

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA HONORS PROGRAM ALUMNI CONNECTION



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WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR



Pictured: Dr. Art Spisak
Provided by: Dr. Art Spisak

Greetings for the Fall/Winter of 2020 to our Honors Program students, faculty, alumni/ae, and friends. I hope you and your families and friends are staying safe and well during these challenging times.

UPDATE ON COVID-19 CONDITIONS

The Honors Program staff, both our professional staff and our student staff, are continuing to work remotely, although we will meet with students face-to-face at their request. The University permitted students to return to campus for the Fall semester, yet the majority of classes (over 75 percent) are online, and masking and social distancing are required. The Honors staff has striven to make the University and Honors Program experience as normal as possible for our students despite the challenging conditions. My appreciation to the Honors staff for facilitating so well the return to classes this Fall. In August and September,

pandemic-related challenges seemed to arise almost on a daily basis, and yet they worked through them all with skill and no complaint. They are a remarkably dedicated and capable group.

Most of this newsletter's articles revolve around changes the pandemic has necessitated and how it's affected students. Yet, you'll also read about several opportunities we've created for our students whose academic plans have been disrupted by the pandemic. A major example is the Summer 2020 Project: it's enabled students to do independent research when access to labs and face-to-face contact have been restricted severely. About one hundred students completed the Summer 2020 Project, which included a reflection on how the pandemic affected their project, and hence, they also documented in some way what conditions were like. We've asked the University Library to digitally archive the projects. Moreover, there's a possibility that we may continue that or certain other projects beyond Covid-19 conditions.

Finally, on Covid-19 conditions, as people who have been through challenging situations know, they can bring out both the best and worst of people. I want to commend our entering honors students who took part in Honors Primetime, this year comprised of eighteen one-semester-hour seminars that took place one week before the start of regular classes. Our students modeled safe and responsible behavior and took all the modifications that were made to some seminars because of Covid-19 in stride. The quality of the final presentations they made of their seminar experience showed how seriously they took their learning experience. My thanks also to our Honors

Primetime instructors, who showed that they could teach under even extraordinary and the most challenging circumstances.

NOTABLE HONORS ALUMNA

The University of Iowa Honors Program was created in 1958, and we now have around 13,000 alumni/ae. Many people do not realize the long history of Honors at Iowa—it was established in good part as a reaction to the Soviet's launching of Sputnik (1957) and the subsequent Space Race. Nor are people aware of the large number of alumni/ae we now have. You'll find our graduates in most all professions. For example, below, you'll read about Susan Werner, a singer/songwriter, who was an honors student and honors student staff member in the 1980s. Some of you may know Susan from her time at the University. She is originally from Manchester, Iowa, but now lives in Chicago and performs all over the country. Susan pays homage to her Honors at Iowa roots as she discusses her new quarantine-created album and her Facebook Live streaming concerts that have attracted hundreds of fans from around the country.

HONORS PROGRAM SCHOLARSHIPS

Last year, through the amazing generosity of our donors, the Honors Program awarded nearly \$200,000 in support to honors students. This took the form of travel grants, support for research, fellowships, such as our Honors Writing Fellows Program, with the largest portion of the total amount going to honors scholarships. The continual decline in State support for public universities and resulting increases in tuition have in many cases made scholarships essential to

our students. I wish donors could see and hear directly from awardees, as I sometimes do, the effects of those scholarships. Some recipients would literally not be able to attend university without that support. In that case, those scholarships have changed lives in unimaginable ways. In other cases, scholarships lessen student debt so that students feel more confident about attending graduate or professional school. In every case, scholarships boost students' confidence and sense of worth. They are then inspired to extend themselves even farther and accomplish more. I have personally observed this incentivizing effect scholarships have on our students, who can be quite modest about their capabilities. I extend a heartfelt thanks to those who support honors for making this help and recognition available to our students. You're doing incalculable good with your generosity.

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. Also, you can direct questions on anything related to the honors program experience to honors-program@uiowa.edu.

Cordially,



Art L. Spisak, PhD
 Director, UI Honors Program
 Professor, Classics Department
 Past President (2017), National Collegiate Honors Council

IOWA ONLINE

By Seth Alan Foster, Olivia Tonelli & Maggie Winegar

The hustle and bustle of the University of Iowa has been disrupted no small amount by the pandemic. Classes have been moved online, much of the campus has been closed, and students and faculty alike are forced to adapt to these changes in the college's more virtually oriented environment. "Although it is unconventional and none of us really expected our freshman year of college to be like this, we have to do our best to make the best of it," says Malayna Stober, a freshman honors student from Oklahoma, currently living in Daum.

The Blank Honors Center was once a prime location for the university's honors students, not only as a home for the University of Iowa Honors Program's counselors and advisors but also as a great area for studying. Social distancing requirements have caused much of the space to be restricted in its use, with the third floor Student Center being closed off completely and the rest of the building allowing limited numbers.

The shift to online classes and restricted access to many locations have prompted students to alter their study habits and created an unaccustomed sense of confinement. Many students are studying in their rooms exclusively as a way to stay as safe during the pandemic. One's room is supposed to be a place to relax and unwind, but the shift online has caused this personal space to instead become one of work and mental exhaustion. Stober emphasized the importance for her to "have places outside of my room to do my classes and homework because I will not focus or learn as well if I sit in my room." Having a familiar, comfortable study space such as a library or classroom aids focus, whereas attempts at combining a study space and a living space often result in frustration.

