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## HONORS SCHOLARSHIPS

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**Connect with the Honors Program on Social Media!**

- University of Iowa Honors Program: Facebook
- @uiowahonors: Instagram
- honorsatiowa.wordpress.com: Website

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HELLO! If you’ve met me or been in a class where I’ve talked about honors scholarships and scholarship opportunities, then you know or may have noticed that I can go a full 50 minutes without even mentioning money. Counterintuitive to scholarship talk, I know.

While the University of Iowa Honors Program offers some great scholarships, (twelve different opportunities for first- through fourth-year students), ending up with a financial award is just a bonus. The secret goal is actually to empower you to become more confident in putting together an application and learning how to effectively advocate for yourself on paper. As you will see in this guide, the honors program scholarship application includes a general application, transcript, résumé, letter of recommendation, and essay. Each component of the application serves a purpose which goes beyond its being evaluated by one of several campus faculty reviewers. It is not a test of what you do or where you’re from but rather what you do with what you do and where you’re from, while helping you to reflect on who you are. The process is what you make it, but it is meant to be a learning tool rather than a transactional application.

One of my hopes as you apply is that you learn about yourself and reflect on all the cool things you do and have done without feeling the need to impress anyone. Too often, our existence is disproportionately weighed on external and narrow criteria and our value is measured on potential marketplace performance — but do not let this determine your personal definition of success or sense of self. Please.

Life is not just about material objects and titles. Yes, the purpose of this application is to get money, which has a very practical value. The world wants to know what we do, which can also carry some punitive explanations of why we seemingly may or may not measure up or do “well,” but this promotes a meritocracy — the system of belief that each person gets what they deserve based on their capabilities and merits this idea of meritocracy carries with it a nasty truth: if we truly believe in a world in which those who deserve to get to the top do, by implication, we must also believe in a world in which those who get to the bottom deserve to be at the bottom. In other words, a meritocratic world will suppose that failure and success in the world’s game are not simply accidents, but indications of genuine value where winners make their own luck and losers make their own defeat. It’s no wonder that the consequences of perceived underachievement or loss can feel especially punishing.

One of my biggest missions in working with students is to help you all unlearn the idea of failure and rejection. Failure, as a concept, is a social construct, and I encourage you all to completely eliminate this word from your vocabulary and move away from such binary thinking. Failure just isn’t real and is not the opposite of success. It is great to feel proud of your achievements, but you should feel just as proud of the work you’ve put into the process, regardless of outcome.

Success and failure are relative markers, not conclusive judgements. In reality, no one is ever either a loser or winner. We are all mixtures of beautiful and ugly, impressive and mediocre, and sometimes less-than-stellar moments. What counts is what you do with all of that. Construct a you that you will be unapologetically proud of. No matter what, whether you get into that program, get that job or scholarship, are publicly recognized for your accomplishments, or achieve anything else you want for yourself, be your own biggest cheerleader and advocate, and don’t care about anyone else’s opinion of you (but if you ever need a backup cheerleader, feel free to email me, any time).

Good luck :)}
The University of Iowa Honors Program is dedicated to helping its students succeed, whether that be through academic resources, community building, or financial assistance. Thanks to the generosity of donors and alumni, the program can award numerous scholarships each year. In 2020, of the roughly 300-member applicant pool, 106 candidates received scholarships.

During the application process, students enter their information into a universal application through the Iowa Scholarship Portal for Undergraduate Students, which automatches a student with all possible scholarships. Then, they must complete the honors conditional application for which students are asked to provide a résumé/CV a letter of recommendation, and an essay. A few additional honors scholarships are available but not included in the universal application.

The essay, which is limited to 750 words, is utilized to highlight who the student is outside of the classroom. Camille Socarras, the honors scholarship coordinator, says, “Honors is really about developing the whole student, and most scholarship recipients will be able to encompass that honors experience in their application.”

- Camille Socarras
Scholarship Coordinator

For many students, scholarships are vital to continuing their education at the University of Iowa, and this has been amplified due to the pandemic. The application for the 2022-2023 academic year will open on Friday, November 26, 2021, and will close on February 26, 2022. For more information, please see the honors website at honors.uiowa.edu.

