'd be a good candidate for it. It might help you decide on what you really want to do."

Thus started my preparations for living at CERN for a year after graduation. At the same time, I was also working in other areas of the Honors College. As an Honors Advocate, I helped mentor a couple of different groups of new Honors students, and I helped with outreach and recruitment by using my experiences with Honors to help motivate other students to join the Honors College. As a Programming Board member, I helped plan, set up, and run certain events, such as the Halloween Party and the Tie Dye party. Finally, I was a Veneration editor in Fall 2023, and I enjoyed it enough to come back and participate as an author and editor for the Spring 2024 edition (the one you are reading right now). All these different experiences helped me make friends throughout the Honors College and gain amazing relationships with all the Honors faculty and staff.

And now, here we are, about a month out from moving to an entirely different country, and only a couple of days from graduating with an Honors Physics degree, a Chemistry degree, and a Minor in Mathematics and Latin Honors. If you had told me back in Spring 2021 that my Honors College involvement would have resulted in this, I would not have believed you. To this day, I am incredibly surprised

and grateful that my experiences with the Honors College have led me to this point, where I am about to engage in the opportunity of a lifetime.



*Miranda Williams, Honors Student*

## Unleashing the Maverick Spirit *An Honors College Student's Testimony*

The significance of a Spirit Horse extends beyond its physical presence as a student-designed statue adorning campus; it embodies the spirit and values of which it represents. The UC spirit horse 'Lasting - Imprint,' which showcases blue and orange handprints on the white horse, represents the community and boosts a sense of camaraderie among UTA students. The MAC Spirit Horse 'Golden - Ratio', the only spirit horse on campus in a jumping stance, stands out with an energetic mood for the students. The Downtown Arlington horse 'Blaze', covered in different hues of orange and blue encased in geometric

shapes, welcomes everyone to the Maverick Country, UTA - style.

These Spirit Horses provide an opportunity for students to express their creativity and artistic talents while also contributing to the visual identity and traditions of their campus, providing collective memories and experiences to everyone around. Each Spirit Horse design reflects the unique perspectives, values, and experiences of its creators, enriching and uniting the cultural tapestry of the university community. Over time, they have woven into the fabric of campus life, evolving into a cherished tradition, and leaving a lasting legacy for future generations of students.



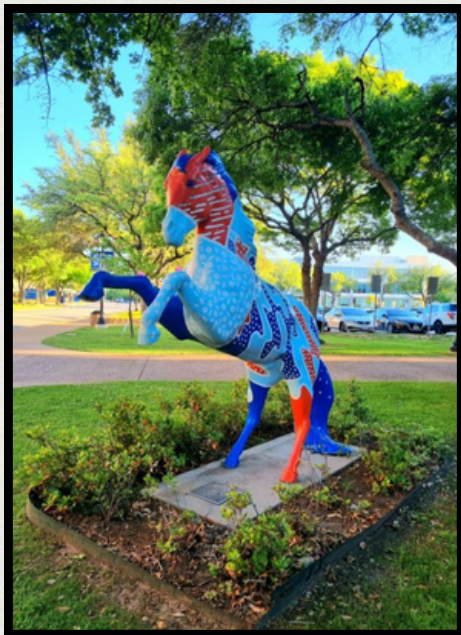
*Blaze, one of UTA's Spirit Horses  
Image by Michelle Izuwah*

As such, it is tragic that the Honors College does not have a spirit horse! The Honors College really deserves a Spirit Horse of its own - a special edition horse that reflects the

creativity, dedication, and Maverick spirit of its students and faculty.

Do Honors Students want a Spirit Horse?

Most Honors students agree that the Honors College definitely needs a spirit horse! A Spirit Horse at the Honors College would not only enhance its physical landscape but also serve as a powerful emblem of the outstanding Maverick spirit that defines them. By visibly representing the values of merit, dedication, and community engagement, the Spirit Horse would make the Honors College community more iconic and carry the symbol of excellence it represents.