"In times where there's a lot of **tension** and we're not able to lead our lives in the way we are used to [this assignment can function as] a **way of helping.**"

- Professor Richard Tyler

Due to the struggles that online classes present to many students, professors have implemented numerous changes to make their courses engaging and accessible. Professor Richard Tyler, who is teaching a seminar for first-year honors students this semester on smartphone use, acknowledges the need to provide his students with an engaging classroom experience over Zoom. That is why Professor Tyler tries to regularly incorporate what he hopes will be "an opportunity to interact with [others]" for each student.

"At the end of each lecture, I assign homework for the following week. And at the end of each week, [students] are required to give feedback," Professor Tyler explains. "Everyone shares their understanding of the assignment." Through allowing time for each student to share their opinions and sharing stories that connect back to class material, Professor Tyler creates an opportunity for personal engagement within the virtual classroom.

Professor Tyler has also created assignments within his seminar that take into account the many stressors of the current times. One assignment in particular tasks students to find a relaxation app to research and share with the class. Tyler believes that "in times where there's a lot of tension and we're not able to lead our lives in the way we are used to," this assignment can function as "a way of helping."

Many students are finding other ways to adjust to this change in learning lifestyle on their own. Stober, who describes herself as "super outgoing," reflects that she has "just made it a point to talk to as many people as [she] can, anywhere and everywhere."

"I found a lot of friends in my residence hall, and I try to hang out with these people as safely as I can, as often as I can so that I have more of an

opportunity to meet my best friends," she says. Indeed, with the additional focus placed on such social media applications as Discord and GroupMe, which have features like live video cameras and microphone access to make calls, interacting with others while practicing social distancing has never been easier.

Online classes have brought a few upsides to students, with some viewing the online format as a blessing in

disguise. Stober said that she likes how Zoom lectures are often recorded and put on ICON, the virtual classroom platform, so that they can be viewed more than once. Before the pandemic, lectures for in-person classes were often only posted for large-scale classes with triple-digit enrollments. In smaller courses, lectures often went unrecorded. Stober also likes not having to wake up and get ready as early, letting her stay up later and sleep in a bit more.

The prevalence of online classes has proved to be a mixed bag, with Stober and many of her peers saying that they would rather move classes back to a face-to-face format. Ultimately, students and teachers alike are making the most of this unprecedented learning experience. Despite the many hindrances the pandemic has presented, honors students are adapting to the online-centric circumstances as well as they can.



Photo courtesy of University of Iowa Office of Strategic Communication

EXPERIENCING CULTURE: REIMAGINED

HOW STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS ARE ADAPTING TO NEWFOUND CHALLENGES

By Julia Fout

Studying abroad is an experience many honors students eagerly await. They excitedly plan when they can fit it into their schedules, where they want to go, and what they expect to learn from the experience. From their travels, they hope to gain new ideas and skills they can apply to their personal, academic, and professional lives. For many honors students, studying abroad is an integral part of being a collegiate scholar. Honors Experiential Learning Director Andrew Willard says, “[it’s] a way to learn about yourself and how you respond to new exposures.”

For junior honors student Hannah Huzzey, being abroad in Rome allowed her to develop interpersonal and adaptive skills. She says, “Studying abroad really forces you to work on your people-skills. You are dropped into this country surrounded by things you don’t know [and] you have to adapt. It is so great for making you learn how to live with change.” For approximately 41% of honors students who participate in international or cross-cultural academic work, their experiences offer perspectives and skills they otherwise might not have received. These skills include adaptability, communication, leadership, and even humility.

Study Abroad Advisor and Program Coordinator Ryan Ourada says, “It’s a great way for students to challenge themselves but also to get global experience of working with other cultures. It’s imperative to understand that they have different attitudes and beliefs, not only in their personal lives but also



Pictured: Hannah Huzzey standing on a bridge over a river in Venice
Provided by: Hannah Huzzey

in their work environments.” Ourada works with students to discern which programs suit their needs. He advises students who go abroad to France, Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. He is also a program coordinator for the India Winterim program.

The pandemic, however, has impeded these opportunities for students. In early 2020, University of Iowa Honors Program students in countries all over the world had to pack up their belongings and bid farewell to the lives they had explored in different cultures.

Huzzey was among the many who were abruptly sent home. She was abroad in Rome for the 2019-2020 academic year studying Ancient Roman Architecture. Huzzey’s Roman life was cut short by two whole months. “One Monday, I’m interning at the Coliseum... One week later, I’m on a plane back to the states. There was really no way to prepare,” she says. It was devastating for students like Huzzey who had grown roots in a new country to say goodbye so suddenly, leaving behind instructors, friends, and host families who made their time abroad so memorable.

Under current circumstances, students are not able to live or breathe the air of other countries. So, the University of Iowa, understanding how meaningful these opportunities are for students, has come up with alternative ways for students to receive these international and multicultural experiences. Currently, the university is offering online international courses and internships in a variety of subjects. There are language, health, and entrepreneurship courses taught from professors all across the globe. Faculty-led programs range from business to medicine, and numerous internships are being offered as well. India Winterim is launching a virtual medicine program this year in which students follow physicians on their rounds and help assess patients virtually. Faculty are also striving to implement cultural experiences outside of what each program focuses on so students can still experience life in another culture, albeit virtually.

