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Virginia Davis,
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On the cover: University Honors graduates Sara Puffer and Noreen Jeglum celebrate following the Honors Commendation Ceremony. Photo credit: Lindsay Marshall
Warm greetings for the summer of 2015 to our Honors Program students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends.

FAREWELL TO THE OLD HONORS PROGRAM

In the 2013-14 academic year, Honors at Iowa instituted a new honors curriculum. That new curriculum requires honors students to opt into Honors and to complete twenty-four hours of honors coursework and experiences in order to graduate with University Honors. We allowed all honors students who were part of the old program to join the new program, and more than two thousand did so. We also allowed the old program to continue running concurrently with the new program for two years. Those two years end with the Spring 2015 semester. Thereafter, there will only be the new Honors Program.

A FIRST FOR HONORS: ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK EXPERIENCE

This Spring Break we had a group of Honors Presidential Scholars travel to Kansas City as part of a one credit hour class setup to explore the topic of equity in education. The trip was fully funded by Honors through the generosity of the Charles Austin family and is the first of an annual series of such trips. See the article below for details on the experience. Possible sites for upcoming years include Detroit, which is undergoing a unique renaissance that may well be the model for northern American cities in the future, as well as Xicotepec, Mexico, where the university has had a presence for some years.

UPPER MIDWEST REGIONAL HONORS CONFERENCE

This spring we again sent several honors staff and students to the Upper Midwest Honors Council annual conference, this year hosted by Minnesota State University in Mankato. Professional conferences are venues for sharing information. Participants present the results of their experience and research so that others can benefit. Our own students and staff added to the body of knowledge on honors education with their presentations. See the article covering this experience for details.

THE LARGER VIEW OF HONORS EDUCATION

The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), which was established in 1966 as a resource network, is the leading honors organization in higher education. Its 1,200 members represent honors programs and colleges in private and public, two- and four-year institutions, including international universities. As such, the NCHC has been instrumental in defining honors education and establishing best practices for honors programs and colleges.

As the current Vice President for the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) and member of its Board of Directors since 2012, I’ve been able to be much involved with honors education on the national and also international scene.

In future issues of the newsletter, I’ll report on major happenings and how they might affect Honors at Iowa. Along that line, the NCHC celebrates its 50th anniversary this next fall with its annual conference in Chicago. Almost the entire Honors at Iowa staff as well as several honors students will be attending and presenting.

As always, please feel free to contact me via email (artspisak@uiowa.edu) or phone (319.335.1681) with any comments, questions, or concerns you have about the Honors Program. I welcome your input.

Art L. Spisak
Director, UI Honors Program

Word from the Director  Art Spisak
Even as the spring semester comes to a close, graduates are awarded honors, and students disperse, the Honors at Iowa crew does not rest. Summer brings with it the new members of the Honors Program. Full of questions and concerns regarding where an honors education can take them, incoming freshmen can look to the Honors Ambassadors to answer questions and give advice pertaining to anything and everything Honors.

In the Honors session at Orientation, the professional staff members introduce new students and their families to Honors at Iowa and then the Ambassadors engage break-away groups in discussions based on the new students’ major interest areas. It is here that the Ambassadors share their major-specific experiences with students, including what honors courses to take or how to earn honors in the major for their specific discipline.

As near-peers, close in age to incoming students, Ambassadors can offer help with the transition from high school to college, a transition that can often be overwhelming for some students. According to the Ambassadors’ supervisor Holly Yoder, “The Ambassadors bring great energy and unique perspectives to the Honors presentation at summer orientation. Students can relate to them. They can see themselves doing what these Ambassadors for the program have done. Ambassadors help new students ‘make their connection.’”

Anya Kim, a Neurobiology, Psychology, and Spanish major, stated, “Honors orientation was incredibly helpful for me last summer. When I first came to Iowa for orientation I was very stressed out about starting my college career: having to sign up for classes, getting involved on campus, finding new friends, and making the most out of my four years here. As a result, I remember freaking out, being generally neurotic and asking at least 20 questions during my honors orientation small group session.”

Kim continued, “However, my Honors Ambassadors put up with my non-stop interrogation incredibly well. They were friendly, and made me feel reassured and at home in Iowa City. After the Honors session, I felt much more comfortable with my choice to go to the University of Iowa. This summer I really want to give any incoming first-years the same feeling, especially if they are as nervous as I was.”

Lance Heady, a Biochemistry and Biology major and Psychology minor, said, “The Honors Program here has been an invaluable experience for me this year and has a large impact on how I will spend the rest of my time at Iowa. I want to help other first-year students have a remarkable experience in the Honors Program and make sure each student knows the benefits the Program can offer.”

Hannah Philgreen, who is majoring in International Relations and French, provides an interesting perspective as a returning Ambassador. When asked why she chose to return for yet another year as an Ambassador, she said the aspect she enjoyed most was “hav[ing] the opportunity to play a role in shaping the lives of incoming freshmen by sharing my own story.” Additionally, her role as an Ambassador has helped not only the incoming freshmen but also herself: “I’ve gotten over my fear of public speaking and have been able to greatly improve my communication skills.”

Similarly, Kim shared her goals as an Honors Ambassador: “My dream is to become a doctor one day, and before I start thinking about going to medical school I believe it is very important that I learn how to best communicate with others, especially when they are feeling vulnerable. This summer my job is to help advise
students and answer their questions, while also helping them cope with a new environment. I believe that this will give me some much-needed experience helping people, in general, deal with trying times.”

In addition to their important job of introducing new students to Honors at Iowa, this year’s Honors Ambassadors are staying very busy this summer while remaining on campus.

Heady is doing research in Andrew Pieper’s laboratory focusing on a neuroprotective molecule P7C3 and its application to Parkinson’s Disease. He also facilitates the late night programming for orientation and volunteers at the University Hospital. Philgreen is finishing up a research project, working at the Iowa Hawk Shop and volunteering with CIVIC (Council for International Visitors to Iowa Cities). Kim works in a research lab as an ICRU (Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates) Summer Fellow, volunteers at the hospital, and assists Honors Scholarships and Fellowships Director Kelly Thornburg’s with updating the Honors at Iowa Scholarship pages.

