

ALUMNI CONNECTION

THE HONORS AT IOWA NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2018



Cover: They heart Honors! Students show their Honors love at the anniversary celebration reception, October 6. Back row, l-r, Logan Drake, Elizabeth Sheridan, Allison Andreason, Kirsten Lucy; front row, l-r, Jenah Black, Ariana Mitra, Michael Li, Barbara Badovinac, and Caroline Meek.

Unless otherwise indicated, all photos by Madeline Berner
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Photo provided by Art Spisak

Dear University of Iowa Honors Program Alumni/ae:

This is our third hard copy newsletter, which only goes out to a selected segment of our many Honors Program alumni/ae. Although we do also have an electronic newsletter that goes out three times per year, we recognize that a print copy has a value and impact all its own. We hope the hard copy format helps to keep you better informed on Honors Program happenings.

A good part of this newsletter has to do with the recent celebration of the Honors Program 60th anniversary. Honors began at Iowa in 1958, when it was founded by Professor Samuel Rhodes Dunlap. Professor Dunlap then directed the program for twenty-three years—until he retired in 1981. Many students had their undergraduate experience enriched by the Honors Program, and especially by Professor Dunlap's leadership. He was highly student-centered, and we try to keep that tradition today with what we do in the program.

Since that founding in 1958, over 12,000 students have graduated as part of Honors at Iowa. In recognition of these many and distinguished alumni/ae, we held several events this last October as part of our 60th anniversary celebration. One of the main events was a reception on the evening of October 6th in Art Building West. Participants included current honors students and staff, Honors Program Advisory Board members, and honors alumni/ae. As part of the program for that reception we had the three speakers: Lynette Marshall, President and CEO of the UI Center for Advancement; Lana Zak, one of our distinguished Honors Program alumna; and Caroline Meek, one of our current honors students. We also had an amazing trombone performance by Teddy Van Winkle, a third-year honors student. See the article on page 11 for further details on the 60th anniversary reception.

Besides founding Honors at Iowa, Professor Dunlap also established as a legacy the Samuel Rhodes Dunlap Scholarship. His legacy gift has over the years provided over \$1.4 million to UI honors students. Some of our readers, I'm sure, will have received one of his scholarships. If you are a donor (or a potential donor) to the Honors Program, you may wonder just what impact scholarships like the Rhodes Dunlap can have on honors students. You may be surprised by how much the generosity of donors impacts our students. The financial assistance is important—sometimes essential to their education—but I have also seen how scholarships can instill confidence and inspire students to attempt what they initially thought was beyond them. In essence, receiving a scholarship means that someone has trust in you and your capabilities, and you feel empowered by that trust to do even more. So, my thanks to our many and generous donors for what they do for our students. I wish you could see firsthand the impact you have. Next best to that experience is reading, on the following pages, what our students themselves say about the effects of scholarships and donor support.

I invite any comments or questions you have regarding the Honors Program. Your feedback and engagement with the program are essential for our current and future students. We hope you'll reconnect with Honors at Iowa.

Cordially yours,

Art L. Spisak, PhD
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Opening Doors to New Opportunities: The Impact of Honors Donations

By: Ajla Dizdarević, Abi Paravasthuramesh, and Madeline Berner

College can be a daunting experience, especially when students have to look for ways to fund their tuition, housing, and research expenses. For many students, scholarships are a vital part of the college experience. One such award is the Rhodes Dunlap Scholarship, which was established in 1981. Named after and funded by a donation from Samuel Rhodes Dunlap, the founder of the Honors Program, the scholarship aims to “recognize strong academic performance, promise of continued excellence within the university, and a demonstrated connection to the honors community through scholarship, research, leadership, or service” and has been used to award over \$1.4 million to deserving honors students.

Josh Yem, a junior studying human physiology and music on the pre-medicine track, is a recipient of the Rhodes Dunlap Scholarship, among other scholarships. While these funds primarily went towards Yem’s tuition and living expenses, the opportunities that emerged as a result of the scholarships extended far beyond the scope of his classroom experiences and his boarding situation.

Yem has had an extremely rewarding experience in his pursuit of a double major in two drastically different areas of study. He

is involved in numerous ensembles at the University of Iowa, such as the Symphony Band, Symphony Orchestra, and Honors Undergraduate Woodwind Quintet. Additionally, he is an Honors Outreach Ambassador and volunteers at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in two positions: the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit and the Recreational Music Program, playing piano in the Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center. He also conducts research under Dr. Warren Darling, with a position in the Motor Control Lab of the Human Physiology Department.