“Given that most students are online learning, [virtual study abroad programs] give them the option to do something different, to learn about topics that the UI maybe does not offer. It’s a challenge to prepare yourself for life outside of the university.”

- Ryan Ourada,
Study Abroad Advisor & Program Coordinator

“Given that most students are online learning, [virtual study abroad programs] give them the option to do something different, to learn about topics that the UI maybe does not offer. It’s a challenge to prepare yourself for life outside of the university,” Ourada says. The burning question, however, is whether these online environments offer similar opportunities for growth in global cultural awareness and experience.

Honors student Claire Kopesky completed one of these online internships during the summer. She took on teaching English from a school in Italy through this new virtual format of education. She says, “This internship was such a unique experience.” While creating curriculum for the internship, she was still able to exchange and learn from different cultural perspectives.

Kopesky feels her internship allowed her to develop professional and international skills that will stick with her forever. She says, “I also think that having it online teaches other skills...like how to work virtually and internationally because those are skills that, if current conditions prevail after I graduate,

I’m really glad to have and develop.”

Citing their accessibility, Kopesky recommends these programs for students who have an interest in interning abroad. Programs are easy to find, and students can pick according to their interests, pay at a lower cost, and apply for scholarships.

Although these programs will not replace the physical experiences students receive while studying abroad, they still offer international educational benefits and connections. Willard agrees that these opportunities “[are] not worse or better, they are just different but absolutely [have] the potential for self-growth and discovery.”

UI students and faculty are working together to adapt to the new circumstances when it comes to studying abroad. The University of Iowa Study Abroad Office is reimagining what possibilities it can offer students during such a trying time. Future programs are still to be determined based on the future effects of the pandemic, but through perseverance and adaptability, the UI is still making international experiences accessible and enriching to allow for students’ growth and discovery.

INSPIRATION IN ISOLATION

By Josh O'Leary

Live shows may be a distant memory, but singer-songwriter Susan Werner finds new ways to connect with fans during the pandemic.



Pictured: Issue of The Daily Iowan from Monday, February 11, 1985, featuring Susan Werner at the piano and other headlines relevant to the time. Provided by: The Daily Iowan

Musical chameleon Susan Werner (86BM) is at home on any stage. For nearly three decades, the Iowa native has performed folk, jazz, and an array of other musical styles in theaters around the world. Even so, when she flipped on the camera this past March for her first virtual concert, she felt a twinge of stage fright.

The Facebook Live show—with hundreds of fans watching from around the country—brought back memories of her first uncertain performances as an honors student in music in the 1980s at the University of Iowa. Fortunately, Werner has never been one to shy away from challenges.

“This is where my experience at Iowa

“For more and more people, you don’t take a job that’s predefined; you create the job for yourself. That self-starting mentality is welcomed and rewarded in a setting like the honors program.”

- Susan Werner

came in handy,” says the Philadelphia-based singer-songwriter. “Singing in the operas *Boris Godunov* and *Madam Butterfly* on the stage of Hancher, these are the kinds of things that enable you to build up your immunity to anxieties.”

Just as she’s reinvented herself as an artist time and again, Werner is finding new ways to connect with her audience in a year when touring has been an impossibility. Since the onset of the pandemic, Werner has hosted a livestreamed show she calls “Susie on Sundays.” About 500 fans tune in each week as Werner plays old albums from start to finish, fields requests during “piano bar” nights, and collaborates with guest musicians.

Werner has also been busy recording new music. In September, Werner released *Flyover Country*, her 21st studio album. Its 10 country-fried songs blend bluegrass, Texas rock, glam country, and Appalachian folk. The music may be traditional, but its recording was anything but. Werner laid down her vocals inside a glass isolation booth at a Philadelphia studio while her sound engineer, bass player, and drummer performed nearby in masks. Between takes, the musicians set up lawn chairs on the street to write and revise in the open air.

“It was surreal, but we had such fun doing the tracks that I could see guys smiling beneath their masks,” says Werner. “Making records can often feel like singing into your refrigerator—there’s no vibe. But this one was great fun, and I think it shows on the tracks.”

The album opens with a tribute to her

MORE ONLINE

Hear Susan Werner perform and watch a recording of "Susie on Sundays" at magazine.foriowa.org.

Manchester, Iowa, roots titled "Long Live." Werner, who grew up on a farm outside the northeast Iowa town, came to the UI School of Music to study vocal performance. Werner credits guitar lessons with classmate and current UI jazz studies lecturer Steve Grismore (85BM, 90MA) and theory classes with former professor Eric Ziolek (82PhD) for broadening her musical horizons. Soon, she was performing at open mic nights at the Mill in downtown Iowa City and at the Wheel Room inside the Iowa Memorial Union.

"That was my first paid gig," she says of the Wheel Room. "Maybe there were four people eating popcorn and drinking beer. It was not the high point of my career, but I realized I could get paid to do this."

Werner also found an academic home in the University of Iowa Honors Program, which provides community and support for high-achieving students.

"It was like a selective college within a university, and I liked that," says Werner, who has fond memories of living in the honors house. "Some of us go to college and want to run on the treadmill at 15 miles per hour and like the challenge of that. I was like, 'How fast can I go?' The honors program matches that kind of ambition."

