



# honorable mention

An Honors Program Publication

February 9th, 2007

## A New Face at the BHC

by Shajia Ahmad

There's a new person on the fourth floor of the Belin-Blank Center. His name is Andrew Willard, and he's the Honors Program's new Experiential Learning Coordinator. And while the door to his fourth-floor office is now open, Willard is busy building a map of the university - a virtual map, that will help honors students discover roads that lead out of the classroom and toward new, hands-on opportunities.

"I think a big part of my task is to broaden connections for students," says Willard. "That's why it's important to get the big picture."

The big picture can sometimes be overwhelming for students to see on their own, especially when they're swamped with classwork and knee-deep in student activities. But experiential learning, better

understood as learning by doing, can be just as important a part of the college experience, says Willard.

Whether that experience comes through connecting with university faculty or exploring options outside the campus where knowledge can be put to practical use, Willard is here to help honors students navigate through the myriad of opportunities. If students have an idea of where they want to go and what they want to do, he says he can "help them cultivate the kind of person they want to become," and perhaps even find ways to help them receive academic credit in the process.

Back in the early 1970's when he, too, was a college student, Willard says he encountered for the first time a professor who encouraged him and his fellow classmates to learn and understand



Andy Willard, the new Blank Honors Program Experiential Learning Coordinator, poses for a picture in his fourth-floor office.

people and the issues not only by studying them, but also through evaluation and proposing solutions, all which could be done without stepping out of the role of a student.

For many years while Willard worked as a researcher at Yale Law School before coming to the University of Iowa, he says he adopted a similar approach in his work, to not only learn and understand problems but to help

find solutions as well. And that's what he encourages honors students to do, to engage with the people and things they are learning about and offer their own evaluations and solutions.

"One of my goals," he says, "is that as many honors students that are inclined to explore experiential opportunities can do so." (continued on next page)

In addition to working as the new Experiential Learning Coordinator, Willard taught an introduction to human rights course this semester. Last spring, he worked with a number of honors students while teaching an honors seminar on human rights and international law. He cur-

rently serves as a member on the Executive Board for the UI Center for Human Rights.

In line with the active role he likes to play in his work, the self-professed baseball fanatic says he'd rather be running bases and hitting balls with his family than watching

others do it. So whether it's about baseball, human rights, or service learning and other experiential learning opportunities, visit Andy Willard in his fourth-floor office. His door is always open and may lead you to a hundred new doors worth exploring.

# I-CAN Team Shows What it Can Do

by Meredith DeBoom

Iowa Civic Analysis Network (I-CAN) is a faculty-supervised undergraduate student program that produces non-partisan policy research for the Iowa Legislature. The program began in the Spring of 2006 under the guidance of Professor Tom Rice of the Department

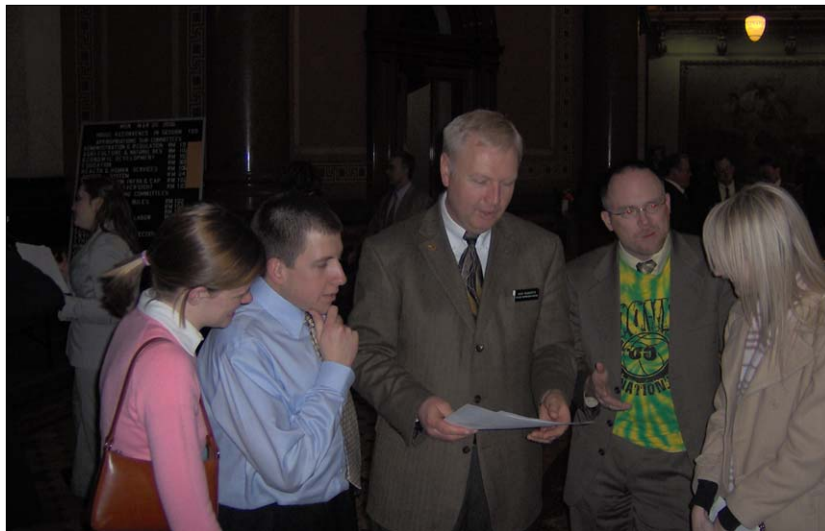
actually perform public policy research. I-CAN provides a unique and rewarding opportunity for students interested in legislative politics to perform research that is actually used by legislators to determine Iowa policy.

I-CAN students research a wide variety of topics for the Iowa Legislature. The process usually begins

either work in small groups or individually to research the topic and compose a public policy "white paper." These reports generally include an overview of the issue, a review of relevant research, a summary of responses of other states or localities, and a synopsis of related legal issues. This fall, I-CAN research topics have included brain drain, eminent domain, cigarette taxes, golf course property taxes, distracted driving, windpower, tribal law, predatory lending, divestment, townships, voting rights for seventeen year olds, bullying, and mental health.

Because the topics researched by I-CAN students are based on the requests of the legislators, the types of issues studied will likely reflect the results of the mid-term elections. The current I-CAN research team spent the last weeks before winter break researching issues that will likely come up in the next legislative session based on the new composition of the Iowa Legislature. In the spring of 2007, a brand new student research team will take over the I-CAN program and begin the process anew.

