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On the cover:
Greetings for the Spring of 2020 to our Honors program students, faculty, alumni, and friends. I hope you, your families, and friends are staying safe and well during these trying times.

PROTECTING OUR STUDENTS DURING COVID-19
The Honors Program staff, both our professional staff and our student staff, has since mid-March been working from home. Email, phone calls, and especially Zoom meetings are now how we interact. Through all these changes in procedures, we’ve striven to soften the blow to our students in every way we can. We’ve done this with several adjustments to the curriculum – for example, creating a special project for honors students unable to undertake internships or study abroad experiences because of the pandemic.

We’ve also instituted research grants to help honors students whose research has been affected by the pandemic; allowed for the first time summer honors contract courses, set up virtual office hours for our staff to make ourselves more accessible, and made other accommodations to help our students get through these difficult conditions. The positive side is that we may continue with some of these practices after the pandemic subsides because they work so well.

To their credit, our students have adapted to this new type of education amazingly well. For example, in the honors seminar I teach, my students valiantly carry on with our assignments and class discussion, even though I know they’re dealing with the extra stress of all the unknowns (e.g., when will we be back in the classroom) and that some families must be experiencing extreme challenges brought on by the pandemic. Seeing them in their home settings – for example, in their bedrooms with all their personal effects around them – somehow makes it even more clear that this is a time to provide all the support we can. My thanks to my staff, both the professional staff and our student staff, for all that they’ve done to help accommodate our students and normalize these surreal times.

NEW HONORS STAFFERS
Speaking of our staff, you’ll see below an article on our newest staff member, Addison Woll. Addison started with us just last March and already it feels as if he’s an integral and well-established part of the team. He has an interesting background that has pushed him in directions that will be especially beneficial for the program. Details on that below.

Also below is an article on the academic background and research area of our next newest member of the Honors professional staff, Dr. Emily Hill. Dr. Hill, who herself was an honors student, has done research on mental health in gifted and high achieving students. A second article, which focuses more on resources for students with mental health issues at Iowa, gives further details on Dr. Hill’s research. Dr Hill’s own goal with her research is to explore how universities like Iowa can be better equipped to support gifted and high ability students with mental health issues. As with Addison, she brings a focus to the program that’s timely – mental health is one of the major concerns for college students today – and most welcome.

HONORS PROFILES
As with all our newsletters, you’ll get a closer look at several of the remarkable students we have and have had in the program. One article details what it’s like to be one of the many athletes who are part of the Honors Program. Another introduces you to two Honors Program alumni/ae, one a Rhodes Scholar who went on to get a PhD at Harvard, and a second with a law degree from Iowa and who is currently on the Honors Program Advisory Board. Both speak fondly of the connections they made through the Honors Program.

UPDATES AND INFORMATION
Finally, in this issue you’ll get updates on recent changes to the Honors Program student space on the third floor of the Blank Honors Center, information on what students can do to help green our campus, and, finally, useful information on honors societies – what their benefits are and what type to avoid.

As always, please feel free to contact me via email (art-spisak@uiowa.edu) or phone (319.335.1685) with any comments, questions, or concerns you have about the Honors Program. I’m happy to have such conversations.
Students Reflect
College in the Time of COVID-19

Compiled by Holly Blosser Yoder

As students transitioned to the new reality of online learning, in keeping with the Honors Program mission of self-discovery, we asked them to reflect on the experience. While students had much in common—surprise, confusion, sadness at missing friends—their writing also highlights their individuality. Thanks to students of Dr. Spisak’s spring 2020 Presidential Seminar who agreed to share their thoughts in response to the prompt “How are you now?”

Uncovering and discovering previous and new pastimes
I’ve been somewhat surprised (though delightfully) at my response to the challenges and opportunities of the current pandemic because instead of worrying, I’ve focused my efforts towards uncovering and discovering previous and new pastimes. Most recently, I’ve started to draw again, continuing what I started in my drawing classes years back. As for something new, I’ve begun to keep a journal, not so much to document the changing times but rather to practice my Chinese writing, which is something I couldn’t do on campus simply due to lack of time. Quite honestly, I would prefer that things revert to the way they were before the pandemic, but I’m content as of now, especially since I can use this debatably opportune time to discover more about myself.