This comprehensive guide will provide tips and tricks for students navigating the scholarship process. Additionally, a few short excerpts will provide details about some of the scholarships offered through the universal application.
Please attach a CV and résumé along with your application.

Most applications typically ask for either a résumé or a CV to be attached in order to be complete. For undergraduates who have never needed to make a CV or résumé, creating these documents may be uncharted territory. Continue reading for a guide on how to tailor your own CV and résumé in your application for the University of Iowa’s honors scholarships.

Résumé vs. CV

Both documents outline a person’s experiences, education, and skills. However, each document serves a different purpose and is used for different applications. You may be familiar with the idea of a résumé from past jobs, internships, and even past scholarships. However, an honors résumé — and an honors CV — looks a little different than it would for other applications.

Curriculum Vitae is Latin for “course of life” and is a detailed collection of someone’s history of their career, including qualifications and education. The purpose of a CV is to highlight research, education, academic honors, and any related experiences. On the other hand, a résumé is a brief overview of someone’s work history, relevant experiences, and skills. While a CV is more detailed and shows the lengthy history of an applicant, a résumé is specifically tailored to the position, scholarship, or grant being requested with the goal of catching the reviewers’ interests. Medical and scientific editor Kristina Greiner states, “A résumé is a listing of skills and work experience. A CV focuses on education and formal training.” Larger or science- and health-related scholarships will typically ask you to include a CV along with your application.

When applying for honors scholarships, most students will not have the necessary years of experience to submit a CV and will need to focus more on tailoring their résumés. The honors scholarship application seeks a better understanding of your qualifications outside of just work and school-related experiences, especially those related to the honors program.
RÉSUMÉ BREAKDOWN

The format for résumés is typically the same across all applications. However, the Honors Program encourages creativity and personal style to be expressed through the format.

1. The résumé begins with your name usually centered and at the top. It is then followed by your address and personal contact information.

2. It then transitions into a collection of sections, beginning with education. This section details the institutions you have attended and the degrees you (will have) received from them.

3. The next section is typically your experiences, which can include work or volunteer positions. You list the role you held, the year(s) you held it, the organization, and three bullet points describing what you did within the role. The bullet points serve to give a better idea of the tasks you completed while holding the role.

4. The final section is includes any organizations of which you are a member. This can be as simple as listing the organization and the year(s) involved. If you hold an executive position within the organization such as president, vice president, or chair, it will help to include that information as well.

5. Finally, include a short section that lists any relevant skills or courses you have taken. For the honors scholarship application, listing honors courses (course code HONR), honors-specific sections, or courses you have contracted will help tailor this section to the application. Skills that may be listed might include leadership, Microsoft Office proficiency, or other certifications.
Tailoring a Résumé to the Opportunity

All résumés should be tailored to the specific scholarship you are applying for. This means including volunteer and work experience that is related to the scholarship you are applying for and putting emphasis on courses and interests related to the scholarship. This also includes removing any irrelevant information. Aside from a few select scholarships, the honors program uses a universal application that allows you to submit one complete application for all of the scholarships the program offers.

Tips and Tricks

Little things can be added or changed within your résumé or CV to make it stand out. One of the most important things to include is quantified statements as your bullet points to show the outcome beneath your experience. One example may include changing a value sentence such as “Organized company files” to “Organized 150 company files to create a more efficient filing system.” This directly shows how you impacted the organization. Another tip is to make sure your professionalism and your personality shine through both documents. This is the first impression a potential scholarship reviewer will have of you, make it count!

Résumé and CV Resources at the University of Iowa

Because creating résumés and CVs can be tricky, the University of Iowa has plenty of resources for students, such as the Pomerantz Career Center, where you can review your documents with professionals. Additional helpful resources for creating CVs can be found on the Carver College of Medicine Page, one called “Curriculum Vitae” and the other called “Curriculum Vitae Pointers.” While these pages are tailored to medical students, they offer great advice that could be applied to pre-medicine and undergraduate students. Tippie College of Business also has a page on its website that provides extremely thorough CV and résumé templates.

