Community Solar Array in a City, Iowa

Chloe McMillan
Supervised by Dr. Marc Linker
The University of Iowa

Community Solar

Community solar arrays are a relatively unexplored facet of renewable energy generation in Iowa. Community projects allow residents to invest in a solar energy array, reaping the benefits of renewable energy production without investing in solar panels on their own property. The traditional rooftop method is not always possible or feasible, especially for those who do not own their homes, live in rental properties, or have limited space available on their property. The traditional rooftop method is not always possible or feasible, especially for those who do not own their homes, live in rental properties, or have limited space available on their property.

Solar Power in Iowa

Solar Power Potential in Iowa City

honors.uiowa.edu
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**On the cover:** Honors Students Kat Dvorak and Ryan Kunkle peruse a poster at the Fall Undergraduate Research Festival.

Photo credit: Lindsay Marshall

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**Virginia Davis,**  
Newsletter Editor  

**Hannah Kopach,**  
Design Editor
My greetings for the Winter of 2014-15 to our Honors program students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends.

SPRING 2015 LAST SEMESTER OF OLD HONORS GPA PROGRAM

Since the Fall of 2013 Honors at Iowa has been running two honors programs: the old program, which was based entirely on maintaining a grade point average (3.33) and had no curricular requirements, and the new program, called a Program of Study, which requires honors student to maintain a grade point average (3.33) and to complete a total of 24 hours of honors classes and experiences. The Spring 2014 semester will be the last semester of the old Honors GPA Program. We continued the old program for two years to allow its members either to opt into the new program or complete the old program.

ENROLLMENT REPORT

Projecting ahead to the third year of the new Honors curriculum (the 2015-16 academic year), it appears we will again have a substantial increase in enrollment – right now the number of students projected to enter the Honors Program in Fall 2016 is about a third larger than it was last year at this time. If that holds, we will have about 1,110 first-year students entering the Honors Program. In the world of Honors education, that is a very large entering class, and particularly when you see how large a percentage it is – possibly 20 to 25% - of the total number of first-year students that will be entering the University of Iowa next Fall.

A CHANGE IN HONORS PROGRAM ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

As I mentioned in the Fall 2014 Newsletter, the large increases in our honors population have prompted us to re-examine our program’s entry criteria. Are those entry requirements indeed bringing in students who will be the best fit for the Honors Program and the University of Iowa? When we looked at our data, we found that a large percentage of the student cohort that came into the program with a 27 through 29 ACT composite score and a high school gpa of at least 3.8 were not making it into the second year of our program – specifically, we lost 43% of this cohort because their grade point average fell below the minimum (3.33) or they did not fulfill honors curricular requirements. We thus decided to raise the Honors at Iowa entry criteria to an ACT composite of at least 30 and a high school gpa of at least 3.8 in order to draw students better fitted for the program. That change will take effect for the 2016-17 academic year. One other related change was that we will raise the UI gpa from 3.33 to 3.5 for UI students to get invited to be part of the Honors Program. That change will take effect for the 2015-16 academic year. The 3.33 gpa that’s now the minimum to remain in the Honors Program will not change.

HONORS PROGRAM INVOLVEMENT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

As you’ll read in one of the articles below, Honors at Iowa has been active at the national level in honors education, both by participating in and presenting at the annual National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) conference, and by being part of the NCHC's leadership. In my own case, after serving on the NCHC Board of Directors for three years, I ran for and this last December was elected to the NCHC executive leadership as vice president. This is actually a four year term in that the NCHC vice president automatically transitions to the office of president-elect, then to president, and finally to past president, with each office being a one-year term. As part of the NCHC executive leadership, I’ll be looking to bring our own Honors Program the benefits that come from being involved in honors education at the national and international levels. More on that as it develops in the coming years.

As always, please feel free to contact me via email (artspisak@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
Director, UI Honors Program
Every year, the National Collegiate Honors Council, an organization for honors programs across the U.S., convenes, welcoming 1500 to 2000 people involved in honors to three and a half days of events, committee meetings, workshops, and presentations related to the collegiate honors experience. The University of Iowa Honors Program is just one of about 850 institutional organizations that can attend the conference, which took place in Denver, Colorado from November 5-9.