If you're like additional information about I-CAN, visit our website at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~ican>.



I-CAN students researchers Stacey Schmitt, Brett Roberts, and Emily Galt talk to representatives Rod Roberts and Christopher Rants.

of Political Science and currently consists of 11 researchers. These students enrolled in a one semester hour course in the spring of 2006 in which they learned the techniques of public policy research and are currently all enrolled in a 3 semester hour course this fall in which they

when a legislator contacts the group and asks for research on a particular topic. The I-CAN team then makes a decision about whether to tackle the topic based on what kind of research is involved and how relevant the research will be to the Legislature. I-CAN students then

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## Quintet Connects with Community



The Iowa Honors Wind Quintet performs at the West Liberty Children's Art Fair (left) and pose for a picture while at the Melrose Meadows Retirement Center (right). The members of the quintet are Megan Luljak, Mark Fitkin, Cheryl Poduska, Alissa Coussens, and Laura Hirschey.

by Megan Luljak

The Iowa City Wind Quintet is the first student ensemble from the School of Music to partner with the University of Iowa Honors Program. The group is made up of honors students who are majoring in music performance and/or music education. The founding members of the quintet are Megan Luljak, a senior from Milwaukee, WI majoring in flute performance; Mark Fitkin, a senior from Bettendorf, IA majoring in oboe performance; Cheryl Poduska, a junior from Solon, IA majoring in clarinet performance and elementary education; Alissa Coussens, a junior from Davenport, IA majoring in music education and horn; and Laura Hirschey, a senior from Galena, IL majoring in music education and bassoon. The group is

coached by Benjamin Coehlo and advised by Mark Weiger.

The Iowa Honors Wind Quintet was formed with the mission of connecting college students with the community through interactive and educational performances. Through these performances the quintet

The smiles, hugs, encore requests, and individual stories from the audience members have left a lasting impression on the group's members.

and into the lives of many members of the community who would otherwise never have the opportunity to hear performances or learn about various types of music. Members of the quintet also benefit greatly from these concerts because they get an opportunity to expand their performance skills as chamber musicians and learn how to design pro-

grams that are suitable for a variety of audiences.

During the fall semester, the Iowa Honors Wind Quintet, with the scheduling help of Arts Share, has performed at the West Liberty Children's Art Fair, Melrose Meadows Retirement Community, Pathways Adult Day Center and the University of Iowa Hospitals. The quintet played a diverse program that included classical music by Mozart and Hayden, a Bossa Nova based on the theme from Beethoven's 5th Symphony, two Latin dances, and a piece titled "Vaudeville" that includes ragtime music and includes several jokes. Each of the performances included an introduction of the pieces and their styles as well as a question and answer session with the audience.

The quintet has several performances scheduled for the end of the semester. At 1:30 on December 2nd the group gave a recital in

Harper Hall at Voxman Music Building. This performance allowed the group to present their program to fellow students and discuss the educational value of outreach concerts for both the musicians and the audience. During finals week, the group embarked on a two day tour of schools in the Iowa City area including Twain, Lemme, Van Allen, Shimek, and Longfellow elemen-

tary schools, and Tipton Middle School. Their program for the schools included demonstrations of each instrument, background information about various genres of music, and a performance of Peter and the Wolf, in addition to their previous program.

Throughout the semester, the members of Iowa Honors Wind Quintet have discovered the im-

mense value of community outreach concerts. The smiles, hugs, encore requests, and individual stories from the audience members have left a lasting impression on the group's members. It is the quintet's hope that more student ensembles will continue to carry on their mission of connecting musicians with the community.

## Mock Trial Team represents University

by Jacqueline Leonard

Two-time national champions. One of the only three teams in the United States to have won the nationals competition two years in a row, and the only school to have finished in the top five rankings for the past five years. What are these statistics all about? The University of Iowa's Mock Trial Team. Whether you're drawn to law, critical thinking, logic, public speaking, or drama, Mock Trial is the creative outlet for exercising your talents. The Mock Trial Team is a student organization that competes as part of the American Mock Trial Association (AMTA), a group of universities from around the country. Each year, AMTA releases a civil or criminal case with which each team works to develop a case and theory. Teams do so by creating a character and expert witnesses from case affidavits, write opening and closing statements, and direct and cross examine witnesses to re-enact what actually occurs in a courtroom, complete with two judges. The mock trial season starts in September and lasts through April, when the national competition takes place.

Currently, Iowa has five mock

trial teams that travel around the country from Los Angeles to Memphis and from St. Paul to St. Petersburg. "The Mock Trial team is a great way to meet new people and to learn about the legal system and what it takes to prepare for law school. I really enjoy getting to visit other schools and representing Iowa in something other than athletics," says junior returning member Dawnielle Simmons.

Megan Lowe, the team's Public Relations Officer agrees. "I've made some amazing friendships through Mock Trial. It's nice that we have events outside of practice where we can all hang out together."