RÉSUMÉ BUILDING GUIDE

DO

- Write concisely
- Customize your resume accordingly
- Include hobbies, interests, and volunteering (if a significant amount of time is spent on them)
- Highlight your honors involvement and other achievements

DON’T

- Embellish or exaggerate your skills and achievements
- Include a photo
- Write in passive voice
- Forget to check for grammatical or other related errors

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Tackling the Essay

By Seth Foster & Olivia Tonelli

Scholarship essays can appear daunting to write at first glance. The essay is one of the most important aspects of an application that scholarship reviewers analyze, and it is where the applicant is able to most clearly express themselves. Therefore, there are all sorts of questions to consider when writing your essay. How do you approach the question? How do you revise your work to make sure it is ready and reflective of you? What do essay reviewers often find appealing? The process comes with a lot of questions. Luckily, other honors students have gone through the same process and have many tips to offer to help write the perfect scholarship essay!

Conceptualize and Organize

Like many efforts in life, taking the first step—coming up with what you want to talk about in the essay—is often the hardest. To begin conceptualizing the essay, a tip that many scholarship winners suggest is to first figure out how you would like to focus your response to the prompt. Often, a primary determinant of whether an essay will impress reviewers comes down to how well the prompt is answered. The scholarship FAQ page of the honors website has some salient advice regarding this: Answer the essay question asked. Even if you do not like it or do not know how you will answer it right away, you MUST answer the question asked in order to be considered for our scholarships. Since instructions can be confusing or interpreted in different ways, we encourage students with questions to reach out BEFORE the deadline to find out more about what is motivating us or just to clarify any piece that feels unclear to them.

Heeding this advice, it is wise to look at the prompt as soon as possible. If it feels too open-ended or overwhelming at first, then you will have plenty of time to ponder the question and allow your response to percolate. After considering the prompt, you will eventually need to decide on your approach to answering it. “Figuring out what you want to write about, how to make it unique...I think that’s the hardest part. Once you know what you’re doing, it’s not that hard to put it on paper,” reflects Lauren Sanyal, a second-year English and creative writing major who has won an honors scholarship herself. In the past, you may have been told to “subvert the question” or “answer the prompt cleverly and indirectly.” Camille Socarras, the Scholarship Coordinator for the honors program, advises against this. “We don’t want students to feel like they need to manipulate the reviewers to get a scholarship...That is very different from knowing your audience, and our reviewers can easily tell when they are being manipulated a certain way.” Caroline Meek, a recent honors graduate, concurs: “Write authentically! Don’t just write what you think the scholarship people want to hear. What’s your real answer to the prompt if you were talking to your dog? You wouldn’t lie to your dog—your dog already loves you.”

With all of that in mind, here are a few things to consider when coming up with your approach:

- Analyze the prompt immediately and closely. Sit and think about it for a while.
- Pitch who you are and why you are applying for this opportunity.
- Attempt to find an interesting and unique place of truth to answer from—what’s your personal story?
- Most important: answer the question, and do so in a straightforward, honest manner.

Create a Draft and Manage Your Time

As with most essays, it is generally advised that you come up with an outline of your response before creating a rough draft. A nice “skeleton” of your essay can help build up all the vital pieces to make an organic, well-crafted product. It also allows you to ask yourself all the important questions: “Should this idea come before that one? How much do I need to expand on these ideas to say everything I want to say? Do I need to trim some parts to stick to the word count?”

After that comes the bulk of where your time will likely go: writing your first draft. This is the most open-ended part of the essay-writing process. For most people, writing a first draft is a process of doing what feels right to them. Still, there are a few tips every essay-writer should follow:

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Please visit the honors website at: honors.uiowa.edu
• Mind your grammar and spelling.
• Order and connect your ideas between paragraphs to make your essay flow.
• Make your tone relatively formal but still conversational—writing from the first-person point of view is welcome and encouraged, but avoid excessive use of abbreviations and/or “Internet lingo.”

It should also be emphasized that, at least with scholarships at the University of Iowa, reviewers want you to provide your response in the format that they ask for. If they want an essay, your response should be formatted as an essay, simple as that. Meek recalls writing a poem instead of an essay for one college application, which did not work in her favor. “It was this whole motivational, spoken word poem/essay and just... no. Follow the instructions—that’s my biggest advice,” Meek says. Additionally, there are a few criteria that essay reviewers tend to look out for. Here are four of the particularly important points you’ll want to ask yourself while writing your draft:

• Does the essay tell us who the student is—not what they do?
• Does the essay adequately explore the full range of possibilities expressed in the question? Does the student also contextualize their story and experience in a larger world?
• Does the essay demonstrate thoughtfulness and critical thinking? Does it show self and global awareness?
• Does the essay inspire you to want to have a conversation with this person and know more?