Werner says the honors program taught her to set and meet lofty goals—an essential tool for self-directed careers like hers. "For more and more people, you don't take a job that's pre-defined; you create the job for yourself," she says. "That self-starting mentality is welcomed and rewarded in a setting like the honors program."

After leaving Iowa and earning a master's degree in voice at Temple University in Philadelphia, Werner set out for a career in opera. But it became clear early on that her talent was more suited to the gigs she played at night on the

East Coast coffeehouse and folk festival circuit. Thirty years and a trove of albums later, Werner has earned critical acclaim, a loyal fanbase, and now, a vibrant social media following. She regularly returns to Iowa to perform, including in 2014, when she played at a special beam-signing during construction of the new Hancher Auditorium.

Even during a pandemic, Werner remains a prolific songwriter. This past spring, she recorded a YouTube series called "Songs of Social Distance" with tunes like "These Different Days" and "Swiffer Swiffer" that at once capture the melancholy and humor of the pandemic. Still, Werner looks forward to a day when she can connect with fans in person. As she sings on *Flyover Country*: "We'll gather loved ones in a fond embrace/ And hand in hand, and face to face/ And shoulder to shoulder/ Sing 'Amazing Grace'/ How I want, I want to be there."



Pictured: Susan Werner playing a guitar at Hancher Auditorium's "Leave Your Mark" event in 2014
Provided by: Hancher Auditorium

PROGRESS & PRODUCTIVITY

HOW HONORS STUDENTS SPENT THEIR SUMMERS IN QUARANTINE

By Casey Huettman & James Transue

For many people, describing the summer of 2020 prompts adjectives such as unprecedented, difficult, and uncertain to spring to mind. Five honors students told us how they spent their time over the summer of 2020 and what it taught them about themselves.



Anthony DeSalvo is a fourth-year honors student majoring in engineering



Maya Torrez is a first-year honors student majoring in English and creative writing



Nick Nachtman is a first-year honors student majoring in political science and sociology



Mitch Winterlin is a first-year honors student majoring in psychology and education



Caroline Meek is a fourth-year honors student majoring in English and creative writing on the publishing track

Q1. Did you take on any personal projects during quarantine? What were they?

Anthony: I learned how to play the ukulele.

Maya: I participated in NaNoWriMo, short for National Novel Writing Month.

Nick: I started to cook a lot.

Mitch: I journaled each night and started an internship through an organization called I Can Help; its main purpose is to spread positivity and mental health awareness online.

Caroline: I started a garden.

"I've always found cooking to be very **calming**. That kind of **stress reliever** was something I needed during quarantine."

- Nick Nachtman

Q2. What pushed you to pursue that project?



Pictured: Caroline Meek's various plants, including vegetables, succulents, and grasses
Provided by: Caroline Meek

Anthony: Playing the ukulele has always been something that I wanted to try, but I hadn't had time before quarantine. I had a friend who wanted to get rid of his ukulele, though, so I bought him a pizza, and he gave me his uke. I definitely got the better end of that deal.

Maya: I did the Young Writers' Program in 7th or 8th grade, and ever since then, I've taken NaNoWriMo up as an independent project almost every year. During quarantine, I thought, what better time to practice a skill that I care about?

Nick: I think cooking is something that you need to know how to do no matter who you are, and I've always found cooking to be very calming. That kind of stress reliever was something I needed during quarantine.

Mitch: I am definitely a very busy-body, motivated person, so I knew under the circumstances that I had to find a way to be productive.

Caroline: I grew up gardening, and houseplants have always been a part of my life and will always be a part of my life if I can help it. So that hobby was a kind of continuation.

Q3. What did these projects teach you about yourself? How have you changed/grown?

Anthony: I got to see how I approach problems in a low-stakes format, outside of a school or research environment. With the ukulele, I could learn at my own pace. I learned that I'm a very sporadic learner: unless I'm really in-the-zone and really hyper-motivated to do something, I can't just sit down and learn it from start to finish. I take little chunks at a time and piece out what I can.

Maya: When the pandemic took all of those responsibilities away, like work, it made me reflect on what I do when I don't have to do anything else. It taught us that we can't take for granted things that we've always had because they can go away for unexpected reasons.

Nick: I've always been such a busy person, so with a lot of time to myself, I realized that I need a lot of variety, but I also need a routine. I need to know what I'm doing. I also realized that I'm a very analytical person, and that's something I need to be cognizant of.

Mitch: I feel like sometimes we get caught up thinking about what society expects of us, and I realized more and more that there are certain things I don't need or want, and that I'm proud of myself for where I am and what I'm doing.

Caroline: The teacher of a yoga class I'm in right now has been talking about this idea that our lives are like a pendulum: we can't find true balance; we can only find consistency and a sort of balance within the constant changing. That idea made me reflect on how cyclical my life is.



Photo courtesy of the University of Iowa Office of Strategic Communication

Q4. How do you think you'll carry what you learned during quarantine into the rest of your life?

Anthony: I've had fun learning how to play an instrument, but that being said, both my roommates also play instruments. I don't know if I'll still feel as motivated to keep practicing and keep learning when I'm not with them anymore. I guess that's to be determined.

Maya: NaNoWriMo is normally in November, so I'm going to do that again this year, and hopefully for the next few years after that. And obviously, since my major is English and creative writing, my career goal is to become a published author and a novelist, which NaNoWriMo supports.