“None of that would be possible without my scholarship funds,” Yem said. “I could not see myself even attempting to obtain a second major in the School of Music if I had to work a part-time job.



Yem (photo courtesy of Josh Yem)



Pillar (photo courtesy of Kelley Pillar)

“The ability to study music on top of my pre-med classes has provided me with countless unique and enriching experiences that I believe have well prepared me for a career in medicine.”

“The ability to study music on top of my pre-med classes has provided me with countless unique and enriching experiences that I believe have well prepared me for a career in medicine.” Yem’s experience demonstrates the value of scholarships to many different aspects of one’s college career, both within and beyond the realm of the classroom. Scholarships can go toward a specific project or study abroad trip, or can afford time to pursue research, service, or a second major.

Kelley Pillar, a senior majoring in biology on the genetics and biotechnology track, received the Rhodes Dunlap Collegiate Scholarship for Excellence during her junior year. As a student paying for her own schooling, Pillar said that she is thankful for how much the scholarship eases her financial burden and allows her to focus on academics and pursue other enriching extracurricular activities. She currently serves as a resident assistant, conducts undergraduate biology research, and works as a genetic counseling student clerk at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in the Cancer Center. She has also volunteered at several organizations including Student United Way, the UI REACH Program, and the Iowa Youth Writing Project. Looking to the future, Pillar is applying to graduate school for genetic counseling. “Applying to graduate school is expensive in and of itself, so worrying slightly less about paying for tuition allows me to dedicate funds toward my applications,” Pillar said.

Olivia Sandvold, a junior studying biomedical engineering with minors in mathematics and computer science, pursued research opportunities almost immediately after arriving on campus: “In my first year, I took as many honors courses as I could get my hands on and got involved in research in a lab with Dr. Robert Cornell.” She continued her research that summer in Dr. Cornell’s lab and began research with Dr. Mathews Jacob as part of the Iowa Institute for Biomedical Imaging. “Scholarships have transformed my experience at Iowa,” Sandvold said. “It’s extremely rewarding to be recognized for your hard work.” The engineering student knows that she would work just as hard without scholarships, but says that knowing her education is supported makes her truly grateful for the people in her life who have helped her along every step.

Scholarships will also allow Sandvold to study abroad in Glasgow, Scotland, next spring at the University of Strathclyde. “I hope to continue my studies in biomedical engineering through different teaching styles,” Sandvold said. “I want to challenge myself by exploring unique cultures unlike my own and meeting individuals with differing backgrounds.” Sandvold understands the importance of becoming a world citizen in an increasingly globalized world, and donor-funded scholarships allow her to pursue opportunities that broaden her view of the world and bring different perspectives to her discipline.

Another Rhodes Dunlap award recipient, Rose Simonson, is currently a junior studying English & creative writing and English education. One of the co-presidents of the English Society and a member of the Chess Club, Simonson expressed her gratitude

“Scholarships have transformed my experience at Iowa. It’s extremely rewarding to be recognized for your hard work.”



Sandvold (photo courtesy of Jamie Flores): Sandvold presents to judges at TigerHacks 2018, hosted by the University of Missouri.

not only for the scholarship, which afforded her the time to “take as many classes as I want,” but also for the application process itself. Simonson said that she “adored” the question and corresponding essay she wrote for the application. She was proud of her work, and it was meaningful for her to be recognized for it.

Marc Beer, a senior majoring in biology and minoring in environmental sciences, has also benefited greatly from receiving the Rhodes Dunlap Scholarship. Beer has pursued his childhood interest in insects and now conducts research in an evolutionary biology lab, which he joined two years ago, under the direction of Dr. Andrew Forbes. He specifically studies the evolution of insect biodiversity.

Like Simonson, Beer appreciated the scholarship application process as well as the scholarship itself. It’s a chance for students to communicate their personality, skills, and aspirations as well as practice effective reflection about their challenges and proud moments. “The honors scholarship application typically has a unique question that really makes you think about yourself and what you want to do,” said Beer.

Beer’s scholarships afford him time to become involved in research. He typically spends between 10 and 15 hours in the lab per week and anticipates pursuing a career in research. “I just love asking questions, and science is where you get to do that,” he observed.