Awards are given each year, and this year, the University of Iowa Honors Program received the award for best newsletter in the most competitive category for its summer 2014 issue, edited and designed by honors students Emily Szymanski and Hannah Kopach. Additionally, University of Iowa Honors Program director Art Spisak was elected NCHC vice president for 2015. The following year, he will become the NCHC president-elect, subsequently, president, and finally, past president, positions that award him four years of influence and service with the NCHC.

Sessions offered at the conference catered to a range of programs and their development levels from institutions just getting started in honors to institutions that have had many years of honors program experience. Classes and workshops covered topics such as film, poetry, dance, and yoga. In addition to developmental and educational sessions, the conference also offered social events, one of which was a party for students attending the conference, which took place in Denver, Colorado from November 5-9.

As a Board of Directors student candidate, University of Iowa sophomore Dexter Golinghorst spoke with students attending the conference to learn more about their experiences in honors. Golinghorst said of his involvement, “I met with and discussed current honors issues and initiative ideas for how NCHC can ensure they are providing a top notch experience to its members and institutions.”

The conference theme this year was “Thrill of the Climb,” and the featured speaker was Erik Weihenmayer, an adventurer and inspirational speaker who is the only blind person ever to reach the peak of Mount Everest. He addressed all conference attendees on multiple occasions, talking about his own experience and how others can live life without barriers. In other years, the conference has featured not only speakers but also performers at the plenary events.

Rotating cities from year to year, the NCHC will convene for its 50th anniversary in Chicago next year. The conference theme will be “Make No Little Plans” and will offer another opportunity for both Honors Program faculty and honors students at the University of Iowa to get involved as attendees, presenters, and representatives.
As a first-generation American coming from an Indian heritage, Aditya Chahande travels to central India about every two years. He had yet to see the northern region of the desert state, Rajasthan, however, until this winter break when he traveled with other students from the University of Iowa to fulfill a research project.

Led by anthropology Professor Matt Hill and mechanical and industrial engineering Professor H.S. Udaykumar and later joined by anthropology Professor Meena Khandelwal, this trip—called “India Winterim: International Development: Solar Energy in India: Preserving Forests, Empowering Women, and Promoting Sustainability”—ran from December 27 through January 17. UI students representing a variety of majors from biomedical, chemical, and electrical engineering to Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies used their different areas of expertise to collaborate on this project.

Before heading abroad, students conducted research on high-efficiency cook stoves to determine which stoves best suited the remote villages around the city of Udaipur. This trip, offered since 2010, originated out of concern that the semiarid area would result in desertification due to the deforestation practices of the locals. This area of Rajasthan consists of many subsistence farmers who rely heavily on their crops as a source of income and survival. Around 50 to 70 percent of these citizens are living below the poverty line, which Aditya notes is much lower than the impoverished in the United States.

The UI team of faculty and students set out to introduce solar cookers to the local women as a new ecofriendly practice to help stop the unsustainable firewood collection patterns. What they discovered through their research undermined their original plans. Indeed, the idea of solar cook stoves seemed like the perfect modification, but it actually was of little use since the villagers cook only two meals a day—one early in the morning and the other in the evening. Therefore, they lacked the sunlight needed for the solar cookers to function. With little to no sunlight, the desert region climate became chilly during these times, and many of the women ended up cooking indoors to stay warm. This brought about another problem—smoke and other dangerous gases accumulating within their houses.

The UI team realized they approached the deforestation issue inadequately by asking the wrong questions. Of course, with the language and cultural barrier, communicating was no easy task. In fact, Aditya explained each state in India has its own Marwari or dialect of Hindi. Within these state dialects, every five kilometers brings a more varied version of the language, making the overall translation to English difficult.

After reassessing the issue, the UI team decided they needed to implement smaller, practical changes into the villagers’ daily lives. By looking at how the people used the firewood upon chopping it down, they felt improvements could be made for a healthier environment. After a week of observing local practices of the people, Aditya shared, “I found that even with all of the fantastic things we learn in the classroom, there is something particularly extraordinary that can only be gained from experiential learning. Some of...
these villagers had vast knowledge that couldn’t be found in any of the reference material we poured through.”