If you wish to learn more about the duties of the Honors Ambassadors, you can visit the Honors at Iowa website at honors.uiowa.edu and click “Honors Advising” under the Academics tab.

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Advice from the Honors Summer Orientation Ambassadors

**Anya Kim:** Take advantage of the Honors Program, get involved on campus, and invest in some sturdy shower shoes before move in day!

**Lance Heady:** I want every student that comes to Iowa next to know that they should follow their dreams and that they should become involved in whatever interests them. Whether it is research, a student organization, or a volunteer opportunity, there are so many ways to become involved on campus and these experiences are very beneficial.

**Hannah Philgreen:** Unlike in high school, Honors at Iowa isn’t something that’s a ton of extra work and that you should be afraid of. It’s a great program that only enhances your experience at Iowa, so take advantage of all the opportunities it gives you.
This spring semester, the Presidential Scholars Program, in coordination with the Center for Student Involvement & Leadership, organized an alternative spring break, during which 12 Presidential Scholars, including myself, visited Kansas City, Missouri with a course attached to the experience. The topic was educational equity, a theme voted for by the Presidential Scholars last fall. It seemed appropriate that a group recognized for its academic achievements discover how to help others do the same.

During alternative spring break, I learned about the implications of service trips and generational poverty as well as about the sports culture in Kansas City and the unique struggles of Latino and Latina students. Led by Thomas Keegan, Head of Digital Research & Publishing and Lindsay Marshall, Associate Director of the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates, my fellow spring breakers and I visited Della Lamb Community Services, KIPP Endeavor Academy, the Guadalupe Center, Harvesters, the Missouri Educator’s Association, and the Boys & Girls Club of Kansas City to learn more about the work these organizations do.

“Beneath all of the information, frustration, and viewpoints from our community partners, there was a steady drive of purpose.”
While service is important to me, service trips are always, to a degree, problematic. They exist on the assumption that less privileged individuals require assistance from the more privileged. They all conclude with the service teams returning to their easier life. Our team visited people who spend forty hours of their week addressing the problem of educational equity. We spent a few short hours with each before returning to pursue our fully funded higher education. An English teacher at KIPP provided the following insight: “I hope my students never see me as the white middle-class woman from the suburbs who dreams of teaching inner-city kids.” It stuck with me because she was so aware of her position, her identity, and consequently, what that might mean to her students. Like her, we will never be able to erase the connotations of a “service trip,” but that doesn’t mean that our intentions are disingenuous. In class discussions following the trip, we brainstormed ways to make use of what we learned to make meaningful change in Iowa City’s education systems.

Beneath all of the information, frustration, and viewpoints from our community partners, there was a steady drive of purpose. Each person we met believes in what they do, a refreshing attitude amidst the oppressive problem of educational inequity. Every community partner was devoted to allowing their kids to discover what the right path was for themselves, whether that is college, trade school, the military, or something else. Tyrone Moore, the Unit Director of Thornberry at the Boys & Girls Club, wants his kids to lead crime-free lives. Judy Ackers, Director of Della Lamb, said she expects her kids to be safe, responsible, and respectful. Lisa, Director of Curriculum Development at the Guadalupe Center, said that the only unacceptable outcome of a Guadalupe Center graduate is if they think that another school would have served them better. A cynic would say that these standards are low, but I disagree. It’s uplifting. In the face of unfair legislation and low funding, these organizations are not interested in statistics but in giving their kids the resources to be who they want to be.

“It seemed appropriate that a group recognized for its academic achievements discover how to help others do the same.”
This spring, a group of seven Honors Program staff and students attended the 2015 Upper Midwest Regional Honors Conference. The conference was held from March 26-28 at Minnesota State University, Mankato in Mankato, Minnesota.

The theme of the conference was "Confluence and Conflict" although the topics and presentations were not limited to this theme. Over the course of three days, students, faculty, and staff were tasked with presenting a topic as well as having the opportunity to learn about other honors programs from across the region. The theme stems from the joining of bodies of water and how that image can represent the fluidity and unity among diverse individuals and organizations.

In many ways, the Upper Midwest Regional Honors Conference is a confluence of the varied and multifaceted honors programs across the region as they came together to present and learn about new concepts. As important as it is to emphasize success within the classroom environment, it is just as important for students to have an understanding of what is going on outside of the classroom and the achievements of their peers on other campuses.

A wide variety of topics were presented, covering everything from the rising water levels in Hawaii to “loving your selfie” and body acceptance to the ups and downs of student employment in honors programs. One pair of students from the University of Iowa co-presented on life as student administrators and another pair co-presented on programming for honors students.

The University of Iowa and Iowa State University represented the largest honors programs of those in attendance, and, through the conference, their students learned how other smaller honors programs operated. The structure of the conference was consistent with the theme of confluence because there was an emphasis not only on presenting one’s own ideas but also on how the ideas of others could be incorporated into preexisting honors programs. A great example of this is how large honors programs, like the University of Iowa’s, can use social media and similar connective platforms to attain the close-knit nature of smaller honors programs.

Overall, the Upper Midwest Regional Honors Conference proved to be a valuable learning experience for all those in attendance. The conference enabled students to present their own work as well as get a glimpse of what life might look like if they choose to continue in academia after leaving the university as a student.

The conference enabled students to present their own work as well as get a glimpse of what life might look like if they choose to continue in academia after leaving the university as a student.

Experiential learning is a key part of the University of Iowa’s Honors Program vision, and as Jessica Waldschmidt, the Honors Program Coordinator, said, “There’s more to honors than books, studying, taking tests, and getting A’s.” Events like the Regional Honors Conference can offer students the opportunity to step outside the classroom, learn about other honors students at other universities, and, ultimately, learn more about themselves.
This spring, the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU) invited students to present their research at the 11th annual Spring Undergraduate Research Festival (SURF). The festival was held on April 8 in the University Capitol Centre and drew about 130 undergraduate researchers from all years in school and across over 30 disciplines. SURF, along with the Fall Undergraduate Research Festival (FURF), welcomes students each semester to share creative or scholarly work that they have completed or are in the process of completing either with a faculty mentor or independently. Research presented at these festivals comes from all disciplines—from science and engineering to dance and anthropology. All students are encouraged to participate.