You can help students like Josh, Kelly, Olivia, Rose, and Marc realize their potential through a gift to Honors at Iowa. For over 45 years, the Rhodes Dunlap Scholarship has enabled students to maximize their time at Iowa to pursue learning experiences in and outside the classroom. Please make a gift today to provide more life-changing opportunities to students at www.givetoioowa.org/2019hp ◇



Beer (photo courtesy of Marc Beer)

*“I just love asking questions,
and science is where you get
to do that.”*

Community Engagement Through Honors History: Carrying Service Forward into Professional Life

By: Anna Magaña

Current honors students have likely heard the phrase “make your connection” more than once since joining the program. However, they may not have stopped to consider the full weight of these words. The push to connect does have to do with peer and faculty engagement, but there is another side to this, looking outward past the usual scope. Being in the program comes with the opportunity to reach out into the world and leave a mark on the community, to connect somehow, as many honors students across the decades have found.

Recently, a panel held in conjunction with the honors 60th anniversary invited past and current students to look back at “Honors Through the Decades,” discussing their experiences at the university and how those experiences shaped their lives after graduation. The panelists reflected on what it meant to them to be able to serve the community while they were still students.

Judy Lewis is a public health sociologist who graduated from the University of Iowa in 1968. During her undergraduate years, she worked on the Honors Newsletter, served as a member of the Union Board, and was the first student to speak at commencement. Lewis was also student body president and remembered how important the position was for her: “The irony of it is that when I was in high school... I could only be the class secretary, that’s all girls could be, so all the other class officers were boys [and] I was the secretary. So, I felt

vindicated when I came to Iowa.” Lewis’s leadership during her college years translated into the important work she did afterward. After completing graduate school at Yale, she worked to develop domestic, and later international, health programs, working in over 50 countries around the world.



Honors Through the Decades panel host Holly Yoder with Judy Lewis, class of 1968 graduate and advisory board member

Alumnus David Hamod also traces his community engagement spirit to his time as an undergrad. Hamod currently serves as the president and CEO of the National US-Arab Chamber of Commerce. As a student in the late '70s and early '80s, he was an honors proctor, acting as a coordinator for students and a bridge between students and the director. Among the values he believed to be central to the honors experience, Hamod

emphasized community because “no matter where we are, we’re part of a larger community.” As a student, he was one of the leaders who started Associated Iowa Honors Students (AIHS), a group that raised money for local charities through an event known as the Study-a-Thon. His current work takes him all over the world, and he noted that he still values the ability, fostered in his early years, to engage with people from different backgrounds.

Jennifer Blair, a current advisor in the Tippie College of Business, was an honors proctor in the '90s, which gave her the resources and opportunity to facilitate change. Under Director David Klemm, she created the Honors Volunteer Program: “I collaborated with nonprofit organizations in the area and then arranged for volunteer opportunities and organized honors students to go and help.” Blair noted that the experience taught her a lot about the concrete ways she could make change, even as a young person. “I got a lot of meaning out of that and a lot of purpose, and it was a defining opportunity for me.”

Panelist Jacek Pruski, representing the first decade of the 21st century, was an early leader of

the James Gang, a community outreach group founded by honors students, whose motto was “Go Public.” The myriad activities of the group included comedy acts, spoken word, music, and public readings. The James Gang was featured in our anniversary publication, “An Honorable History,” [available on our website.](#)

For each generation of honors students, there have been different opportunities to get involved with the community. One current example, The Green Room course, vests honors students with the responsibility to collaborate in bringing guest speakers and new ideas to Iowa City. Students can also incorporate community engagement into their honors experience through service learning or internships or collaborate with faculty to create an entirely new idea. What alumni highlighted in reminiscing about their past involvement is that what a student does now can affect their future actions in a very positive way. The desire to make a difference and the ability to take initiative may even grow stronger as years pass. With strong support for community spirit, current students will continue to make connections and go on to inspire those who come after them. ◇



L-r, Holly Yoder, Judy Lewis, David Hamod, Jennifer Blair, Jacek Pruski, and current student Abhigna Akurathi



L-r, David Hamod, Jennifer Blair, and Jacek Pruski



L-r, David Hamod, Jennifer Blair, Jacek Pruski, and Abhigna Akurathi



L-r, Panelists Jacek Pruski, Abhigna Akurathi, Judy Lewis, David Hamod, and Jennifer Blair each represented different eras of Honors Program history at a 60th anniversary symposium October 7, called Honors Through the Decades.

“We were learning by doing and learning skills that, for me, have served me so well for the rest of my life. From how do you have a vision and ... come up with a strategy [to] how do you create an organization and manage it? ... And Honors was so woven into all of this.”

- Jacek Pruski on his community engagement experience with the James Gang and Ten Thousand Hours Show

Gathering to Celebrate: The 60th Anniversary Reception

By: Elizabeth Sheridan

On October 6, after an hour of mingling and testing hors d'oeuvres, the attendants of the honors 60th anniversary reception made their way into the auditorium of Art Building West in preparation for a celebrative anniversary program. The crowd included everyone from current honors students to Honors Program Advisory Board members to distinguished honors alumni. The one thing bringing them all together was an appreciation for the Honors Program.



Emily Johnson, Caroline Meek, Elizabeth Sheridan, Logan Drake, and Kelly Thornburg

The first speaker of the night was Lynette Marshall, President and CEO of the University of Iowa Center for Advancement. Following an introduction from Dr. Spisak, Marshall expressed gratitude for the opportunities she's had to work with honors students, such as recent graduate Rachel Zuckerman and senior Ojas Pradhan. She also shared the story of her "favorite honors alum," Professor James Ankrum. Marshall highlighted

Ankrum's trajectory—from an honors student to a faculty member at Iowa—and stated that "because he was an honors student, James was able to create an interdisciplinary course of study that allowed him to focus on his interest in ergonomics," and factored into his decision to "come back as a faculty member and to be able to contribute to young people's education, as well as his particular masterful research interests."

Marshall's speech was followed by a trombone performance by Teddy Van Winkle, a third-year honors student studying music performance. He played "On Your Own Now" by Steven Verhelst, from his honors recital program.

Next up was Lana Zak, an ABC News Washington Correspondent who graduated in 2000. In his introduction, Dr. Spisak revealed that Zak, who served as the president of UISG and was a recipient of both a Fulbright and Truman scholarship, has experienced many adventures since her graduation—visiting all 7 continents, kayaking in Antarctica, diving the Great Barrier Reef, flying in zero gravity, hiking the Inca Trail, and swimming with great white sharks.

Zak spoke about her career, which she said the Honors Program helped her to achieve, and also about "civility and the unique role that Iowa has in trying to bring our democracy back from the brink." Calling it more than a partisan issue,

Zak argued that the state of America's democracy is "about us, as a community, getting it right." She called democracy America's #1 export and stressed the importance of civic education. "When you caucus, you come together," Zak stated, emphasizing the role Iowans play in the election process. "You get together with your neighbors, and you come with your own opinions, but Iowans, I think, come with an open mind, too. There's something that's so powerful about being able to get together in a room and to put out there what you feel about what we need as a society and then debate it with someone."

The final speaker of the night was Caroline Meek, a second-year honors student and Presidential Scholar studying English and creative writing. The entirety of her speech is included on pages 15 and 16. Meek's publication, *Project Canvas*, was released on November 15.

The night came to an end with the giveaway of Honors Program mugs, stickers, and t-shirts—a tangible way for alumni to maintain a connection to their time at Iowa and all the memories they created with Honors. ◇



Above: L-r, Lynette Marshall, Art Spisak, and David Hamod

Below: Associate Director Bob Kirby (left) and alumna and board member Judy Lewis (center) greet former director Alice Fulton (1998-2005) and Tom Haugen at the opening of the 60th anniversary reception, held in the atrium of Art Building West.





David Hamod and Lynette Marshall



Bob Kirby, Jacek Pruski, and Mark Kresowik



The anniversary program brought together current students, alumni, staff and advisory board members to celebrate 60 years of Honors at Iowa.



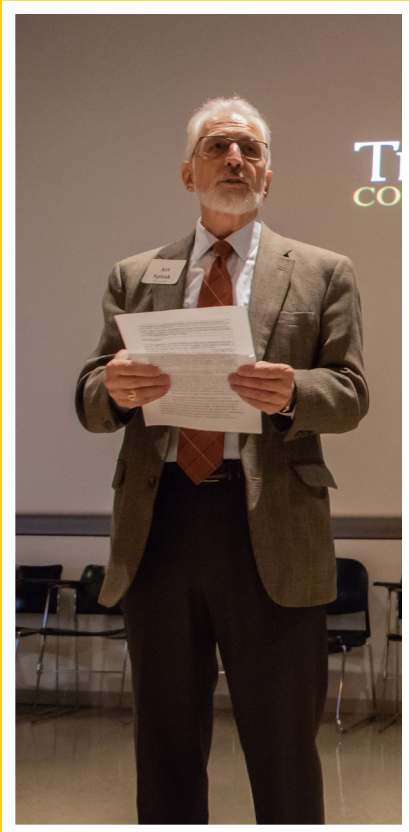
Nicole Kresowik and Bob Kirby



Rochelle Honey and Rae Corrigan



Teddy Van Winkle



Art Spisak



Lana Zak

Conversations, Connections, and Porch Swings: Caroline Meek's 2018 Honors Experience

Sometime this past February, I took the elevator up to the 4th floor of the Blank Honors Center to study: except on the 4th floor, it's all the honors staff offices. Before I could remember that the study rooms were on the *third* floor, I was out of the elevator and really confused. But then I saw Dr. Spisak's office down the hall and I thought, "Hey, why not go say hi?" I was in his self discovery seminar at the time, so we had a nice conversation about class and I ended up talking to him about a project I was working on.

It was going to be a book of writing advice and motivation for other writers. The twist: young writers from all around the world had each contributed a short chapter. So we had people from the University of Iowa

talking about being vulnerable in your writing, a student in Nigeria giving tips for how to write every day, and someone in Slovakia talking about outlining your novel. All in all, we had 61 teen and

young adult writers from 11 different countries, 6 different continents. It was essentially an international community of writers, connected solely through social media and the blogging networks I'd discovered in high school.

You hear about social media a lot, and usually it's not good stuff. You hear about how it's wasting our time, and destroying our mental health, and distracting our youth. But what about its power to connect us? What about a community of writers—usually so iso-

lated in their art—getting to communicate across thousands of miles and oceans and languages? I wanted to learn more about how these global communities work, so I told all of this to Dr. Spisak,



Caroline Meek presenting at the 60th anniversary reception

who took me down the hall to meet Melinda Licht, the Director of Undergraduate research. Then I told all of this to Melinda, who told me about the International Writing Program. I ended up applying for an ICRU fellowship to work with them, and spent the summer here with the Between the Lines program, their youth writing camp.

It's a two-week program in which about 30 high school students come to learn about writing, build community, and break down barriers. This summer, they came from Russia and various Arabic-speaking countries. I got here a few weeks early to help prepare and research before the program started, then spent the next two weeks with them, acting as the photographer, mentor, and, eventually, friend to the writers participating.

This opportunity came at the perfect time in my journey as a writer. I got to experience that international community in person, and I learned so much from the students and the faculty. After two weeks, it felt like a family—the kind of family that you only need to know for a short time, and then they're your family forever. I wrote *a lot*, and I got past a lot of blocks in my writing that had been there for months. And probably most importantly, the students helped me understand myself. These students, from so many different places, carrying so many identities and languages and stories, taught me how to understand and accept parts of myself that I had locked up for a long time. It was a life-changing experience, something that will direct my writing, understanding of the world, and life goals in the near and far future.

At the end of the summer, you would have found me sitting on the swinging bench on the porch of the Shambaugh House, where the International Writing Program is housed. The students had left the day before, and I was left with this half-full, half-empty feeling, so I was writing about it. That bench was iconic—it was a favorite spot of myself and all the students, and we spent al

most every afternoon sitting there, writing and just enjoying the fact that somehow, of all the places we could be in the world, of all the places we were from, we'd somehow all been connected right here. It's ironic, because all these things are connected. Without knowing it, I had traced the history of the Honors Program backward this summer, starting with Dr. Spisak in the Blank Honors Center, and ending up on the porch of Shambaugh, where the Honors Program used to be housed. I later found out that the porch swing was donated by Kathy Klein, a previous secretary for the Honors Program.

My book, *Project Canvas*, is going to be published in five weeks. Christopher Merrill, the director of the International Writing Program, wrote the foreword, and two of the students from this summer will be included in the book.

The amount of connections and friendships I've made through the Honors Program in just the last year and a half is unfathomable. From the Presidential Scholar Program, to research with ICRU, to getting confused and ending up on the wrong floor of the BHC, there's no end to the opportunities for growth here. So many people are willing to listen and help connect you. My experience with Honors so far has been amazing, and I'm excited to keep growing and connecting here. ♦



Meek with her book, Project Canvas, released November 15

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We couldn't have come so far without the generosity of our alumni. Help our students grow by making a donation.

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If you know of an internship opportunity that's perfect for an honors student, let us know!

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