Moving forward and learning from failure, the UI team decided to rid their old cook stoves and conduct testing on three models of high-efficiency cook stoves produced locally. These stoves were designed to consume less wood and still meet the demands of the villagers. After distributing the three types of stoves to people in the village, suburbs and city of Udaipur, the UI research team found the Darfur and Envirofit cook stoves popular among the women. With proper feedback, accommodations can further benefit these individuals. Some suggestions from the villagers included making more durable, long-lasting stoves that are affordable and closer to ground level, as many women prefer to cook on their knees. While the group from UI has left, the local NGO representative will continue to check up on the villagers to see if they are still using their stoves. She will report back to the team who will then further investigate the usage based on the results.

Reflecting on the trip, Aditya believes it would be wise to learn about any limitations within the environment so the most effective and practical cook stoves could be implemented into the daily lives of Indian citizens. “I expected to walk away having solved the problem, but I learned that many of the global issues that people face in developing countries are multifaceted. It is impossible to simply address one face of the problem and assume it would fix everything. Often it is required to make progress on several fronts simultaneously for issues like poverty and sustainability to truly change.”

In the future, possibly during his senior year, Aditya is considering going back to Rajasthan to continue his involvement in the research project. He is interested in further studying in South America, Africa, or Asia to learn about other cultures and to gain insight within his field.

Photo credit: Aditya Chahande
# Honors First-Years by the Numbers

## HONORS FIRST-YEAR STATS

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Honors First-Year statistics as of Spring 2015 by Assessment Director Suzanne Carter Squires. Designed by Hannah Kopach
The fifth Fall Undergraduate Research Festival (FURF), one of two research festivals hosted by the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU) each year, took place on December 3, 2014. The event “featured nearly 100 visual presentations given by University of Iowa Undergraduate Researchers... work[ing] in more than 30 different departments and majors, and represent[ing] each of the senior, junior, sophomore, and freshman classes.” The festival, held on the second floor atrium of the Old Capitol Mall, is highly attended by students, professors, and university administrators.

Typically, FURF showcases the work of 80 to 100 students, many of whom are ICRU fellows (students involved in research or creative projects and who receive financial support for their work from ICRU). Others, however, work with professors outside of the fellows program and some even work independently on projects. Students can even present research, scholarly, or creative work they have developed through honors contract courses or work they have done for thesis projects in their areas of study. There are no requirements to present at the festival apart from having a project—completed or at any stage of the process—and being available to attend the two-hour-long festival. Because the criteria for presenting are minimal, projects represent a wide variety of fields, from biochemistry to dance to history.

For example, first-year students in engineering and biochemistry, Kara Hoving and Alora Kraus shared an aquaponics project they are working on with Professor Craig Just. Partnering with Mark Ginsburg, owner of M.C. Ginsburg, they are designing a small aquaponics system with the hopes of installing it on the roof of his business in downtown Iowa City. The students’ research explores how this type of urban agriculture can be used as a sustainable food source, supplying both garden crops and fish for commercial value, that will support the local economy and promote energy efficiency. Hoving and Kraus got involved in the project as ICRU fellows, and they both foster an interest in sustainability.

Another student, Irina Gass, worked with Professor Rebekah Kowal in the dance department and shared her research on Jewish-American dance from 1930-1950, a project that explored the conflicting expectations of American audiences and Jewish entertainers, ultimately concluding that dance was used to assimilate Jewish immigrants.

Nate Otjen, an English and anthropology major, presented his project, which fuses the fields of environmental studies and English. Otjen works on the People’s Weather Map, a project that collects stories from across Iowa about both recent and historical weather-related tragedies in order to...
highlight the ways in which global climate change is affecting Iowa. The project, started by Professor Barbara Eckstein three years ago, has a website, peoplesweathermap.org, where more of Otjen’s research can be found.

While most students present using posters, others, like Otjen, who used the project website, incorporate different strategies. Claire Rosen and Sophie Katz, for example, used PowerPoint and video footage to showcase their work as interns on a spontaneous street performance pilot festival, which, partnering with the Iowa City Downtown District, debuted this past summer. The video component displayed some of these performances while the slideshow outlined their research approach and suggestions for future festivals.