The time in which you finish and submit the essay is also something to keep in mind. It should be obvious advice to never rush an essay or turn it in the day before or, worse yet, on its due date. Spreading the work out over several days is a good approach to time management, both to reduce stress and help your focus. “I spread [the general honors scholarship essay and resumé] out over...maybe two weeks,” comments Sanyal. “Doing it all at once is definitely too tiring.” Spreading the writing and revision process out will ensure that you have enough time to think about the prompt, decide on a compelling topic, and produce a well-written product. If you rush the process, the quality of the writing is likely to suffer.

**Edit and Finalize**

Once you have decided on the focus of the essay and have written the first draft, creating a second draft and/or editing your work are all that remain. Reviewing and editing the essay several times is highly encouraged. “When I look back, I always see ways I can write better... I can always improve how I say things,” Sanyal says. Going over your article several times can help reduce that “I could have done better” feeling, and generally, the more confident you are in your writing, the higher quality your writing likely is. Rewriting the whole essay may be intimidating, but it is a tactic that works for some individuals. “I force myself to open a new document and actually write out a new draft word for word,” Meek says. “That second draft is more intentional because I’ve kept the stuff that was good and had to rewrite the stuff that didn’t need to stick around. That’s the hardest part, but after that, it gets a bit easier.”

Within the revision process, peer review is also a valuable resource that should be taken advantage of whenever possible. Having another set of eyes look over your work will bring issues to focus that you might not have seen yourself. Meek believes it is valuable to ask for feedback from someone close to you. “I think the most effective and powerful [essays] are the ones that you’re writing from a personal standpoint, so if you’re workshopping it with a buddy who really gets you, they’ll be able to cut down to the heart of it,” Meek says. Even on the most basic level, having someone else read over your work will ensure that your argument makes sense.

If you don’t have someone you trust to look over your work, however, the university provides resources to help. The university’s Writing Center, for example, is a great place to go for editing and general writing advice. Even if you don’t feel you need feedback, it never hurts to hear what others have to say about your work.

If you have given the essay enough time and effort, the only thing left to do is trust that you’ve done a good job. For Meek, a big part of the process is trusting your intuition. “As a reader, you go back and read your own work, and then you’ll kind of know. And if you don’t, then hopefully your friend will know!” Meek added that once you put in the work to write, edit, and revise, you will have created an essay that shows who you are, and the rest is out of your hands. “Trust that you are cool and unique enough by nature of being a human that if you’re a right fit for that opportunity, you’ll get it.” Meek further advises. If you’ve followed these tips, then chances are that you have yourself a scholarship-winning essay.

**“Trust that you are cool and unique enough by nature of being a human that, if you’re a right fit for that opportunity, you’ll get it.” – Caroline Meek**
REACHING OUT WITH CONFIDENCE

A Step-by-Step Guide to Asking for a Letter of Recommendation

By Morgan Corbett

Asking for a letter of recommendation is like submitting a section of your scholarship application blind-folded. You will never see the final product, which is why asking for a letter of recommendation is such an important step in the submission process. Not only do you never see it, but it is also the most social component because it requires you to reflect on your existing relationships with trusted faculty.

Dana Thomann, a professor in the Department of Rhetoric and the most recent recipient of the Honors Teaching Award, has written hundreds of letters of recommendation for both her graduate teaching instructors and undergraduate students that take her rhetoric courses. Sierra Wicks, a third-year honors student, has already received multiple honors scholarships since she began attending the university. Combined, their advice has helped create a cohesive guide to help you get the most out of your letter of recommendation.

Choose Whom to Ask

When choosing whom to ask for a letter of recommendation, both Thomann and Wicks highly suggest that you choose a recommender that you know well. If they are an instructor, asking someone who taught a class which you did well in gives them a much easier time when writing a positive letter of recommendation. “It’s about making sure that you’re giving them the resources...and it shows that you care,” Wicks explained.

