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Greetings for the Spring semester of 2013. I have a few updates since our Fall 2012 newsletter. Since then we have taken on a new staff member, Lindsay Marshall, who is the assistant director for the Iowa Center for Undergraduate Research (ICRU) and an Honors Program professional staff member. Lindsay has a background in Biological Anthropology and has already made a strong connection with the students. You can see why in the article below that features her.

Another update is that our new Honors curriculum has been approved by the Provost and will take effect in the Summer 2013 term. The Honors staff, with the help of our current honors students and the campus community, have been developing our new plan of study for over a year, and we’re very pleased it has been so well received.

Briefly, our new curriculum consists of 24 hours of honors courses and honors experiences (for complete details visit at http://honors.uiowa.edu/article/new-honors-curriculum-and-requirements). It’s divided into two levels:

The first level, which is 12 semester hours of honors coursework, will build a broad knowledge base, and mostly incorporates honors sections of general education classes.

The second level, which is also 12 semester hours (or the equivalent), is experiential in nature. This means students learn by doing – arguably the most effective way to learn. It includes a variety of menu options (e.g., undergraduate research; honors in the
major; internships) that give students the flexibility to tailor the program to their wants and needs.

Students who complete the new Honors at Iowa curriculum will have University Honors notated on their transcripts and diplomas. It will also be announced at graduation ceremonies when names are read.

The main objective of our new curriculum has been to give our students the structure that is traditional for an honors experience, but still to offer the flexibility, which has been a trademark of our program, that allows students to make their personal connection – that is, to find and pursue their particular life-plan – through Honors at Iowa.

Our current honors students will have the opportunity to opt into the new curriculum up through the spring of 2015.

Finally, I offer best wishes and all success to our honors students who will be graduating this May. We’ll be giving formal recognition to those who are receiving commendations at our Honors Commendation Ceremony on May 17th.

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

Art L. Spisak
Director, UI Honors Program
As the semester was winding to a close and students were finishing their classes in November, Lindsay Marshall was just beginning her new position as ICRU (Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates) Assistant Director and Honors Program staff member. Originally from Virginia, Lindsay studied at James Madison University and Oregon State University before coming to Iowa.

Although she interned with Ecolotree, Inc., an engineering firm in North Liberty, in the fall of 2011, Marshall wanted to be at the University of Iowa. “The energy found on a college campus just really can’t be matched,” she said. Marshall’s research interests focus on women’s reproductive health.

While in graduate school at Oregon State, Marshall originally intended to study the globalization of food systems. However, her plans changed after meeting Dr. Melissa Cheyney, who was also a practicing home-birth midwife. Marshall was fascinated after only a couple of classes with Cheyney and was inspired to begin her work at Oregon State’s Reproductive Health Laboratory.

When asked about her fascination with women’s reproductive health, Marshall posed a question: “Have you ever found or been introduced to something that resonated so deeply within you that you throw all of your energies into it?” Her passion for reproductive
health and research projects is evident in the variety of research projects in which she has participated, including a project focusing on women breastfeeding in birthing centers with midwives.

But research is not the only work Marshall has done. In the past, Marshall worked at a bank, as an intern at the aforementioned Ecolotree, Inc., and as a staff member of the Student Sustainability Initiative at OSU. In addition, she worked as an editorial assistant for the Journal of Ecology of Food and Nutrition and as a graduate student instructor for an anthropology class.

“I love being in the classroom – there’s nothing like watching even one student tap into the kind of education that I’ve been lucky enough to receive and try to emulate,” said Marshall. She has brought her enthusiasm for being in the classroom and interacting with students to Iowa. Marshall is excited to work with students during events such as the Spring Undergraduate Research Festival.

Despite the (currently) cold weather, Marshall enjoys being in Iowa City and working with the Honors staff. “I’ve been working closely with icru Director Bob Kirby to learn more about what UI offers and am looking forward to working with students as the year progresses,” Marshall said. “Things are going really well so far. The Honors staff (professional and student) are great people to work with.”