- Jason Gao

Switching habits
I am typically a constantly “on-the-go,” type of person. I am rarely at home for more than a few hours. I am also rarely on my phone, preferring to talk to my friends face to face, and I often misplace it. I was forced to switch both of these habits during this unprecedented pandemic. In some ways, these changes were much needed. Being at home forced me to take my life one day at a time and slow down a little. I have done more reading, baking, and improvisation dancing than I have in many years because I "did not have time." I was reminded how much I love them. I can also able to spend more time with my family than I have for more than 10 years. The necessity to connect virtually has given me a much greater appreciation for how fortunate I am to have access to a phone and internet. Finally, I am also so grateful that all my loved ones, at home and in Germany, are staying safe.

- Hanna Schaeffeler

A list of things to look forward to
A few weeks ago I got the news that in less than 24 hours I would have to move out of the place I’d tentatively started to call home. When I had woken up that morning, I had no idea that I had already slept for the last time in a bed I’d gotten comfortable in. Now I’m living on my own for the first time, cooking for myself for the first time, and discovering that I don’t enjoy it and am quite terrible at being an adult. This was my first Easter not going to church or being with my family. I’ve mostly been going through the motions - wake up, do homework, make food, look at a screen, sleep for too long. In the past when I’ve been down I make a list of things to look forward to, but there isn’t much now - the future is just too uncertain. The only list item is “for this to be over.” This all sounds quite self-pitying of course, people have it much worse than me. But I can’t honestly answer the question “how are you doing” with any form of the word good right now. I doubt many of us can.

- Marie Ohlinger

Grieving the small losses to avoid the enormous ones
I am getting into the routine of online classes and better at finding the motivation to get my schoolwork done. Logistically, I’ve settled into this “new normal.” However, a lot about this situation is still weighing heavily on me. I feel like we’re constantly having to grieve the small losses – all the wonderful experiences we would have had in these next few months, were we able to leave the house--in order to avoid grieving the enormous loss of losing a loved one. Yet, those small losses are hard to let go. Suddenly, I lost the second half of my semester. I moved out of my dorm room. My relationship suddenly became long-distance. I often feel sad and anxious about all the lost memories and experiences I could have had with friends and loved ones, and I wonder what I could possibly do to make this time productive enough to make this time not feel like a waste or a loss. But I’m trying my best. And so is the entire world.

- Samantha Fiegen
How are you doing now?

Honestly, I am not sure. I am still shocked by the goings on of the world. However, I have been the one in my household trying to keep everyone calm. My mom and stepfather are both essential workers and are therefore in contact with others very regularly. My mom is a nurse and works with very sickly people. I am being careful, and I know social distancing is going to help flatten the curve, but I am sure my family is doomed to fall ill due to my mother’s line of work. I will not tell my family this, because they are scared enough as it is. All I can do right now is support my family. I haven’t considered how I am doing during all this.

- Ashley Preston

A natural introvert

Since I am a natural introvert, I have enjoyed my alone time in isolation. Of course, I miss my friends, but I have been taking more time to reflect on my college transition and who I am as a person. I do feel like at times I am not being as productive at school as I normally would be, but I am starting to accept that. Sometimes it’s okay if assignments aren’t turned in a week early, or if I studied a few less hours for a midterm. This unprecedented time has taught me a few life lessons about how to cope with things out of your control and to be grateful for what you have.

- Amanda Dougherty

A little more stir-crazy

On March 12th, it was announced that spring break was extended by an additional week. That night, I remember walking back from Burge hands full of walking tacos, chips, and other items associated with flex meals. In the short, 15 second jaunt from the south exit of Burge to the north door of Daum, I remember the breeze blowing across my skin, the chill air refreshing my lungs, and the clouds passing in this mild, enjoyable night. I remember thinking, “Could this be my last night in Daum?” and then dismissing the thought immediately – this was my home, and I was surrounded by friends; I still had another two months to live here, to enjoy staying up way too late, surrounded by friendly faces.

I’m home now – a nice, amicable, accepting, cozy, peaceful, tranquil, utterly boring place. Though I enjoy relaxing, every day I feel a little more stir-crazy, a little more anxious than the previous. The goal that I always kept in sight – chemistry research at the university – was indefinitely postponed. So, my days continue: I continue to read textbooks, watch video-recorded lectures, and turn in homework assignments until my eyes ache from staring at my computer all day. While I’m in a wonderful place, I feel dampened and emotionally starved, so I do my best to count down the days in grudging acceptance.

– Darrell Smith

So much opportunity, yet so many restrictions

I’m lonely. I check the news every day which I’ve never done before. I’ve learned to cook, at least made a solid attempt at it. I somehow feel just as busy as I did before we all moved home. I’m hopeful. I’ve started watching T.V. shows that have been waiting in my watchlist for months. I’ve realized that there will never be a time in my life like this again, so much opportunity, yet so many restrictions. I manage to balance staying in touch with old friends, new friends, lab groups and professors. Some days are more challenging than others, but the time has passed quicker than expected and I’ve gotten into a routine. I’m not upset and I can’t complain. We’re all going through it together and this too shall pass. That is how I am feeling at the current moment, sitting in my bedroom, drinking my tea.