Nick: Learning to structure my time has ensured that I'm getting my assignments in and also that I'm staying productive in general. Also, it'll be important for me to give myself more time for self-reflection. It's always good to understand myself a bit more.

Mitch: I'm definitely going to continue journaling since it helps me to reflect on each day and analyze my emotions. I'll also continue my internship because I love the meaning behind I Can Help and everything it stands for. My all-time dream is to teach student leadership, and I'm hoping that through this organization, I can develop skills to support that career.

Caroline: During quarantine, I think I realized that I have an obsession with being okay all the time, and I think that's come out of a couple of years of therapy and dealing with mental health stuff. I realized that I was focusing too much on whether I was okay or not. It's good to take care of myself, but it's also nice to just step back and live. I'm learning to let it be what it's going to be.



Pictured: Caroline Meek amongst various plants
Provided by: Caroline Meek

"I realized that I was focusing too much on whether I was okay or not. It's good to take care of myself, but it's also nice to just **step back** and **live**. I'm learning to let it be what it's going to be."

- Caroline Meek

BALANCING ZOOM ROOMS AND STUDENT STRESS

By Miah Clark & Sam Eliassen

A crucial component of a successful college experience is co-curricular education. Outside of class, lifelong friendships and career-building connections are made through student organizations, on-campus employment, and internship opportunities. After all, community is fundamental to the learning experience, and there are few who enjoy pursuing studies in a vacuum. While the pandemic has changed the landscape of college life, Hawkeyes have reached out and stepped into new roles to find direction and community amidst so much uncertainty.

"We wanted more options for students to gain experience when the pandemic affected full-length internships," said Jennifer Noyce, the university's Associate Director of Experimental Education. So, for the 2020 fall semester, the University of Iowa and Pomerantz Career Center have partnered with Parker Dewey to offer limited-capacity virtual micro-internships.

"In person, there's this divide between extracurriculars and your own time. Of course there's this duality of asking myself 'am I doing **too much?**' and 'am I doing **enough?**'"

- *Prakruti Pancholi*

Though the Parker Dewey Micro-Internships are open to the university at large, they were first made available to the honors community and have since proven to be popular. "Honors was part of a group that received direct marketing during our soft launch," said Noyce. These micro-internships are a welcome addition to many remote students' schedules, offering career resources and connections to those facing the challenge of a virtual college experience.

As students search for more opportunities from the safety of laptop and smartphone screens, a staggering number of student organizations have taken up the virtual mantle. These past few months, student email inboxes have been flooded by student orgs, and virtual meetings are so common and accessible that students have been able to take on more commitments. As with the micro-internships, such opportunities are largely beneficial; however, added responsibilities can mean added stress—and students are starting to feel the effects.

For many who are active in extracurriculars and organizations, it can be difficult to draw the line between socially distanced involvement and virtual chaos. While pursuing her PhD at the University of North Dakota, Dr. Emily Hill, who serves as Assistant Honors Program Director, conducted research on mental health concerns among students identified as "high ability." She recounted some unique challenges regarding mental health and its perception by these students and described how online engagement may come into play.



Pictured: Jennifer Noyce
Photos courtesy of the University of Iowa Pomerantz Career Center and Honors Program

Pictured: Emily Hill



Pictured: University of Iowa Pomerantz Career Center
Photo courtesy of the University of Iowa Global Health Studies Program

Dr. Hill stressed the importance of taking realistic steps toward personal goals, however big or small, with a hearty amount of personal grace. “It’s important to set reasonable expectations for what we can accomplish during a pandemic,” she said.

Particularly among honors students used to an active lifestyle, it’s necessary to be honest and introspective in terms of personal mental health. When seeking out involvement online, students should be aware of their personal limits and should focus their energy on activities they enjoy. Hill stressed that students at the University of Iowa do not have to navigate this balance between involvement and self-care on their own. University resources—including the UI Counseling Center, the

student group “Active Minds,” and the University of Iowa Honors Program—can help make these concerns easier to balance. “It’s not a failure...to use the resources around you to have a successful experience,” Hill said. Whether these resources include in-office counseling or a daily run, their importance cannot be overstated.

Honors freshman Prakruti Pancholi decided to defer her housing contract and take her full schedule of UI classes online this semester. However, her physical distance from campus has not stopped her from finding community at the university. Among other activities, she is an active member of the UI Student Senate. When asked about how online involvement has forced her to look for different ways to stay active,

she said that it’s definitely been crucial to think outside the box. “In addition to my getting creative,” she said, “organizations are also more creative.”

Balancing it all from a laptop screen has been a challenge, Pancholi acknowledged. “In person, there’s this divide between extracurriculars and your own time,” she said. “Of course there’s this duality of asking myself ‘am I doing too much?’ and ‘am I doing enough?’”

For students like Pancholi who are grappling with questions about their levels of involvement, Dr. Hill recommends a personalized approach and stresses the importance of self-care during these trying times. “The priority should be taking care of yourself, and that looks different for everybody,” she said.

CREATIVITY FOR CREDIT

NEW HONORS PROJECT OFFERS STUDENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT WHILE EARNING CREDIT

By Axel Ohrvall & Lauren Sanyal

As a result of the recent pandemic, honors students lost many opportunities to grow as scholars and fulfill experiential learning requirements. To remedy this, the University of Iowa Honors Program created the Honors 2020 Summer Project, designed to encourage students to delve deeper into their academic and personal development during a tumultuous time.

The project submissions ranged from written papers to podcasts and audio files. The diversity and creativity of the submissions were a result of the project's flexible requirements.

The project's main architect was Addison Woll, the assessment manager and admissions coordinator of the honors program. Holly Yoder, the honors program's advising director, proposed the

idea of coming up with some kind of project to make up for the credit students would be missing out on. Woll ran with this idea and came up with the project itself, creating its description and rubric.

Honors Experiential Learning Director Andrew Willard was part of the team. He talked about his surprise at the number of projects submitted. Over 200 students filled out the required pre-questionnaires, and 100 completed the entire project. Despite this seemingly low rate of completion, Willard stressed that there had been no expectations for submission numbers and that the quality was "superb."

He said, "The questions were designed to get at the project's purpose, a set of guiding questions and parameters that were sufficiently flexible that any honors students could use them. The description had to be open and flexible so it could be adapted by anybody. That was a factor in shaping how the actual assignment was phrased."

Woll suggested that the honors program secure UI librarian Cathy Cranston to help students with the research side of the project and its introspective elements. According to Cranston, the introspective portion of the project was the most important since it gave students a chance to step back from their hectic lives and take time to reflect on their current situations.

Cranston's colleagues who work in the University Archives and Digital Scholar-



Pictured: Addison Woll standing in front of a garden
Provided by: Addison Woll

ship and Publishing Studio worked with the project to ensure that the student products can be added to what they call "The Covid-19 Stories for the Digital Repository." Cranston said: "What students were creating through these honors projects and looking at how Covid impacted their scholarship—that's going to become part of this digital repository. So, 100 years from now, if someone wanted to know what the experience of an undergraduate student at Iowa was like, they're going to have a record of that. It's a neat thing to be a part of history, even though it's a challenging time. They can add their voice to that collection." The records, which house an online archive of student work and stories, can be found at the university libraries website.

Putting the project together within a limited timeframe was no simple task. Woll highlighted how difficult it was to create the rubric, and Yoder commented on how instrumental teamwork was

"[I]t taught me that, when there's a crisis, people really do pull together and are looking for solutions rather than just trying to point out problems."

- Addison Woll,
Assessment Manager &
Admissions Coordinator



Pictured: Daniela Rybarczyk
Provided by: Daniela Rybarczyk

in building the project so quickly.

Despite the difficulties, the staff was excited to be working on the project. Woll referenced students' creativity, stressing how much he hoped students would take advantage of this opportunity to work through inspired ideas and learn more about themselves. In Cranston's case, she looked forward to working directly with students again.

Cranston believes that the Honors 2020 Summer Project was a success, especially in its introspective elements. She commented that the essential part of the project seems to be coming "through loud and clear with what students are producing."

Daniela Rybarczyk, a music performance and business major, completed the project and had a lot to say about it. "I looked at the economic impact on the orchestra industry right now. It was a two-way street with that and the protective measures they're taking. A lot of scholars are comparing the economic impact here to the impact of the 2008 Recession."

She also commented, "One of the

things that I was initially struggling with was how to incorporate the business side into the perspective. It wasn't until I talked to Ms. Cranston, the librarian, that I figured the 2008 recession aspect. Once I started going and researching, the ball got rolling."

Aside from the project's success, the staff also found themselves benefiting from their efforts. Following a Zoom call with a student that left her emotional, Cranston found herself feeling very hopeful about the future, especially in relation to the promise she has seen in the young generation of students she worked with.

Woll felt similarly: "I guess it taught me that, when there's a crisis, people really do pull together and are looking for solutions rather than just trying to point out problems."

While the project was initiated in response to the pandemic, Professor Willard, along with the rest of the team, is hopeful that this can be done again next year, albeit with some changes: "I certainly hope we do this again, without the pandemic."

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES: HONORS SCHOLARSHIPS

By Mia Knapp & Jayne Mathis

The University of Iowa Honors Program is dedicated to helping its students succeed, whether that be through academic resources, community building, or financial assistance. Through generous donations from alumni and sponsors, the program can award numerous scholarships each year. In 2019, of the roughly 250-member applicant pool, 108 candidates received scholarships, or about 43%.

During the application process, students are asked to submit their information, a résumé/CV, a letter of recommendation, and an essay. The essay, which is limited to 750 words, helps to show the development of the student and their ability to express themselves in a concise way. With such a highly-successful applicant pool, the essay is utilized to highlight who the student is outside of the classroom, with less emphasis strictly on grades. Camille Socarras, the Honors Scholarship Coordinator, says, "Honors is really about developing the whole student and most successful scholarship applications show how the honors experience has contributed to both their academic and personal growth."

For many students, scholarships are vital to continuing their education at the University of Iowa, and this has been amplified in response to the pandemic. Thanks to generous donations the program received, more scholarships were given out this year compared to previous years. Featured below are three students' biographies, perspectives on their scholarships, and plans for their futures.



Pictured: Abigail Jordahl
Provided by: Abigail Jordahl

Abbey Jordahl - University of Iowa Honors Program (UIHP) Fellowship 2020

Awarded to second-year students who demonstrate a particularly in-depth academic and intellectual involvement in their education, the UIHP Fellowship aims to help these students further develop their knowledge of themselves. The focus of the award for the 2020-2021 school year was a commitment to service-learning and/or civic engagement.