The festival invites graduate students to judge the presentations, and each presentation receives feedback from four to five judges. This year, over 100 graduate students volunteered as poster judges. These judges address things like the visual effect of the posters or presentations and the communication of the student presenters, especially in making their projects clear to non-expert audiences. This year, students had the added challenge of providing both an academic title and abstract and a general audience title and abstract, garnering interest from viewers of varying levels of expertise in the given field. Based on these components, the judges recognize the top 12 posters with Distinguished, Outstanding, and Commended awards in each of four discipline categories.

For many students, FURF is the first step in organizing and talking about their research in a professional setting. At each research festival, about 50 percent of the student presenters are presenting for the first time, and many of them are first-year students. FURF also enables students currently uninvolved in research to learn from their peers what undergraduate research looks like. For some, this may mean learning how research works in the humanities, and for others, it may mean learning how to talk about highly specialized research.
From November 3 to 14, six posters were displayed in the Blank Honors Center. These posters belonged to the six undergraduate students who presented their honors experiential learning projects in the fall.

As part of the University Honors curriculum, honors students participate in experiential learning from a menu of options and, in the case of study abroad and internships, they further enhance the opportunity by completing an independent project. While an experience like study abroad is valuable in itself, a project can deepen the overall experience. “I thought it would be a fun way to explore the country I would be living in on a deeper level,” says Paige Pfaffe, who went to Spain for her honors experience. Working with Honors experiential learning director Andy Willard, Pfaffe developed a research project to complete while she was in Spain. “As I am very interested in health trends across the world and was traveling to the Mediterranean, I thought a project around the mysterious health benefits of their diet would be very interesting to explore, especially since Spain has the highest longevity. I wanted to see what they were doing right.”

Students wanting to pursue an honors experience and research project work closely with Dr. Willard, who helps them develop their ideas into a research proposal. “I think having the ability to do [independent research] will be very valuable for me in the future,” says Pfaffe. “Not only did this project teach me a lot about the Mediterranean diet, but it also allowed me to go through the entire process of developing and completing a project of this sort on my own.”

Not every honors experience lends itself to a research project, though. Over the summer, Ellen Cranburg lived on a U.S. Marines base in Japan, teaching swimming lessons for a children’s program. She kept a blog as part of her independent project. “I wanted something I could use to share my pictures easily, communicate to my friends and family back home what I was doing, and also have a reflective aspect. A blog fit these criteria well.”

Spending time abroad helped both Cranburg and Pfaffe engage with the cultures they were studying, as well as regard their own culture from a new perspective. “Not only
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Paige Pfaffe explains her project, which explored Mediterranean diets and health and supplemented her trip to Spain. Photo credit: Lindsay Marshall

do Spaniards eat different foods than Americans, but the way they eat is much different. For them, meals are the time of the day when everything stops,” says Pfaffe. “They leave work or school, go home and eat with their families. This is a direct reflection of the culture and something that I truly believe benefits their health. The importance of family and being together was something very special, something that I think many Americans are missing out on.”

The experience of living on an American military base in Japan exposed Cranburg to new cultures on a variety of levels. “I learned a lot of things about the U.S. military, Japanese culture, and valuable traveling tips. While I didn’t learn anything specific to being an attorney,” said Cranburg, who plans to go to law school, “the lessons about tolerance from living with the U.S. Marine Corps and the patience I learned from traveling and teaching children’s swimming lesson are valuable life lessons applicable anywhere.”

The posters were displayed for two weeks, culminating in a poster session, during which the presenters gave a brief summary of their experience and described their project to attendees. The six presenters were Ellen Cranburg, Paige Pfaffe, Thomas Rigg, Catrina Jargo, Kelsey Frisk, and Kaitlyn Daugherty.