– Rachael Volkman

Left: Rubye Ney, a first year honors student, takes a break from studying for a socially distant walk along a country road near her house in rural Iowa. Like many first year students, she moved in with her parents in March due to Covid-19 safety measures.

Photo by Suzanna Yoder
A Fresh Face on the Fourth Floor

Meet Addison Woll

Sonia Beltz

If you told Addison Woll, a current Masters degree candidate in higher education and student affairs, a few years ago he would be hired as the Honors Assessment Manager and Admissions Coordinator at the University of Iowa, he probably wouldn’t have believed you. But this February, Woll became the newest member of the Honors staff, a group with whom he says he is really excited to work.

“Life is a journey,” said Woll when asked about the path he took to arrive on the fourth floor of the Blank Honors Center. In high school, Woll wanted nothing more than to go to college and move up the socio-economic ladder. As a first-generation college student, Woll says he fell in love with chemistry during his second semester in college and never looked back. He graduated with Bachelor of Science degrees in biochemistry and microbiology from Southeast Missouri State University. After that, Woll enrolled at the University of Iowa for graduate school in the hopes of attaining a PhD in molecular medicine. But graduate school came with its own, new complications. “I realized I hated doing research,” he said, which derailed his doctoral plans. So instead, he graduated with a Master of Science degree in molecular medicine.

But it was the extra-curricular experiences that he had in graduate school that truly impacted him. One organization he was involved in, the Association of Multicultural Scientists seeks “to promote the advancement of diversity and inclusion within biomedical sciences,” according to its website, by targeting students of underrepresented backgrounds with support and resources. Woll worked with this organization for 2 years, managing student retention and programming for students of underrepresented backgrounds. It was through this group that Woll discovered his love for assessment and his drive to help underrepresented students.

“I enjoy doing professional development with students but never knew it was a field of work,” he said. Currently, Woll is pursuing his Master of Arts in higher education and student affairs, thanks to advice he received from an advisor. He will graduate this summer.

“What was so striking was that when we asked [Woll] ‘Why are you interested in this position?’ he said his three interests were ‘beekeeping, gardening, and assessment,’” said Dr. Emily Hill, assistant director of Honors at Iowa. She was among those who interviewed him for his position. Woll was a perfect fit for the position, Hill says, because of his passion for assessment, which will come in handy as he creates assessments for the program such as those to track how many students who begin Honors graduate with University Honors. “Without data you can’t make an informed decision,” says Hill, pointing to the importance of the data-collecting assessment that Woll will perform.

In his new position, Woll will not only help to recruit high-achieving students to the Honors program but will also create more DEI (Diversity Equity and Inclusion) programs, according to Hill. These programs will provide students with the social capital they are lacking, in order to help them succeed, says Woll. This will involve surveying student needs and interests, and finding out which programs they feel are important.

Continued on page 11

Addison Woll, Assessment Manager & Admissions Coordinator for the Honors Program
Alumni: Where Are They Now?

The boisterous bustle of the University of Iowa reverberates through the memories of its students throughout their lifetimes. Its sound is a welcoming cadence, bringing to mind the seemingly endless array of opportunities that are presented to those who attended the school. As students enter into new stages of their lives, the search for a place to call home begins. Regardless of the physical distance that separates people from the University of Iowa, it remains a home that transcends space for our alumni.

Renugan Raidoo, a 2011 University of Iowa graduate with a Bachelor of Science in chemistry, a Bachelor of Arts in anthropology, and a minor in French, is proud to consider himself a Hawkeye, and his time in the Honors Program cements that feeling. He said that the Honors Program “served as a quite literal home for me during my first two years when I stayed in Daum. Many of my peers from that time remain friends and the conversations we had at the front desk often stretched well past time to close the [Blank Honors Center].” He worked as an Honors Program student staff member and a Writing Fellow. Although Raidoo has traveled all around the globe, earning a PhD in anthropology at Harvard University and studying at the University of Oxford with the Rhodes Scholarship, he is grateful for the home he established in Iowa.

