

Taylor University

## Pillars at Taylor University

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2020 Website News Stories

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### Senior Stories: Art

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## Senior Stories: Art

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Taylor wouldn't be Taylor without amazing students. Developing servant-leaders marked with a passion to minister Christ's redemptive love is why we are here. Students seeking to serve through many different fields and careers are participating in this Senior Stories series to share about how God has used Taylor in their lives.

### Taylor's Art Program

Every artist knows the importance of both a muse and of practice. Through Taylor's [Art program](#), students find inspiration and a foundation through their faith, foundational core classes, travel opportunities, and relationships. At the same time, our students work hard to hone their skills as artists and as professionals. As a result, whether they major in [Pre-Art Therapy](#), [Art Education](#), or another Art major, they graduate prepared to enter a variety of careers.

Meet a couple of seniors graduating from our [Art Program](#):





Name: Leah Groeling, '20

Major: Pre-Art Therapy

Hometown: Fort Wayne, IN

How has your faith been affected by your Taylor experience?

I actually feared going to Taylor. I grew up in a Christian home but never went to a Christian school. I was convinced if I said a bad word here the students would strap me down to a table and scrub my mouth out with soap. That obviously wasn't the case at all. Taylor is a community of broken people growing together in Christ. We all fall short. We all mess up. The people here offer unconditional forgiveness and a surplus of love.

I have never felt so welcomed by a community and so motivated to grow in my faith. The people here have impacted my faith and have strengthened me to be a light to others as I venture out into the adult world.

Have you had any internship experiences?

My internship was at Gigi's Playhouse: Down Syndrome Center where I served as the Art Program Director. Leading up to it I had a lot of responsibility on my plate. I had to find my own internship, set up my own interviews, and figure out when and how long would I work. I thought it was a lot at the time, but man, I am glad I did it—no one was there to spoon feed me or hold my hand. It was my first taste of the adult world.

What advice would you give a high school student who is considering Taylor and being an Art major?

Taylor can be hard, but the education here is incredible. You will find yourself ready to take on the real world after you graduate—actually, you'll be itching to get into the real world because you'll just be that prepared (not even kidding. I took karate last semester. I'm ready for literally anything). To the students who are interested in art therapy: I'm gonna be honest, art therapy is a great starting point to build your career off of, but entering into the world as an art therapist however, can be a bit of a challenge.

Art therapy is an up and coming topic of interest in our world. What our world doesn't know yet is that we need it. We need to express ourselves. We need a creative outlet. We need to give voice when there are no words to say. Although I won't become an art therapist, I am so grateful for being a pre-art therapy major—I have no regrets choosing my major. Art therapy has provided a foundation on which my philosophy of art education is built.



Name: Erica Bell, '20

Major: Art Education

Hometown: Miamisburg, OH

Why did you choose to attend Taylor and select the major you are completing?

I ultimately decided to attend Taylor because I valued growing in my faith just as much, if not more, than growing as a professional in my field. I chose to major in art education because it felt like the perfect combination of two of my passions: being an artist and working with people. I knew that Taylor would prepare me to be an excellent educator who builds her classroom upon a selfless love for students that reflects the love of Christ. As a senior who is currently finishing up student teaching, I can confidently say that TU has prepared me well!

How has your faith been affected by your Taylor experience?

My faith has been stretched and grown in ways I never could have foreseen or imagined during my time at Taylor. When I was accepted to Taylor, I couldn't wait to be a part of what I thought would be a community of like-minded Christians who believed what I believed about God and who agreed with me on what a Christian is supposed to look like in the world. Thankfully, the complete opposite happened, and I found myself navigating a campus that was diverse in every way possible.

Because of the wide range of Christian thought and practice that exists on this campus, my faith is deeper, richer and stronger than ever before, and *not* because I have been affirmed in my own beliefs, but because my beliefs have been challenged and my eyes have been opened by a countless number of patient peers who graciously helped me realize how limited and privileged some of my beliefs and viewpoints were. I have learned that it is far better to be together than to be right, and that God is more interested in us learning to love and care for one another through our differences than He is about us defending what we believe to be correct.

In what ways do you feel prepared for your future because of your Taylor experience?

I am so incredibly thankful for the interpersonal skills I have acquired at Taylor University. On this campus, it is made clear to us from the beginning that cultivating intentional community can be messy sometimes. While living with roommates and floormates can be challenging at any university, I am thankful that Taylor embraces the challenge from the start and calls it a holy, inevitable part of learning to love and serve one another. In countless ways, Taylor has given me socio-emotional skills that are necessary to cultivating healthy relationships in both the workplace and at home.

What has life on campus taught you?

Taylor students joke a lot about our campus being in the middle of nowhere, but I think that comes with a hidden blessing: we are forced to spend time with one another and cannot run away as easily when conflict arises. As a result, I have learned so many valuable relational skills that have assisted me not only with my roommates, but also with relationships at home and within my workplace. Taylor has prepared me not only with the skills necessary to succeed in my field, but with the hidden resume qualities that are necessary to succeeding in today's world: emotional intelligence, and socio-emotional interpersonal skills that reflect the kindness, compassion and patience of the Lord.

What are your hopes for your future career?

My hopes for my future career involve living faithfully to the path and career that God has called me to. Even if that career changes, or my professional path takes me into a new field later in life, my hope would be that I simply remain faithful to the job He has given me: to be loved by Him, and to share that love with a hurting world that is desperate for hope. After graduation, that will look like loving students that He places in my public-school art room, serving them, preparing them for success, and affirming their creative voice through art education.

What advice would you give to a high school student who is considering entering your major at Taylor?

My greatest advice for any aspiring art education majors is to seek out as many opportunities as you can to work with children, both at home during the summer times and during your time as TU student! I went into my program with the mindset that I can never have too much experience, and now, as a senior who is wrapping up student teacher, I can honestly say that I am so thankful for all of the experience I sought out working with students during my time as a TU student.

I felt so prepared because I had spent so much time in front of students already: I taught art lessons through the Art Department to local students, I volunteered at children's ministry at my church, I was a Discipleship Assistant on my floor for two years (a position that involved a lot of public speaking and teaching) and I found opportunities in the summer that allowed me to teach summer art camps to students of all ages. Seek out opportunities in the summertime especially: teach summer art camps, work in your church's children's ministry, be a camp counselor. *Anything* and *everything* you can find will equip you to be more prepared educator who is comfortable standing in front of a group of students.

Most importantly, don't forget that you are an *artist* at heart! Make time to make your own art! The better artist you are, the better art teacher you will be to your students. Don't let your personal work fall to the wayside during your time at TU: your artwork is something the world needs! Commit yourself to not letting yourself disappear completely as you serve art students; instead, be filled up daily with the great Love of the Father, and trust that overflow to take care of your needs and the needs of your students.