*Golden-Ratio, Outside the MAC  
Images by Michelle Izuwah*

Moreover, the Spirit Horse would also symbolize the noble contributions that Honors students make to their surrounding community. As a hub for students committed to making a positive impact beyond their personal goals,

the Honors College embodies a spirit of service and intellectual curiosity. A Spirit Horse would serve as a tangible representation of this legacy, showcasing the Honors College's commitment to leadership, scholarship, and civic engagement.

Beyond its symbolic significance, a Spirit Horse would also serve as a practical identifier for the Honors College, helping students, faculty, and visitors easily locate and identify the building. This visual marker would foster a sense of belonging and pride among members of the Honors community, reinforcing their shared identity and sense of purpose.

### **Process of Requesting a Spirit Horse:** A step-by-step guide

The application for a Spirit Horse usually opens mid-spring semester. Artists can submit their designs via a submission form. Next, the UTA Ambassadors choose a design, after which the artists paint the horse during the summer. The horse is then placed on campus during the fall semester. To request a horse for a specific building, an email must be sent to the UTA Ambassadors stating they would like their spirit horse design for a specific building. The significance of a Spirit Horse transcends its role as a mere decorative element on campus. It symbolizes strength, resilience, identity, tradition, and community pride, while also serving as a tangible expression of the core



*Lasting Imprint, Outside the UC  
Image by Michelle Izuwah*

values and aspirations of the university for many years to come. The Honors College, being one of the very few buildings around campus without a spirit horse of its own, definitely needs one to showcase the outstanding Honors Mav spirit!

## **Rotaract Club at Lake Arlington**

Finding time to volunteer as a student can be challenging, but finding a cause you thoroughly enjoy can make that invested time worthwhile and fulfilling. That has been my experience with volunteering for the Lake Arlington Native Plant and Pollinator Garden. I have been volunteering there since Spring 2021, and now, I have shared this opportunity with the Rotaract Club of UTA, a new volunteer organization housed and supported by the Honors College.



Although we are supported by the Honors College, we are open to all students regardless of their Honors enrollment. Through this, we have amassed a great group of students dedicated to community engagement. When I joined the club, I pitched the Lake Arlington Garden as an opportunity for us to engage with Arlington directly, as Arlington Water Utilities backs the garden. Since then, we have visited the garden four times and adopted our own garden bed at their location, with more visits planned in the future.

The goal of the Lake Arlington Native Plant and Pollinator Garden is to help restore native prairie and wildflowers to local Arlington land and provide a learning experience and gathering area for events and field trips. Rotaract's adopted bed is the Xeriscape

Garden Bed, which houses low-maintenance and drought-resistant plants like cacti, milkweeds, unique grasses, and small flowers. In our visits before adoption, the Rotaract Club helped replace the top layer of soil with a new layer of small rocks that not only help prevent the growth of weeds but give the garden a nice, clean, minimalist look.

The amount of effort we put into the garden made it the perfect choice to adopt, and we look forward to helping upkeep the bed with further visits.

The Rotaract Club is always looking for new members. You can follow our organization's Instagram page at @mavs.rotaract, where you can also find our website. Keep an eye out there for updates on when we will meet in the Fall. We would love your help with any of our projects,

including our work at Lake Arlington Garden.