Once you have a small list of people to consider, ask yourself the following questions:

- Did I perform well in their class/research study?
- Have I taken the initiative to get to know them outside of a professional setting?
- Did this class prepare me for my future career?
- Do I have a passion and interest for that subject?

If all four of your answers are “yes,” then this faculty member would be a perfect candidate for recommending you. If you do not have anyone who fills all of these criteria, there’s no need to worry. The person who fits the criteria best is recommended. Always have a backup just in case.

Reach Out

Thomann recommends that you reach out to whomever you are asking about one month in advance of the deadline for submission. If you ask too early, the recommender might forget, and emailing them with extra reminders will create more work on your end. If you ask too late, then the faculty member might not have enough time to write a great letter.

If possible, Thomann recommends you reach out in person first. She recommends attending office hours or setting up a meeting to explain the opportunity you will need the recommendation for and why you are interested in applying for it.

Here is a list of what you should include in your initial correspondence the first time you reach out:

- What you are applying for
- A direct request for a letter of recommendation
- When the submission deadline is
- Asking to meet to discuss the opportunity

At this point, there is no need to provide a mountain of details. If you are reaching out in person, the faculty member will not remember everything, so leave additional information for after they have agreed to write you a letter.

It is also a good idea to tell them why you have reached out to them specifically. “You should include a ‘here’s why you’re the person that I chose’ part,” Thomann suggested. She explained that it helps when a recommender knows the student has gotten a lot out of their class or research study. “There’s something about the emotional side of it.”

If you don’t have a very strong relationship with the faculty member, tell...
"You should include a ‘here’s why you’re the person that I chose’ part ... There’s something about the emotional side of it.”

- Dana Thomann

Professor

them more about yourself. In the case that it has been over a semester since working with or for them, refresh their memory and describe what class you took or what position you held. If you are a first-year and haven’t known them for a full semester, give them a summary of what your aspirations are outside of what they already know. Explain why you believe your work with them encapsulates it. The faculty member will then determine whether or not they can still write you a great and accurate letter of recommendation.

If whomever you are reaching out to agrees to write you a letter, ask what kind of additional information they will need. If they decline, don’t give up! Immediately reach out to your backup choice and follow the same steps.

Provide Details

Once you have a recommender, the next step is to email them with additional information. If the recommender doesn’t have any specific details they would like to know, then the amount of additional information that you provide is up to you. This should be based upon what you think is important for them to know.

This is the best time to give them a more thorough description of what you are applying for, and what you want them to include. Like a resume, the letter of recommendation is often tailored to the opportunity. Remind them of the due date so they can plan accordingly and consider adding the link to what you are applying for so the faculty member can read it for themselves.

Here are some details you might include to help your recommender write you a personalized letter of recommendation:

- Why you are applying for this scholarship
- Plan of study (including major(s), minor(s), certificate(s), etc.)
- Career goals, passions, and interests
- Your experience in their class/research study
  - Its impact on you
  - Any notable project that you completed
- A copy of your resume
- Extracurricular involvements

If your recommender doesn’t know you from a class setting such as a former boss or research supervisor, give them any academic information that they might be missing.

To avoid any confusion at the time of submission, explain to your recommender how they will submit the letter of recommendation. For the honors scholarship, everything is run within the scholarship portal, so all you have to do is submit their name and email address. Tell them that they will receive an email from the scholarship portal with instructions. There is a possibility that the email will end up in their spam or junk folder. Just in case, Wicks likes to add the line, “Let me know if you don’t get that email.”

Follow-Up and Send Reminders

Make sure to stay on top of your letter of recommendation. Although rare, it is still easy for a faculty member to forget they are nearing an important deadline amidst the other work they have to complete. “It’s okay to send a reminder,” Thomann stated. “Sometimes our email inbox does get inundated...so it’s absolutely okay to kind of press people a little bit.”

A proper reminder includes:

- Checking in to see how everything is going
- Reminding them of the letter’s due date
- Asking if they need anything else from you before they submit it
- Verifying that they have received an email from the scholarship portal

Thomann recommends that you follow up once as a gentle reminder, and twice if the letter still has not been submitted 24 hours before the deadline.