Gabrielle Watson, who studies communication sciences and disorders, presents on newborn hearing screenings and the demographic factors involved in the process.

Photograph credit: Lindsay Marshall

Colton Jensen shares his research in chemistry, his field of study.

Photograph credit: Lindsay Marshall

Biomedical engineering major Rae Ann Corrigan researches structural models of proteins with the ultimate goal of improving cancer treatments.

Photograph credit: Lindsay Marshall

Biology major Jonah Heskje shares his research on the experience of pleasure derived from music.

Photograph credit: Lindsay Marshall
Honors at Iowa celebrated its outstanding students with a recognition ceremony and reception on April 11 at the Pomerantz Center and the Blank Honors Center. The ceremony recognized scholarship recipients of all years and majors as well as a few of the distinguished faculty and staff who have played significant roles in the past year making the Honors Program successful across campus.

Kelly Thornburg, Director of Scholar Development at the Honors Program, facilitated the ceremony. Advising Director Holly Yoder and Honors Program Director Art Spisak introduced the award recipients. In addition to Honors Program awards and recognition of Honors at Iowa scholars, also recognized at the ceremony were the national scholarships and fellowships winners: Gates Cambridge scholar Allison Kindig, National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship winner Jocelyn Todd, Goldwater scholar Kasra Zarei, Goldwater honorable mention Alexandra Bartlett, Udall and Truman scholar Jeffrey Ding, and Truman finalists Carter Bell and Maddie Bro.

Tom Niblock (class of 2007) served as the alumni speaker and Nate Hua (class of 2016) delivered the student remarks.

Following the ceremony, the Honors Program hosted a reception, at which students, families, and friends of the Honors Program could get to know the scholarship winners a little better.
Honors Recognition Ceremony  Continued

National Fellowship winners from left: Allison Kindig, Alexandra Bartlett, Kasra Zarei, Carter Bell, and Maddie Bro.
Photo credit: Lindsay Marshall

Astrid Montuclard (left) and Jacob Isbell engage in a conversation following the ceremony.
Photo credit: Lindsay Marshall

Ceremony attendees enjoy refreshments and conversation at the reception.
Photo credit: Lindsay Marshall

Scholarship and fellowship awardees await for the ceremony to begin.
Photo credit: Lindsay Marshall

Emily White (right) and her mother celebrate her achievements.
Photo credit: Lindsay Marshall
Honors at Iowa Scholars 25 Graduating Seniors are Recognized

Liam Hovey is a fifth year graduating senior with Physics, Chemistry and Biochemistry majors and a minor in Mathematics. For the last three years, Liam has been working in Professor Madeline Shea’s laboratory in the Biochemistry Department on the biophysics of calcium signaling and on how calcium controls massive proteins that send electrical signals in heart cells and neurons.

Irina Gass graduated in May with a B.F.A. in Dance and a French minor. As a dance major, Irina has performed faculty and student works and toured with the UI Dancers in Company. Her own choreography has taken the stage in UI concerts, and her own show “Kaleidoscopic Memoirs” was performed this April. Alongside performance and choreography, Irina received the ICRU (Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates) fellowship and Ferentz grant for her research in dance history.

Elizabeth Mueller is graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Microbiology and a certificate in Global Health Studies. Since her freshman year, she has conducted research in the Schlievert laboratory, where she studied the mechanism of novel antimicrobials against Staphylococcus aureus. This work resulted in several national presentations and publications. To appreciate the multi-faceted dimensions of health, she also conducted international field research with the CDC, World Food Prize, and Iowa’s India Winterim program.

Hyejung Kim is a senior graduating with a major in Finance. She was an active member of Phi Beta Lambda and the Korean Business Association in the Tippie College of Business. She took various roles in both organizations and lastly served as Vice President of Community Services.

Each year, Honors identifies a cohort of extraordinary graduating seniors across the University of Iowa for celebration as Honors at Iowa Scholars. Twenty-five were recognized at both the April Recognition Ceremony and at the Honors Commendation Ceremony in May.

Left to right: Kelly Daniels, Samuel Mueting, Bingyi Yan, William Tollefson, Xin Xu, Maureen Owens, Virginia Davis, Catherine Babikian, Emily White, Quinn Hejlik, Dora Grote, and Christopher Winters. Photo credit: Lindsey Menard
Daniel Plebanek has been studying Psychology and Linguistics at Iowa since fall 2011. Since his sophomore year, Dan has been working with Larissa Samuelson in the Psychology department, studying cognitive development and the development of executive function in young children. Dan hopes to get his PhD in developmental science and continue doing research in various aspects of child development.

William Tollefson received a bachelor’s degree in Biomedical Engineering with a focus on Bioinformatics. He has been involved in the University of Iowa School of Music, Math Club, German Club, and Medicus Premedical Society. In addition, William conducted research with Dr. Michael Schnieders involving computational protein biochemistry and was the Teaching Assistant for a cell biology course in the Department of Biomedical Engineering.

Bingyi Yan graduated with bachelor degrees in Economics and Journalism and Mass Communication. Bingyi is interested in the optimization of a country’s natural resource strategy using customized dynamic economic models. He completed a research report on Roman military disciplines under the supervision of Vasiliki Kostopoulou.

Ani Danelz graduated with a double major in Speech and Hearing Sciences and Psychology, as well as a minor in American Sign Language. In addition, Ani did research at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics and is seeking publication for her paper. In the fall, Ani will be returning to Iowa City and attending graduate school at the University Iowa for a Master’s Degree in Speech Pathology.

Xin Xu graduated from the University of Iowa with a bachelor’s degree in Biochemistry. During her undergraduate career, Xin worked with Dr. Brenner on non-enzymatic acetylation of mitochondrial proteins. In addition, Xin provided active service to the Palliative Care Team at the University Hospital. In 2013, Xin ventured to Trivandrum, India to further her understanding of healthcare abroad.

