



Honors Newsletter

FALL 2017
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA



honors.uiowa.edu

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On the Cover:

Photos by second-year human physiology major Emily Bui, taken during the 2017 SHPEP program, accompany a piece in which pre-health sciences majors tell about powerful learning experiences. Read more on p. 15.

Photo by Emily Bui.

Word From The Director

Greetings for the Fall of 2017 to our Honors Program students, faculty, alumni, and friends.

THE GREEN ROOM – A NEW HONORS CLASS

In this issue you'll learn more about the Honors Program's newest honors course (first taught last fall). This course, titled the Green Room (a room in a theater or studio in which performers can relax when they are not performing), has gotten much publicity in its latest run through its guest speakers and because its classes were almost all held at the Englert Theatre and were open to the public. That's right: the public was part of the class!

The Green Room class had its origins in feedback from honors student focus groups on how the Honors Program could help its students with self-discovery – which is an important part of our mission statement. Our students suggested a class similar to a first-year seminar that would help students to find their path and passion(s). Honors asked Dave Gould, known for his highly popular Life Design course that he taught for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for some years, to structure a class around the students' description. Dave's own philosophy of education – make it personal, relevant, and community-engaged–matches so well with what we do in honors education here at Iowa. Dave, through this one-of-a-kind class experience, has deeply engaged our students, helped them to connect with the community, and to self-discover.

Dave, by the way, also plays a central role in Engaged Social Innovation (ESI for

short), a major that Honors for the past three years has piloted for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. ESI presents a unique and cutting-edge way for honors students to engage in experiential learning. It has the added benefit of helping our students to self-discover. ESI majors are not your typical college students. Most students are content to follow a prescribed curriculum and prove their capability in their discipline through papers, sometimes lab work, and exams. In contrast, ESI students create a third of their major's curriculum; ESI students also are responsible for identifying a social need and then designing and implementing an innovative solution to address it.

This takes a special type of person: one with a strong sense of civic responsibility, who is independent, highly motivated, creative, innovative, and willing to take a risk. If you're interested, Dave Gould is the contact person for ESI. See <https://honors.uiowa.edu/current-members/engaged-social-innovation> for more info and Dave's contact info.

HONORS AT IOWA AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

I'm nearing the end of my term as president of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), the oldest and largest organization for honors education in the world. I'll still have a year left in the NCHC leadership, however, in serving as immediate past president in 2018. My three years thus far in the leadership have been challenging in various ways, but they have also been highly rewarding. I'm very pleased to have been part of it, and although I'm still only coming to realize how the experience has



Dr. Art Spisak

affected me, I'm certain that my time in the NCHC leadership has and will benefit Honors at Iowa. More on that in the next newsletter, after my term as president has actually ended.

As always, please feel free to contact me via email (art-spisak@uiowa.edu) or phone (319.335.1681) with any comments, questions, or concerns you have about the Honors Program. I'm happy to have such conversations.



Art L. Spisak, PhD
Director, UI Honors Program
President, National Collegiate Honors Council

Education Through Engagement

A deeper look at the Green Room

By Madhuri Belkale



Students of the Green Room all sit on the stage of the Englert Theatre on the first night of the class before opening the doors to the public. Professor Gould addresses the class and students wait in anticipation of the semester ahead as he discusses the unknown possibilities of the Green Room. Photo by Madhuri Belkale.

"What I care about, and what I work towards, is trying to make higher education more meaningful and the community engaged. Let the experience mark the students — it's not just a class, it's not just a transferring of information, but it's truly something that is designed and purposeful to try and make an impact on somebody's life." These are the words that Honors Professor David Gould uses to describe the goal of his professional career, and this is precisely the attitude that students of the Green Room bought into this unique learning experience.

During the fall semester, the Green Room met Monday nights from 5:30-8:30 P.M. at the Englert Theatre for an unconventional class, which concluded with an "after-party" at The Merge to continue the conversation. Each week, the class, comprised of 73 students and 13 teaching assistants, was joined by musical performers, a local non-profit organization, a "main act" speaker, and members from the Iowa City community.

Before each session, the class hosted a "real" green room experience, connecting students with national and local leaders. Students were divided into a series of small teams led by teaching assistants, and teams were given various responsibilities for each week, including promoting the event, greeting the community, and producing the show. At the end of each Green Room session, an activity was

revealed for the entire audience to complete within 24 hours — a collective push intended to generate momentum — an "aftershock" honoring the class's time together.

Professor David Gould describes his vision for the class as an experiment and the classroom as a laboratory, naming it as a place where "you can be an English major today, a history major next week, and an economics major by the end of the semester and nobody thinks that's weird." According to him, this vision should be executed and viewed through a ladder of success that he explains like this: "First, can we get people to come? We were able to fill the class with students and we were able to fill the theater with community members. Are we able to inspire them? Then, are [they] the next morning still thinking about what [they] heard last night? And will [they] still be thinking of some of it by Friday? And then, will [they] then do something about it?" While Professor Gould doesn't know the answer to those questions, he hopes that students and members of the community will be able to answer them.

In its mission statement, the Honors Program declares, "Honors at Iowa enriches the undergraduate experience by cultivating intellectual curiosity and practical skill through challenging coursework, creative engagement, and experiential learning to nurture a deeper understanding of one's discipline and self."

A deeper look at the Green Room, cont.

In accordance with that mission statement, Honors Associate Director Bob Kirby said, "Understanding who you are, what you value, and what you are committed to is a lifelong process but the college years are an especially important time. Many students are trying to think through those questions as they consider what they want to do for a career. Through the Green Room, we are trying to use individuals who have found success in their careers and life as examples for students to learn from. By listening to our guests' stories and raising questions with them, we hope students will learn that pathways to success can have a lot of twists and turns and no easy roadmap is provided. What does come through from listening to our guests is that they care deeply about what they do and their work aligns with who they are. As students in the Green Room, we ask that you think about who you are, what you value, and how you can make your future reflect those aspects of you."

Each Monday night, the students of the Green Room eagerly anticipate class and the excitement in the air is strong as members of the community enter the theater. Green Room

student Eric Small said, "I have found the Green Room to be an academic treat every week. Its speakers and community leaders inspire you: inducing thoughts to become action and generating meaningful self-reflection."

The Green Room students vary across demographics and disciplines, yet all speak highly of the class and describe it as a very unique academic experience. Green Room student Hailey Verdick said, "For me, the Green Room was a sacred three hours in my evening that I committed to learning about my community and the world. I used this time to expand my views, evaluate what I wanted my future to look like, and consider the smaller decisions I could make every day to add meaning to my week. I also enjoyed the opportunity to connect with other Honors students, and realize how many other people are interested in learning beyond the classroom."

The class gave students the opportunity to learn in a nontraditional way and to invest in the future of their education. Green Room student Noel Mills said, "As a student, I yearn for experiences that help me learn not through memorization and regurgitation, but rather through engaging encounters with the 'real world.' In the Green Room, I learned more about my community, myself, and the human spirit than I have in any other class. The Green Room is a

hallowed space in which students' hearts were set ablaze."

The Green Room is also unique in having thirteen equally passionate teaching assistants that lead the twelve teams of students. According to Professor Gould, "[Last year's Green Room students] looked at their class and said, 'This is wonderful, but it's only 30 students, and we've got thousands of them, and how can we expand the experience to reach more?'" So, he made the decision to expand the class and invite the community to join, and he asked back his old students to help.

Green Room teaching assistant Ben Ross said, "As soon as I heard the Green Room was coming back, I knew I wanted to be involved."

Another teaching assistant, Katie Frericks, said, "The Green Room last fall was the first time I had ever been genuinely excited for a class... [D]uring the Green Room I felt that I wanted to be engaged and I wanted to go to class and do my work and do my very best at all of it." This excitement is what inspired her to become a teaching assistant

"For me, the Green Room was a sacred three hours in my evening that I committed to learning about my community and the world."

—Hailey Verdick

for the class. The teaching assistants hold a unique perspective on the class, since it is their second time experiencing some form of the Green Room.

Ross said, "Often times in the middle of the semester it feels like there's no time to think about what the classes and extracurriculars we're involved in are really for. How do they fit into our passions? How can we use what we learn to make an impact on our world? The Green Room makes space in our schedules to really think about what the purpose of a college education should be, and where it might lead."

Frericks added, "The Green Room is about touching the lives of others and creating a space for people to learn from others as well as themselves, and that's what I think learning is all about."

It is difficult to describe the addicting atmosphere of the Green Room, and even harder to tell someone exactly what the class teaches. However, it is easy to say that the Green Room breaks boundaries of a traditional class, and encourages students to break boundaries in other ways. Whether you are exploring different majors, interested in exploring nontraditional career options, or just excited to learn, Green Room attendees will cheer you on, all the while assuring you that you are not alone.

Life After Honors

How Honors aided Elise Kerns' post-graduate career

By Eilidh Sperry

Deciding what to do post-graduation is a daunting task which all students eventually face. There are many possibilities in terms of paths to take: jobs, internships, travel, and research are all unique ways to take one's learning into the outside world. One recent alum, Elise Kerns, is already seeing the impacts of her time in the Honors program in her life. Kerns graduated in 2017 with a degree in English after attending the University for three years. Despite her short time here, she participated in a wide variety of Honors experiences as she completed University Honors requirements, found her true passions, and developed her future goals.

Kerns completed the first requirement of University Honors, Honors Coursework, during the first semester of her freshman year. One experience in particular served as the catalyst for the rest of her time in Honors: Kerns was in an Honors Rhetoric class taught by Matt Gilchrist. This experience led her to get involved with the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU), where she did research on arthouse cinema and film culture, especially focusing on the ways local film communities impact films, with Gilchrist as her advisor. Kerns completed some of this research abroad in Edinburgh and, upon her return, was an ICRU Ambassador. She states that as one of the only ambassadors who was a non-science major, she was very focused on "[highlighting] underrepresented research and [making] research a more inclusive environment for people who are in the humanities." Kerns was also an Honors Writing Fellow, and later became a Writing Center tutor. The combination of her work in the Writing Fellows program and her research in ICRU made up the Experiential Learning component of her University Honors.

Since graduation, the main thing Kerns says she's been focused on has been reading and writing; she remarks that "I feel like I need time to process and incorporate my learnings as an English major, and I also have time to catch up on readings that I didn't have time to do." She currently works at the Iowa City Public Library as a Library Aide and is focusing on personal health, noting that she's taking time to slow down as she believes she will be "a better professor, a better student, and a better adult if I really take the time to prioritize, slow down, and process everything." Looking ahead, Kerns plans to go to graduate school and obtain a Master's degree and a Ph.D. She is considering a Masters in Library Information Science and, or alternatively, a Masters of Fine Arts due to her interest in creative nonfiction. Kerns is in the early



Elise Kerns graduated in May 2017 with a Bachelor's degree in English. She currently works as a Library Aide in the Iowa City Public Library. Photo provided by Elise Kerns.

stages of working on her graduate school application, but states that she is taking her time to develop a strong writing sample and consider her passions.

Although she only graduated this past spring, Kerns has already seen the impact of her Honors experiences. She notes that her work as a student representative for ICRU and her experiences working with students as a Writing Fellow are currently helping her as an employee in customer service. She also feels that she was able to have an impact as a humanities scholar in ICRU research which is typically dominated by science fields by being a part of representing these lesser-known research areas.

Kerns says that Honors is a hugely valuable experience for students, remarking, "I think that Honors is a really easy way to gain greater agency in your academic life because it forces you to take control over your interests as an academic." She notes that the program motivated her to pursue her own interests and made it easy for her to do so. She advises current Honors students to reach out to mentors as they can help you through your academic and career growth, and emphasizes how important her mentors were during her time as an undergraduate. Her final piece of advice for Honors students is to "Really listen to what you're passionate about... you're far more likely to take something away from your education if you put your heart into whatever you're doing."

Life After Honors

The travelogue of recent alum Adria Britton

By Adria Britton



Adria Britton graduated with Honors in December 2016 with an English major. Photo provided by Adria Britton.

December 2016: I smile at my honors thesis – *Goodbye, darling, it has been an adventure and I hope that, if we meet again, I will not blush too severely at your awkward ways and sections of ignorance.* I finish talking to my thesis and go back to the apartment to pack.

All three of my apartment-mates wake up early (5:35 A.M.) to drive me to the airport, help me with luggage, and say goodbye. I still need to finish a paper for my class on Ukrainian culture and history. I will work on the plane and do the last edits at home, I suppose. And I suppose I do call it home, don't I. But I also call Apartment #5 on Lincoln Avenue my home, and St. Andrews in Scotland, and the Saavedras house in Chile, the woods, nana's house, Finch in Point Loma, and the Emigrant Wilderness (though that home has much I have yet to explore). More lasting than these places, I am always home when I hear God in me, home when Ruairi talks to me, home when hugging dad or snuggling with momma, laughing with Ellie, dancing with Elias, leaning against Ian. These are all things I realize I ought to do more often.

My hands are dry, red, cracked. Soon, I will be free from the weather that does this to them, sheltered in the milder, but still snowy, winter of Northern California.

January 2017: In the last eight months or so I have, cautiously and without fully believing it possible, constructed a plan. When I finally peeled it open, the fantasy-like nature of my plan excited me and I considered it with the thought, "This is the probable direction; if things change, I will accept the adventure." It would

set me up to continue learning about life while also investing in a community, caring for those around me. The plan is unconventional, and will begin in about a month.

February 2017: This day has a sweetness to it. Bees trot the air, and sunlight hums. The wind invites hair to dance—now bowing beneath it, now making it spin. This grass is young, these trees are old; the sky is breath and I breathe it. "You are young," I whisper to myself. "You are young and you are sitting on a blue blanket in a meadow." I soak what winter sun I can, because I will be further north soon, in St. Andrews, getting the Atlantic out from between Ruairi and me.

Onto a plane, my stomach not willing to eat much but my mind wanting to consume everything. I am trying to distract myself from the fact that I have daydreamed of living in a small town on the coast of Scotland, sun bursting from then hiding behind textured clouds, writing by a window while sipping coffee and looking over to see the man I love beside me, reading or writing—distract myself from this because I do not want to have expectations; I want to feel fully whatever life I live, rather than mourning the nonexistence of the lives I have not lived.

May 2017: I have been here for a few months. To line you out on logistics: I walked straight into my dream world. I work part time copyediting, and, as I am living with a friend and cooking my own food, the income is sufficient for now. Ruairi's flat is a five-minute walk from mine, church is about eight minutes walking distance, and the North Sea is always close, hemming in the town with cold grey-blue water. I dedicate the first half of my day to writing and editing—practicing prose, researching, writing poetry, compiling creative nonfiction, and editing work. Afternoons usually see Ruairi over for lunch or coffee, both of us reading in the light greens and whites of the living room. My schedule leaves room for me to help my church with community work and to dedicate time to friendships.

I have given up on undergoing reality checks. I am experiencing the communion of external and internal worlds, enjoying the company of friends, walking by the water, cooking, writing, dancing, and loving. I observe. Though there is always more to notice than one manages to notice, I can sense that I am not slipping into a thin, superficial life.

Two things I am learning that I hope never to abandon: (1) The difference between hoping for something in life and demanding something of life. How the one can be fulfilled while the other fosters selfishness and an almost calculated space for disappointment.

The travelogue of recent alum Adria Britton, cont.

(2) By pulling away from the predictable path, a person can become a refreshing presence to those around her.

Oh, and this third thing that seems like a strange and possibly irrelevant “fun fact,” but has, in truth, been a key element to my lifestyle: I got rid of my phone about seven months ago. I stay in touch with people through email and Facebook on my laptop. Though phonelessness does frequently lead to inconveniences, inconveniences do not necessarily lead to a poorer quality of life. It has meant more connections with people around me, knowing where I am without Google, interesting conversations surrounding technology, and spending more time settled into full eye-contact conversations.

July 2017: I am with my family in Tuolumne, California again. The blueness and largeness of the mountains soothe me, and I experience much of it as new, having just been in a country so

different. I wait for September to come, when Ruairi will meet my quirky, delightful family, and get to know this vast, absurd state.

In a sense, I have directly followed both of the expected after-undergrad life paths: work and continued education. For work, I am writing and copyediting; for education, goodness, do I continue to learn. Travel, exploring nature, spending time with friends, working alongside my family, writing, reading—all these everyday teachers I can learn from if I but sit up, take notes, listen, wonder, ask, imagine, remember, act, reflect. A little imagination goes a long way (as far as California to Scotland, for instance), so, whatever plans I formulate, I hope I do not forget to look up and notice the possibilities waiting to be realized, waiting to lead me on more adventures.

**“A little imagination goes a long way,”
—Adria Britton**



In the Right Direction

How Lina Khodor found her path in Prague

By Lina Khodor

My name is Lina Khodor and I am a senior studying International Studies on the Human Rights track with a minor in Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies. Through the University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC) program, I studied abroad in Prague, Czech Republic for the spring semester of 2017.

In Prague I found myself inspired by the art, architecture, and the sheer amount of beer consumed by the locals. The city, from its Old Town Square to its beautiful castles, made it easy to believe I was in a fairytale for five months. When walking along the cobblestone streets from my apartment to my favorite bakery, I would be greeted with tall, grand buildings each painted in different bright colors.

I was not expecting some sort of miracle that I would "find myself" while studying abroad and suddenly know exactly what I want to do with my life, but my internship abroad did give me a nudge in the right direction. My internship at La Strada Czech Republic, an international NGO (non-governmental organization) dedicated to systemically ending human trafficking and exploitation, was the best part of my experience as it helped give me the courage and ambition to work abroad in the human rights field. That little push gave me a sense of independence and confidence I did not know I needed.

I left the United States at the end of a particularly divisive and tumultuous presidential election, one that brought topics such as Islamist terrorism, Islamophobia, and Syrian refugees to the forefront of American politics, media, and minds. With recent terrorist attacks and a global refugee crisis, I was hesitant to study abroad in fear of facing backlash and prejudice as a Syrian. My parents shared the same concern and urged me to continue my studies in America. However, I have faced these challenges within my own community.

I grew up in a predominately white small town in Iowa where I felt alienated and pressured to assimilate rather than integrate. It was not until I attended the University of Iowa that I began to meet and interact with a wide range of people of color. Their stories did not exactly match my own, but many have felt the same anger and experienced similar struggles. Originally, I believed that education, ambition, and self-expression would give me armor against the ignorance I faced, but soon I realized it should not end there. I could work towards creating an environment where the marginalized, especially minorities and refugees, are treated equitably and with dignity.



Top: From left to right, USAC participants Bozhie Pokorny, Sydney Haboush, Lina Khodor and Amber Crow smile as they attend Springfest in Munich.

Bottom: Senior Lina Khodor sits upon the rocks of Moher Cliffs in Ireland. Photos provided by Lina Khodor.

How Lina Khodor found her path in Prague, cont.

This motivated me to pursue international human rights academically and professionally. I chose to pursue International Studies on the Human Rights track because I am passionate about advocacy and human rights. I hope to devote my life to a career that focuses on refugee rights, resettlement, and integration. I chose to study in the Czech Republic because of its rich history with refugees and minority persecution.

The Czech Republic's Jewish population was forcibly displaced and subjected to violent anti-Semitism, which is daunting in its similarity to the current persecution and refugee crisis Syrians are facing. USAC offers courses and volunteer work that delve into Jewish history and persecution within the Czech Republic. This cannot be replicated by taking courses on the subject in the United States. It is the locals' interpretation of their history that provides a more comprehensive understanding of issues through an international

perspective, a skill that is vital to my future success in the professional realm of international human rights.

My experience with an NGO internship challenged me to consider different perspectives and difficult questions. How can we, as an international community, work to better the conditions of refugees and minorities? How can I contribute? My decision to study abroad was years in the making, but it is these questions that ultimately inspired me to realize my dream.

Studying in Prague was magical, and I have come to love the city as if it were a second home. Living there made me realize that I was not afraid to leave the comfortable sheltered lifestyle I have in Iowa. Interning at an NGO abroad helped me become involved in the human rights field and introduced me to professional advocacy and action. In the end, it was the push I needed to let go of my fear and doubt, and continue going forward.

“Originally, I believed that education, ambition and self-expression would give me armor against the ignorance I faced, but soon I realized it should not end there. I could work towards creating an environment where the marginalized, especially minorities and refugees, are treated equitably and with dignity.”

—Lina Khodor



Study Abroad with UI

From the deserts of Morocco to the cities of China, Iowa's [International Study](#) Abroad Program can take you anywhere.

Kicking Down Doors and Shattering Glass Ceilings

Candid advice from a fellow Hawkeye

By Katie
Kiesewetter

I came to college in 2014 with a new MacBook and \$11,000 I had saved from waiting tables, making ice cream, and washing beer mugs at a couple of restaurants in my hometown for the greater part of three years. My furniture was made of plastic. I watched a lot of *Portlandia*, *Friends*, and *Game of Thrones* with groups of my best Daum buddies while we ate various snacks, drank any hot bev we could force through a Keurig, and played *Settlers of Catan* (like, a lot of *Settlers of Catan*). I'd never heard of Paula Scher or Cindy Sherman. I didn't know what intersectionality was. I wanted to be a writer.

This is the first year of my senior year (naturally, I have a victory lap coming up). I'm double majoring in Graphic Design and English with a minor in Gender, Women's, & Sexuality Studies. I work at a bar for a living. I take 18 credit hours each term. I work about 30-40 hours a week. I pick up freelance artistic work to build my portfolio. I live with my boyfriend and our cat. I regularly get five hours of sleep each night. I am up to my eyes in student loans. I am behind on all tuition payments. I consider Toaster Strudels an adequate breakfast. I want to be a designer.

Someone told me earlier this week that she thought I was like Wonder Woman because I involve myself in so many things. Naturally, I responded with a cute emoji and a thank you, but I had to wonder—no pun intended—what that meant to me. Why on earth would she think that? People say, "You work so hard. You have so many things going for you!" In all honesty, my life is a mess, and ninety percent of the time I feel like I'm about to fall apart. All I ever want to do is get some sleep, but hard work is all I know. I only want to be better, do better, and have a better life for myself.

My family is from central Illinois. We're pretty steadily grounded in the lower middle class, and I've had multiple jobs since I was fifteen. The idea that I would run off to college and be an art major was pretty jarring to a lot of people where I come from. Not only because I was a complete black sheep, but also because those words simply don't translate to a lot of folks with blue-collar backgrounds. My family has always been open to change and supportive of my dreams, but the general expectation from many rural townies is that boys will work in something mechanical or involving a union and girls will be nurses, housewives, or schoolteachers—which



Katie with her fellow designers from the Chicago Blackhawks Practicum, pictured outside the Blackhawks locker room. Photo provided by Katie Kiesewetter.

are great options if that's the life you want. I'm all about personal choice, but I think because I was never presented with many stellar opportunities to make informed choices when I was younger (I truly lived in a suffocating bubble), I just latched onto any chance I could get. From then on, I rode out every opportunity until I absorbed new powers before moving on to the next thing. I think that's the reason I was asked to write this senior profile. I've had a lot of cool experiences. So onward to those!

I joined the Honors Program because, like all smart kids, I like being validated in my smartness. However, I met a lot of cool people along the way who have motivated me to strive for greatness, so that's a pretty decent bonus. In my first semester I took *World of the Beatles*, a non-honors course taught by honors professor Dr. Donna Parsons, and it was easily my favorite class. Donna saw how interested I was in her work, and I was constantly visiting her during office hours. I was so inspired by the way she made a career out of the things she holds dearest to her heart.

Sooner than I knew it, that next semester and on for a full year and a half, I was conducting undergraduate research in the humanities with Donna as my mentor, reading memoirs of modern musicians and drawing cross-modal comparisons between the Beatles and the Pop Art movement. At the time, I wanted to write for *Rolling Stone* and make art on the side, so the research I was doing was incredible for that goal. While my interests have changed since I was a fresh and green eighteen-year-old, Donna has continued to push me academically. It's so refreshing to meet professors who genuinely want you to succeed.

Candid advice from a fellow Hawkeye, cont.

Also in my first year, I interviewed and was offered a job as an administrative assistant in the Honors offices. I had an amazing boss, Jessica Waldschmidt, who helped me take my career from answering phones, coordinating events, and processing receipts to becoming a social media manager and graphic designer for the program. She, at the time, was the program coordinator and communications specialist, but she is now on her way to an amazing career in Corvallis, OR. I will truly miss her. She is the first person who made me believe I could make it in the great big world of design and communication, even though I came from a high school where graphic design was barely even a thing. Any time I expressed interest in a project, she let me run with it. Most importantly, she included me in a project about online presence management that we presented to other honors programs at the NCHC conference in Seattle, WA. That's the furthest I've ever been from my hometown and the most I've ever felt at home.

share. Without Rachel, I never would have learned how to use my artistic skills to support and help others.

After those experiences, I truly believed I could tackle anything, so I honestly just started saying yes to any possibility. Why not? The spring of my junior year, Dan Matheson, a professor in the Sport & Recreation Management department, visited my web design class to discuss a graphic design opportunity that involved collaboration on various projects related to sports management, ticketing, charities, and the like for the Chicago Blackhawks Practicum. I had no experience in the sporting industry, but I love graphic design, so I was like, "Sure, I'll interview." Long story short, I was taken on a whirlwind adventure this past July. I moved to Chicago for a few weeks with a group of students I'd only known for a few days, and I worked on project proposals in branding, design style, corporate sponsorships, and project management for the Chicago Blackhawks executive staff. Like, does that even sound real? I had the most amazing summer, and all it stemmed from was me taking a chance on myself and saying, "Sure."



When she makes art for herself, Katie likes to illustrate portraits of women, using bright colors. This is a postcard she made when living in Chicago this summer.

The best advice I can give to anyone reading this article is never believe you can't do something simply because you've never done it before. Many of the most successful moments in my life have been the result of having an open mind and taking chances. For example, as soon as I became interested in design, I impulsively joined UI Students in Design where I could collaborate with other student artists, meet new friends, and take trips to professional studios and firms across the Midwest. From making wedding programs for friends to typesetting menus for restaurants, I've said yes to nearly everything that's been asked of me. Every little experience is an opportunity to hone your craft—artistic or not. There are so many projects out there

Another lovely genius lady I met on my journey at Iowa is Rachel Williams. I took Intro to GWSS with her the summer between sophomore and junior year. She lit a feminist fire in my belly like no other human being could, so the same autumn in which I took my little jaunt to Seattle, I was also in Rachel's Studio Art, Feminist Practice, & Social Justice class. That semester and through the spring, I worked with a bunch of rad, justice-seeking students to bring art workshops to low-income shelters and crisis groups to support women and children who had been victims of family and intimate partner violence. Through these workshops, we helped build a community of people who became stronger by expressing themselves with images and colors when words were too painful to

begging for young people's contributions, and all we have to do is say, "Hi, look, I can do these things, let me help you."

So, to wrap this thing up: say yes, stay weird, be scrappy, cry a lot, but always come back with your big girl pants on and sleeves rolled up. Most importantly, be grateful. I've seen and done a lot of things in a few short years, but I'll never forget where I came from. The working class is what I was born into, and I don't think I would have been as hungry and motivated had I not started from the bottom. I am grateful to my family, friends, and mentors for their love and support these past few years and I can only hope they know how much they've helped me on my way to building my best self as a young professional. I do have that victory lap to look forward to next year, but after that I can't see anything stopping me from kicking down doors and shattering glass ceilings.

Running the Numbers

The benefits of honors participation

By Claire Jacobson



Daum Honors House residents decorate pumpkins at a fall 2016 party. Research by Honors at Iowa staff, still in early stages, examines correlations between early honors community experiences and outcomes such as overall GPA. Photo provided by the Honors Outreach Team.

The preliminary findings are in for a research project the Honors professional staff have been conducting in our own Honors Program: searching for a correlation between Honors experiences and undergraduate student success. "I lived in Daum," said Honors student Ashley Chong '18. "I think living with a mix of different majors and in particular people who were dedicated and serious about said majors was very helpful." Even though students may anecdotally report a positive impact on their education from these Honors experiences, it is an entirely different matter to run the numbers and find the real relationship between the two.

The variables? Participation in Honors Primetime, a relatively new pre-semester experience for incoming Honors freshmen, and residence in the Honors Living-Learning Community in Daum. For comparison's sake, between 40% and 60% of incoming Honors freshmen take part in Primetime, while between 30% and 40% of them live in Honors housing. This research, still in its early stages, examines outcomes such as overall GPA, the number of Honors credits accumulated, and ultimately who stays in the program until graduation.

The results? In the class of 2017 (also called "the 2013 cohort"), "There is a clear increase in GPA with Daum residence, and there is a clear increase in GPA for Primetime participants" as compared to students who met the academic requirements to join Honors but chose not to do so," said Johnson. And though the effects don't

appear to be cumulative, "there was a clear negative effect for students who did neither of those two things. Where we did see a difference, though, was in the likelihood of finishing the program by graduation," Johnson said.

Right now, it's difficult to make any conclusive statements based on this data. "One problem with this is that we have a small sample — i.e. just one year of graduates so far. But it's something we'll keep an eye on, because it looked pretty significant with this first cohort that just graduated," Johnson said. And, strictly speaking, "we can't point to any causation and don't yet even know if the differences are significant." This research is ongoing and will take into account future graduating cohorts of Honors students, as well as continue to perform more specific analysis of other factors like demographic distribution and other areas of Honors Program participation.

In May 2017, Honors professional staff members Emily Johnson, Bob Kirby, and Art Spisak had an opportunity to share their findings at the Honors Education at Research Universities (HERU) National Conference at Ohio State University.

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Iowa at Oxford

Exploring New Study Abroad Opportunities

By Abinaya
Paravasthuramesh

Cassidy Shubatt, junior, is the first Iowa undergraduate to embark on a year-long study abroad experience at the University of Oxford through a brand-new program called Iowa at Oxford. The honors study abroad experience gives students an opportunity to study at the renowned University of Oxford for an entire academic year. Credits gained through the Iowa at Oxford program are eligible to count towards the Honors Program requirements.

Shubatt is a double major in math and economics. She will focus on economics at Oxford. The Oxford academic calendar is split into three terms. Each trimester, she will take two classes. This fall, Shubatt is tackling econometrics, which is a statistics and economics class, as well as a modern British feminism course.

In Iowa City, Shubatt was involved in University Democrats and conducted economics-based research with Dr. John Solo. It was Shubatt's passion for economics and politics that drove her to pursue the Iowa at Oxford opportunity. "Economics is topical in the sociopolitical culture that you are studying it in; it's relevant to how you are learning and what you are talking about. It is cool to study economics in a different setting, especially with Britain's current political climate, on the verge of Brexit," said Shubatt.

Shubatt's application and preparation process to be a part of Iowa at Oxford began over a year ago. Last October, she submitted her first round of applications, which had to be approved through the campus selection committee. Following this, the same application was submitted to the college at Oxford. The application consisted of a transcript, essay, and a writing sample of at least 10 pages. Ideally, this writing sample would have been something she had already written, but Shubatt did not have one on hand, so she compiled shorter papers she had already written and expanded on them to produce a new essay.

In addition to the academic application, the visa process "was intimidating and lengthy," mentioned Shubatt. "The visa process can technically take up to eight weeks, but luckily it did not take that long for me," said Shubatt. Other aspects of preparation included meeting with her advisors for housekeeping purposes, such as making sure she could graduate on time and deciding which classes she would need to take upon returning to Iowa.

"I was most nervous about traveling alone and getting here," said Shubatt. Driving to Chicago, boarding connection flights,

Interested in applying? More information about Iowa at Oxford can be found [here](#).



Cassidy Shubatt poses on the roof of Carfax Tower, the tallest building in Oxford. Photo provided by Cassidy Shubatt.

navigating the airport, catching trains and taxis, and tackling the Icelandic language barrier during her layover were all things Shubatt was worried about. In the end, everything went smoothly and Shubatt arrived successfully at Oxford. "Be confident that you are going to be able to handle situations as they come at you," Shubatt advised.

"It was scary not having anyone to ask what the trip would be like, but it has also been encouraging." Even though no other Iowa students were in the Iowa at Oxford program, Shubatt was able to network with students from other schools who have ongoing relationships with the program. "It is comforting to find other people who know about what it is like."

Powerful Learning

Pre-health sciences majors share experiential learning impacts

By Holly B. Yoder

We asked Honors ambassadors and peer mentors who are pre-health science students to identify their favorite out-of-the-classroom learning experiences and name what about those experiences they valued most. Following are their responses. *** = Earns honors experiential learning credit towards graduation with University Honors.**

Volunteering at the UIHC (University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics)

Second year pre-medicine student **Alex Marti**, a double major in health and human physiology and Chinese, volunteers for a weekly shift at the hospital, where she performs various tasks including cleaning, stocking linens, checking patient rooms and assisting families however possible. Marti said she most values the self-development aspect of the experience. "I have seen myself develop and grow so much more confident over the course of my volunteer experience at the UIHC," she explained. "I have progressed from being unsure of myself to navigating the hospital with ease, confidently interacting with patients. In addition, I have found it heartwarming how something as simple as a short conversation or a quick favor such as getting a cup of water can change a patient's day. In the process of trying to impact the lives of others, mine has most certainly been impacted as well."

Research*

Nitya Virippil, a second year human physiology major on the pre-medicine track, identified her research in the sciences as especially formative, saying that it "has allowed me to connect concepts and techniques that I have learned in class and use them outside of the classroom," thus answering the perennial classroom question, "Will I ever use this?" Virippil values the skills she has gained from research, working "both independently and with others to make steps in the scientific fields."

A fourth-year Psychology major, **Cari Wadman**, also highlighted research as a powerful learning experience. Wadman, who is also earning a certificate in public health, created and analyzed databases on deaths and injuries related to ATVs (all-terrain vehicles). She worked closely with a research scientist and an epidemiologist and sat in on meetings with physicians discussing safety and prevention. "I also was able to discuss and present my research to Iowa senators and congressmen on Capital Hill," she noted.

Wadman observed that, in the process of doing research, she also learned things about herself. "This experience helped me realize that I want to not only go to medical school but also study public health and ways that accidents or disease can be prevented. It gave me an opportunity to see that I am passionate about all aspects of healthcare, such as education, prevention and policy making, so we can use healthcare resources in an effective way."

Teaching Internship*

Madeline Ungs, a third year pre-medicine student who majors in both human physiology and dance, values the professional experience she gained by completing an advanced teaching internship with Dr. Brenda Leicht in Foundations of Biology. "I attended the laboratory prep session each week with Dr. Leicht and the graduate teaching assistants. During labs, I engaged students in lab conversation and prompted group discussion," Ungs said.



Photo by Emily Bui.

Pre-health sciences majors share experiential learning impacts, cont.

Ungs enjoyed the rewards of teaching and working with others. "I was able to show students different ways to learn the material, for example, by drawing out the chromosomes of the fly crosses in color, which is how I prefer to learn the material. It was satisfying to see a student understand something after I showed a different way to explain it."

Latham Fellows*

Contributing to something she considers important is what senior **Anya Kim** found most satisfying about her participation in the Latham Fellows, a program that fosters engagement between scientists and the public. "In the Latham program, I not only learned how to be a better science communicator, but I got the funding and support to draw and distribute a neuroscience comic book for kids, and to work with two other fellows to develop our own day-long science career workshop for 60 local high school students underrepresented in science," said Anya Kim, a senior who double-majors in biology and Spanish. "My experience didn't end after my year as a Latham Fellow and I got the chance to come back to do an Honors Teaching Practicum with the new batch of fellows," she added. "I even ended up getting a publication out of the experience!"

Most importantly, Kim explained, "I felt like I got to make an impact on the community in a way that I created and directed. I also made some really great friends because of the size of the fellows class, and it was great to spend a year working with such inspiring people."

Summer Program

Angeline Vanle, a third year human physiology major on the pre-medicine track, met doctors, dentists and pharmacists this summer as part of SHPEP (Summer Health Professions Education Program). "Each day we would take a basic science course as a boost for the next semester, then we would hear from health professionals about their field and how they got to where they are. We would then end our days by volunteering with the mobile clinic, learning how to take vitals, and visiting anatomy labs."

The program facilitated "an environment that was so absolutely encouraging and hopeful," according to Vanle, who added what she most valued were the relationships — friends with whom she explored her dreams. "This program made me believe in myself,

and also provided me with the skills I needed to succeed," Vanle said of SHPEP, which is offered by the University of Iowa Health Sciences Colleges for aspiring health professionals, particularly from underrepresented backgrounds. "I learned how to network and work with others, I learned basic sciences, I learned medical skills and the importance of giving back to the community, and I got immersed in an environment that supported diversity in the health professional field."



Photo by Emily Bui.

Study Abroad*

Third year biomedical engineering major **Madeline Beauchene** studied abroad in Italy after her first year at Iowa. "This was a great experience where I was able to take classes while also traveling and learning about new cultures. The smaller class sizes allowed me to get to know my professors and fellow students. When on your own in a foreign country, you learn a lot about yourself and gain a greater sense of independence."

Internship*

Senior human physiology major **Grant Gullion** earned internship credit for serving as a resident assistant in Daum Honors House for two academic years, a role that was focused on supporting first-year students. His work included advising students on academics, setting goals, and helping students to navigate day-to-day challenges. Gullion said he most valued the relationships he developed as part of the experience.

"Working with Daum residents and being part of a staff taught me a lot of valuable lessons that I will undoubtedly use in my future profession," said the pre-dentistry student. "They collectively taught me more about the world around me and how to be a better contributor to it than I could have learned any other way."

Fantastic (Honors) Courses

And where to find them

By Elizabeth Sheridan

Even if you've never heard of Professor Donna Parsons, you've probably heard of her incredibly popular honors course, Harry Potter and the Quest for Enlightenment. The course has been so popular, in fact, that last fall there was a record number of students on the waitlist. In order to meet this demand, another section of the course was added for Spring 2017 and Parsons worked with the Honors Program to create a brand new Wizarding World first-year seminar: Fantastic Beasts, Formidable Opponents, and the Pursuit of Justice.

As any Harry Potter or J.K. Rowling fan knows, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* hit theaters last November, the first movie since *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2* to take place in the same universe. "First year seminars typically focus on a topic that is timely," Parsons explained, "whether it is current events... or elements of pop culture that are creating a buzz, including super heroes, Star Trek, and the literary work of J.R.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling." This semester, students in the honors first-year seminar are critiquing the film and the published screenplay in order to "explore issues of poverty, segregation, friendship, politics, journalism, industry, commerce, jazz, art, and zoology in 1920s New York City."

This comparatively low reading load (Harry Potter and the Quest for Enlightenment students read all seven books in the original series in addition to some short supplementary works) is in part due to the course's format as a first-year seminar, which meets just once a week for 50 minutes. In addition to the readings, students will complete 6 short writing assignments, which "form the backbone of class discussions, and are broad enough that students can focus on elements of the screenplay that they find most intriguing or challenging." They also get to choose their own topic for the final research project, which involves working with Janalyn Moss, the Research and Instruction Librarian for the Main Library.

"We have an amazing University Library that includes over 1000 databases. The wealth of materials that we have in the Main Library, the Art Library, or the Hardin Library for the Health Sciences can be a bit overwhelming to anyone who is unfamiliar with the library

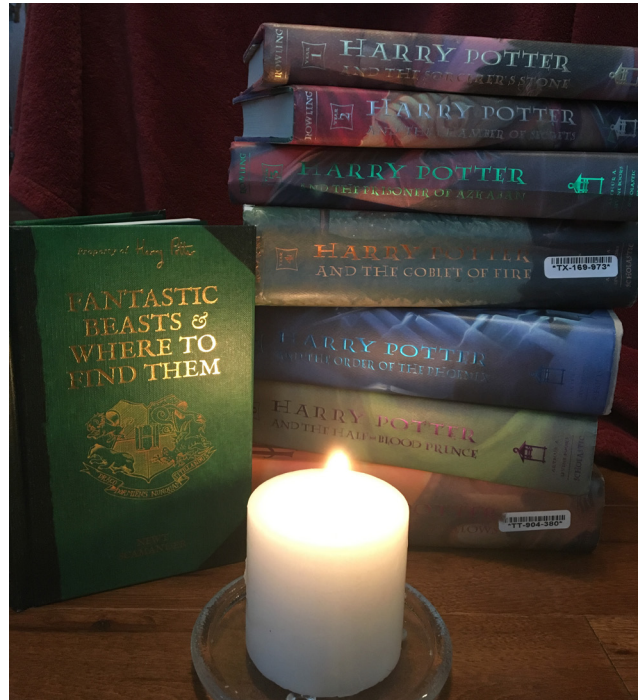


Photo by Abby Sheridan.

catalog or even the physical layout of each branch library," Parsons explained. "One of the goals of the Fantastic Beasts seminar is to help students develop their skills in navigating the library catalog and the 1000 databases that are available with a click of a button." The first-year seminar has already exceeded Parsons' expectations.

"Students are actively engaged in the screenplay and the film, and they are making connections between the two and the Harry Potter series," she said. "You see how cyclical social and political issues are and how each generation offers their own unique solutions to each concern."

***"[E]ach generation offers their own unique solutions to each concern."
—Donna Parsons***

While *Fantastic Beasts, Formidable Opponents, and the Pursuit of Justice* is only available to first-year honors students, keep an eye out for some of Professor Parsons' other courses, such as *World of the Beatles, Issues in Popular Music: Women Who Rock, and Popular Music in the United States*. "At first I was thinking about offering a seminar on *Guitar Heroes: Clapton, Hendrix, and Page*," Parsons explained, "and at some point I will do that."

Student Profile

Four questions with Vijay Kamalumpundi

Year: Sophomore
Major: Health and Human Physiology, Global Health Studies minor
Hometown: Cedar Rapids, Iowa

1. What kinds of activities are you involved in at Iowa, and how do those fit in with your interests and goals?

On campus, I am involved as an OnIowa! leader, Honors Summer Ambassador, and sit on the Development Committee for Dance Marathon. All of my life, I've always tried to surround myself with people who I look up to and who can guide me in the direction I want to go. By engaging in these organizations, I've had the opportunity to work with truly amazing people to achieve even more amazing things. Promoting this amazing institution's values through the Honors Program, OnIowa!, and through our mini dance marathon programs to prospective students is the least that I could do for to a university that has provided me with so much opportunity.

2. How has the Honors Program helped or supported you so far?

The Honors Program has provided me with a network of like-minded peers whom I could ask questions when I have doubts about my future directions, people to play racquetball with on a Friday night, or study partners when I didn't want to work on homework alone. The Honors Program also got me networking with faculty through many of the courses and first year seminars that are offered exclusively to first year students. Interestingly, it was because of an unusual seminar class that I took about



“The Honors Program also got me networking with faculty through many of the courses and first year seminars that are offered exclusively to first year students.”

dinosaurs that got me super interested in cellular metabolism and mitochondria. It was this small spark, that ignited the flame of passion in this subject and led me to a principal investigator whose research is on mitochondrial dynamics and its unique roles in diabetes and certain cancers.

3. What has your learning outside of the classroom looked like while at Iowa?

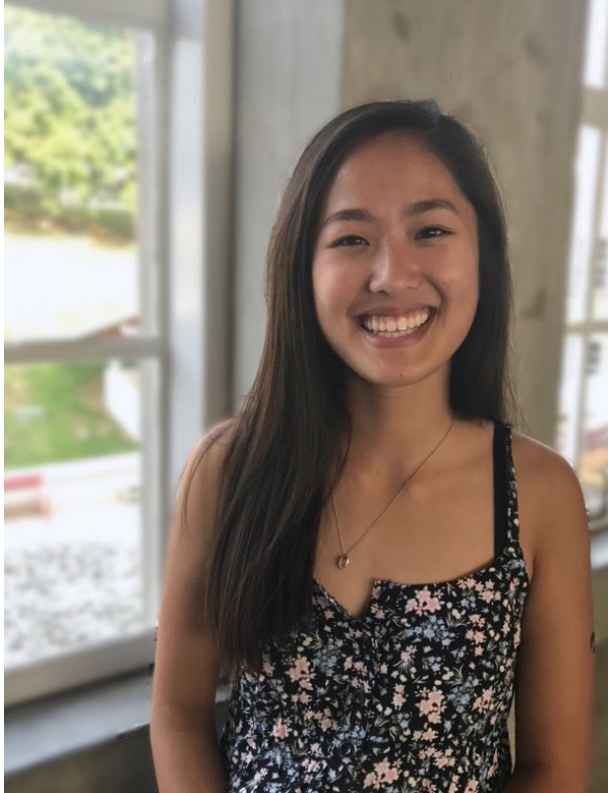
Learning outside of the classroom, apart from my research across the river, has involved lots of time spent volunteering. I've found that volunteering builds character and perspective in ways that other extracurricular activities may fail to do. I volunteered at the local food pantry last semester and helped translate for local Hispanic populations who spoke little English. In this way, I had the opportunity to build my Spanish skills, and also analyzed certain socioeconomic issues that were arising right here around our own neighborhoods.

4. How do you keep your priorities in order as you try to get things done?

As like many other honors students, I sometimes find myself overwhelmed under mountains of homework. Under a lot of time stress, I find myself prioritizing the things that are closest to the deadline. Sometimes it just helps to sit down in a quiet space and work hard on homework for my more labor intensive courses (like organic chemistry) and end on a lighter subject. College is such a big learning curve so balancing classes may be hard initially (I still struggle a lot!), but we only get more efficient at doing our work every year as well!

Student Profile

Four questions with Olivia Sandvold



Year: Sophomore
Major: Biomedical Engineering
Hometown: Ankeny, Iowa

1. What kinds of activities are you involved in at Iowa, and how do those fit in with your interests and goals?

I am the secretary of the Biomedical Engineering Student Society (BMESS) and Social Chair of HackIowa. BMESS has helped me realize some of my professional goals and led me to discover companies that I may intern with and potentially work for in my future. HackIowa has given me an outlet for my passion for computer science while also teaching me valuable leadership and communication skills. I am a better team player from being involved in these two student orgs.

Additionally, I am a TA for Introduction to Engineering Computing (IEC) and I work with Professor Mathews Jacob in the Electrical and Computer Engineering department doing research on calcium ion

imaging. Being a TA and doing research has opened doors for me if I choose to go to graduate school, because I have a wide range of professors I can reach out to, and detailed knowledge of a specific field.

2. How has the Honors Program helped or supported you so far?

The Honors Program has given me opportunities I never knew existed. Through Honors coursework, I've met diverse individuals who excel in their own unique ways and share their enthusiasm with others. Through interacting with these peers, I've become more confident in my own abilities. The Honors Peer Mentor system is an example of Hawks helping Hawks, and it has encouraged me to promote other students' success.

Additionally, by sharing my research at undergraduate conferences, I've been able to develop the skills to effectively communicate academic subjects with the general public, which is necessary for any person interested in applying for graduate school.

3. What has your learning outside of the classroom looked like while at Iowa?

I helped co-found HackIowa. Our goal as a club is to support students' learning outside the classroom through bringing in experts to give lectures or workshops and showing them how to use what they learn in the classroom in their own lives. So, for me, learning outside the classroom has been taking what I know, building on that foundation with exploration of other coding languages and creating programs that are useful, or at least interesting.

“Through Honors coursework, I’ve met diverse individuals who excel in their own unique ways and share their enthusiasm with others.”

4. How do you keep your priorities in order as you try to get things done?

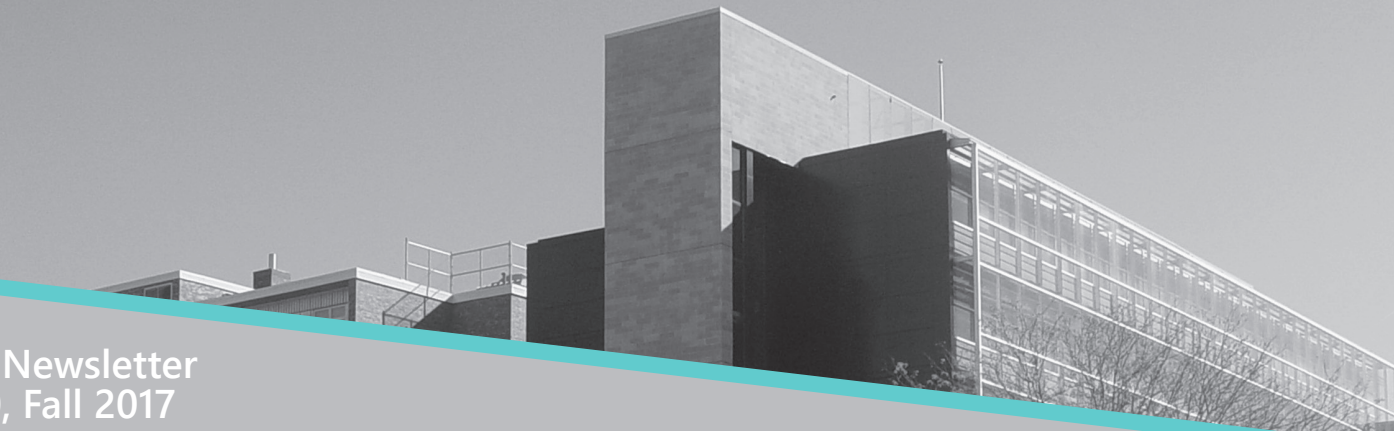
The number one thing I do is learn from my mistakes and make note of what I need to improve on by writing it down. I use Google Calendar to visualize my day and week, making note of when I have free time to work on homework or study for tests.

A black and white photograph of a middle-aged man with short hair, wearing a pinstriped suit jacket, a white shirt, and a striped tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a library with bookshelves filled with books.

60 Years.

Submit stories of your honors experiences today.

In celebration of the Honors Program's 60th anniversary, we are taking stories about your experience in the community. Your story could be in the next issue! Contact Holly Blosser Yoder at holly-yoder@uiowa.edu.



Meet the Writers

Honors Students at Your Service



Madhuri Belkale

Madhuri Belkale is a second-year student studying Psychology and Political Science with a minor in Spanish and hopes of eventually understanding human behavior. She works on the Honors Outreach Team and is a proud student of the Green Room. She enjoys travel, sipping a good cup of tea, and learning about the world from her 11 year-old brother.



Katie Kiesewetter

Katie Kiesewetter is a fourth-year student from Farmington, Illinois. She is double majoring in Graphic Design and English with a minor in Gender, Women's, & Sexuality Studies. Her goal is to graduate (hopefully soon) and move to Seattle, Minneapolis, or Chicago with her partner, Nathan, and their cat, Kiki, to work at a creative agency or design studio.



Adria Britton

Adria Britton is a young, Northern California-based writer who enjoys crafting poetry and creative nonfiction. She graduated with a B.A. in English from the University of Iowa, and now works part time as a copyeditor. She is known to drink lots of tea, hum often, and go barefoot whenever possible.



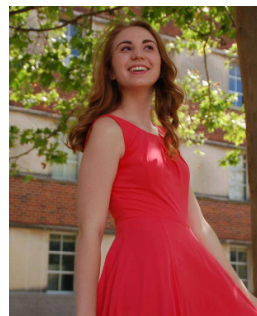
Abinaya Paravasthuresh

Abinaya Paravasthuresh is a first-year student studying Biomedical Sciences on the pre-med track. She is involved with club tennis and the South Asian Student Alliance. She enjoys spending time with her family and friends.



Claire Jacobson

Claire Jacobson is a senior majoring in French & Arabic with a minor in translation. She is a Writing Center tutor, research assistant at the International Writing Program, and VP of the Translate Iowa Project. She hopes to eventually pursue a career in translation and interpreting, and maybe add a fourth language to the mix.



Elizabeth Sheridan

Elizabeth Sheridan is a third-year student studying English on the publishing track, with minors in Mass Communication and Gender, Women's, & Sexuality Studies. She works as an Honors Summer Ambassador and editorial intern for the University of Iowa Press. She enjoys coffee, Broadway musicals, great books, and good grammar.



Lina Khodor

Lina Khodor is a 4th year International Studies major from Sioux City, IA. She hopes to work in international development after graduation. When she's not making travel plans way out of her budget, she likes to talk about existential crises with her friends, go on hikes, and eat carne asada tacos.

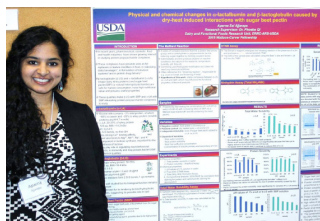


Eilidh Spery

Eilidh Spery is a sophomore from Colorado and is majoring in English. Besides searching for the best cup of chai, she spends her time lost in fictional worlds, playing guitar and traveling.



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