One of these recipients is Abbey Jordahl, from Ankeny, Iowa, who is pursuing a double major in French and International Studies. Before coming to college, she volunteered at an English as a Second Language (ESL) program in Des Moines, which spurred her interest in International Studies and civic engagement.

This year, Jordahl is a co-leader of Students for Human Rights and is working to find virtual volunteering opportuni-

ties to stay engaged with the community. She is also the Events Coordinator for the UN Association, which is currently focusing on a fundraiser for polio vaccines. "I want this to be some part of my career," she answered emphatically when asked if she wants to continue with similar organizations or projects in the future. While she has no concrete plan set, Jordahl is enthusiastic about possibly working for a Non-Governmental Organization or something similar.

In terms of self-discovery, Jordahl says that her time in the honors program has shown her "how much being around motivated or engaged students can push you." This does not only apply to her time in the classroom; she also makes a consistent effort to attend events for both the honors program and the community at large. In short, as she says, her involvement with honors has taught her the importance of "investing in things that you value that aren't directly academic."



Alyssa Ricke - Richard Tyner Scholarship 2020

The Richard Tyner Scholarship is awarded to students who did not join the honors program as an incoming freshman.

A fourth-year from Sac City, Iowa, awardee Alyssa Ricke is majoring in Psychology and minoring in Sociology. Ricke's interest in these subjects partially, she joked, was piqued from her love of the show *Criminal Minds*. Primarily, however, Ricke's interest stems from the value she places on awareness of different cultures and people.

"I didn't really know about the honors program. I knew it existed, but I didn't know it was something I could actually be in." After receiving an email during her first semester, Ricke realized the opportunity was available to her.

What motivated her to follow through with the application was her brother, who had been in the honors program previously. He told Ricke how the program would help her get into smaller classes, connect better with other students, and would help down the line for things like applying to graduate school.

After joining the honors program, she found that her brother was right. Ricke described how she was able to establish better connections through her smaller classes as well the honors society she joined. These connections would prove useful both socially and for networking in her fields of interest. Ricke plans to pursue clinical psychology with an emphasis on forensic psychology and hopes to attain a PhD. Thanks to her honors experience (and *Criminal Minds*), she is excited and confident about her future in the field.

Pictured: Alyssa Ricke
Provided by: Alyssa Ricke

"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, Honors Scholarship Coordinator



Zach Vig - Williams 2019, Dewey B. Stuit 2020, Rhodes Dunlap for 2nd Years 2020

The Rhodes Dunlap Collegiate Scholarship is awarded to students who demonstrate their exceptional knowledge, skill, and experience through outstanding academic performance, innovation, and discovery within chosen disciplines. The scholarship emphasizes contributions to the university community through performance, research, organizational leadership, service, or creative engagement.

The Dewey B. Stuit Scholarship also recognizes extraordinary continued performance in a chosen discipline as well as a connection to the honors program through research, leadership, scholarship, or research.

Zach Vig is a repeat scholarship awardee who received both the Rhodes Dunlap Scholarship for second-year students and the Dewey B. Stuit Scholarship for 2020 after receiving the Williams Scholarship in 2019. Vig is a

third-year student from Mount Vernon, Iowa, who is majoring in physics and geology. He became interested in these fields by participating in Science Olympiad in high school. Vig's experiences prompted him to think about how he "could do this better."

Being a repeat scholarship awardee requires a serious commitment to high academic achievement. Vig's advice is to study subjects you find interesting since it makes it easier to sit down and learn the material. "When I sit down to study, I sit down only to study. I split up my work time and relaxation time," he says.

The honors program has impacted Vig academically and socially. It has given him the opportunity to network with people in the hopes of finding research opportunities. In the future, he hopes to attend graduate school and conduct research. Vig's end goal is to "work to better the planet," and the honors scholarships are assisting him in his endeavors.

Pictured: Zach Vig
Provided by: Zach Vig

MEET THE WRITERS



Sonia Beltz

Sonia is a second-year from the Dayton, Ohio, area. She is majoring in English and Creative Writing on the publishing track with a minor in Religious Studies. While at the University of Iowa, she hopes to develop her skills as an editor and writer.



Miah Clark

Miah Clark is from Overland Park, Kansas. She is a second-year student at the University of Iowa studying English and Creative Writing, as well as pursuing a writing certificate. She hopes to improve her writing and academic involvement through her work with Honors Publications.



Thomas Duong

Thomas is a second-year student from Iowa City, Iowa, with an open major on the pre-medical track. Besides his studies, Thomas is president of UNICEF Iowa and is an undergraduate researcher. He enjoys sports, playing drums, and traveling.



Sam Eliassen

Sam is a first-year student studying English and Creative Writing on the publishing and pre-med tracks. He is from LeClaire, Iowa, and is excited to work with university honors to find intersections between fields in science and communications. He loves reading and writing and is also involved in InkLit Magazine, U of I's freshman literature and culture journal.



Seth Foster

Seth is a freshman of the Computer Science program at the University of Iowa. He hails from Mason City, Iowa, and he intends to earn either a Bachelor's or Master's degree in Computer Science with an emphasis on game design to set himself up for a career in that field.