Jessica Lewandowski graduated from the University of Iowa with a bachelor’s degree in Nursing and a minor in Spanish. She is an active member of the Sigma Theta Tau Honors Society in Nursing. During her time at Iowa, she contributed to Nursing Research and presented this research at the International Society of Nurses in Genetics meeting in the fall of 2013, as well as the University of Iowa Fall Undergraduate Research Festival.

Christopher Winters graduated with a BS in Biomedical Engineering. Christopher’s involvement with biomedical research motivated him to assist in founding HURA (Hawkeye Undergraduate Research Association). Apart from serving as HURA’s Director of Social Activities, Christopher also promotes undergraduate research as a Research Ambassador for ICRU. Christopher plans to attend the Carver College of Medicine.

Maureen Owens graduated with degrees in history and classical languages and a medieval studies certificate. Her honors thesis focused on the influence of classical ideologies on the public persona of Queen Elizabeth I. Outside the classroom, Maureen enjoyed volunteering and serving on the executive board for the student organization STAR (Students to Assist Recruitment). Maureen was also an active member of Iowa’s classics honor society, Eta Sigma Phi.

Allison Kindig from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, graduated with a major in Industrial Engineering, minor in Business Administration, and a certificate in Global Health Studies. Through research, she helped develop solar-powered cooking technologies in India and Cameroon. Allison also enjoyed being a resident assistant, student ambassador, and captain of the triathlon team while attending Iowa.

Virginia Davis is an English and American Studies double major. She has been involved in the Honors Program as a student staff member and as the Honors Newsletter editor. She has also served as a writing tutor and writing fellow. Virginia completed her honors thesis this May, writing a creative piece that explores cults and mental illness.

Catherine Babikian graduated with degrees in history and anthropology. While at Iowa, she worked both as an honors writing fellow at the Writing Center and as a student assistant at the Iowa Women’s Archives. Her interests in British history have also taken her to Belfast and London for study abroad.

Kelly Daniels double majored in Political Science and International Relations. She served as an Honors Peer Advisor.
for three years, a Teaching Assistant for a semester and tutored in two subjects. She co-authored a paper with Professor Mitchell on international maritime disputes. The two presented their paper at a conference in Toronto last spring.

**Sam Mueting** graduated with a BS in Biochemistry and minor in Psychology. He has been involved in research projects involving ovarian cancer with Dr. Pavla Brachova, neonatal hematology under Dr. Jack Widness, and error-prone DNA repair mechanisms under Dr. Todd Washington. He has served as a Research Ambassador for ICRU and helped start the Hawkeye Undergraduate Research Association. He was also a member of the Hawkeye Marching Band and Iowa Pep Band.

**Elizabeth Wolf** is a Linguistics major with a German minor. She spent a year and a half doing psycholinguistic research at the MAClab here as well as a semester doing second language acquisition research under the supervision of a Linguistics professor. Her interests include teaching English abroad, computational linguistics and psycholinguistics.

**Emily White** majored in Health and Human Physiology (BS) and minored in Global Health Studies. She will be attending Carver College of Medicine in the fall of 2015. Emily participated in the 2015 Women’s Resource & Action Center’s Iowa N.E.W. Leadership Program in May. She was involved in research from the spring of her freshman year, working with multiple sclerosis patients on a multimodal intervention. She completed an Honor’s Thesis on Dignity Therapy, a narrative based therapy for end-of-life patients.

**Sarah Mayer** studied Biochemistry and Spanish in preparation for medical school. Since her sophomore year, Sarah conducted biochemistry research with Dr. Heather Bartlett and Dr. Dan Weeks. She also participated in the Diagnosing Diseases India Winterim and a Spanish language and service learning study abroad program in Peru. Sarah has been involved with the UIHC volunteer program’s Student Leader Board, the ImmUNITY Campaign, and the Presidential Scholars Program.

**Quinn Hejlik** graduated from the University of Iowa with degrees in History and International Studies. He has complemented his classwork with a semester abroad in Prague, Czech Republic and completed an Honors thesis in Czech and Slovak history. Quinn has been heavily involved with the Honors Program and the Presidential Scholars Program. After graduation, Quinn plans to teach English in Russia and then continue his education in graduate school.

**Noreen Jeglum** is a Psychology and French major. During undergrad she was involved in research in Psychology in the ADHD and Development Lab, and she has been a member of the girls a cappella group, Take Note, for four years. She will attend the University of Wisconsin, Madison to pursue her MS in Occupational Therapy.

**Dora Grote** graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Journalism/Mass Communication and a minor in Political Science. She was named the 2015 Iowa Broadcast News Association’s outstanding student, managing editor at the Daily Iowan, TV News Director for Daily Iowan TV, and this year’s Top Scholar in the Journalism School. She spent last summer interning in Washington, D.C., and will intern in New York City this summer for CBS.
This spring, three juniors were named finalists in the Truman Scholarship competition: Carter Bell, Maddie Bro, and Jeffrey Ding. This announcement followed months of intense preparation. “The process consisted of an extensive written application to determine finalists and then an interview in Kansas City to determine winners,” said Ding (for more about this national scholarship, check our website at http://honors.uiowa.edu/harry-s-truman-scholarship).

The applicants developed their applications with the help of Kelly Thornburg, Director of Scholar Development for the Honors Program. “Kelly Thornburg approached me and told me a bit about the Truman Scholarship. What I gathered from our initial conversation was that yes, the Truman would be challenging, time consuming, and emotional,” said Bro, “but moreover, it would be a great opportunity for self-exploration and self-growth. In retrospect, the process was most certainly all of the above.”

Thornburg was instrumental in both recruiting applicants and preparing them. “Kelly is really good at watching out for honors students and making sure they’re applying for things they should be,” said Bell. “She was a Truman winner, so it’s kind of like her baby.”

The writing-intensive portion of the process called on all of the finalists’ academic abilities. “The School of Journalism & Mass Communication has equipped me with a writing toolbox that was crucial to this essay-heavy application,” said Bro. “The demands of my various journalism and strategic communication courses prepared me well for writing multiple drafts for the diverse prompts within this application.”