*Members Moving Weeds | Image Collected by Allison Pham*



*Members Raking | Image Collected by Allison Pham*



*Rotaract Members | Image Collected by Allison Pham*

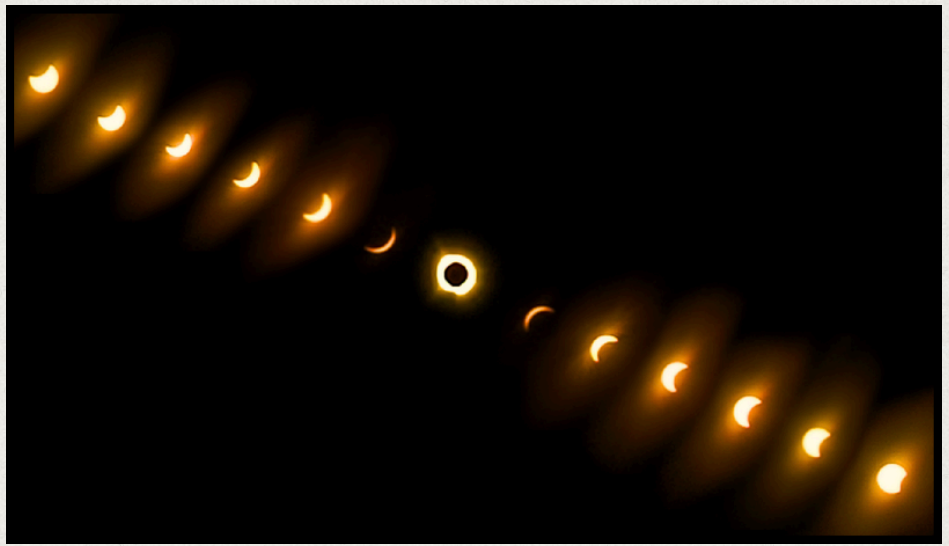


*UT Arlington Rotaract Club*

# The Ethereal Blanket of Shadow

## *The Solar Eclipse or Who Turned the Lights Off?*

Relatability- something most people base their interactions on. Maybe it's a popular show, a great song, or maybe the solar eclipse of 2024. It was indeed a sight to behold with scientists out with their telescopes, photographers with their



*Total Solar Eclipse Timeline | Image by Daniel Brown*



*Students Watch During Honors Total Eclipse 2024 | Image Collected by Allison Pham*

cameras, and many enthusiasts with their excitement to finally witness the unique event that has been talked about for the past few weeks. But that begs the question: why was this solar eclipse so special?

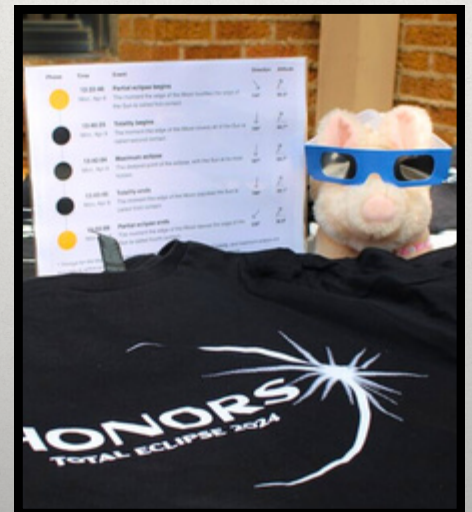
Solar eclipses are a surreal phenomenon that is the product of the moon positioning itself between the Earth and the sun. As a result, the moon casts its shadow on the Earth, thus leading to the solar eclipse. Even then, there are various types of eclipses. There are annular eclipses, partial eclipses, and the rarest of them all – total solar eclipses. The last known record of a total solar eclipse in Texas

was in 1878, which made this one all the more worthwhile.

While the eclipse itself was breathtaking, watching communities come together and set their chairs in the lawn and seeing the wonderful UTA staff hand out eclipse glasses as a blanket of protection against the deadly side of this wonderful incident was indeed a sight to behold. Munching on the scrumptious food students were handing out, everybody was engaged in pleasant conversations under the looming threat of bad weather during totality.

In the moments leading up to the much-awaited event, everybody held their breath.

In a few minutes, the sun would be completely covered. Cheers erupted from the crowd as a sea of clouds narrowly missed the sun as it reached totality. At that moment, everybody's troubles melted away as they took off their glasses to witness the marvel of nature in its rawest form in an experience believed to be as magical as the eclipse itself. In a society that is divided on many major issues, watching people from all walks of life come together and witness this enigmatic dance of light and shadow was indeed a majestic experience.



*Poppy at the Honors Total Eclipse*

# POPPY'S TOTAL ECLIPSE





*Total Solar Eclipse of July 11, 1991*

## You Should Have Been There in '91

We lucked out and had nice weather for the eclipse. It's one thing to just look up at it and another to view it through a telescope, so I hope you had the opportunity. Of course, nowadays, observatories and science entities can stream it on the Internet, so much of the magic of chasing a total solar eclipse is lost; before the Internet, you had no choice but to travel. Overall, the equipment is better now than the last time a total eclipse came to the area on July 29, 1878, but the length of totality was about the same.