To get in touch with Lindsay, email her at lindsay-marshall@uiowa.edu, call her at 319.335.8336, or drop by her office in room 401 of the Blank Honors Center.
Late last November, three Honors staff and student representatives attended the National Collegiate Honors Council’s 2012 conference in Boston. The conference drew students from universities across the country to attended committee meetings as well as presentations and classes about honors programming.

The Council, founded in 1966, is a nationally recognized association representing honors programs in universities across the country; its goal is to represent and assist honors programs in the United States, and it publishes guidelines for such programs.

“It’s the main voice for honors in the world today”, said UI Honors Director Art Spisak. “It’s one of our sources here for new requirements.” At the conference, three honors students and two professional staff members presented about a year-long project that culminated in the redesigned Honors Program for the University of Iowa. The students were a part of an assessment team reviewing patterns of Honors student engagement since 2006 administering questionnaires and researching peer institutions (see Spring 2012 issue, *Honors Taking a Close Look: Self-Reflection for Improvement*). Also at the conference, Riley Cook, another member of the student delegation, was elected to the Council’s Student Board of Directors.
Editor’s Note: The University of Iowa’s International Programs coordinate a wide variety of Winterim experiences that can easily fit into the program of study of any student. The Honors program recognizes that studying abroad for any amount of time is, by its nature, an Honors experience and recognizes these intellectual adventures with Honors credit.

Pre-med students dream of donning their white coat and draping a stethoscope over their neck for the first time. The image of oneself as a doctor is in the distant future but it’s enough to motivate the obsessive studying and résumé-building necessary to apply to med school. But I was fortunate enough to get a sample over winter break.

I spent the break in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India with the India Winterim program. The course I took was Diagnosing Diseases which taught us how to take patient histories, perform physical exams, and use that information to make diagnoses.

Our group spent two weeks working in Meenakshi Mission Hospital and Research Centre, a 700 bed charity hospital. The attitude among the administration, doctors, and patients was unlike what you would see in America. There wasn’t any hesitation to involve us as students. Rather, the physicians insisted that we study with them, and they critiqued us along the way. The patients weren’t bashful; they let us interview and examine them without question. And the administration wanted us to see as much of the hospital as we could.

This was representative of the attitude of the Indian people. Wherever we went, we felt welcomed. People wanted to show us their culture – the food, the language, the fashion. Nobody took anything too seriously.

I was able to watch a complete kidney transplant in person. The surgeons expected us to stand at the operating table, at their side, and watch the surgery directly. They quizzed us on our anatomy and physiology as they explained the procedure to us in detail. The experience was illuminating.
Our assignment was to study individual patient cases in depth. Groups of four would visit a unit that interested them with hopes of finding an interesting case. My group spent time in cardiology, neurology, nephrology, and diabetology. We would spend about an hour taking a full patient history, following a proper format that allowed us to communicate it professionally. The experiential learning was unreal.

In the beginning, we made the error of overlooking seemingly irrelevant details and leaving lines of questions unfinished. Those missing details made all the difference in our diagnoses. For example, when a patient reported hematuria (blood in the urine), we failed to ask him to describe it in more detail. Depending on when during urination blood occurs (beginning, end, or the entirety), you can make a completely different diagnosis. That’s a lesson you can only learn by making your own mistake.

Our skills improved with practice and by the end of the trip, we were able to gather and organize information to build a complete case and our diagnoses matched the doctors’. After working with patients in the hospital, I now feel that I have a good understanding of a doctor’s work. We experienced the frustrations of difficult cases and incomplete patient reports. But even during the challenges and late nights, I never wanted to leave our cases unfinished. I am more confident than ever that I want to practice medicine.
Music majors are busy students: taking classes, performing in ensembles, and practicing for hours every day. Students looking for additional challenges and experiences participate in the School of Music Honors Program. The program is open to all music majors with a GPA in music of 3.8 and above, whether they are pursuing the Bachelor of Music or Bachelor of Arts degree.

Honors requirements are usually met in the junior or senior year. Students must complete at least 6 s.h. of designated honors work in music, including honors contract courses, graduate courses, and at least 3 s.h. of independent work through the Honors in Music course (25:097/MUS:4995). Honors projects range from performance in an honors recital in conjunction with extensive program notes or a paper related to the repertoire performed; to musical composition, transcription, arrangement, or edition; a recording/performance project; or a research paper or project.