Paige Pfaffe explains her project, which explored Mediterranean diets and health and supplemented her trip to Spain. Photo credit: Lindsay Marshall

Ellen Cranburg presents on her experience living on a U.S. Marines base in Japan, using pictures that she also posted to her blog. Photo credit: Lindsay Marshall

A Glimpse into the Past

By Virginia Davis

Nine years ago...

the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU) began. This program resulted from the merging of the Undergraduate Scholar Assistant (USA) and Iowa Research Experience for Undergraduates (IREU). ICRU grew out of the hope that more undergraduate students would become involved in research and the idea that “research is a creative process that cuts across all boundaries between sciences, getting creative students together with creative faculty.” While ICRU began under the direction of Bob Kirby, it is now headed by Dr. Kirby as well as Lindsay Marshall, both of whom are Honors Program staff.
Miss Iowa Aly Olson
Embracing Diversity on Campus and all over Iowa

By Virginia Davis

Aly Olson came to the University of Iowa in 2011 to study vocal performance. Here, she engaged in the Honors Program, in the University of Iowa Foundation, and in choir, a capella, and opera opportunities. Meanwhile, she worked hard to compete in the Miss Iowa Scholarship Program, ultimately earning the title this past summer. Now she reflects on the first half of her year as Miss Iowa and how the experience continues to challenge and shape her.

When and how did your journey to Miss Iowa begin?

I like to think that my whole life has been preparation for being Miss Iowa: from singing throughout school and as a vocal performance major to speaking with audiences large and small to being engaged in service in my community. My life fit so well with the mission of the Miss America Organization that I knew I wanted to compete at Miss America when I was much younger. I was Miss Iowa’s Outstanding Teen in 2010, which is the “little sister” program to Miss Iowa; during this year of service, I fell in love with the program and began planning my journey to Miss Iowa and Miss America. My older sister also competed for a number of years and pageants became a “family thing.” My intentional long range planning enabled me to win Miss Iowa my first time competing for the title in June of 2014.

How did your involvement in both academics and extracurriculars at the University of Iowa help prepare you for your job as Miss Iowa?

Being involved during my time at Iowa solidified my passion for being busy that I had during high school. Balancing classes, performance rehearsals for operas and recitals, work with the Honors Program, and my relationships with friends and family helped me know how to balance responsibilities during the crazy preparation for Miss America. Prioritization and compartmentalization are both key skills for college students and myself as Miss Iowa. One unexpected development during my time at Iowa was a blooming passion for my state and university. At Miss America, I felt so much pride in representing Iowa and the University of Iowa, where amazing advances in health, the fine arts, and business are being made every day by my peers and friends. Speaking on behalf of the state and university has been such an honor!

Tell us about your experience at the Miss America competition.

The realization that I was only able to “do” Miss America once occupied my mind for the entire two-week experience in Atlantic City. All 53 contestants compete in each phase (private interview, talent, gown, lifestyle & fitness in swimsuit, and on-stage question) during four days of competition before anything is officially broadcasted. Competing with the highest caliber women in America for this year was both exhilarating and intimidating, but by the time the TV broadcast of the final competition came around, I felt confident that I would be named in the Top 15 finalists. When I was called 14th of 15 spots, I was relieved and absolutely elated. However, as all finalists were named, I had mixed feelings: I was sad for my friends who did not advance with me and excited looking at the smaller group of women with whom I was competing. The broadcast is an absolute whirl as you get two minutes to change from outfit to outfit and stare into the cameras on-stage while knowing that America is watching and rooting for you. I truly had this immense sense of responsibility to the entire
state of Iowa (and the Midwest). Unfortunately, I did not advance past the Top 12 to perform my talent. If anything, I would change that one part of the competition, so that I could share my talent with America and those watching at home. However, my friend from Kentucky (another Top 12 finalist) and I both knew that we had no reason to be bitter or disappointed about our performances. I was happy to have Miss New York Kira Kazanstev be named the new Miss America because she was one of my friends. She is doing an amazing job as Miss America.

**What does a typical day as Miss Iowa look like?**

One of the things I love the most about my job is the variety of things I get to do as Miss Iowa. Thus far, I have visited with families who benefit from Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals (the UI Children’s Hospital is one!); sang at a Hawkeye football game, Brett Michaels concert, and drag queen pageant; talked with kids about my platform Do One Thing: Diversity Everyday in schools; and traveled over 12,000 miles in my car throughout the state doing many other events and activities. I would summarize my job as listening to the people of Iowa as they share their stories with me; I collect these stories and carry them with me everywhere I go.

