

Leonna Huddleston, who is featured in the article below, is an alumna of the ACE Mentor affiliate (chapter) in Indianapolis. She participated for two years (2016 and 2017) and won a \$2,000 scholarship from the ACE affiliate. She says her ACE experience solidified her interest in an architecture career because she was exposed to the real world of the profession. As a freshman at Ball State, she is using many of the skills and knowledge she gained in ACE. ACE also taught her how to network, a skill she finds useful in architecture school.



Ball State Magazine

Architecture Student Hopes to Make Her Passion a Career

BY KIM RENDFELD
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Huddleston (left) said that Ball State “is like a family.” At her mother’s encouragement, she pursued her lifelong interest in drawing to become an architecture major. She added a business minor and hopes one day to open her own firm.

Leonna Huddleston started drawing at age 5 by tracing coloring books with her brother at their home in Indianapolis. Now a freshman at Ball State University, she loves drawing so much, she does it in her free time. Eventually, she hopes use her architecture major and business minor to start her own architectural firm, where she will design fashions and the building they’re designed in.

In the meantime, Huddleston enjoys designing urban housing like apartments and condos in the Architecture Building, the home of the [College of Architecture and Planning](#) (CAP).

“In the CAP building, I’m putting in a lot of hours, but I don’t really notice it because it’s so much fun,” she said. “Ball State feels like a family, especially CAP. They give you the tools, and it’s up to you to take the experience and run with it. Ball State empowers students instead of just providing instructions.”

In addition to the academic building, she has studio space at the newly renovated [Schmidt/Wilson Residence Hall](#), complete with drafting and light tables, and is a member of the Design Living-Learning Community. Students of art, design, architecture, and related majors participate in discussions, gallery showcases and field trips to meet with professionals.

Signs pointed to Ball State

An animal lover, Huddleston at first thought she wanted to be a veterinarian but decided against it as a career when she realized she couldn't stand the sight of blood or needles. Her mother encouraged her to pursue a profession using her creative talent instead. Architecture came to mind – and so did Ball State.

In fact, Ball State was Huddleston's top choice. The first in her family to go to college, Huddleston was a straight-A student at Arsenal Technical High School, which offers three academies to its roughly 1,900 students.

"I always wanted to go to Ball State," she said. "My mom and I take cardinals as good luck, like a sign from God. After I graduated from high school, I saw cardinals every day."

Ball State has exceeded her expectations, from the diversity of the student body to the university's culture of mutual respect to the caring faculty and staff. She is especially grateful to architecture instructor Cesar Cruz, who both pushes her to do better and urges her to take care of herself.

"You can accomplish anything here," she said. "You put your heart to it. Nothing will hold you down as long as you have Ball State and passion. You can do more than education. You can have morals."

Benevolence and the values the iconic statue represents – excellence, integrity, social responsibility, respect and gratitude – resonate with her.

"Benevolence is who we are," she said. "One arm reach out there – we're going to help you. Benevolence represents unity."



In the newly renovated Schmidt/Wilson Residence Hall (shown above), Huddleston is a member of the Design Living-Learning Community and has studio space, complete with drafting and light tables.