Despite his profound success, there were still moments that Raidoo was met with obstacles that felt insurmountable. Reflecting on these challenges, he stated, “I’ve learned to take stock of what else is going on in my life and to catastrophize less. With the benefit of hindsight, I realize how inconsequential the things I worried about a decade ago—while an undergrad—are now. With the gradual accumulation of life experiences, each hurdle or setback becomes a little bit easier to put into perspective.” The countless lessons he learned from his worldwide journeys inspired him to become a professor of anthropology one day to share his experiences with his students. It has nearly been a decade since Raidoo walked across the graduation stage and yet, he still celebrates the memories he created at the university as he continues to step forward into his promising future.

The sounds that fill the walkways of the University of Iowa resonate clearly with Susan Hagan, a 1994 University of Iowa graduate with a BA in history and Russian Language and Literature with a doctor of law degree. She is the executive director at the University of Iowa Center for Advancement’s Planned Giving department, which allows her to guide individuals in their desires to make a lasting impact on the university and its students. The charitable nature of her job allows her to reflect on the generous impact that the UI and the Honors Program had on her. As a student, she said, “I really enjoyed taking Honors sections of some of my general education classes.” After taking an honors section of her Western Civilization class, she explained, “I ended up forming a bond with that professor and went on to take about five or six classes with her over the years.” The Honors Program helped cultivate countless lifelong connections for her that she still cherishes today.

Hagan continues to develop her passions and ambitions as she moves forward in her career. Of her position now, she said, “I love what I do and hope to finish out my career doing exactly what I am doing now.” The difference she has made in the lives of those who call the University of Iowa their home have been made all the better because of her continued passion in the field. She believes, “It’s important to find a career that you love and that you believe in, a career where you value the work you do and feel valued in return.”

Both Raidoo and Hagan cherish the home they built in Iowa City through the connections and opportunities that they look back on fondly. As seniors prepare to graduate, or for those who eagerly await that day, Hawkeyes do well to appreciate their university home and celebrate the memories they’ve made. Your Honorable title is always with you, no matter how far your footsteps trek across the world.
Scoring Big In and Out of the Classroom

Jenny Cape

Here at Iowa, there's no doubt that the university's Honors Program consists of high-achieving students who are eager to get involved on campus. Whether it's doing undergraduate research alongside a faculty member, helping fundraise as a member of Dance Marathon, or competing with the intramural basketball team, there is something for everyone. However, with such a vast array of options to choose from comes the difficulty of making sure students don't spread themselves too thin by joining any and every organization that peaks their interest. Personally, as a member of the Iowa soccer team and the Honors Program, efficient time management skills have always been crucial to my success. Fortunately, I'm not alone; according to John Bruno, a director of Student-Athlete Academic Services, 44 student-athletes at Iowa are also members of the Honors Program, managing the various demands of collegiate athletics with the time and effort required to succeed as a student at the University of Iowa.

Although each athlete I talked to had a different reason for choosing the Honors path, for most, it came down to an internal desire to challenge themselves. Noah Scigliano, a member of the men's gymnastics team, said, “Being in Honors holds me to high academic expectations for the time I have at Iowa, pushing me to become the best version of myself while I’m here.”

Noah Scigliano competes his floor routine against Oklahoma in February 2019. Photo by Brian Ray

Despite it being difficult to manage athletics and academics, many student-athletes have really appreciated the benefit of enrolling in honors courses. Iowa soccer player Daisy Light, for example, “enjoy[s] being in a smaller class size with motivated people who, likewise, actively participate in discussions.” Outside of an enriched classroom environment, the connections made with both peers and honors staff are invaluable.

However, being an Honors student-athlete at Iowa also requires plenty of discipline. Since both school and sports consume so much time and effort, it’s incredibly difficult to be fully invested in both all the time. Especially when teams are in-season, with over 20 hours dedicated to a combination of practice, games, weightlifting, film review, and team travel, people have to hold themselves accountable in order to succeed in class. One way Honors student-athletes deal with their hectic schedule is by becoming masters of multi-tasking; a substantial amount of travel time is spent making sure students don’t get behind in the classes they had to miss. Whether it’s in a bus, on a plane, or up in a hotel room, it’s not uncommon for teammates to devote any free travel time they have to schoolwork. As Iowa soccer’s Melina Hegelheimer said, “being in Honors and athletics kind of forces you to have a level of grit.”