**What has been your favorite opportunity or event you’ve experienced as Miss Iowa?**

Singing at the Iowa vs. Northwestern game was a highlight for me! There were slight sound difficulties at the beginning of my rendition of “God Bless America,” but standing on the 50-yard line while the ANF card stunt surrounded me was as moving as it was cool. I love my university so much and cannot say how thankful I am for how fully they have embraced me as Miss Iowa and as a student. Additionally, taking the crown off to share with children is the most personally rewarding. I often only get a few minutes to interact with each child and I do my best to make them smile and know that they can do whatever they set their mind and hearts to do.

**Your platform is “Do One Thing: Diversity Everyday.” Tell us about what that means for you personally and for you as Miss Iowa.**

My parents raised my sister and I in a very tolerant and welcoming household. By the time I came to Iowa, diversity of friends, activities, and experiences was very important to me. I became involved in the Walk It Out Multicultural Fashion Show on campus and enjoyed learning from...
my friends who were different from me. Through these experiences, I was sometimes challenged as to why I should care about diversity. I knew then that utilizing the platform structure of the Miss America program would enable me to speak about how important it is for all of us to celebrate diversity and promote inclusion. Appreciating diversity is a journey and through my work with Do One Thing: Diversity Everyday I know I still have much to learn. As Miss Iowa, I am most excited to work with students. I will be speaking to schools of all levels about embracing diversity and difference. I also have been working on celebrating diversity within corporations and communities, encouraging the spread of my message through my social media campaign.

What has been the most valuable thing you’ve learned as you prepared for Miss Iowa and as you began your role as Miss Iowa?

As Miss Iowa, I learn poignant lessons nearly every day. The two most recent striking realizations I have come to while working are that people need to be listened to in their relationships and that people of all ages need to be told how amazing and special they are as human beings. Listening to Iowans share their stories, I make connections in a matter of moments. Sometimes these few minutes will result in further relationships or opportunities for me later on down the road, but they always help me realize how fundamentally good people are in their daily lives. When I take my crown off and put it on the head of a five-year-old girl and tell her she is amazing and can do anything, I know that message can never do harm, but rather immense good.

Parties or schools interested in Aly’s platform should like her Facebook page, Do One Thing: Diversity Everyday. She continues to fill her schedule with school and business presentations, and those interested in booking her can email Lisa Soesbe at businessmanager@missiowa.com. Her adventures as Miss Iowa can be found on Facebook: Miss Iowa 2014, Aly Olson and on Instagram: @missiowa2014.
How long have you worked with the Honors Program?

This December marked my fourth year with the program. I joined the staff in 2010, as the Interim Scholarship Director, when my predecessor, Andrea Beloy left to travel the world for a while.

How did you end up in your position?

I am so grateful for and fascinated by my work, but it was never a part of my plan. While I was working with another organization on campus, I got the chance to serve on the campus nomination committee for the Truman Scholarship. The candidate prep and application review was not new to me, but the respectful openness cultivated by the committee was a different experience. I was not very familiar with formal fellowship advising—the practice was just developing into a profession when I won the Truman in 1998—but the scholarship application geek in me was energized by the students’ ideas and the intensity of the process. When the position opened up, I felt like the universe was presenting me with a gift.

Has your job changed since you joined the Honors Program?

One of the obstacles I have negotiated since taking on my position is confusion about what my role is. My title was originally “Scholarship Director,” but because students and their families often associate the idea of scholarships with financial aid services, I spent a great deal of time fielding questions I was not qualified to answer! To help clarify my role and more clearly articulate the value of nurturing a deeper, more purposeful relationship with ourselves as well as our chosen disciplines, we changed my title to the “Director of Scholar Development.” This shift in description reflects how I have come to define my contribution to the intellectual and creative development of our students. For me, the application and the essay are necessary, powerful tools of self-discovery. When we approach the questions they pose for us with honesty and authenticity, we can see more of who we are what we believe and how we can serve the goals, we have set for our communities and ourselves. The vulnerability and intensity that come with competing at this level often creates extraordinary levels of dissonance, discomfort and uncertainty in applicants, but I’ve seen those forces push the same young people towards their own version of greatness. One that is earned instead of given, built instead of used, produced by invaluable risk and failure and perseverance that cannot be taken away.

The idea of “scholar development” fits for me because the process and the result go beyond the professional or the intellectual. Our students come to us with more privilege, talent and experience than many of their peers. In return, we must ask more of them because they are able to give it. In order to keep growing, to allow their sense of self to expand and evolve, our students must make room in their lives for reflection and reevaluation. A big part of how I can help our students is to create a space where they can learn how to look back, observe their present, and imagine their future.

What is a typical day like for you?

There is a lot of variety in my day-to-day. Like any member of a living organization, I spend a good chunk of my time in service of the mission of our program and the university as a whole. This includes weekly staff meetings, event coordination, classroom presentations, scholar development workshops and special committees inside and outside of the Honors Program. I also run our annual scholarship competition, work with the University of Iowa’s Presidential Scholarship Program, and read for a variety of campus awards. The majority of my time is spent on the identification, recruitment, selection and support of national fellowship nominees. To do this, I play a lot of roles—advisor, investigator, coach, editor, devil’s advocate, and fashion and etiquette consultant. Because I am responsible for a wide range of undergraduate fellowships, many of which fall far outside of my own expertise, I am learning right along with our applicants. This exchange...
of knowledge strengthens my connection to my students and to our current scientific and creative discourse.

**What is the Fellows Project?**

Purposeful engagement with extraordinary challenge requires us to know ourselves as well as we know our disciplines. The Fellows Project was established to not only identify and reward the most thoughtful, curious and motivated honors students early on in their education, but to create a space where each Fellow is challenged to develop a knowledge of the self that will deepen their intellectual life, strengthen their engagement with their academic community and foster authenticity and confidence in their personal and professional relationships.

Students invited to join the Fellows Project are able to demonstrate their interest in further developing the following skills, traits, and perspectives:

- an authentic investment in the process of learning and the pursuit of challenge
- a desire to contribute to one’s chosen communities—academic, creative, athletic, faith-based, political, social, entrepreneurial... and more
- adaptability, curiosity, and self-awareness
- strong writing and speaking skills—extroverts and introverts alike!

Each Fellow in our community has access to a spectrum of intellectual, professional and social opportunities, including:

- two years of dedicated scholarship funding
- structured scholar development support through an honors seminar in the first year of funding
- connection to other Fellows, like-minded peer collaborators, Honors faculty and staff, university leadership, and visiting thought leaders
- and individually tailored research, fellowship and graduate school advising

**What DOES the Director of Scholar Development do?**

Our Director of Scholar Development works with:

- students as they consider how specific scholarship and fellowship opportunities can support their larger intellectual, professional, and creative goals
- applicants as they craft original essays, personal statements, research proposals, build reciprocal relationships with faculty and community mentors, and prepare for individual and group interview experiences
- faculty and community leaders as they mentor and support applicants, as well as in the development of strong, representative letters of recommendation.
Hejlik visited the small town of Český Krumlov during the spring 2013 semester, which he spent studying abroad in Prague. Photo credit: Quinn Hejlik

Hometown: Missouri Valley, Iowa
Year: Senior
Major: History and International Studies

How did you get involved in the Honors Program, and how has your involvement influenced your time at Iowa?

I knew some of the people working on Honors Student Staff during my first year at Iowa, and they encouraged me to apply. I have been involved with the Honors Program ever since as Student Staff and now as Honors Liaison to the Iowa City Foreign Relations Council (ICFRC). Honors has been especially beneficial for me because of the people I’ve met and worked with, and the educational and work opportunities it has afforded. ICFRC has exposed me to many professors, students, and activities at the University of Iowa relating to Russian and Central/Eastern European cultures, which is my area of study within history. I am now writing a history undergraduate honors thesis on the topic of Slovak national identity in 1960s Czechoslovakia.

What has been your favorite honors activity or memory?

I helped program an honors event in April of 2014 that featured a Russian law professor, who Skyped in to speak to a group of honors students about the Russian perspective on the Ukrainian crisis. The speaker’s perspective was very interesting and unique in comparison to what we typically hear in Western media. The event was well-attended, and everyone seemed to enjoy it. I love that my job and involvement with the Honors Program has afforded me the opportunity to put on such interesting events.

What advice would you give students thinking about taking an honors class or graduating with honors?

Do it. Honors classes are great because they’re generally full of enthusiastic, hardworking students. You’ll likely get more out of the class, and you’ll get to know your TA or professor better. By taking honors classes, doing the experiential learning side of the Honors Program curriculum, and graduating with university and/or departmental Honors, you not only get a fuller education, but also a wealth of experience and connections to new activities and opportunities.