As Bell noted, “The Truman really embraces political activity.” Each of the finalists brought significant political experience to the application table. “Student government helped [my application], and [my involvement in] University Democrats helped as well. That’s the group I’ve been most passionate about.”

For his part, Ding has been involved in student government as well. “My leadership experiences in student government, both as sustainability liaison and now as vice president, were very present throughout my application. I was able to show some of the change I have effected on campus and project that into potential broader-scale changes in the future.”

But it took more than the right combination of extracurriculars to set these students apart from the pack. “When the foundation is looking at paper applications, they’re looking for a combination of smarts paired with empathy, being able to connect with and put yourself in the shoes of other people,” said Thornburg. “I also think ambition is a necessary component. This process is really hard-core, it takes a lot of time, and often it doesn’t pay off. It’s a challenge that doesn’t come from anywhere else, and pursuing that shows me that [these applicants] are competitive.”

After being named finalists, Bell, Bro and Ding went through an intensive interview process in Kansas City. “It’s made me a better interviewee,” said Bell. “When I interview in the future, it’ll be like, ‘I’ve been through a Truman interview, so this is no big deal!’” Each of the finalists had to face a panel of seven interviewers for twenty minutes. “They made me defend my policy proposition, even my choice of career,” said Bell.

“Facing a panel of seven people and engaging as a peer as much as possible, I think they have to be really brave,” said Thornburg. “You have to have a cohesive idea of what you choose to talk about, how you focus your ideas, and how you prioritize what you say. They have to be able to demonstrate their vision and their drive to take action, to change something they think isn’t working.”

Out of necessity, the finalists did a great deal of self-exploration and examination during the application process. “While in college, I often feel that my many advocacy activities, academic pursuits, and athletic endeavors are fragmented, one-dimensional, and lacking meaning,” said Bro. “However, composing my application for the Truman Scholarship gave me a holistic view of the ways my education, passions, and career aspirations intersect and motivate one another, and highlighted a convergence of my professional and advocacy interests that I’m excited to continue pursuing.”

The process helped the finalists expand upon existing skills and learn what more they could accomplish. “I learned much more about my own leadership style and how I am able to
use my unique skillset to build coalitions and sustainable relationships toward solving particular issues,” said Ding.

The process even helped Bell clarify her own goals and plans. “I learned my skills, and my weaknesses. I came in thinking I didn’t want to ever do policy work as a career, but [the application process] revealed to me that voting rights is my number one issue.”

Even though self-exploration was a crucial part of the process, it was not the most natural thing to do. “Talking about themselves can be uncomfortable for Midwesterners,” said Thornburg.

“The main question is ‘what are you bringing to the table?’ The way we got to that was often through them talking about each other, and then coming back to themselves. For example, it was super easy for Carter to say, ‘This is what Jeffrey is good at and what people go to him for,’ and it was a really good gateway for doing the same thing for herself.”

Of the three finalists, Ding was awarded the Truman scholarship. As the recipient of the Udall Scholarship as well, Ding became the third student to ever win both awards. “I will be attending the Truman Scholars Leadership Week in President Truman’s home state from May 19 to May 24, during which I will get the chance to meet other scholars and learn more about different paths to public service,” said Ding. “I hope to be an active member in the Truman Scholars community, attend a graduate school program with a focus on U.S.-China relations, and eventually contribute meaningfully to U.S. foreign policy.”

Despite the outcome, Bell appreciates the experience immensely. “The process itself is very rewarding,” she said. “I was really lucky and grateful to make it to the final stage.”

The application process was a valuable experience for each of the finalists. “Although the end result of the Truman Scholarship wasn’t as I hoped, I am in excellent application-writing shape. I’m fired up about applying for other challenging fellowships and graduate or professional programs,” said Bro. “The Truman interview panel shared a piece of advice with us that I have taken to heart. ‘Whether you win the scholarship or not, we know you all will still fight the good fight.’ That is exactly what I intend to do in the future.”
The Honors Commendation Ceremony celebrates students graduating with University Honors. This year, the ceremony was held on May 15th. Students, faculty, and their guests joined the Honors Program to recognize outstanding honors graduates as well as the Teaching and Thesis Mentoring award recipients.

Seniors wear their graduation cap and gowns as they receive their honors medals and cordons.

Guests of graduating seniors are invited to attend the ceremony.

Honors Program Director Art Spisak congratulates Keegan Lockhart.

Photo credit: Jessica Waldschmidt

Photo credit: Jessica Waldschmidt

Photo credit: Jessica Waldschmidt

Photo credit: Jessica Waldschmidt
At the end of each academic year, Honors at Iowa recognizes two outstanding instructors with the Honors Teaching Award and Honors Thesis Mentor Award. This year, the program honored Ambassador Ron McMullen with the Honors Teaching Award and Meenakshi Gigi Durham with the Honors Thesis Mentor Award. McMullen, nominated by honors student Devon Jones, and Durham, nominated by honors student Dora Grote, received a monetary award and personalized memento at the annual Honors Program Commendation Ceremony on May 15.

Ambassador Ron McMullen, currently Visiting Associate Professor at the University of Iowa, leads a seminar of sixteen honors students in a discussion of international politics. McMullen has previously served as a Foreign Service Officer for the United States Department of State. In his nomination letter, Jones wrote that “Ambassador McMullen enters each class meeting with unbridled energy, insight, and determination to instill in each student a prolific passion for world affairs and a critical eye with which to approach issues and arguments in our interconnected society.” Jones praised McMullen for his ability to draw from his extensive background in politics and use real-world examples in the classroom. For example, Jones explained that students “recently drafted action memos addressed to the Under Secretary of State for the government of the United States to consider.” McMullen has also invited students to his home to enact a scenario in which each student represented the interests of a different state. “My peers and I are fortunate and grateful,” wrote Jones. “Ambassador McMullen has distinguished himself as a remarkable and effective honors leader.”