Frankly, I think Noah put it best when he explained that “Although my schedule is quite full, it keeps me geared toward the future I truly desire.” Nobody said combining the lifestyles of a Division I athlete and an honors student would be easy, but the work ethic and time management skills learned from such an experience are second to none.
Beginning with February renovations, changes are happening within the Blank Honors Center (BHC), leaving the third floor Student Center significantly affected. Behind these renovations is the University’s Lindquist Center, but more specifically a program previously housed in the center known as the Iowa Reading Research Center (IRRC). Accommodating for rapid growth in the College of Education, the relocation of this program to the BHC has caused a major reconfiguring of the third floor layout. Half of the study rooms and the computer lab have been reallocated to the IRRC. This is being accommodated for by the placement of a printer and multiple computers in one of the open areas still available to Honors students on the floor.

Students who often use the third floor’s amenities (a computer lab, quiet study rooms, and group lounges) are directly impacted by the change. The Honors Program recently conducted an anonymous poll in order to gain an understanding of how their students were feeling about the new changes, and many had feedback to give.

One student asserted, “It’s shameful if students can’t share a six-story building. Do we really need all these study lounges/chill spots?” This student expressed their support for the project suggesting that there is enough room for everyone to benefit. On the other end of the spectrum, another student replied, “Not cool. The third floor is my favorite study space on campus.”

Opinions on the matter seem to be split at the moment, but with the project managers wanting to work alongside the students there is hope that the project can satisfy everyone. In a statement about the relocation of the IRRC program, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education Tanya Uden-Holman explained, “Although the renovations on the third floor will result in the loss of some study space, we plan to explore other areas of BHC that could be utilized for additional student study space. We look forward to gathering input from Honors students to assist with planning the furnishing of the student lounge and study spaces. We appreciate everyone’s patience during the renovations.”

With the Campus Planning team confident that the BHC is the best fit for housing the new IRRC, renovations were originally slated for completion by late May. They have since been delayed in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
Honors Societies
What Are They Worth?

For many students in the honors program, ever-full e-mail inboxes receive some particular invitations throughout our college years—an abundance of them purporting the names of honors societies. Beyond a list of names and a Greek alphabet soup, these invitations make us wonder which opportunities are really worth attention and/or time. Are these legitimate organizations? How does one define their worth?

"I have received a lot of other emails and formal mail invitations for other honor societies, but it is hard to tell if they are actually active, or if it's a scam for money," said Sarah Potter, a junior at the UI.

Many students like Potter receive emails from dozens of different organizations claiming the legitimacy of being honors societies, putting on a face as an experience for "honors" students—whether they be for specific majors, centered around students of a particular background, or labeled generally as an "honors" group. In some ways these groups are built to function in ways akin to student organizations, social fraternities, and even standard University honors programs.

It is important to note that this questioning of an honors society's worth is by no means a new issue. One article, addressing how a number of students were turning down Phi Beta Kappa, a prestigious organization with an extensive network, due to these doubts, dates back to 1996 in The New York Times. Quoting a number of students in the article, their testimonies all follow the thread of Potter’s sentiments, addressing how many societies are out there and — more importantly to students — how they all cost money.

"There are a number of honors societies that have long histories that you might want to join for the same reason you might join any other student organization of like-minded people," Yoder said. "Membership might mean new friendships, leadership or service opportunities, and, in the case of PES, access to scholarships not available to other students."

Potter, who is a nursing student, plans to join another honors society particularly focused around her nursing major—Sigma Theta Tau. She says after doing some research into the opportunities they provide to nursing students, she wants to accept the invitation knowing she will utilize these resources such as research pertaining to the nursing field and scholarships. Yoder went on to say, however, that some honors societies can hold weight on their own—Phi Beta Kappa being one of them.

Roland Racevskis, Associate Dean for Arts and Humanities in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the university attested the organization's worth. Racevskis doubles as president of the Alpha Chapter for Iowa of Phi Beta Kappa, the first chapter to have ever existed in the state.

"Phi Beta Kappa is really the most comprehensive, venerable, and prestigious honors society for students to join," Racevskis said. "It is widely recognized and provides meaningful academic and professional connections."
Honors Societies: What Are They Worth?

The professor has been a member himself for 29 years. In 1991 he was invited to join as an undergraduate student at Michigan State University. He said the group focuses primarily on event organization, bringing special guest speakers to students, and making connections with one another. Yoder says that she recommends students accept the offer if invited by Phi Beta Kappa, noting the group’s worth.

Connection being the primary purpose of the organization, leaves question of the benefit beyond prestige. Yoder, who advises Phi Eta Sigma, said how the society’s history at Iowa dates back to the '60s, contrasting how the world at that time was in a whole different stage with communication, and thus the organization served a greater purpose connecting students on a larger scale.

"There was no internet, there wasn't globalization — a national honor society connected you with students around the country," Yoder said. "There [was] something legitimizing and transcendent about that for a student at the time."