Honors students most frequently chose to perform in recitals as their independent projects. These recitals must be above and beyond the requirements for their degrees in music. Some students have chosen recitals with a related body of repertoire, such as music of a particular composer, country, genre, or theme. The student must do extensive research on the background of the music and composers and perform the recital for a public audience. Recent music majors have performed recitals with themes of “American Songs of Protest,” Paris Conservatory composers, Russian music, and contemporary compositions based on baroque styles and genres.
Some music students have conducted research related to music education, music therapy, or music history. The results of their research have been presented at conferences and published in journals. Other students have composed original music for their instrument or for various ensembles. Honors projects encourage students to be creative and thoughtful with their music education.

Although music majors maintain a morning-to-night schedule of classes, ensembles, and individual practice, some exceptional students choose to go beyond the considerable requirements and challenge themselves by participating in the honors program. The additional research, performances, and compositions give students the opportunity for more breadth and depth of experience. Many of these honors students find that they have a “jump start” on graduate school or professional experience upon graduation from the University of Iowa. To stay up to date with everything that’s happening in the music department, check out the UIMusic Blog: http://uimusic.wordpress.com/
Music can be used powerfully to connect with other people, to connect with our own emotions and desires, and to learn about other cultures; it [music] helps me to appreciate the amazing reality of what it means to be human.
—Justin Farris

The world-renowned writing program is what initially drew Justin Farris to the university; however, during his time as an underclassman he began to study Russian and piano under the tutelage of pianist Dr. Rene Lecuona. When Justin realized that he could successfully complete all three majors in only four-and-a-half years of study, he “decided to go for it.”

Justin’s ambition didn’t end with his triple major, he also became an Honors Writing Fellow during his junior year. As an Honors Writing Fellow Justin found that he enjoyed “the elevated level of engagement with writing as a disciple.” Justin will graduate with Honors in Russian, and he has designated several courses that will accredit him with an Honors Commendation for Interdisciplinary Studies.

As for Justin’s musical studies, he primarily trains as a pianist, but has also been a member of the University Choir and Steel Band Ensemble. He attributes some of his favorite experiences at the School of Music to his time away from piano. For instance, this past December Justin had the opportunity to sing Carl Orff’s impassioned work Carmina Burana. Justin is grateful for the exposure to different genres and styles of music as a part of his studies in the School of Music. As a piano performance
major, Justin is expected to practice a minimum of 17.5 hours per week. Obviously, this is incredibly demanding, especially with his other endeavors. To balance his responsibilities, Justin follows three paramount rules: start early, work at points of low-stress, and be consistent. Justin said, “[following] these can be most difficult at times, but these concepts help to ensure that everything is done methodically and correctly.”

Currently, Justin is working to complete an Honors thesis in music that will be a review of the scholastic literature written about the prominent Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich’s 5th Symphony and its alleged political criticism and content. This unique project allows Justin to incorporate all three of his fields of study into one multidisciplinary piece of work. The idea for the project came when Justin began studying another Russian composer’s (Dmitry Kabalevsky) work for piano with his teacher Dr. Rene Lecuona, leading him to investigate the experimental tendencies of the early 20th century Russian composers and what exactly made their music sound and feel so intrinsically Russian. When Justin ultimately decided to complete his Honors thesis he was fortunate enough to have Dr. Nathan Platte, an authority on Russian music of the 20th century, as his supervising professor. So, what advice does Justin have for a student with the notion of completing Honors in music? He urges, “start early, utilize your supervising professor, and discuss your ideas with them as much as possible!”

After graduation, Justin hopes to relocate to New York City in order to experience the extraordinary multiculturalism and artistic community the city has to offer. Although the distant future is still uncertain, Justin has several fantastic options: returning to Russia for advanced linguistic study, joining the Peace Corps, applying for a foreign service position through the State Department, and becoming the “next (less bitter) Conan O’ Brien,” the latter being his ultimate fantasy. It’s clear that whatever the future has in store for Justin, it’s sure to be full of promise and success.

“I think [that] words help us to articulate the world, but music helps us to become aware of our existence...music has a powerful ability to shape our impressions of the world through the ideas that artists intend to convey. I would say this gives music an immense power that can be both good and bad. Picasso said that, “art is a lie that makes us realize truth.” I think that in the future, increased ethno-musicological study and awareness will help us to become a more inclusive world.”
Prompted by the advent of the Cold War and the Space Race, a flurry of universities across the United States initiated special programs to afford honors students with additional resources. In 1958, Rhodes Dunlap founded the University of Iowa Honor’s Program with support from the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Dewey Stuit. The program had meager beginnings; with no permanent home, it was shunted from building to building within the University. At its inception, there were between sixty two to sixty four graduates from the program, and Honors opportunities (primarily one-on-one interactions between students and faculty) were available only to students of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

The Honors Program’s first real home was the Shambaugh House, bequeathed to the University by Benjamin Shambaugh. Originally located at 219 Clinton Street, between Daum and Old Brick, Shambaugh became the Honors Program’s permanent and primary location in 1982, under the watchful eye of then-director Donald Marshall. The burgeoning Honor’s Program now had a part-time director, professional staff, and an assistant director. In the early 90’s under the directorship of David Klemm, the Honors Program.
Program inaugurated its first living-learning community, which spanned a few floors of the Kate Daum residence house. Soon the entirety of Daum became a living-learning community, housing honors students from all areas of study. It was also under Klemm’s leadership that the Honors Program offered its first classes for students. These first classes were general education seminars that allowed honors students work closely with professors from many different areas of study.

In 1996, the Honors Program’s esteemed founder, Rhodes Dunlap, passed away. In his wake, he gave the University of Iowa Honors Program a fantastic and generous gift of $1.6 million. This endowment was used support student activities and to this day still funds the Rhodes Dunlap scholarship available for Honors students. During this period, the program implemented a direct admission program, which enables incoming freshmen who meet the program’s GPA and ACT requirements in high school to be directly admitted to the Honors Program without any application necessary.

As the program developed, it slowly outgrew the historic Shambaugh house, and in 2002, moved to the Jefferson Building (then known as the Jefferson Hotel). Here, student involvement in the Honors Program grew exponentially, as this new Honors home had both a staff of students as well as a computer lab. A group of honors students known as the James Gang sprang from this new location, and they were the pioneers of several well-known student opportunities on campus today such as the 10,000 Hours Show and Public Space One, a showroom for the arts still housed in the Jefferson Building.

In 2005, the Honors Program moved once again, this time to the newly built Belin-Blank Honors Center. Cozily housed with the Belin-Blank Honors Center, which provides activities and programs for gifted children from pre-K through the 12th grade, the Honors Program has continued to flourish. During this time the Honors Program became accessible for students throughout the University, rather than only those in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The Honors living-learning
community once housed exclusively in Daum has now expanded to include Centerstone, an apartment-style residence for honors students. Additionally, new honors opportunities have been made available to students, such as the Honors Writing Fellowship program and the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates.

Looking forward, the Honors Program will see even more changes, the greatest of which will be starting next year: students will no longer be automatically admitted to the Honors Program by meeting the requirements. Instead, qualified students can choose for themselves to be part of the program. “The more we have people opt into the program, the more it will seem like a community of honors students,” says Honors Associate Director Robert Kirby. Another part of the new Honors opt-in policy is the possibility for graduation from the Honors Program itself. If a student meets the Honors graduation requirements of having taken at least twelve credits of honors coursework and twelve additional hours of engagement within the honors community, he or she will be able to graduate from the Honors Program as well as from his or her chosen college in the university.

Within its fifty-five years of existence, the Honors Program has changed lives through countless, enriching opportunities. The Honors community is on track to continue its tradition of excellence, growing, as it always has, to meet the needs of its students.
Distinguished Alumni

Amanda Laust won the Collegiate Scholar Award in 2003 and went on to graduate with Highest Distinction and with Honors in Biology from the University of Iowa. She then earned a PhD in Biological Sciences from the University of California, Irvine. Luast has devoted her work to developing breast cancer vaccines and was a recipient of a National Cancer Institute Cancer Biology Pre-doctoral Training Grant from 2008-2010.