Professor Meenakshi Gigi Durham teaches gender, women’s and sexuality studies at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. A leader in scholar development, Durham has served as the Honors Coordinator for the School of Journalism and Mass Communication from 2007 to 2012, where she oversaw honors projects and course schedules. She also taught honors sections of Journalistic Reporting & Writing during the fall of 2008 and spring of 2009. In her nomination letter, student Dora Grote described Durham as a “supportive, intelligent, and dedicated” thesis mentor and continued that Durham “has worked hard to contribute to the university community through her leadership positions in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.” Grote met Durham through an upper-level writing class Durham taught during Grote’s sophomore year, and the two have stayed in close contact since then. Having had Durham as both a teacher and a thesis mentor, Grote feels more confident in her writing and her budding career as a journalist. “Throughout my brief 22 years, she is hands-down the most inspiring and dedicated teacher and mentor I’ve had,” wrote Grote. “I want to give back something small since she has done so much for me.”
Honors is home to a unique policy analysis course with potential for impact well beyond the classroom. The Iowa Policy Research Organization (IPRO) is a research group composed entirely of undergraduate honors students and led by political science professor Rene Rocha. Students of IPRO collaboratively conduct policy research and original quantitative analyses of local and statewide issues, learning in the process how to effectively research policy, collect and analyze data, and write policy reports. The first term of the two-term program consists of a one-semester hour course through honors, and this is followed in the second term with a three-semester hour course through the political science department, in which students continue to conduct research and write reports.

Students in the program, with the direction of Professor Rocha, choose the issues on which to focus their reports. Currently, IPRO students are working on a report on school start dates and how they affect students’ math proficiency on the Iowa Tests of Educational Development. Through in-depth analysis and collaboration, the organization produces reports that are often more sophisticated and thorough than other arguments about issues such as these.

IPRO students are sophomores, juniors, and seniors, and they come from majors like environmental policy, economics, political science, and public policy, though the organization is open to students of all majors. IPRO is not only an excellent way for students to develop an honors community and work closely with their peer group but also a way for them to engage in the Iowa City community. Their reports and research have appeared in Press Citizen and The Daily Iowan. Involvement in IPRO is especially good for students who are considering graduate school in policy. Alumni of the program have gone on to do political research in various settings around the country. Below, Lauren Freeman, a sophomore in political science and economics and current IPRO student, discusses her IPRO experience and hopes for the future.

**Why did you decide to take the Policy Research Practicum and get involved with IPRO?**

I am a political science major and wanted to take a class that focused on public policy. Carter Bell, who is our current teaching assistant for the course, told me I should get involved with IPRO because she said it was fun and a great learning experience. I signed up for the class not knowing much about it, but I loved it so much that I would definitely recommend it to other political science majors.

**What is your favorite part of IPRO?**

My favorite part about IPRO is that I get to collaborate closely with my classmates, Carter, and Professor Rocha. We have a small class of seven students, which has given me the opportunity to get to know them well and work with them closely.

**How do you see IPRO shaping your time here at Iowa and how do you see it shaping your future?**

This class brought together a wonderful group of honors students whom I have loved getting to know and work with. Through IPRO, I’ve gained valuable writing and research skills that I think will be useful for future academic and job opportunities. Once we complete our current project, I will have a polished policy report containing original research that I can show potential employers.

**What advice do you have for students interested in IPRO?**

IPRO can be a bit intimidating at first because our class discussions consist of openly critiquing each other’s writing. My advice for students who may be interested in taking the class is that they should not shy away from this constructive criticism. It’s great to be in such a small class because you really get to know the people you are working with and become comfortable taking and giving critiques. I think that is a valuable skill for any type of profession you plan to pursue.
Students are buzzing about plans for the upcoming summer. Between research opportunities, jobs, study abroad, vacations, internships, and summer classes, students in the Honors Program are in for a variety of adventures this summer, many of which will take them to places they have never been before and give them a world of new experiences. Some of these experiences will specifically focus on service in an international setting.

One student’s journeys will take her to South Africa for a one-month-long service trip with faculty through the University of Iowa Child Life Program. On the Pre-Med track with a Global Health minor, Emilee Gibson wants to “dive right in, to be in a hospital in a different country” in order to gain hands-on global health experience. Gibson first became interested in the medical field while on a similar trip in Costa Rica in high school. After sparking her interest in health-related professions, she began volunteering in the emergency room at Mercy Hospital in Iowa City. “Sitting in a cubicle never seemed appealing to me,” she admitted. “Volunteering at Mercy is the highlight of my week—this trip seemed like a natural fit for me.”

This summer, Gibson will be a childcare worker in the Red Cross War Memorial Children’s Hospital in Cape Town, South Africa. Gibson explained, one has to be able to understand someone in order to best help them, which is why being familiar with the culture of South Africa is crucial. “I’m most looking forward to being in a different cultural setting and being able to work in a medical setting as well. I’m particularly interested in pediatric and maternal health,” she said.

Another honors student traveling far from home this summer is first-year Elementary Education major Alyssa Peiffer. Through Camp Adventure, Peiffer will be working as an aquatics counselor on the Foster U.S. military base in Okinawa, Japan. This spring, Camp Adventure participants completed an intense training process, preparing them to head to different places all over the world. Besides daily aquatics programming with the kids, Peiffer expects to “make a difference in the lives of the children by being a positive role model and interacting with the kids in a fun and positive way.”

Peiffer’s assignment is to teach ten swim lessons a day on base, five days a week. On weekends she is looking forward to exploring the island of Okinawa and being immersed in Japanese culture. She even plans on getting scuba diving certified and venturing into the depths of the Pacific Ocean. “It’s incredible to think that I’m doing something like this after only my freshman year,” Peiffer commented. “I can’t wait to see where Camp Adventure takes me.”
Honors students are involved in a wide variety of opportunities outside the classroom. They are ambitious researchers, philanthropists, politicians, and entrepreneurs. They are also successful athletes—like Allison Kindig, Jocelyn Todd, Maddie Bro, and Brigitte Waldier. These four athletes demonstrate how students can meet their goals both in the classroom and on the track, field, and pool. Below, they answer a few questions about what it’s like to be students and athletes.