However, then was then, and now is now. Yoder continued by saying how communication has greatly changed since, making it easier for students to make connections across the country nowadays without any society or organizations. Honors societies are functioning in a world far different than the one in which they began — leaving their worth up in the air, but their ever-present offers still linger in inboxes. Left to the individual is the choice: whether to take the society and run as far as their opportunities provide or to let it fall and take personal time and focus elsewhere.

The Phi Beta Kappa Society

A Fresh Face on the Fourth Floor: Meet Addison Woll (continued from page 6)

Woll is looking forward to this aspect of his job, because of his passion for working with underrepresented or underserved backgrounds, which he has found through personal experience.

“He is very student-focused,” said Hill, who encourages students to meet with Woll. Woll echoes this, saying, “I'm willing to share my life.”

For him, helping students is personal, since he had little support as a student. He is an open book when it comes to sharing his struggles with others in search of help.

“I was homeless,” he said, referring to a period of time in his high school career. He cites his surprising journey as evidence that success is within reach, noting that he never could have predicted where he would end up.

Woll wants to meet with Honors students and find out what is important to them both through surveys and conversations.

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Whether student or staff, the first day at the University of Iowa is an experience that all Hawkeyes share in common, and Honors at Iowa Assistant Director Emily Hill is no exception. Just last spring, she faced her first day on campus in her new role. Bringing plenty of background within the field of education, the University of North Dakota alum quickly acclimated to the community at the University of Iowa and settled into her office on the fourth floor of the Blank Honors Center. Now, not only is she filling the role of the Assistant Director, she's also teaching a seminar for the Presidential Scholars Program and hosting weekly office hours in Daum Residence Hall.

Like many students, Hill understands the internal conflict of being interested in many things and not being able to choose which to pursue. Although she experimented with many majors and tracks including pre-law, Hill graduated in 2008 from the University in North Dakota with a Bachelor of Arts in both English and Honors. After earning these degrees, she continued her educational career by earning her Masters of Arts in English in 2011 from her alma mater. From this point, Hill took time off to explore career paths, but she found she desired to keep learning, a trait that is prominent in many honors students. Through the University of North Dakota's Educational Foundations and Research Program, she was able to conduct her own studies on a topic of her interest -- twice-exceptional students. After conducting her research, she wrote her dissertation and defended it in December 2019, earning her P.h.D.

As discussed in Dr. Hill's research, twice-exceptional college students are defined by two components: being labeled as "gifted" by a counselor, teacher, or other professional and living with a physical disability, mental disability, learning disability, mental health concern, or a combination thereof. Her focus was specifically on those with mental health concerns. Through the University of North Dakota's Educational Foundations and Research Program, she was able to conduct her own studies on a topic of her interest -- twice-exceptional students. After conducting her research, she wrote her dissertation and defended it in December 2019, earning her P.h.D.

Some research studies have suggested that honors students are more likely to suffer from mental health concerns. A study conducted by Steve Pham at Western Michigan University cited struggles with perfectionism, increased stress levels due to higher-level courses, and the reinforcement of poor coping tendencies which are all risk factors that contribute to mental health concerns as support for this claim.

Dr. Hill recalled similar results from her own research: "That was one of my major findings with all of my participants. For the most part, they all said that they believed that they should be able to logically think their way out of their mental health because they were able to do that in their academics," Hill said, "Mental health is not logical."

Along with this, the students in Hill's study often exercised a very common ideology of "fake it until you make it." Many had developed skills to hide their mental health struggles to keep functioning and succeed. Dr. Hill even recalled a particular student who was struggling.
with panic attacks and found a way to prevent herself from having those panic attacks while in class but had to set aside time for these breakdowns at home.

On the other hand, Hill discovered that some students who did seek help found that their experiences were not as positive and/or helpful due to other factors like long waits for services or the shifting of who provided treatment. Along with this, she mentioned that services outside of a university are often not accessible nor affordable for students, hindering them.

These are many of the issues that Hill hopes to address in the future by both working with campus partners as well as students and staff who are often the biggest resources for those who are struggling. Although her work would primarily be at the University of Iowa, this may provide an example for other universities to follow. Being able to recognize the signs of many mental health concerns would be beneficial for staff and students to have to provide the support their peers need. Kognito, an electronic simulation that helps participants recognize signs of suicide ideation in their peers, was required for the incoming class of 2023 to complete as part of Success at Iowa. Hill says she would like to see more students and staff complete the training or something similar such as the “Mental Health First Aid” program she saw implemented at another university during her research. Like Kognito, the “Mental Health First Aid” program assisted participants in recognizing signs of common mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.