Give Gratitude

Once you have gotten confirmation that the letter has been submitted, make sure to reach out again to your recommender to thank them for taking the time to write you a letter of recommendation. Wicks suggests including something along the lines of, “Thank you so much for taking this time. I really appreciate it. Let me know if you have any questions.”

Thomann recommends that in your thank you note, you ask whether or not they would appreciate another follow-up. “I do prefer to know the end result even if it’s bad news,” she explained.

If you feel comfortable, you can also ask the faculty member if you can use them as a reference. “I always double-check with people before I list them as a reference,” Wicks said. If they say yes, then they will have a file ready to pull up, and you will have a reference for any future opportunity.

FOR MORE TIPS:
Check out the information on page 12!
TIPS TO ACE THE LETTER OF REC

Thomann and Wicks also have some tips on what can help you and what to avoid while asking for a letter of recommendation.

Stay organized

- A little extra effort goes a long way and makes the process much easier for the recommender. Make sure you’re supplying them with enough information. Send reminders to them and watch the due date. “They’re a partner in this,” said Thomann.

Turn this into a learning opportunity

- Ask yourself what you can learn from this experience. As Thomann put it, this is not “transactional” but a way to practice making connections with faculty and to build confidence before you enter a graduate program or the job market.

Don’t let nerves keep you from applying

- You might ask yourself, “Is it really worth it?” “What if all of my professors hate me?” Wicks once thought. Most faculty members LOVE supporting students because they want to see them succeed, so don’t let anxiety get the best of you.

WHAT TO AVOID

Asking too late

- If this recommender has already written you a letter before, two weeks’ notice is perfectly fine. “You can tweak that pretty quickly,” Thomann explained. However, that might be too short of a time frame if this is the first letter the recommender has written for you. Stick to one month and follow up when the deadline is approaching.

Reaching out years after you have worked with them

- Even if you can recall your performance in their class or research study, this faculty member most likely has hundreds of students every year, and reaching out more than a year later will make it difficult for them to write an accurate letter. “Keeping in touch with people is important,” Thomann added.

Asking faculty members that you performed poorly with

- If you took an instructor’s class and didn’t perform well, then it will be difficult for the instructor to write a positive letter for you. “They just don’t have much to write about,” as Wicks put it. Faculty members still need to be honest, so reach out to someone who you know can speak to your academic strengths and positive character.

“Asking for a letter of recommendation is always something that I’ve been very nervous about,” Wicks admitted. “But your professors don’t hate you. They probably really like you.”

Thomann understands the nerves as well because she used to be the one asking for letters of recommendation herself. In reality, faculty members always want to help their students get great opportunities. “We want you to land the scholarship,” she said. “Have confidence!”

Faculty members want to help you, but they can’t until you reach out and ask, so give it your all. Soon you could be saying what Wicks does every time she’s received a scholarship: “This was so worth the hours that I put into it.”
Honors Scholarships Available through the Universal Application

The University of Iowa Honors Program Fellowship
The Richard Tyner Scholarship
The Dewey B. Stuit Scholarship for Excellence
The Rhodes Dunlap Scholarship for Achievement in First & Second Years
The Rhodes Dunlap Collegiate Scholarships - For Scholars in the Third Year
The James D. Robertson Scholarship for Excellence in the Social Sciences
Guy D. and Betty J. Williams Scholarship
Dr. Donna S. Parsons Honors Scholarship

Honors Scholarships NOT Available through the Universal Application

The Dewey B. Stuit Scholarship for Excellence in the First-Year
The Sean Wu Scholarship
Phi Eta Sigma Scholarship
Honors Experiential Learning Grant
Kay Keeshan Hamod Scholarship
Presidential Scholars Program

For more information: https://honors.uiowa.edu/availableawards
HER office walls were dotted with photos from iconic Beatles landmarks throughout Liverpool, where she’d visited eleven times,” reads the memoriam of recently passed University of Iowa alumna Donna Parsons — a beloved educator who created an impact in the honors community.

An Iowa native, Parsons received a Bachelor of Arts in music, Master of Arts in music, and a Doctor of Philosophy in interdisciplinary studies with concentrations in music and literature all while attending the University of Iowa. After graduating, she went on to teach and lecture at the UI across several areas of study including within the School of Music and the honors program.