Julia Fout

Julia is from Moline, Illinois, and is a second-year student at the University of Iowa. She is studying for a major in both French and Psychology with a minor in Rhetoric and Persuasion. Outside of class, she enjoys biking, going to local bakeries, and practicing French.



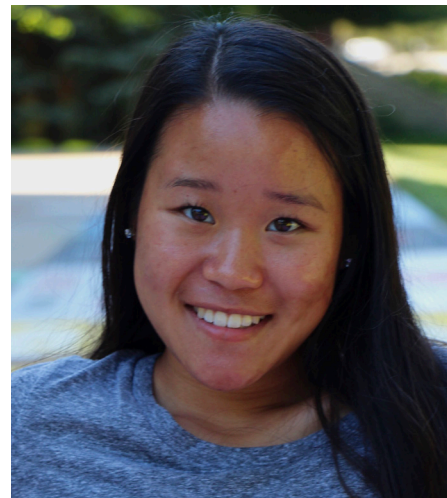
Lydia Guo

Lydia is a second-year student studying Biomedical Sciences and is a design editor for the Honors Newsletter. She works as an undergraduate research assistant focusing on cystic fibrosis and volunteers at the UIHC. In her free time, Lydia enjoys oil painting at her local art studio.



Casey Huettman

Casey is from Peosta, Iowa, and is a freshman at the University of Iowa. She is pursuing majors in International Studies and Chemistry, and when she is not in school, she enjoys roller skating around campus and reading anything she can get her hands on.



Mia Knapp

Mia is a sophomore from Lisbon, Iowa, studying Journalism and Mass Communication with a Business minor. Aside from her studies, Mia is involved in the Salt Company and Her Campus. In her free time, she enjoys baking and spending time with her friends.



Jayne Mathis

Jayne is a sophomore from Ankeny, Iowa, majoring in English and Creative Writing. Along with writing, she also enjoys playing the trumpet, rotating through four very specific music playlists, and laughing at her own jokes.



Airiana Mohr

Airiana is a second-year neuroscience major from Machesney Park, Illinois, with minors in Spanish, chemistry, and psychology. Aside from her studies, Airiana is a member of numerous groups on campus including USG, Homecoming Executive Council, and SiR. In her free time, Airiana enjoys reading and spending time with her friends.



Axel Ohrvall

Axel is a sophomore from Bolingbrook, Illinois, studying Creative Writing and Journalism. An avid writer of stories, poetry, and fanfiction, he is currently working on the third draft of a novel he wishes to publish next year. He reads sci-fi novels and practices fencing in his free time.



Jacob Sammon

Jacob is from Urbandale, Iowa, and is a second-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.



Lauren Sanyal

Lauren Sanyal is from San Diego, California, and is a first-year student at the University of Iowa. She is double-majoring in English and Creative Writing (publishing track) and Screenwriting. She is excited to become part of the amazing writing community that Iowa City offers through getting involved in as many ways as she can.



Olivia Tonelli

Olivia Tonelli is a second-year student from Joliet, Illinois, studying English and Creative Writing on the publishing track. Through her academic pursuits and collaboration among her peers, she hopes to refine her artistic voice as a writer and elevate her skill set as an editor.



James Transue

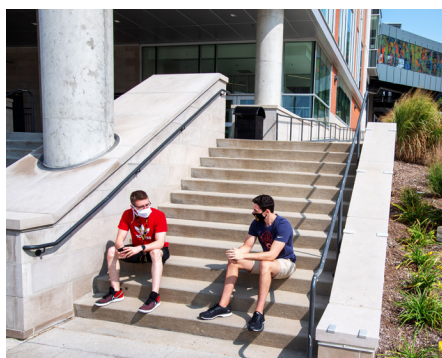
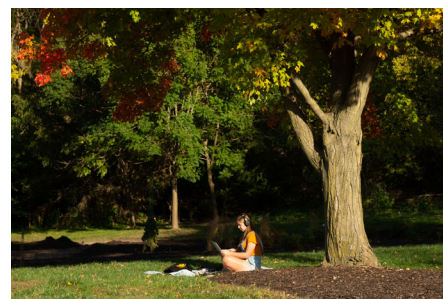
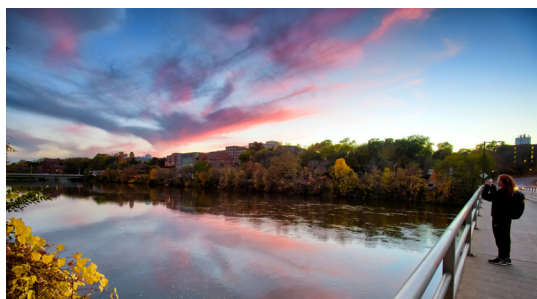
James is from Rochester, Illinois, and is a first-year student at the University of Iowa. He is currently pursuing a double-major in Journalism and Creative Writing. James hopes to spend his time at college honing his writing craft and making connections among his peers and the university faculty.



Maggie Winegar

Maggie is from Jefferson City, Missouri, and is currently a second-year at the University of Iowa. She is pursuing a major in Journalism and Mass Communications with minors in both Spanish and Business Administration. Maggie is passionate about environmental sustainability and strives to continue learning every day.

GIVING TO HONORS



Photos courtesy of the University of Iowa Office of Strategic Communication

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