“In our culture that’s becoming more and more comfortable talking about mental health, we now need to make a plan of how we’re going to support those people,” Hill said.

Those are goals for the future. For now, Hill continues to hold open office hours remotely on account of the university closure and teaches one of four Presidential Scholars seminars. The seminar is a direct way to be able to talk with students about their experiences and hear about their struggles. For Hill, it’s confirmation that a lot of the components of her research are still prevalent in the honors community.

Dr. Hill holds open office hours during the school year, which can be found advertised on the honors website.

They believed that they should be able to logically think their way out of their mental health because they were able to do that in their academics, but mental health is not logical.

If you’re interested in knowing more about or completing the Kognito training, information can be found here: https://counseling.uiowa.edu/services/kognito/

If you or someone close to you is in need of services for mental health concerns, information about University Counseling Services (UCS) can be found here: https://counseling.uiowa.edu/
Dealing With Mental Health

A Few Tips from Honors

The University Counseling Services (UCS) offers helpful consultations and therapy services to all UI students, as a mental health fee of $8.25 is included in each semester’s tuition. How often does the care help students? Do they know what problems affect honors and students identified as gifted and how to address them? Are there ways to better their system? The Assistant Director of Honors at Iowa, Emily Hill, about her PhD research on this topic, answered many of these questions.

Dr. Hill’s dissertation, which she just defended in December, was about twice exceptional students, or those who have been identified as gifted and talented and also struggle with their mental health. Being in honors tends to have a high population of those identified as “gifted and talented,” which are those that have been specially identified as gifted during their K-12 schooling, so the struggles she identified in the students she interviewed at a different, unnamed, university are likely to apply to a large number of the UI’s honors students. The largest problem she found in these students was one’s attempt to be self-sufficient. “[The students] thought they should be able to think their way out of any mental health problems.” They often became frustrated when they could not, because mental health is often not able to be simply thought out of and solved, she said. A fair amount decided to not seek any help at all because they did not want a diagnosis, had the idea that they should be able to handle it on their own, or believed they were too busy to seek any help, Hill said.

Those that sought out treatment were often faced with further challenges including from parents and even university staff. Parents often struggled to understand the intricacies of mental health, inadvertently or even outwardly being hostile to the students seeking help, Hill said. One parent of a student Dr. Hill interviewed refused to pay medical bills for them after they were hospitalized for a suicide attempt. Lecturers and other professors are sometimes more understanding, as Hill stated they can have trouble recognizing when a student might need, or want help. “One student seemed super chill, very happy, but learned when she began to conduct the interviews that he suffered from suicidal ideation.” Dr. Hill had never suspected anything was wrong. How could she, when the student hadn’t brought it up?

Students in Dr. Hill’s survey also complained of long lines for counseling at their university. In a separate interview with an Honors student named Jessica Hambrick, felt the same as those students. “Countless people [were] being turned down because they called too late in the day. All the appointments for the day were taken.” This, along with the counseling service focusing on solving what the UCS website states as the “immediate problems that brought you to the UCS” rather than long term issues, can be discouraging to students seeking help for their mental health.

A UCS staff member at Iowa, Caitlin Owens, had a different take on UCS. “We try to be really responsive with outreach programs, professors, anything we can do to grow and increase our impact.” Though she does acknowledge there is room to grow. “We always accept feedback, and want to do better. We’re looking into ways to reach more minority and other underserved populations at the university.” She also offered many solutions to help deal with mental health in the everyday. “It’s about finding what works for you, whether it’s counting breaths, guided meditation, taking a hot shower, or yoga you should do what works best for you.” The most important thing she said, though, was that the best time to come in to see UCS was now. “You don’t have to wait until you’re in a crisis. Anytime when you are feeling unwell, or even well but like you need help, schedule an appointment.”
"Every student who goes through here has to deal with the effects of climate change in some way. The university has to prepare them for what they will face in the real world," the Director of Sustainability of the UI Student Government Emily Manders said. Manders is also an intern for the UI Office of Sustainability.

Although the university invests in large, sweeping projects, many students feel they do not contribute much to the school's sustainability efforts. "I don't necessarily feel actively involved. I see the measures being taken around me, but I don't feel like I'm contributing," Sydney Clarkin, a student in Daum Residence Hall, said. "It's more like I see a recycling bin and think 'oh, that's a good idea.'"

Manders said, "There are steps the [UI] has taken this year to try to bring more attention to sustainability efforts, but I think that there is a huge gap between what students know and what the [UI] is doing. Luckily, there are several programs to help students take a more active role in the school's efforts.