During her time as an educator, she inspired students through her memorable classes which combined her passions for popular culture, music, and literature. Her honors courses “Harry Potter and the Quest for Enlightenment” and “Women Who Rock” were incredibly popular and loved by many honors students. Parsons strived to create exciting learning opportunities for students through research, travel, and interdisciplinary courses. She encouraged students to always be curious and ask questions.

Dr. Art Spisak, former director of the honors program, fondly remembers Parsons and the joy she brought to campus. “She was a very warm and giving person,” Spisak shares. “That carried over into the classroom. She helped students academically, but she was there to support them through their personal problems as well.”

When Parsons passed in 2018, the Dr. Donna S. Parsons Honors Scholarship was created by her father, Donald Parsons Sr., and brother, Donald Parsons Jr., to honor her contributions to the University of Iowa community and commemorate the impacts she had as a beloved educator, mentor, and friend. In accordance with the intent of the scholarship donors, the Parsons scholarship is available to all honors students with preference given to a “deserving student” with financial need.

The scholarship is also renewable to any recipients who continue to meet the requirements of the scholarship in their years as a student at the University of Iowa.

To apply for the Dr. Donna S. Parsons Honors Scholarship, students can use the University of Iowa Scholarship Portal. To best qualify for this scholarship, students should demonstrate financial need and show the ways in which they embody the spirit of Parsons when applying through the honors program universal scholarship application.
IN MEMORIAM

The Legacy of the Sean Wu Scholarship

By Axel Ohrvall

Honors students are offered a wide range of scholarship opportunities through the universal application, but there are a few opportunities outside of the portal that honors students may also qualify for. These scholarships require additional applications. One of them is the Sean Wu Memorial Scholarship. Available through the Division of Student Life, this scholarship is limited to an incoming first-year student and is intended to help those enduring personal hardships. Although the scholarship is not directly available through the universal application of the honors program, recommendations are made based on applications for the honors program.

Sean “Scooter” Wu and his twin brother were born on August 12, 1998, to parents Dave and Una Wu in Arizona. At the age of six, Wu was diagnosed with Kawasaki disease — a rare condition that causes blood vessels throughout the body to swell. Despite his diagnosis, Wu was an enthusiastic person and a bright student. He graduated as class valedictorian from J.F. Kennedy High School in Cedar Rapids and would go on to study at the University of Iowa. Wu was also a member of the honors program during his time at the UI.

Unfortunately, Wu passed away on April 8, 2017, during his first year at the UI, and after his passing, Wu’s parents created a scholarship in his honor. The Sean Wu Scholarship is given to an incoming first-year student who demonstrates overcoming a hardship amidst their academic pursuits. The scholarship serves to commemorate Sean, who is remembered lovingly by his friends and family as a good friend and someone who persevered despite hardships.

In memory of his legacy, a mural that demonstrates Wu’s interests in music and film now hangs on the third floor of the Blank Honors Center. The third floor also connects to Daum Residence Hall, where Wu lived as a first-year student.
In everyday life, STEM-related careers have proven time again that they are a benefit to society. Across the nation, people are making efforts to use this to their advantage and produce a world in which science helps propel us forward. With this effort, the Guy D. and Betty J. Williams foundation, alongside the University of Iowa Honors Program, is aiding the cause.

The Guy D. and Betty J. Williams scholarship is an award offered to physics students pursuing studies with an emphasis on resolution to modern climate crises. Offered yearly, the scholarship recognizes exceptional students at the University of Iowa and promotes research on scientific dilemmas that now affect populations worldwide. The scholarship aims to promote student work and to support the next generation of academics looking for science-grounded solutions to environmental problems. Past recipients have gone on to make notable contributions to their fields of study, spanning from laboratory leg-work to current policy. For the 2021-2022 school year, three students were selected to receive the Guy D. and Betty J. Williams scholarships.

Faculty connections have provided students, both in and outside of the physics program, with valuable resources to enrich their academic careers. Siddharth Nandanwar, one of the three recipients, is a third-year student studying physics with a minor in mathematics. Currently, he works in the Thomas Foland lab, where he looks at condensed matter to develop newer, better semiconductors. Nandanwar’s research with Dr. Foland works toward the creation of more energy-efficient electronic devices that could reduce the carbon footprint of modern technology.