The current estimate for the

next total eclipse here is July 9, 2317, so if you want to see another one, you'll need to travel. This was the fifteenth total eclipse to happen this century from a pool of 68 which gives you some idea of how seldom they occur. Ceceda, Mexico had the best spot for the longest duration of totality at four and a half minutes.

And as fun as it all was, I've seen better.

I'm talking about the total solar eclipse of July 11, 1991, one of the top three of the last century, viewed from the southern tip of Baja Sur in Cabo San José. The group of amateur astronomers I traveled with arrived a day or two early for setup, which was

on a green space next to the hotel. I did break the first rule of air travel and took a nap in the afternoon and slept through until morning, which prevented me from enjoying the fun of doing the polar alignment for all the telescopes. On the plus side, I didn't have to stay up until 11 pm to help do the polar alignment for all the telescopes.

The next day, we wandered around the town, mainly as practice for using the camcorders supplied to the group by Canon to document the event. I was assigned an A1, while the Canon Representative who came with us used the then-not-yet-released-in-North-America L1.

We had to be ready early on the day of the eclipse. The scopes were not clustered together so we all had room to observe. The biggest scope was a Celestron C14, but I was using a C8. One scope, it probably was a C11, had a Hydrogen-alpha filter with an adapter for the L1 to record the event. Viewed with this filter, the surface of the sun is a reddish-orange, and we could just make out the cellular appearance of the surface, each a convection point. I don't remember specifically if I was using a camera on my scope or not. The one with the L1 did have a motorized mount so it could properly track the sun throughout. My main experiment was capturing footage of the shadow bands, which are now believed to simply be shadows of the convection in the atmosphere, similar to the wavy shadows you see in the bottom of a swimming pool. They are visible

right before and just after totality. We had not planned out what I needed to do, so while I did capture them, I could have done better.

Just before the six minutes and fifty-eight seconds of totality began, it was rather wild. In front of me was the beach and the Gulf of Baja. Behind me were some foothills. Someone called out a few seconds before totality. For some reason, I looked behind me and watched the moon's shadow race down those foothills towards us. In the spirit of that amazing sight, I laughed and threw out some profanity, which thankfully was crystal clear in the footage.

And then there was totality. Most of us were wearing eyepatches so that one eye would be adapted for the darker sky for looking at the corona immediately. The sky itself was dusky but not dark. The oddest thing is how polarized the light is; it seemed like the colors were desaturated. It's an odd sensation. Birds went to roost and the streetlights on the highway came on. After focusing my camcorder on the eclipse, I wandered over to one of the other scopes to have a better view. We did see a few red prominences within the gossamer grey of the corona. It was possible to perceive the corona changing. I don't think it was possible for the prominences directly, but when viewing the footage later and at a higher speed, changes were perceptible. I was enjoying the moment and not really paying attention to the

time. Someone called out the end of totality and I had to sprint back to my station and train the camera on a cloth I had already staked out for recording the shadow bands. Once they were gone and the light grew stronger, I oriented the camera to look out at the gulf. In the footage, you could see the shadow moving away from us and over to the mainland. And then it was over.

After tearing down and storing the equipment, we drove over to Cabo San Lucas for dinner, but stopped first at a local bar, Latitude 22, to show off some of the footage and buy their commemorative eclipse t-shirt. On our walk to the restaurant, we did have to pass Cabo Wabo. They were rather rowdy, so I asked Sammy to keep the noise down.

One of the more amusing moments was when we left; the plane was a puddle jumper that managed to hold all the astronomy gear and a full complement of passengers. Because of the excess weight, they put in enough fuel to take off and fly across the gulf to a larger airport, where we would depart the country. We touch down, and the pilot is using every braking method possible to slow us down, and he is still doing it as we turn off the runway. It made me laugh at the time as much as it does today.

So, I hope you all had fun during the event, but, again, I've seen better.

## Poppy's Adventures



*Poppy at Board Game Night*



*Poppy at Stillwater, OK.*



*Poppy Making Friendship Bracelets*



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## Spring 2024 | Honors Veneratio Team

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*Thank You For Reading*

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