This is a movement led by student voices, the more voices we can get, the better."
Goals for a Green Campus: What Can Students Do to Help?

UI also has a Student Garden on campus, originally started by an honors student in 2009. The gardens provide sustainably-grown produce to students and to organizations like the Food Pantry and the Johnson County Crisis Center. For students who want to learn more about sustainable agricultural practices and lifestyle choices, this is a good place to look. Student Garden co-president Olivia Bohlman said, “I think it’s really important for students to have access to free, fresh produce, as it’s not always the cheapest to buy in Iowa City... It’s also a really easy way to connect with the environment and understand your own role in providing for the earth, yourself, and others.”

Beyond individual programs, one of the most important ways to improve sustainability is to foster a culture that actively pursues it. In 2019, the Honors Program had several Primetime activities that touched on sustainability, including “Go Outside and Play”, which outlined the importance of nature to human well-being, and “Textiles, Trade, and Fast Fashion,” which acknowledged the effects of commercialism on resource waste. There are sure to be more Primetime topics about environmentalism this summer to get Honors students involved in sustainability as soon as they arrive.

Honors students especially have a big role to play in improving sustainability on campus. There are plenty of tools on campus to reduce personal waste, but it’s even more important to participate in broadening sustainable culture in the community. The leadership and involvement of honors students is what creates new tools like the Student Garden and other programs on campus. The UI looks to students to provide feedback and lead new projects, so getting involved can have a huge impact on the campus.

“This is a movement led by student voices,” Manders said. “The more voices we can get, the better. That’s really important.”

The UI student garden is being maintained this spring despite student absence. Photo by Kinsey Phipps
Meet the Writers
Honors Students at Your Service

**Eleanor Abbott**
Eleanor is a freshman Statistics major who likes writing, drawing, and taking long walks around campus. She’s planning to study abroad later next year.

**Sonia Beltz**
Sonia is a freshman from Beavercreek, Ohio, studying English and creative writing. In addition to writing and reading, she enjoys listening to music and spending hours researching European history.

**Mackenzie Anderson**
Mackenzie is a freshman from Ames, Iowa studying Health and Human Physiology with hopes of becoming a Physician’s Assistant. Other than her passion for studying health she also enjoys doing anything active, drinking way too much coffee, and exploring Iowa City with her friends.

**Genevieve Cleverley**
Genevieve is a fourth-year Psychology and Studio Art major, with Human Relations and Social Work minors. She is an admin and graphic designer for the Honors Program. In her free time, she enjoys working at the Iowa Children’s Museum, printmaking, NPR podcasts, and her cat.

**Jenny Cape**
Jenny is a sophomore from Brookfield, WI, majoring in Biomedical Sciences with a Spanish minor. Besides math and science, she loves playing soccer with her team, listening to different Spotify playlists, and exploring new places.

**Kyler Johnson**
Kyler is a current freshman at the University embarking on an English and creative writing major with minors in German, Portuguese, and Chinese. Having spent the last year abroad in Belgium, he’s happy to be a bit closer to home, hoping with the stories he shares to really connect with his new college community.
**Meet the Writers**

*Honors Students at Your Service*

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**Gabbie Meis**

Gabbie Meis is a senior studying English and Creative Writing with minors in Spanish and Translation. Apart from editing and writing, she enjoys baking bread, drinking Starbucks refreshers, and reading whatever she can get her hands on.

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**Airiana Mohr**

Airiana is a first-year neuroscience major from Machesney Park, Illinois with minors in chemistry and Spanish. Aside from her studies, Airiana is a member of DSAC (Dean's Student Advisory Committee – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences) and UISG. In her free time, Airiana enjoys reading and spending time with her friends.

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**Kinsey Phipps**

Kinsey Phipps is a sophomore studying English and Creative Writing with minors in Spanish and Translation. With a heart for travel, she spent last summer interning in Dublin, Ireland. You probably won’t see her without a coffee in hand.

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**Jacob Sammon**

Jacob is from Urbandale, Iowa, and is a first-year student at the University of Iowa. He is pursuing a major in English and Creative Writing, a minor in Communication Studies, and is on the Publishing Track. He hopes to continue developing his skills as a writer by learning from his dedicated peers and the City of Literature’s culture.

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**Oliver Willham**

Oliver is a sophomore from West Des Moines, IA, majoring in English and Creative Writing and Cinema. He spends most of his time at the library, writing and reading. Or just drinking the library's smoothies.
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