Nandanwar’s work is groundbreaking, but it all started modestly in a professor’s office hours. When a conversation on Physics III course materials turned to science application and research methods, Dr. Foland offered Nandanwar a position on his research team. Months later, he is being congratulated for his findings and awarded for his dedication.

The Guy D. and Betty J. Williams scholarship is supporting Nandanwar’s academic journey. He notes, “This scholarship is definitely helping me move toward my career goals in sustainable energy... I’m hoping to pursue a Ph.D. after I finish [my undergraduate degree], and this is giving me some of the financial flexibility to choose a graduate school.”

Nandanwar’s story demystifies the pathways by which students can find research opportunities and highlights the importance of reaching out to find opportunities.

Zach Vig is another one of the 2021 scholarship awardees, and is a third-year double majoring in physics and geology. Outside of formal coursework, he works in the Jessica Meyers research lab, where he studies sedimentary rock formation and hydrogeology to analyze groundwater contamination and toxic pollution.

Vig comments on the impact that one message can have on a student’s academic experience: “Don’t be afraid to email people. If you reach out to professors and ask for opportunities, they will usually be more than happy to...”
respond and help you out. In my experience, professors really do like to talk about that kind of stuff.”

While research may sound daunting to many, both Nandanwar and Vig assure that opportunities for interested students are available and that faculty are supportive.

The third 2021 Guy D. and Betty J. Williams scholarship recipient is Will Golay. He is a third-year studying physics and astronomy with a minor in mathematics. Within the UI physics program, he works as a junior instruments specialist, calibrating devices atop Van Allen Hall and making the stars more accessible to researchers in astronomy. Additionally, he does work on the UI’s other telescope systems in Arizona. While astronomy may seem distant from current environmental issues, the analysis of weather patterns and planetary influences on climate would be impossible without such researchers.

Like Vig and Nandanwar, Golay has found faculty connections within the honors program and the UI physics program to be instrumental to his success. “It’s really cool to me that the honors program is working with the physics and astronomy department to offer seminars. I took an honors physics seminar that tied research and science to philosophy, and I’ve been interested in that intersection ever since,” he says. As Golay mentions, these seminars are available every semester to honors students, covering a variety of topics. For students interested in the environmental impact of physics research, interdisciplinary seminars can help round out skills that are useful to advising policy and enacting change.

Golay speaks passionately about astronomy and physics education, urging young students to put themselves out there and take risks within the department. While the coursework associated with a Bachelor of Science degree in physics is indeed rigorous, he notes that the physics program is tight-knit and supportive, offering guidance and resources to students who take up the challenge. “A lot of people who I meet that are interested in physics are really apprehensive about the math involved, and my best advice could be to just go for it. This is one of the best physics and astronomy departments in the country, and the faculty will be there to support you,” Golay says.

Golay, Vig, and Nandanwar work tirelessly in the classroom and laboratory. However, it is not their on-paper qualifications that unite the trio of scholars and researchers. Through and through, their passion for physics drives their work and inspires onlookers to dedicate themselves similarly. Students interested in physics should take advantage of the resources offered through the program. Like Vig, Golay, and Nandanwar, they just might find their calling somewhere in the mechanics beneath the earth’s crust or beyond the reaches of our solar system.

Golay imparts advice for students interested in physics and the Guy D. and Betty J. Williams scholarship: “If you’re interested in physics, you could be the future of the field. Professors know that, and they’ll be there to support you like they’ve been there for me. Take a course and explore your interests.”

"Don’t be afraid to email people. If you reach out to professors and ask for opportunities, they will usually be more than happy to respond and help you out.”

- Zach Vig
HONORS SCHOLARSHIPS
BY THE NUMBERS

2021 Honors Scholarship Application Cycle

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICANT PROFILE

304 TOTAL APPLICANTS

FIRST-YEAR 155
SECOND-YEAR 95
THIRD-YEAR 54

SCHOLARSHIP DISTRIBUTION BY COLLEGE

College of Public Health, Tippie College of Business, College of Nursing
College of Engineering
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

12 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
17 128 NON-IOWA RESIDENTS
78 150 IOWA RESIDENTS

107 SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

8 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
31 NON-IOWA RESIDENTS
68 IOWA RESIDENTS

12 DIFFERENT SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE