

HONORS NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2023



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Honors Program



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**Livvi DiCicco, Airiana Mohr,
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Publications Editors

Thomas Duong
Design Editor

Holly Blosser Yoder
Staff Advisor



SOMETHING ROTTEN

A Glimpse Into the Life of Honors and Arts

By Grace Hahn

“What the hell are musicals?” If you have ever found yourself wondering this, a University of Iowa production such as this semester’s “Something Rotten!” is an egg-celent place to start. The musical comedy was one of the largest shows done by the theater department, with 25 students in the cast and even more involved behind the scenes. With rehearsals happening six days a week, students put in over 20 hours each week preparing for the show. One couldn’t possibly balance being in honors and devoting that much time towards this musical, right? Wrong!

Samantha Mayer, a third-year honors student double-majoring in English and theater arts on the musical theater track, welcomed this workload and balanced it with ease. So what does being a double major, an honors writing fellow, and a lead in a musical look like? Busy, but worth it. Mayer was excited to perform in one of her favorite musicals as the character she had hoped for: Bea. In the show, Bea is the wife of Nick Bottom, another main character in the musical. Mayer explained, “Bea is the ‘fix-it’ girl. Any problem she comes across, she tries to figure out a solution for. She won’t take no for an answer. Instead she takes a ‘no’ and turns it into a ‘no, not this way, but perhaps another.’”

A challenge of playing such a role is that, in the musical, Bea disguises herself as three different people. Figuring out how to stay true to the

character of Bea, while also playing different disguises, provides a layered character for Bea, as well as being quite the job for Mayer. Mayer’s task was to stay true to the character so that, even in her disguised forms, the audience could still perceive Bea’s character underneath.

Broadening to honors and the arts, Mayer expressed how being an honors

student prompted her to go beyond her coursework. Through contracting courses such as Acting II and Musical Theatre, she was able to dive deeper into what she was learning, an experience she might not have had otherwise. “Being a part of both honors and the arts is not an obstacle,” Mayer said. “If anything you can use it as fuel to find the connection between the two. The



Pictured: Samantha Mayer and Cullen Asbery perform on stage. Provided by: Eric Stone



Pictured: Samantha Mayer and Cullen Asbery perform on stage. Provided by: Eric Stone

honors program encourages branching out and gaining new experiences.”

Mayer is also the recipient of the honors program’s Dr. Donna S. Parsons Honors Scholarship, which was made available by generous funding from members of the Parsons family in order to commemorate Donna Parsons, a loved and respected professor. Some of her notable pop-culture classes included World of the Beatles, Women Who Rock, and perhaps most notably Harry Potter and the Quest For Enlightenment. Parsons’ memory lives on through this special opportunity given for selected honors students. The Parsons family continues to stay close to the program. They attended one performance of “Something Rotten!” to support Mayer and see the impact of Parsons’ legacy.

On a more personal note, I wanted to get honors students excited about watching the musical “Something Rotten!” because of how entertaining it is and how much work had gone

into the production. Working with Iris Peimann, the student engagement coordinator, we released a survey in order to gauge interest. The honors program graciously purchased 50 tickets for students to attend the show. Within the first hour of release, the tickets were all claimed and the students enjoyed the performance.

“The worst thing they could say is no. At least I tried.”

- Samantha Mayer

One student who participated in the outing commented, “I never would have heard about or been motivated to attend the musical without going with a group. I am so glad I was able to go. I had an amazing time and really loved the musical. It was really engaging, and all the actors were amazing singers.”

Finally, I wanted to leave you with one last piece of advice. Something I learned while writing this article and planning this honors event is that as a student, specifically as a student in the UI Honors Program, you have the foundation you need to reach out to anyone or plan events. During this whole process, I kept telling myself, “The worst thing they could say is no. At least I tried.” While I told myself this, no one told me no. It was encouraging to be able to work with various faculty and staff members to plan the honors outing and learn more about musical theater at Iowa. I encourage you to be bold. If you have an idea, reach out to faculty or staff and make it happen!

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING **DOWN** **UNDER**

Iris Peimann Abroad in Australia

By Mackenzie Becker

What is one experience that changed the way University of Iowa alumna and current staff member Iris Pieman saw the world? Studying abroad. Studying abroad at the University of Iowa is a powerful way for college students to explore the world, make new friends, and gain new experiences, all while completing college coursework. Additionally, in the University of Iowa Honors Program, studying abroad is a way for adventurous students to gain the experiential learning credit they need. Peimann, who now works as the honors program's student engagement intern, reflected on her experiences studying abroad as an undergraduate.

As a college student, Peimann had the idea of studying abroad on her radar but had no idea where to start. Aspects of studying abroad can prove to be intimidating, starting with the initial stage of choosing a place to travel.



Peimann made an appointment with the UI Study Abroad office and was presented with a list of places — both major related and fun once-in-a-lifetime destinations — that could potentially be a good fit for this experiential learning. Out of all the brochures, Australia caught her eye.

In Australia, Peimann experienced things she would never have seen in Iowa City. As Peimann explained to local news website The Messenger, “Everyone tells you that studying abroad will change your life and who you are as a person, and I can definitely attest to that.” She raved about the time she went on a hike to see a waterfall in the middle of a rainforest with her peers. “That feeling of first-time awe on both an individual and group level was really special,” said Peimann.

Although studying abroad is loved by many, students may feel some unease about the process. Peimann said she would advise a student who is on the fence about studying abroad to ask themselves, “What’s the worst that could happen? If the worst thing is that you go somewhere new and didn’t like it, it’s still an experience you got to grow from.” The study abroad office is there to help students to navigate possible barriers. From the knowledgeable advisors to the multiple scholarships available, studying abroad can prove to be less intimidating than it may initially seem.

For honors students, there are additional benefits. Peimann made memories that will last for a lifetime, but she believes a guided reflection process connecting her personal growth and career aspirations would have made a great experience even better. Reflection is a key piece that Peimann finds to be beneficial to students coming back from studying abroad, and she noted that the honors program provides a great way to make sense of experiential learning. “We

“That feeling of first-time awe on both an individual and group level was really special.”

- Iris Peimann

want this to be a chance for you to experience this, and reflect on how it could impact you and help you grow,” she said. The three-part honors reflection process — consisting of pre- and post-experience questionnaires and a narrative — helps students to stop and think about the gains they have made as a result of this high-impact learning experience.

Currently, Peimann is earning a master’s degree in higher education and student affairs at the University of Iowa. Her plan after graduate school is to find a job, possibly as an academic advisor or in another higher education staff role. She wants to help students experience personal growth and find their passions as she did during her time studying abroad. By taking the leap and experiencing study abroad as Peimann did, who knows how your life could be impacted?



Pictured: Iris Peimann sleeping under the stars during her trip to the Outback. Provided by: Iris Peimann.

YES YOU CAN!

Earning Honors Credit While Studying Abroad

By Berkley Barnett



Pictured: Maya Torrez on a beach in Delos, Greece. Provided by Maya Torrez.

So, you're an honors student looking to study abroad. But where do you start? Studying abroad is an exciting and engaging experience for any student. Despite this, some honors students feel that their program's rigorous coursework and demand for outstanding grades prohibit their opportunity to study abroad. The truth is, honors students can earn credit for studying abroad through a few clearly-defined steps.

Experiential learning is learning by doing. Honors students fulfill their University Honors curricular requirements by getting hands-on experience through volunteering, internships, and yes, even studying abroad. The three-part honors reflection process — composed of pre- and post-experience surveys and a narrative piece that may be a blogpost or creative work — documents their learning for honors credit.

Iris Peimann is the student engagement coordinator who advises on experiential learning for the honors program. Peimann recognizes that students have concerns about studying abroad and how it fits with their academic goals. With advising and resources available through UI Study Abroad and the honors program, she believes it is doable for many students "We want you to do what fits for you," Peimann explained, "In terms of graduating, it's a great experience in so many different realms—not only to complete requirements for honors but also to grow as a person."

Third-year honors student David Roth only looked into studying abroad as he approached his fourth year of undergraduate study. Roth is triple-majoring in actuarial science, data science, and mathematics. He explained, "The first thing that made me want to study abroad is that I realized I could study abroad." Roth's hesitance grew from seeing his peers lean towards conventional academic opportunities to earn experiential credit rather than going abroad. Departing from the familiar, Roth will be studying in both Berlin, Germany and Kyoto, Japan in the fall of 2023. When asked about his advice to students looking into studying abroad, Roth advocated for experiencing something new: "I'm a proponent of 'Go [to] the place that makes you almost as uncomfortable as you can be.'"

While David Roth is looking forward to studying abroad, third-year honors student Maya Torrez is excited to share her experience of studying in

"I'm a proponent of 'Go [to] the place that makes you almost as uncomfortable as you can be.'"

- David Roth

Greece. Torrez explained: "I always thought, 'I would love to do that, but it's not for me.'" As an English and creative writing major, she was used to seeing students in the honors program fulfill experiential learning credit in a single activity, like honors in the major. Despite this, Torrez said, "Once the idea of Greece was planted in my brain, it was where I wanted to go." Her interest in the power of written word is something she utilized in her experiential learning reflection. Torrez said the reflection was a good way to look back on her time abroad. She advocates for sticking through the initial hardships of traveling and saying 'yes' to new experiences.

Students interested in study abroad can reach out to honors advisors such as Iris Peimann, along with anyone at UI Study Abroad, to get started. By filling out the short pre-questionnaire on the honors ICON page, students are a step closer to earning experiential learning credit around the world.



Pictured: Maya Torrez in front of the Parthenon in Athens, Greece. Provided by Maya Torrez.

NOT JUST A **JOB**

Honoring Honors RAs

By Berkley Barnett



Pictured: Leila Sennour speaks to residents. Provided by Leila Sennour.

Daum is a beloved residence hall for many in the University of Iowa's Honors Program, so it should not be surprising that some students wish to stay in Daum to pass on their positive experiences to younger students. A way of achieving this is by becoming a residential assistant (RA), but an RA position can be tough to come by as it is a very competitive process.

Becoming an RA is no easy feat. To be considered for a position, students must attend a mandatory fall information session followed by a series of interviews. The responsibilities of being an RA are long and cover a wide range of areas. RAs must be available to their floor residents to discuss any issues or concerns a student may experience. Other responsibilities include facilitating Hawk Talks, floor events, and roommate agreements. RAs demonstrate a commitment to individual and community success, manage and resolve conflict within the residence hall, and maintain an academic-focused atmosphere.

Being a Daum RA also comes with some honors-specific responsibilities catered to its 344 residents, almost all of which are first-year honors students. "I am available to answer any honors-specific questions including advice concerning experiential learning or honors credits," noted Daum RA Ondrea Li. Students can come to their RAs with questions they might find otherwise daunting to ask professional staff.

Although being an RA comes with many responsibilities, the job also comes with many rewards. "I enjoy meeting all different types of personalities from students to staff through all types of different interactions," said Li. However, the benefits go beyond the interpersonal level. Li added, "I get to take skills I am learning here and apply them to my future career."

"I most enjoy being able to build a community among residents. I think the most important thing for your [first] year of college is having a strong group of friends around you who can help you get through some of the difficult moments."

- Leila Sennour

Leila Sennour, who is completing her second year of being a Daum RA, opened up about watching connections happen right in front of her eyes: "I most enjoy being able to build a community among residents. I think the most important thing for your [first] year of college is having a strong group of friends around you who can help you get through some of the difficult moments." RAs work to create a sense of community through floor events to help students foster new relationships. Sennour stated, "Sometimes those efforts work, and sometimes they do not, but when they do, it is a very rewarding feeling!"

When asked what she would say to a student thinking about becoming an RA, Li enthusiastically replied, "Just do it. Go to the information sessions and see what it is about. You will get to meet so many different people and have all different types of interactions. You are going to get experiences you are not going to get anywhere else." However, Li also acknowledged that being an RA is not for everyone and that candidates need to be up for the commitment.

Both Li and Sennour's experiences demonstrate that the responsibilities of being an RA are diverse and essential to the success of new students. It is important to acknowledge the hard work of honors RAs. If you see an RA, make sure you give them a big thank you for the dedication that they put into their job!

For students who are interested in becoming an RA, information can be found at:

<https://housing.uiowa.edu/uira>

HEAR ME OUT

Daum Executive Board Listens to Students' Voices

By Calista Kopulos

If you've ever wanted to make an impact on the Daum community, the Daum Executive Board is for you! The Daum Executive Board is the Daum-specific branch of Associated Residence Halls, whose mission is to create an inclusive environment in the residence halls, improving them through fundraising, event planning, and financing.

Daum residents join the Daum Executive Board through an online application at the beginning of the fall semester. Once students complete their application hall coordinators select students whom they deem the best fit for the Executive Board. These students often have leadership experience and involvement in a variety of campus activities. When the new board is filled they begin holding biweekly meetings which are typically concerned with event planning. Daum Hall Coordinator Jilly Boudreau stated, "We try to do two events each month, however, depending on ideas and funding we can plan more."

For example, on Valentine's Day they oversaw the "Candy Grams" event where residents made Valentines to send to loved ones in the building. This allowed for a greater sense of community as tangible tokens of appreciation could be seen sprinkled throughout the hall. Additionally, it helped keep the holiday spirit alive and well within the dorm. Another holiday-centric event they planned was the "Daum Monster Mash," a Halloween-

themed social event with music and snacks.

At the "Hot Drink for a Hot Take" event, residents wrote an anonymous complaint they had about the residence hall in exchange for a hot drink. This allowed for problems to be voiced directly by residents and they could be sure that they would be heard. Furthermore, as the notes were anonymous, students felt more comfortable speaking their minds resulting in increased participation.

While certain events are specifically dedicated to residents' concerns, the board is always happy to lend an ear no matter the time of year. For example, recently a student became concerned about the lack of accessibility of period products for students. Once brought to the Executive Board's attention, they swung into action. This led to the board's decision to provide free period products at the Daum front desk. Thus students are able to see the real effects of their voices on the hall which lets them know that their voices are taken seriously.

Because residents are able to be heard in this way a stronger sense of community is built between students and residence hall staff. Boudreau said, "For me, it's been a great opportunity to be more present in the hall and get to know the residents...I feel more involved and like I can actually address issues that come up."

First-year Executive Board member Nicola DeJager observed, "Through

the Daum Executive Board, I've grown much closer to the RAs in the building and met so many new people!" By banding together to solve Daum-specific issues, residents grow closer and create a culture of mutual respect. Furthermore, through participation on the board, members meet others with the same passion and drive for change, often fostering lasting friendships.

If you didn't sign up in time for this year's Executive Board, never fear! Daum residents can join the Daum General Body, an offshoot of the Executive Board, at any point in the academic year. Those in the general body aid in planning events, as well as voicing any concerns they have with the residence hall. Because the Daum General Body requires less of a time commitment, many busy students may find that it better fits their schedules, allowing them to have a voice without overloading their schedules.

If you would like to find out more information or get involved, students can get in touch with the Daum Executive Board through their email: uhd-rad-hall-assoc@uiowa.edu. They are always happy to hear suggestions!

For students who want to find out more information or get involved, contact the exec board at:

uhd-rad-hall-assoc@uiowa.edu

FRIENDS IN ALL PLACES

How Living Outside Daum Shapes the Honors Experience

By Neely Goerlinger



Pictured: Annalisa Cinkay and her friends having a movie night in Rienow's downstairs lounge. Provided by: Annalise Cinkay.

When coming to the University of Iowa, many honors students dream of spending their first year in the designated honors residence hall, Daum, amongst their peers. However, out of the thousands of honors students at the university, only a lucky 344 get to live in Daum. The rest live among the other ten other residence halls on campus. So how can an honors student find their experience outside of

of the UI Honors Program since her first semester, when she lived in Rienow Residence Hall. Located near the hospital and sports complex, Rienow housed students involved in sports teams, ROTC, fraternities and sororities, a variety of different clubs, and so much more. Experiencing all of these different interests in one place helped her to feel more comfortable: "That [diversity] was exactly what I needed

my freshman year. There's something so special about being completely thrown out of your known environment." Cinkay said it was eye-opening to see everyone on such different paths, but all willing to push themselves towards their individual goals.

Molly Harris, a fourth-year honors student, echoed these ideas. Harris works as an honors outreach ambassador – someone who shares



Pictured: The girls on the floor in Rienow playing games and introducing each other. Provided by: Annalise Cinkay.

the honors residence hall?

The overwhelming conclusion is these students wouldn't change their experience for the world. Despite the physical disconnect from the honors hub at Blank Honors Center (BHC), there are still plenty of ways to get involved.

Annalisa Cinkay is a second-year student majoring in speech and hearing sciences and has been a part

**"Iowa City had become my home...
and the fourth floor had become
my family."**

- Annalise Cinkay

about their experiences in the UI Honors Program with prospective members to encourage them to join the program. She spent her first year in Catlett Residence Hall. "A lot of my early experiences at this university were defined by my participation in the honors program," she said, adding, "I appreciated the opportunity to meet people outside of it."

She still talks to her former roommate everyday, and says she wouldn't change a thing about her first year. However, as an ambassador, she understands that many people are worried about not getting into the residence hall they had originally planned, and especially sees this with honors students looking to live in Daum. To her, the most important thing is to keep an open mind: "I don't think that anyone should hold the mindset that where you live will keep you from what you want to do." Each residence hall holds its own unique opportunities just waiting to be taken advantage of.

When applying for housing, Cinkay had a last-minute housing assignment and a last minute roommate, and she was certain it would ruin her first year. But when it was time to leave for winter break, she found herself, two days before, homesick for somewhere that she hadn't even left yet. Previously, she couldn't wait to go home, but now she wanted to stay with the friends she had made on her floor. "That was when I realized Iowa City had become my home, not just my school," she said, "and the fourth floor had become my family." This coming year, she will be living with two others that were on her floor her first year, and sees the rest of her floormates as much as possible.

"It's going to sound cliché to say, but I promise you, everything happens for a reason," Cinkay said. In retrospect, she believes that living in Rienow Residence Hall helped her to escape from what she calls "honors kid syndrome." She

**"There are
so many
opportunities
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- Molly Harris

explained, "I would hold myself to such impossibly high standards that I would never be able to reach. It was something I desperately needed to get away from." While she may not feel as connected to the honors program as people who shared a doorway with the BHC, she would not change her experience.

Harris, despite living in Catlett, has found her own way to stay connected with the honors program through her honors classes and position as an ambassador. She emphasized how easy it is to get involved regardless of distance: "There are so many opportunities out there, you just have to go looking for them." From get-together events to leadership positions, becoming involved in the honors program is about putting in the effort.

No matter where you are at the university, west side or east, on campus or off, the UI Honors Program is open to you, and is ready to help its members thrive.



Pictured: Catlett during a colorful sunrise. Provided by the Office of Strategic Communication.

LIFE BEFORE HONORS

How Do Students Get Recruited?

By Bri Brands

Within the University of Iowa Honors Program, every student has their own unique story as to how they found out about honors and why they chose to enroll in the program. Some may have joined to make friends and be part of a community, and others may have done so to challenge themselves academically. However, some students first heard of the benefits from Top Scholar Visit Day, an invitation-based campus visit program hosted by the office of admissions geared towards high-achieving high school seniors.

Starting in 2014, Top Scholar Visit Day aids in the recruitment process for current or rising high school seniors into the honors program. Each summer, a select group of rising seniors is invited to attend the event. Students are extended an invitation based on a number of factors, such as test scores and how they performed in their core courses in high school. The most likely indicator, though, is grade-point-average (GPA). Senior Assistant Director in the Office of Admissions Susan Dickinson explained, "A lot of times, all we have to go off of is a student's GPA." Most students need

64%
OF STUDENTS
JOINED
THE HONORS
PROGRAM
AFTER ATTENDING THE
TOP SCHOLAR
VISIT DAY

to have a GPA of 3.7 or above to be considered for an invitation. The event is typically held twice, once in July, and once in late September or early October, with between 150 and 200 students attending each one. Turnout for this year's events was high, according to Dickinson: "They both filled really quickly, so I think there's definitely an interest in this kind of program for students."

The daily schedule for the event changes minimally from year to year. The morning starts with a large-group welcome for all students and their families, and then breaks off into smaller sessions based on the college or major that the prospective student plans to go into. Afterwards, the students are offered lunch, and then move into breakout sessions of their choice. The options for these include mock classes, honors application workshops, parent sessions, information about research, information about how to get involved in the arts, information about studying abroad, and a campus walking tour.

The event is reliably successful, especially in terms of having students return to UI. Some students come back

for another visit, and others make it the deciding factor in their decision to attend UI. “For students who attend this event, we are very likely to see them come back to campus again,” noted Dickinson. The event has also been successful in getting students to join the honors program itself. In 2019, 56 percent of students who attended Top Scholar Visit Day went on to join the honors program. In 2021, that number rose to 64 percent. The number is expected to rise even more this year, and will be finalized in May.

Each year, Dickinson, whose job entails planning the details of the event, helps build the agenda and decide where the event is going to be located. The location varies year by year, but it has been held in multiple buildings all over campus, such as the Iowa Memorial Union, Pomerantz Career Center, and Voxman Music Building. This year, they have plans to bring the event to Hancher Auditorium. “We have such incredible performing arts spaces and I love getting to show those off,” said Dickinson. Over the years, she has found that there is a large overlap between students in the arts and prospective honors students, so showcasing the performing arts centers is just one way to recruit more students.

One Top Scholar Visit Day attendee, Eleanor MacKeller, currently a first-year honors student, chose to go because it gave her more knowledge than a normal orientation and was geared more specifically towards her and her interests. When they reached out to her, they pointed out her excellent GPA and involvement in extracurriculars, making her feel like she would be an important part of honors at UI.

On the visit, MacKeller was able to attend a science panel, alerting her



Pictured: Eleanor MacKeller in front of the Psychology Building during Top Scholar Visit Day. Provided by: Eleanor MacKellar.

to the opportunity to go into research already in her first year. Now, she spends a fair amount of her free time helping out in the psychology lab. On top of helping her get involved in research, MacKeller mentioned how the visit taught her to reach out and make connections with professors and other faculty, contributing to much of her success within the honors program.

Top Scholar Visit Day is a successful tool in the recruitment process of prospective honors students from all over the country. By reaching out to students and gearing activities towards a wide variety of interests, the office of admissions at UI has been able to recruit top students to the University of Iowa Honors Program, and help them to get an excellent start.

HONORED TO BE AN ATHLETE

How Honors Benefits Iowa
Student-Athletes

By Colin Votzmeyer



The University of Iowa Honors Program does not only serve the general student population—it offers career exploration, academic support, and more to UI student-athletes. Student-athletes must satisfy the same requirements as other honors students, but the program provides them with countless opportunities to push themselves in academics and prepare for the workforce after their careers in sports.

Liz Tovar is the senior associate athletics director of Student-Athlete Academic Services, a center that collaborates with other programs on campus to ensure student-athletes are offered the necessary academic opportunities to develop themselves and their careers. The honors program is one of such collaborations.

Forty student-athletes are already in honors, but Tovar said more qualify but are not taking advantage of it: “It’s about our student-athletes really understanding what the benefits are of being in the honors program.” While honors students need a 3.33 grade-point average (GPA) at graduation to earn University Honors, more than half of UI student-athletes have over a 3.0 GPA. In the fall 2022 semester, the average GPA for the whole campus was 3.28 and 3.75 for honors students—student-athletes averaged a 3.17. Yet honors is not primarily about GPA, but about enriching the student experience.

Tovar believes student-athletes can take advantage of membership in the honors program by doing hands-on applications of their studies to the real world. “I think the benefits are the experiential learning opportunities and the research opportunities,” she said, “then also working with professors in getting letters of recommendation from people who they’ve come into close contact with in the honors program.”

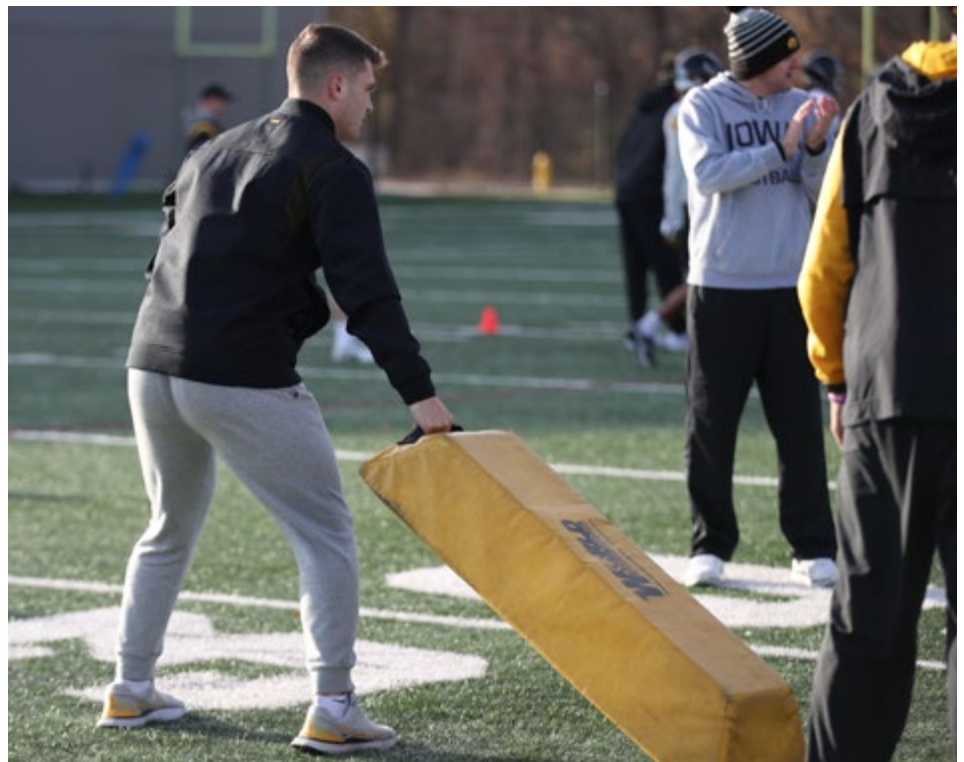
In addition to hosting honors tabling

“Other student-athletes who have gone through the honors program and are talking about their experiences really hits home for our student-athletes.”

- Liv Tovar

events and informational sessions at the Gerdin Athletic Learning Center—a space on campus for student-athletes to use academic resources—Tovar said targeting student-athletes who could benefit from honors is a good way to get more student-athletes involved. “Other student-athletes who have gone through the honors program and are talking about their experiences really hits home for our student-athletes,” she said. A recent example is Marissa Mueller (BS biomedical engineering ’21), a student-athlete in track and field who was active in research and became the recipient of the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship.

Balancing collegiate athletics with the honors workload may look like too big of a time commitment, but Tovar said the student-athletes have leeway in making their schedules. “[We’re] letting them know that, if you’re in season



Pictured: Kieran Monaghan sets up a drill at an Iowa football practice. Provided by: Kieran Monaghan.

this particular semester, you may not need to take as heavy of a load," she said. "There's great flexibility in terms of scheduling courses and the number of courses that you have to take in order to earn honors, [which] I think needs to be re-emphasized." Student-athletes can spread the required 12 semester hours of coursework out so they can have a lighter workload when in season and do more of the work in the offseason.

When applying for honors, biomedical sciences student Jenny Cape was concerned with the time commitment on top of her demands with the Iowa women's soccer team. Looking back as a fourth year student, she appreciates the program's flexibility to help her balance both. Student-athletes have to be able to time-manage, and honors helped her do so by contracting a course—doing a more in-depth extra project for a regular class to get honors

credit. "If I couldn't necessarily make my honors hours that I needed, the department was very flexible in letting me turn normal classes into honors classes by doing an extra project," she said.

The honors program provided Cape with opportunities in experiential learning that she would not have known about had she not taken the chance in joining the program. One of such opportunities was the Writing and



Pictured: Jenny Cape kicks the soccer ball during a game. Provided by: Jenny Cape.

Community Outreach class, in which she taught creative writing workshops to kids in Iowa City schools. “That was a really cool class just because it tied experience actually into the class,” she said. “Instead of just learning about something, we actually were able to apply what we learned.” In addition, tutoring and research she was already pursuing also counted as experiential learning credit for University Honors. “That was just really helpful because it didn’t make honors another thing I had to do on top of everything else,” Cape said.

Cape emphasized the reflection skills honors students develop in doing the post-experience questionnaires after their experiential learning opportunities. The reflections helped her on her medical school applications, on which she answered questions she had already thought about in the reflection process. “I think [the honors program] really encourages and promotes reflection and self-discovery,” Cape said. “I think that’s also similar with grad schools, and they want you to really reflect on why you want to do what you want to do and what it means to you.”

Kieran Monaghan, a second-year human physiology major and member of the honors program, is a student manager for the Iowa football team. The honors community has supported him most in helping him manage the time requirements of his role with the team. “I think it’s honestly more about the community of people that you’re around and how they can support you through your academic stuff,” Monaghan said. “We spend an absurd amount of hours during the week working, so as much alleviation you can get from your academic stuff helps a lot.”

Monaghan is at every team meal to help out, every practice to set up drills and move equipment, and every game to ballboy. He works long hours, so the



Pictured: Kieran Monaghan poses for a photo before an Iowa football night game.
 Provided by: Kieran Monaghan.

“[The Honors Program] really encourages and promotes reflection and self-discovery.”

- Jenny Cape

honors sections for his classes allow him to connect with honors classmates via group chats and get the support he needs when he is crunched on time. “Those are the people that are going to help you with your assignments and work collaboratively to figure out what you’ve got to study for the test,” Monaghan said. “Honestly, when that happens, that makes my job with football easier. I’m not worried about school as much because I have the resources that will help me out.”

The University of Iowa goes beyond just stellar Big Ten athletics—it supports and encourages its student-athletes in the classroom too. Talk to your advisor, explore the UI Honors Program, and see the benefits honors offers you in the game and beyond.

FROM AROUND THE **GLOBE**

International Students Reflect on Honors

By Thomas Jones



Pictured: Nafisa Kamal wearing Salwar Kameez taken on Eid day. Provided by- Nafisa Kamal

Imagine you wake up one day and are surrounded by people and places that you don't know. Nothing is familiar, and it hits you that you have to make this new place your home for the foreseeable future. This is the reality for many international students. "There is just so much going on, added with the stress of coming to a new country. It's a lot," observed Nafisa Kamal, a fourth-year student from Dhaka, Bangladesh.

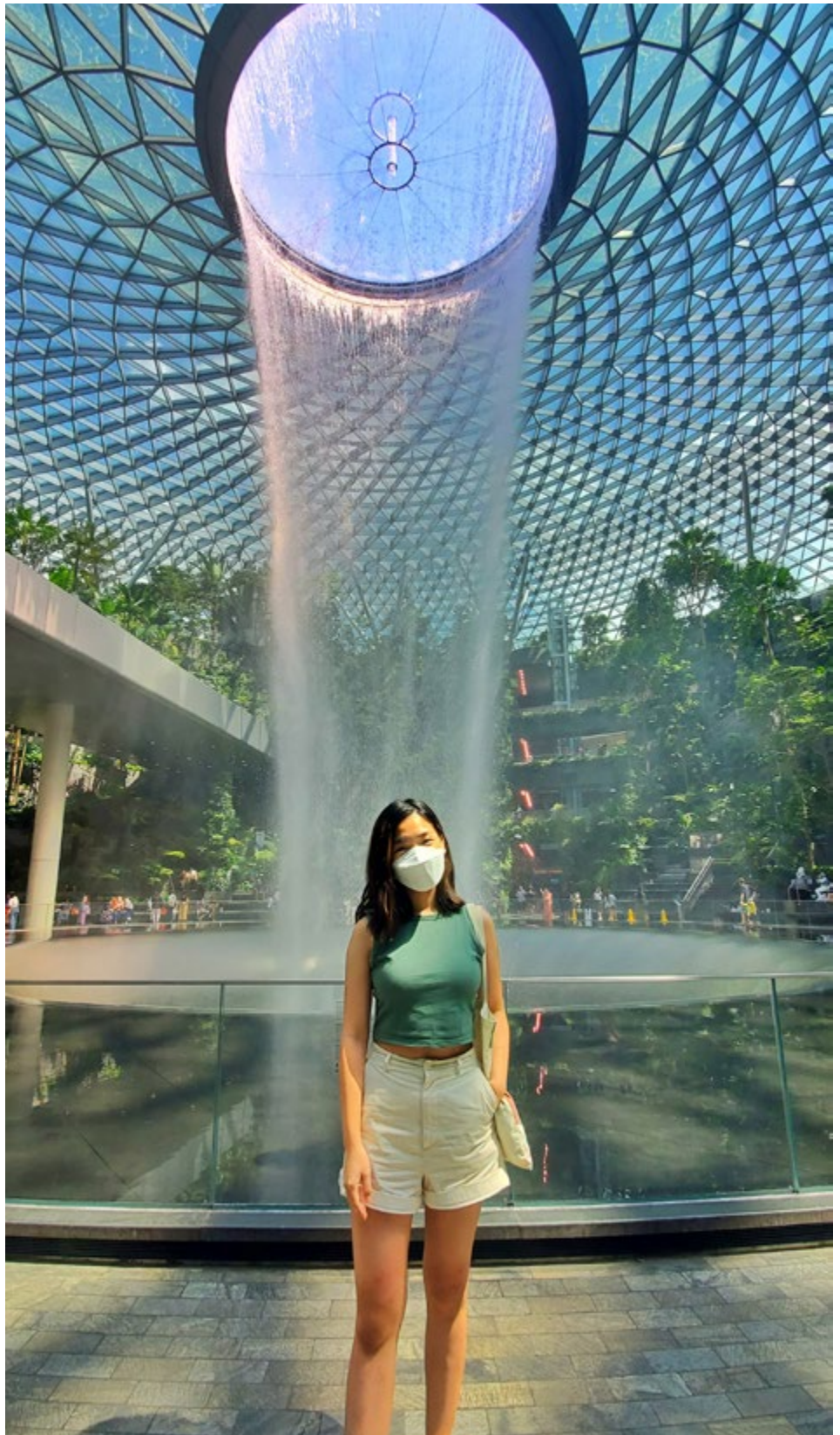
Kamal has been involved in honors since the start of her second semester. "Coming in, I had no idea what the honors program was. I had never even heard of it," she said. The University of Iowa is home to 415 undergraduate international students, 42 of which are involved in the honors program. "When I first got to campus, I didn't feel like I belonged. I definitely had some imposter syndrome," Kamal said. She lived in Burge Residence Hall during her first year and learned about honors from some of her friends who lived in Daum, the honors residence hall. After learning more about the program from her friends, Kamal decided to apply. She has been involved with the program since that time and is currently a resident assistant in Daum.

For Ondrea Li, who grew up in Singapore but attended high school in the United States, the honors program helped her to get connected. "When I first arrived here [to the University

of Iowa], I wouldn't say I felt out of place because I was so focused on getting involved," Li explained. One of the things that Li found most helpful was honors classes, and particularly discussion sections. "Discussion sections really gave me the opportunity to connect with other honors students, and we already had a topic to talk about [classwork]," Li said. This allowed Li to form relationships with other honors students and create friendships that she still has over a year later. "Going out and trying new things and reaching out to people is really important," Li advised.

Bhavya Vats, a fourth-year student from New Delhi, India and a member of the Honors Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council, further elaborated on Li's point: "For me, I got involved by talking to pro-staff within the honors community [...] You have to remember that they are there to help you, and they can really get you involved on campus if you talk to them." Vats wants incoming students to understand that the best way to gain a sense of belonging within honors is to get involved, and there are abundant ways to do that. For example, the honors DEI Council holds events, and attending them can build that community. "At the start of the year we had a Talk and Chalk event," Vats mentioned. "It was really cool to see everyone talking and getting involved before the semester even started." Beyond the Honors DEI Council, Vats observed that there are lots of events through a variety of organizations, and there is something for everyone.

While Kamal was not involved in the honors program as an entering student, she has since learned about Honors Primetime, which is a first-year experience that works to give honors students a jump start into their college experience while allowing for community building within the program. Kamal felt that participating in Honors Primetime may have made her feel more comfortable and less out of place.



Pictured: Ondrea Li in front of the Jewel at Changi Airport in Singapore. Provided by: Ondrea Li



Pictured: International flags on the IMU footbridge. Provided by the Office of Strategic Communication.

Like students in Marching Band, Iowa Edge, athletics, and other programs with pre-semester experiences, a key obstacle for first-year international students in the past was the missed opportunity for Honors Primetime. Until 2023, Honors Primetime took place exclusively during the week before the start of the fall semester. International students, due to conflicts with international orientation, were not able to take advantage of this experience. Beginning fall 2023, however, a Primetime class earning 1 semester-hour of academic credit will be conducted during fall

semester, asynchronously, which will enable students with pre-semester commitments to take part. While still under development, the fall semester class will be “a fun and engaging way to learn about what it means to be a student in the program and build community with their peers, faculty, and staff,” according to the program website. An optional three-and-a-half day pre-semester experience, featuring workshops on various topics taught by faculty, will offer experiential learning credit.

International students have varying experiences in their first year on

campus and moving forward. Getting involved can be a powerful way to develop belonging when locating to a new community. “Be shameless about doing things that will help you,” Li summed up her approach to the college transition. Advocating for yourself is integral to success and can lead to feeling more at home at college, for both international or domestic students alike. The honors program gives students valuable opportunities and resources to get involved, and ultimately providing a positive college experience.

HONORABLE HINDSIGHT

Reflecting on Primetime After the First Semester

By Korbin Yauk

Honors can be an overwhelming idea to incoming first-year students. The program features academic and experiential expectations that students aren't used to, especially compared to high school honors programs. The University of Iowa's Honors Primetime serves to make this transition period smoother by essentially creating a trial run of college for students during the week before classes. It follows then that Primetime has a massive impact on the initial impressions students have of campus life. How do they look back and remember those first days?

Honors Primetime is a pre-semester interactive workshop experience meant to introduce incoming first-year honor students to the program and the university. It features a wide variety of subjects and includes a three-day workshop followed by a group presentation. Students often reflect positively immediately after Primetime, but how do these students look back over a semester later? Jon O'Keef was one of those students last semester. A first-year student double-majoring in screenwriting arts and English and creative writing, O'Keef attended the

workshop *On Paper, In Print*, taught by Daniel Khalastchi. In his words, Primetime was "just very different from a high school setting and it definitely helped me understand what it was going to be like for the rest of the year—like I was experiencing it with training wheels."

For O'Keef, Primetime helped ground his initial experience at the university: "The first month, maybe even two months, it didn't even feel like I was at college." To him, college felt like a summer camp where at the end he would go home and tell his high school friends about all the amazing people he



Pictured: Jon O'Keef, Provided by Jon O'Keef.

met. Like many other students, O'Keef distinguished the first few weeks of college from the rest of the semester. He explained that, "as the semester progressed, I realized that this is where I'm going to be for the next four years."

Molly Harris is a fourth-year student majoring in neuroscience with a minor in chemistry on the pre-medicine track. She attended the 2019 Honors Primetime, choosing a workshop about the health benefits of being in nature taught by Shaun Vecera. What Harris remembers most was her instructor's enthusiasm regarding the subject. In her words, it was "immediately apparent to me that I really enjoyed listening to Dr. Vecera speak on topics

"As the semester progressed, I realized that this is where I'm going to be for the next four years."

- Jon O'Keef



Pictured: Molly Harris (right) enjoys dinner with a friend. Provided by Molly Harris.

he was clearly passionate about, which made me excited to meet the other professors I would have as classes started."

In addition to learning what she might expect from future professors, Harris also made friends with peers through Primetime. Though she didn't remain close to them after the first week, she found that the familiar faces she saw on campus following Primetime made the transition into college much easier.

Overall, for both O'Keef and Harris,

initial impressions of the University of Iowa through Primetime were positive. O'Keef appreciated a college launch with "training wheels." Harris anticipated that the passion expressed by Vecera was likely to reflect a universal character trait of professors at Iowa. Experiences like these, surrounded by students who were just as excited to learn and hone their skills, made Primetime a welcoming and supportive introduction to the honors program and the university.

SEEING DOUBLE

Distinguishing Between University Honors and Honors in the Major

By Sam Wilson Hoff

Did you know that there is more than one way to get the distinction of honors at the University of Iowa? The term “honors student” can be ambiguous because the University of Iowa offers recognition for University Honors and honors in the major, which is also known as departmental honors. Despite these two distinctions being offered, only a fraction of honors students pursue both. According to Honors Program Assessment Manager & Admissions Coordinator Addison Woll, only an average of 26.5% of University Honors students graduated with both distinctions over the past five

years. Among students who completed honors in the major, about 56.6% also graduated with University Honors. Knowing the difference between honors in the major and University Honors is important for students looking to gain such achievements in their field and can prevent them from missing out on activities they are trying to pursue.

What exactly does honors in the major look like? Honors in the major is meant to challenge ambitious students in each major in preparation for post-graduate pursuits. Director of the University of Iowa Honors Program Dr. Shaun Vecera

explained that honors in the major is an “opportunity that is tied to the content of a discipline. Not every field is the same, and it helps to think more like the field you are going into.” In addition to his role in the honors program, Vecera is also involved with honors in the major in psychology. As for why honors in the major and University Honors have remained separate, Vecera said it is to “[recognize] that the people that would know the best for the honors level experience in that discipline for grad school or a job would be in that discipline.”

Honors in the major can offer students valuable experience. Asel Nasr, who plans to graduate with both University Honors and honors in the major, said, “I definitely recommend anyone who is considering [honors in the major] to do it because it gives a practical use for what you are learning in your major.” For Nasr’s thesis project, she is studying the impact of social media on postpartum body dissatisfaction. Through honors in the major, she has the opportunity to work with professors both inside and outside of the global health studies department. “So many things go into doing research. I hope to



Addison Woll



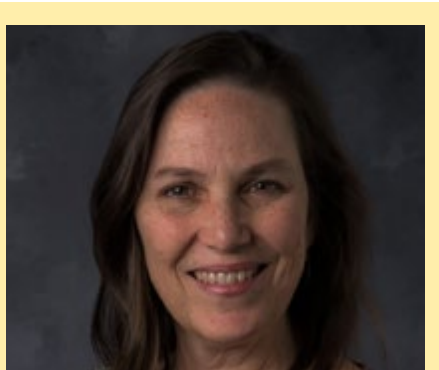
Shaun Vecera



Pictured: Asel Nasr Provided by: Asel Nasr.

be in an academic setting in the future, so this is a great learning experience," said Nasr.

How is University Honors unique, and how does it exist alongside honors in the major? "University Honors is about enriching the overall university experience," said Honors Advising Director Holly Yoder. "The research or creative work that is required for honors in the major usually begins in a student's third or even fourth year, whereas students participate in honors classes and activities from the moment



Holly Blosser-Yoder

they arrive on campus or join the program," she explained. In the honors program curriculum, honors in the major is one of many options to satisfy the experiential learning requirement, along with research, internships, service, study abroad and experiential coursework. "University Honors does not require honors in the major, but we value the experience for our students, which is why we count honors in the major as completely fulfilling the experiential learning requirement for University Honors," said Yoder.

While aiming for both honors in the major and University Honors can be intimidating, the two are meant to work together to benefit students. According to Woll, "[Honors in the major and University Honors] are quite compatible. University Honors is interested in strengthening relationships with individual departments, especially since the majority of students who complete honors in the major are University Honors students." Often, one leads to the other. "University Honors opened up a pathway to learn more about research and what it entails. It led me to learning more about honors in the major," said Nasr, who will graduate with University Honors and Honors in Global Health Studies in May.

Both University Honors and departmental honors, while administered separately, enable students to get the most out of their college experience. The bottom line, according to Woll, is "for students to be successful with whatever they are looking to get out of college."

BEHIND THE DESK

Life as an Honors Admin

By Sam Wilson Hoff

When you walk through the halls of the Blank Honors Center (BHC) fourth floor, you might not think much of the students behind the front desk, but these students play a more integral role in the honors program than you might suspect.

They are the University of Iowa Honors Program's "student admins," or honors admins, a group of seven individuals whose wide assortment of responsibilities support the honors community in a variety of different ways. "They're basically the student face of the honors program," said Veronica Sanchez, the program's administration and communications coordinator and supervisor of the student admin. "They help run the program and provide outreach."

On an average day, an honors admin's job requires them to monitor the shared spaces within the BHC, answer the phones, respond to emails, check the mail, and provide answers to the many, many questions asked by students, families, and faculty. "There's some things that require daily checks and attention constantly," said Thomas Duong, a student admin and fourth-year honors student majoring in



Pictured: Thomas Duong holding up a trophy. Provided by Thomas Duong.

microbiology. Additionally, the admin might work on different kinds of odd jobs, such as organizing the theses in the Nelson Activity Room (414 BHC) or putting up bulletin board designs. "I have something to do every single time I come into my shift," said Duong.

There's a whole other side to student admin work that seeks out and fosters editing, graphic design, and social media management expertise. Admins that specialize in these skill sets are responsible for the weekly creation and publication of the Honorable



Pictured: Raquel Valladolid. Provided by: Raquel Valladolid.

"You really find people who you can talk to or reach out to. That's the great positive about this job."

- Jon O'Keef

Messenger email newsletter, updating the honors website, creating social media posts, and more. "A lot of them have different roles within," Sanchez explained. For instance, Duong updates the website, takes part in design work, and is an integral part of the Honorable Messenger's creative team. "Other admins write blog posts and help put up bulletin boards," he said. "We all sort of specialize in something."

Raquel Valladolid, another student

admin and third-year honors admin double majoring in Spanish and English and creative writing added, "It's definitely encouraged for us to do something extra aside from the administrative stuff." Valladolid's specialties involve the design, scheduling, and information that goes into the Honorable Messenger. "There's no real requirement for what specifically to get involved in," she continued. "There's one admin that's been helping with the social media posts and another who's been tinkering with the website."

Another key part of the job is acting as a liaison for the individuals with questions regarding the honors program, which comes with its own list of hurdles. "Answering people's questions can be a little scary if I'm not confident," Valladoild said. "You don't want to convey the wrong information," Duong agreed. However, that doesn't mean the admins aren't happy to undertake the challenge. "It's the most gratifying part," Duong said. "You're helping a lot of other students who probably had the same issues and



Veronica Sanchez

"Our current admins have definitely been able to build on their experiences so that when they graduate, they can take it to their future jobs or just in their day-to-day life."

- Jon O'Keef

questions as you, and you're able to help them answer those questions and get on their way."

"There are a lot of things that go into being an honors admin, but you can also take a lot out of it," Sanchez said. With so much to do and so much to learn, employment as a student admin not only offers a great way to cultivate experience, but to prepare for life outside of the university. As Sanchez put it: "Our current admins have definitely been able to build on their experiences so that when they graduate, they can take it to their future jobs or just in their day-to-day life."

Many of the admins will also gain stronger relationships and more knowledge about the honors program. "You really find people who you can talk to or reach out to. That's the great positive about this job," Duong said. Most importantly, every student admin gets the satisfaction of bringing something tangible to their community.

Right now, if you walk through the BHC, pull up the honors program's Instagram, or look through the honors program's website, there's a high probability you will see the hard work and skill of a student admin. As you read this article in the honors newsletter, know that the polished product you see before you would probably not be what it is without the assistance of the very same people you'd find behind a desk in BHC.

If you are interested in applying for a job as an honors admin or other honors student staff position, email honors-program@uiowa.edu or fill out the Honors Program Employment Application, which you can access on the honors program's student employment page.