Along with representing Iowa abroad, the Mock Trial Team also hosts its very own tournament each year, the Iowa Cornshucker Challenge. Held in late October, 20-30 teams attend and compete at the Iowa Memorial Union and English Philosophy Building. Iowa Mock Trial is an extraordinary way to get involved on campus, meet new people, and challenge yourself to think in a new way. For more information about the Mock Trial Team, visit our website at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~uimt>.



Top: Two Mock Trial members prepare for a competition.  
Middle: The Mock Trial Team with its trophy at Nationals.  
Bottom: The Mock Trial Team relaxes at Barrett Anderson's house.

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## Program Embraces Learning by Doing

by John S. Nelson  
Director of the University  
Honors Program

As we turn toward a new year, the University Honors Program celebrates the addition of a new person and position. Formerly of Yale Law School, Andrew Willard joins us as the UHP's first Experiential Learning Coordinator. This issue of *Honorable Mention* introduces Andy in a separate article, so let me settle here with a rousing, "Welcome Andy!"

Experiential learning is learning by doing. It is the personal acquisition of knowledge through practice. Universities encourage critical reflection on experience, so they sometimes award academic credit for experiential learning, particularly when it includes analysis of the experience in light of systematically developed networks of knowledge.

Universities often configure experiential learning in diverse forms. Field work, laboratory experi-



A group of students study at the Blank Honors Center.

ments, and simulations can enrich classroom-based courses. Practicums can complete professional educations. Internships can add practical skills to academic principles. Studies abroad, cultural events, and artistic or political performances can refine and extend the preparations that students make in earlier courses. Service-learning arrangements can turn volunteer effort into experiences enlightening for students and social organizations alike.

The closest and often the strongest links hold for learning by doing within academic practices: conducting research, writing

articles, and stories and poems, presenting papers and posters, teaching classes, editing work by others, making films or dramas or music, and more. The UHP's Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU) supports students in doing inquiries on the frontiers of knowledge. Likewise Willard will be helping ICRU's Director, Bob Kirby, to continue as annual events the Spring Undergraduate Research Forum and Research in the Capital: both inaugurated last spring as occasions for Iowa students to present research to other scholars and publics. Our Teaching Practicum

awards academic credit to honors students who serve as teaching assistants. And our paid program for Honors Writing Fellows just sent its participants to tout their Iowa work at the national convention for college teachers of writing.

In music education, Iowa's new Honors Woodwind Quintet will contribute to the Santa Catarina Music Festival on January 14-27, 2007 in Jaragua do Sul, Brazil. There our five honors students will perform and provide instruction for Brazilian band students who lack instrument specialists to teach them.

Similar opportunities arise for turning student employment at universities into experiential learning. Students who finance their educations in part by working for campus libraries, laboratories, departments, residence halls learn to take better advantage of campus resources. This newsletter is a ready example, with this issue's (and year's) thanks going

to Mark Hernberg and Kat Rokhlin.

Thus we know that the Honors Student Staff is what makes most UHP efforts succeed, but we also realize that repeated reflection on the work makes it fully into experiential learning, so we include all interested members in the Honors Advisory Committee that meets with me to talk through UHP initiatives and results.

Public engagement includes many activities with the potential for experiential learning. Instruction in the social sciences long has used templates for experiential learning to turn campaign work, social service, government internship, and the like into reflective and systematically informed efforts worthy of aca-

demical credit. Links to civic practices are appearing as well these days in the arts, humanities, and professions. Through movements such as environmentalism, the sciences are doing the same. The Iowa Civic Action Network (I-CAN) sponsored by the UHP and Political Science gives honors students the chance to learn academic methods for the study of public policy then put these to work in writing policy papers for the Iowa Legislature. It is telling that prestigious national and international scholarships for further study pay specific attention to experiential learning and public affairs by the students who apply, and the UHP is working toward a new program to prepare honors students for such com-

petitions: stay posted!

The service-learning movement in education seeks to expand experiential learning of comparable kinds into social practices that range far beyond the officially civic settings like businesses, charities, clubs, and other community organizations. The UHP provides honors credit for these experiences, and it is starting to offer seminars with such service-learning opportunities. Already the UHP's Willard is working on the needed courses.

When the ambition to make cultural practices into sites for experiential learning, the exercises include field trips to sample a subculture, witness a performance, explore a museum, or take part in an event. Carol Severino's first-year hon-

ors seminar on travel writing enjoyed a field experience at Lake McBride. I just took my own TV-and-film seminar, honors students included, on a "field trip" to analyze *The Queen* (2006) in its natural habitat at a local theater. And LaShelle Christensen, who coordinates student programs, regularly arranges free tickets and guest commentators to help our honors students participate in local events.

In an earlier era, the mantra was: If you want to learn it, do it! This is what experiential learning embraces, and Honors at Iowa is thrilled to be venturing even farther into this territory - under the veteran guidance of its new Experiential Learning Coordinator.