If you could offer one piece of advice for incoming students, what would it be?

Immerse yourself in your classes, activities, and life in general at the University of Iowa (and join Honors, obviously!). College is infinitely more rewarding and enjoyable when you dive in, experience new things, make new friends, and develop a passion for something. As a freshman, you tend to think about what you’re going to do at the University, but by the end of your degree you start to realize that everything you’ve done has created a much broader foundation for the rest of your life. College is very much a journey rather than a destination.
Sarah Mayer
Student Profile

In addition to the Honors Program, what other organizations have you been involved in?

I am involved in the UIHC Student Leader Board, the ImmiUNITY Campaign, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Women in Science and Engineering, Alpha Chi Sigma, Medicus, and Undergraduate Research.

What advice would you give students thinking about taking an honors class or graduating with honors?

Definitely go for it! There are so many ways to fulfill Honors requirements, and you’ll find that they’re things you’d want to do anyway! The Honors Program can connect you with great resources for unique opportunities on campus. The honors contract option was how I got to know one of my Spanish professors really well, and I got to do several extra projects that really interested me.

What has been your biggest challenge in college and how did you conquer it?

I was a little bit overwhelmed at the size of Iowa at first, but I just tried to get involved with smaller communities where I felt at home. After almost four years, it’s nearly impossible to meet someone and not have at least a few friends in common. It’s important to find your niche at Iowa, whether that’s in the Honors Program or another community on campus.

How do you balance school, work, and extracurricular activities? How would you advise students to successfully balance college life?

I heard a great speaker my freshman year who was asked a similar question about work-life balance and her answer really stuck with me: “There is no balance, only priorities.” It can be hard to juggle a million obligations and feel like you have to give 100% to every single thing, but it helps to step back and look at how you’re spending your time. If something is really important to you, you’ll make time for it. Conversely, if you don’t have enough time to do what you value most, it’s time to make a change. This is a lesson I learn over and over again!

Mayer says her favorite honors opportunity was taking Professor Donna Parsons’ Harry Potter seminar. Photo credit: Sarah Mayer

Hometown: Johnston, IA
Year: Senior
Major: Biochemistry and Spanish

How did you get involved in the Honors Program, and how has your involvement influenced your experience at Iowa?

I started with Honors Primetime before classes even began freshman year, and I lived in Daum [Honors House] my first year, where I made a lot of really great friends. I’ve also taken several honors classes through the years. An honors contract course is a really great way to build a relationship with a professor and learn something cool outside of the regular course content. I’ve also been on the executive board for the Presidential Scholars Program, where I got to help dream up new programming and activities for a really engaging group of people.
Brittany Loutsch is a junior from Le Mars, Iowa, working towards her degree in English and attaining her licensure in teaching through the College of Education. She is also receiving a certificate in nonprofit management. Currently, she volunteers with Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Iowa Youth Writing Project. She participates in the Eats and Treats Club and Ed on Campus. After college, Brittany plans on teaching for a few years to gain experience in the classroom. From there she dreams of studying educational policy and writing about contemporary issues in education.

Stasi Kosyanchuk is a sophomore from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She is double majoring in Journalism and Political Science and studying Russian. In the future, she hopes to pursue a career in public relations or broadcasting. In her free time, Stasi enjoys spending time with loved ones, shopping, and listening to music.

Claire Jacobson is a freshman from Iowa City, studying French and Arabic at the University of Iowa. She is an aspiring polyglot, and hopes to pursue a career in translation and interpreting. When she’s not studying or working, she can be found reading Tolkien books and volunteering at her church’s youth group.
Arianna Chronis is a Pre-Law junior from Palos Park, Illinois who is majoring in English with a certificate in Medieval Studies. This year, she is also Marketing Executive Advisor of the UI Dance Club and Membership Chair of the Swing Dance Club.

Virginia Davis is a senior from Orange City, Iowa. She is studying English and American Studies and is currently working on her senior thesis. In addition to the Honors Newsletter, she also edits and writes for Iconic, a student-run magazine. She is an Honors Student Staff member, a Writing Fellow, and a writing tutor.
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