**Allison Kindig**  
**Year:** Senior  
**Major:** Industrial Engineering  
**Hometown:** Cedar Rapids, IA  
**Sport:** Triathlon

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**Jocelyn Todd**  
**Year:** Senior  
**Major:** Biomedical Engineering with a German minor  
**Hometown:** St. Louis, MO  
**Sport:** Track and Field

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**Maddie Bro**  
**Year:** Junior  
**Major:** Journalism and Mass Communication; Gender, Women’s and Sexuality Studies  
**Hometown:** Ames, IA  
**Sport:** Swimming and Diving

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**Brigitte Waldier**  
**Year:** Junior  
**Major:** Speech and Hearing Sciences  
**Hometown:** Frankfurt, IL  
**Sport:** Ultimate Frisbee

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**How has your college experience as both an athlete and an honors student influenced your decisions, priorities, and plans for the future?**

**Kindig:** Since commencing my studies at Iowa, I’ve realized that my dual passion for triathlon and engineering are actually quite complimentary. I’ve been able to apply much of what I’ve learned in my engineering classes to improving my running, biking, and swimming technique and equipment. In fact, I engineered and built my own triathlon bike this year. Now, I’m racing that bike, and it’s absolutely incredible. Going forward, I hope to remain an athletic, academic, and artistic triathlete during my time at Cambridge and beyond.

**Todd:** As a runner, I am constantly thinking about my running mechanics to enhance performance and decrease risk of injury. This directly correlated to my research interest in orthopaedic biomechanics. For the last two years I’ve been doing research in this field and will continue as I start working towards my PhD in Bioengineering at the University of Utah. Also, as a student-athlete I have developed a deep understanding of setting and achieving goals, perseverance, and time management; this has greatly influenced the high standards I set for myself and fueled my decision to take on the challenge of a PhD.

**Bro:** My athletic experiences prior to and during college have influenced my academic interests and career goals. I enjoy studying portrayals of women, transgender, and homosexual individuals in the media, particularly in the athletic sphere. I am currently building a portfolio of writing that addresses sexism, transphobia, and homophobia in the media and that offers up more inclusive methods for writing about these individuals. I hope to incorporate my public advocacy experiences, athletic background, and passion for writing into my future career.

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*Madie Bro prepares for her heat.  
Photo credit: Maddie Bro*
What do you enjoy most about being a student-athlete?

**Kindig:** What I love about being a student athlete is getting to be an engineer and something more. After a long day of intense, stationary work indoors, there’s nothing better than getting outside and going for a long bike ride with a detour to the Coralville Reservoir for a swim with some friends. Athletics provides a great release to challenge yourself mentally and physically, live a healthy lifestyle, and meet awesome people. Some of my fondest college memories have come from being a member and captain of the UI Trihawks Triathlon club team.

**Waldier:** For me, the best part about being a student athlete is the connections you make. As you travel, you meet amazing people from majors, backgrounds, and teams completely different from you. While it can make life really busy, a super important part of my college career has been playing a sport I love with great teammates. It relieves stress by helping you make friends, laugh, and exercise!

**Bro:** I have experienced three practice or competition related injuries within 10 months of each other while a collegiate student-athlete. These injuries were physically and emotionally taxing, but my doctors and athletic trainers provided me with excellent care. Now that I’m 100 percent healthy, I have a rejuvenated motivation going into my final year of competition that I haven’t felt since my days in age-group swimming.

**Waldier:** The biggest challenge I’ve faced is just planning my schedule to work around school, work, practice and tournaments. The most stressful part is finding the perfect fit for everything when everyone expects all of you all the time. Placing my health and school first was definitely a hard but necessary lesson to learn.

**What advice would you give to other athletes, honors students, and those who are both?**

**Todd:** My general advice is the same for all three: be a sponge. You get about four short years of college and there will be no other time in your life when it is so easy to pick up great experience and knowledge. Don’t worry about deciding on a passion—try everything you can handle that’s interesting and exciting to you and let your experiences (good and bad) dictate your career plans. A side-note specifically to athletes: don’t expect all of your teammates to understand your academic lives and don’t be afraid to be different from your teammates off the field. There can be time to join clubs and organizations without sacrificing your athletic duties if you take time to communicate with your coach and the organization officers.

**Waldier:** I would definitely recommend that honors students take advantage of their opportunities. There are so many amazing professors just waiting for students to engage with them. Be bold and ask for opportunities. As for athletes, plan ahead and do not use your sport as an excuse for poor grades. Everyone is busy—athlete or not—and we just have to learn to manage the time we have.
What are your career goals?

Kindig: My goal is to lead multidisciplinary teams on community engagement projects that seek to develop food and energy security for sustainable development and the advancement of global health.

Todd: My goal is to continue expanding our knowledge of the musculoskeletal system and how it can be repaired in order to help people continue living active, healthy, and normal lives. In the fall, I will attend the University of Utah, where I will pursue my PhD in Bioengineering. I will conduct research under Dr. Jeff Weiss, director of the Musculoskeletal Research Laboratory, and my research (generally) will expand on their long history of computational hip work.

Bro: After completing my undergraduate studies, I aspire to attend law school and enroll in a women’s studies graduate program to become either a Title IX attorney or law professor. As an attorney, I hope to represent students in Title IX sex discrimination and harassment cases. As a law professor, I would focus my teachings and research on civil rights law, sport law, and employment discrimination.

Waldier: After graduating next May, I hope to continue my education and receive my Masters in Speech Language Pathology. Once I receive my Masters, I am interested in working in a school system as a speech pathologist, whether that is focusing on literacy skills, special education communication, or social skills.

Brigitte Waldier, #87, passes the frisbee to a teammate. Photo credit: Brigitte Waldier

What are your career goals?

Jocelyn Todd runs at the Iowa Invitational. Photo credit: Jocelyn Todd
Student Profile Kasra Zarei

Kasra Zarei was recently named a Goldwater Scholar. Photo credit: Kasra Zarei

Hometown: Coralville, IA
Year: Junior
Major: Biomedical Engineering and Biochemistry

How are you involved in the Honors Program and how is it shaping your college education and your future?