MEET THE TEAM

Honors student writers and editors



Holly Bloesser-Yoder

Holly serves as the advisor to Honors Publications, the student editors and writers who produce the Honors Newsletter, Alumni Connection and many articles on the Honors Program blog. A writer with an interest in history and culture. Holly is the author of *The Same Spirit: History of Iowa-Nebraska Mennonites*.



Hannah Cargo

Livvi is a third-year student from Phoenixville, PA, majoring in English & creative writing with minors in philosophy and french. She enjoys writing speculative fiction short stories and is working on an original period romance novel. In her free time, she either reads or creates digital art.



Livvi DiCicco

Livvi is a third-year student from Phoenixville, PA, majoring in English & creative writing with minors in philosophy and french. She enjoys writing speculative fiction short stories and is working on an original period romance novel. In her free time, she either reads or creates digital art.



Thomas Duong

Thomas is a student from Iowa City, Iowa, with microbiology and biomedical sciences majors on the pre-medical track. Besides his studies, Thomas plays the snare drum for the Hawkeye Marching Band, is an undergraduate researcher, and served as president of UNICEF Iowa. He enjoys sports, biking, and traveling.



Airiana Mohr

Airiana is a fourth-year student from Machesney Park, Illinois studying neuroscience with minors in Spanish and psychology. Aside from her studies, Airiana spends most of her time in her research lab or working with the numerous student organizations she is a member of.



Berkley Barnett

Berkley is a first-year student from Highlands Ranch, Colorado. She is majoring in international studies, with a minor in Arabic studies, and pursuing a certificate in writing. Berkley hopes to develop her communication skills while exploring interdisciplinary coursework across campus.



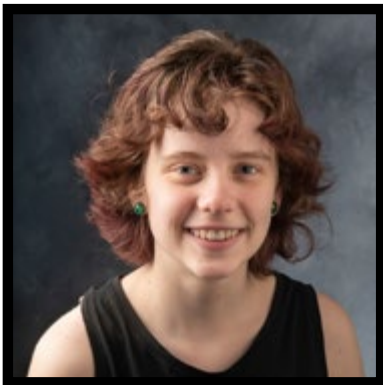
Mackenzie Becker

Mackenzie is a first-year student from Maple Grove, Minnesota, majoring in psychology with a minor in rhetoric and persuasion. While at the University of Iowa, she hopes to continue exploring opportunities in both psychology and within the Honors Program.



Bri Brands

Bri is a first-year student from Spirit Lake, Iowa majoring in English and creative writing on the publishing track. While at University of Iowa, she hopes to become a stronger, more confident writer.



Katie Davis

Katie is a first-year student from Bluffton, South Carolina majoring in English and creative writing. While at the university she hopes to read, write, and get her masters in Library Science.



Neely Goerlinger

Neely is a second year student from Clintonville, Wisconsin. She is majoring in English: creative writing on the publishing track, with a minor in ancient civilizations and certificate in nonprofit leadership and philanthropy. She loves writing and came to the University of Iowa to develop her skills and become the best writer she can be.



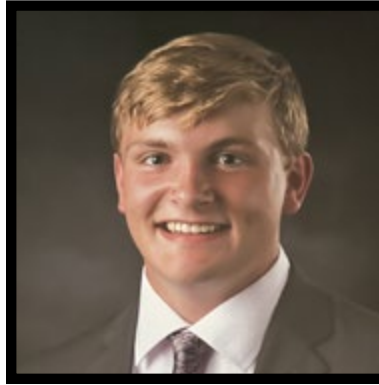
Grace Hahn

Grace is a first-year student from Orange County, California double majoring in speech and hearing sciences and disorders and psychology. Through the honors program, she hopes to dive deeper into her classes to get the most out of her time at the University of Iowa.



Gracie Harvey

Gracie is a first-year student from Fort Dodge, Iowa, majoring in journalism and mass communications. While at the University of Iowa she hopes to gain experience in the realm of strategic communication.



Thomas Jones

Thomas is a second-year student from Elkhart, Iowa, majoring in history and secondary education. Upon graduating, Thomas plans to become a high school history teacher and eventually go back to school in hopes of being a principal one day.



Calista Kopulos

Calista is a first-year student from Arlington Heights, IL, and is studying radiation science on the RT/CT track.



Colin Votzmeyer

Colin is a second-year student from Mount Prospect, Illinois, majoring in journalism and mass communications with minors in history and sports studies. In his time at the University of Iowa, he hopes to perfect his writing skills for a career in sports writing.



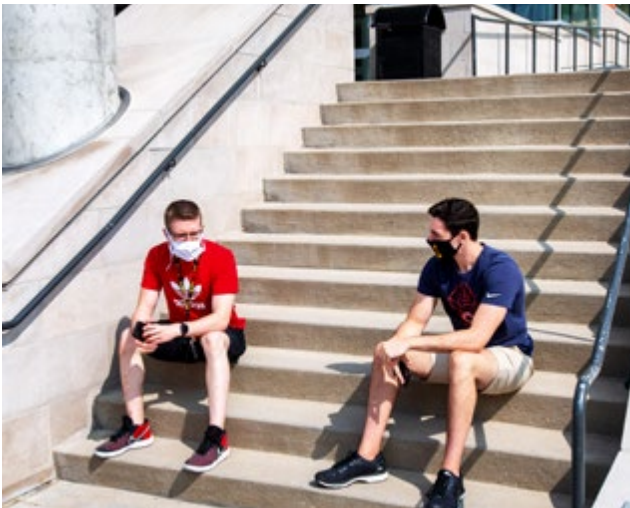
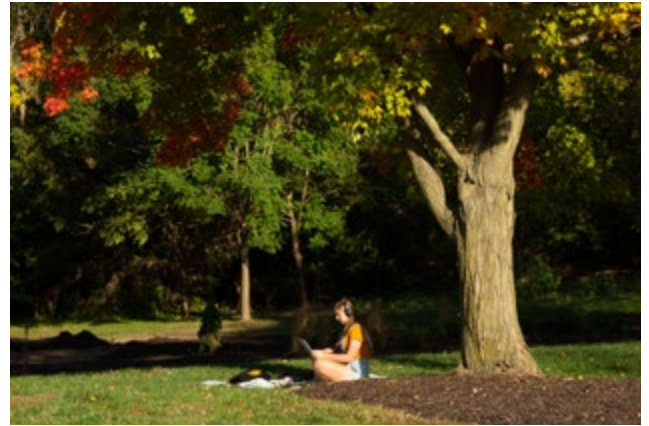
Sam Wilson Hoff

Sam is a third-year student from Des Moines, Iowa, majoring in art with a focus in 3D design along with a minor in cinema. Sam hopes to further develop his passion for form, function, and storytelling in art through his classes at the University of Iowa.



Korbin Yauk

Korbin is a first-year student from Fayette, Iowa, majoring in anthropology. While at the University of Iowa, he hopes to learn more about human behavior and culture before applying to law school.



Photos courtesy of the University of Iowa Office of Strategic Communication.



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honors-program@uiowa.edu



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