The honors program provides scholar development (one-on-one and in peer groups), which is something that is hard to obtain in other areas on campus. While most places on campus focus on academic advising, the Honors program has provided me with a wealth of information about all things related to research, writing, working on fellowships and applications, as well as other things important for my professional development. I think all the conversations, group activities, and essay writing I have participated in has helped me become a better student, with a new, honed skillset.

You were recently awarded the Goldwater Scholarship. Tell us about that experience.

It was a very demanding but ultimately rewarding experience, regardless of the outcome. I was fortunate to work closely with Kelly Thornburg (I could not have won without her help), friends, and peers. Over the course of many months, I learned how to approach and complete a national scholarship application. I strongly feel that I have become a better writer after working on the application. I especially want to mention the summer writing workshops that Kelly offered and hosted herself. In general, I feel like you can never over-prepare or put too much time into an application. It was beneficial to have an extended period of time to self-reflect about everything I have done as an undergraduate, and tailor what to include on my application. That being said, I have so many wonderful mentors, professors, peers, and friends, and I would not have achieved anything without their help.

What has been the biggest challenge you’ve faced since beginning college?

Without a doubt, the biggest challenge for me has been focusing and selecting the activities that I want to pursue and matter the most to me. Being part of a big university with endless opportunities, I always find myself having a selection headache regarding what to be involved in and commit to.

How do you balance school, work, and extracurricular activities?

Every day and week, I focus on one class, assignment, activity, or objective for work at a time and invest all my thoughts and energy on that particular item. I also find that pursuing a wide range of classes and activities helps me more than just going to class all the time and studying. For instance, extracurricular activities give me a chance to temporarily set aside coursework and research. Having that small amount of time to focus on something else (teaching, etc.) re-energizes me.

What are your plans for the summer?

I am really looking forward to spending the first two weeks of summer traveling to Germany and Poland. Everyone needs a vacation. Upon returning, it is back to business to me. I will continue to work throughout the rest of the summer and hope to make more advances in my research.
How are you involved in the Honors Program and how is it shaping your college education and your future?

I have been involved with the Honors Program since arriving on campus by participating in Honors Primetime and Honors First Year Seminars. I lived in the Honors House my first year at the University of Iowa where I had the opportunity to meet a lot of other honors students. I became an Honors Peer Advisor to be able to meet with prospective students and families and talk with them about the Honors Program. We also put on events for current students to build the honors community. I got involved with research through the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU). I serve as an ICRU Ambassador, going into classrooms to talk about how to get involved with research. Engaging with Honors has definitely shaped the course of my college education and my future plans. I have found that I really enjoy working in the lab, and I now plan on applying to programs that will allow me to continue to do scientific research—something I had not considered before my undergraduate research experience.

What else are you involved in on campus?

The University of Iowa has a lot of diverse student organizations to be a part of. A few that I have really enjoyed are: Active Minds (mental health awareness), immUNITY Campaign (advocating and raising money for access to vaccines in third world countries), and Iowa Student Inter-active Theatre Experience (using forum and image theatre to promote bystander intervention).

What has been the biggest challenge you’ve faced since beginning college?

The biggest challenge at college is definitely living on my own for the first time. Being responsible for the things I used to take for granted (cooking, cleaning, washing, grocery shopping) has been an adjustment. Becoming more independent is great. I have discovered many new ways to make eggs.

What advice would you give other honors students?

My advice for other honors students is to get involved with the things that make them happy and feel purposeful.

What are your plans for the summer?

This summer I will be working in the lab, continuing research on my project that investigates ectosomes, tiny particles that bud off of the plasma membranes of white blood cells that have eaten staph bacteria. I will also be salsa dancing in the ped mall.
Get to Know Our Contributors  Writer Biographies

**Laura Wang** is a rising senior majoring in English and Chinese. Her dream job is to travel the world on someone else’s dollar while being pursued by the major publishing companies. If that doesn’t pan out, she would be happy with any job that involves writing. She spends most of her free time watching Netflix and contemplating getting a cat.

**Katie Kiesewetter** is a freshman from Farmington, Illinois. She is currently majoring in English and Studio Art with a minor in Art History. This summer, in addition to her new job as an Honors Ambassador, Katie will be taking summer classes, working off campus, and beginning her research project through ICRU regarding the impact of the Beatles’ music on musicians, artists, and designers of the 20th and 21st centuries.

**Virginia Davis** is a senior from Orange City, Iowa. She is studying English and American Studies and is currently working on her senior thesis. In addition to Honors Newsletter editor, she is also an Honors Student Staff member, Writing Fellow, and writing tutor.

**Claire Jacobson** is a freshman from Iowa City, studying French and Arabic at the University of Iowa. She is an aspiring polyglot, and hopes to pursue a career in translation and interpreting. When she’s not studying or working, she can be found reading Tolkien books and volunteering at her church’s youth group.
Get to Know Our Contributors

Continued

Marcus Brown is a freshman English major from Washington, D.C. His primary focuses are creative writing, journalism, and avoiding math and science in all its forms. He is a columnist for the Daily Iowan Opinions section as well as a member of the Editorial Board. He enjoys bike rides and long walks by the river at night.

Katie Gabel is a first-year student majoring in Speech and Hearing Sciences with minors in Spanish and American Sign Language. Besides being challenged by some fascinating classes, Katie’s experience so far at the University of Iowa has consisted of dancing in the rain, snowball fights, late night Iowa City explorations, and becoming skillfully trained in the art of singing children’s songs in preparation for being a Camp Adventure counselor this summer.

Arianna Chronis is a Pre-Law junior from Palos Park, Illinois who is majoring in English with a certificate in Medieval Studies. This year, she is also Marketing Executive Advisor of the UI Dance Club and Membership Chair of the Swing Dance Club.

Melia Dunbar is a third-year student who studies biology and English. She participates in Honors at Iowa as a student staff member. She hopes to eventually pursue a career in science writing or public health.
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