Cecilia Cornejo earned the Rhodes Dunlap Scholarship in 1999 while pursuing her Bachelor’s degree in Communication Studies from the University of Iowa. Cornejo went on to earn a Master of Fine Arts degree in Film and Video at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. While working as an academic advisor for The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Cornejo co-founded *The Nineteenth Step*, a collective of artists, teachers and curators who used cinema as a tool to foster a deeper understanding of Latin American culture. Now living in Minnesota, Cornejo is working on various paper-making and binding projects, in addition to her latest video piece: “Work & Happiness”.

*Pinochet*, a curatorial documentary produced by Nineteenth Step, a collective of Latin American Filmmakers founded by Cecilia Cornejo.
It’s one thing to hear from honors staff members and student ambassadors about the merits of the honors program, but what does a former honors student think? With the benefit of a few years of real world perspective, alumna Lana Zak talks about her experience at the University of Iowa as an honors student.

What do you do now?

What was your major while at the University of Iowa?
Journalism/Mass Communications & Political Science.

Who was your favorite professor?
I had so many amazing professors at Iowa, but at the top of my list are Burns Weston and Jae-On Kim.

What drew you initially to the University of Iowa?
Part of what makes Iowa unlike any other university is the legendary Iowa Writers Workshop. There is a certain energy that comes from the best literary talent hanging out in Iowa City. But more than that, I think it is infused into the very soul of the University, bringing to life our poetry and creativity regardless of department or major.

What is your favorite honors memory?
It’s funny but so many of my memories of the old honors house seem to revolve around food. I remem-
ber my friend Catherine Cesnik and I created a book club focused on diving deeper into the works of local writers. The books were great but it was the food that was the real draw to the hungry college kids who joined!

How did honors help you accomplish your goals?
The honors program supported me in so many ways, I knew that whatever late-night idea I hatched, I could count on support from my friends at the Honor’s program.

What is one thing you wish you could change about your time at Iowa?
The experiences I had at Iowa contributed to the person I am today; I wouldn’t change a thing!

What would you say to honors students or prospective honors students at Iowa?
Take advantage of the tremendous opportunities at Iowa. In particular, the Iowa Honors Program is wonderful about supporting your interests, whatever they may be.

That’s the inside scoop on Honors from journalist Lana Zak. Find her on twitter at @LanaZak if you’re keen to know more!
LaShelle Christensen and the Honors Student Staff work hard to ensure there are a variety of Honors activities to engage students. The redesigned Honors website makes it easy to stay up to date on what is happening in the Honors community. Visit our newly renovated online home at: http://honors.uiowa.edu/events
In an effort to revamp the sense of initiative and community amongst University Honors Program members here at Iowa, starting in summer 2013 eligible students will be asked to opt in or out of the program. This conscious choice that students will be asked to make should ultimately reflect the program's emphasis on being an active member and plugging into all that the program has to offer.

According to Honors Program director Art Spisak, the main goal of the new program requirements is to improve the quality of the program. While prerequisites for high school students hoping to enter the program at Iowa have not changed, the program has outlined specific requirements for what being an ‘active’ member entails and for what a student needs to accomplish in order to formally graduate with University Honors, aside from simply maintaining a minimum grade-point average of 3.33.

Effective for the 2013-’14 school year, students wishing to graduate with University Honors will need to fulfill a 24-semester hour minimum of honors courses, specified contract courses, mentored research, study abroad, or honors in the major. This outline allows for a degree of student choice in what honors framework they might pursue and was compiled...
based off what honors faculty found ‘active’ students to already have been doing.

Additionally, honors faculty conducted research as to what defines an honors program, relative to both national guidelines published by the National Collegiate Honors Counsel and peer institutions. The faculty also took on-campus feedback into consideration, from students, professors, and deans of undergraduate colleges alike.

Although Spisak recognizes that the new program requirements could likely reduce the total number of students in the program, he feels that the sense of honors identity will ultimately be increased. Active honors students will not only forge connections with faculty but with each other as well.

“We want to help students find out who they are and empower them,” explained Spisak. Moving forward, honors will be more than a title or addition to a degree, but a holistic view of the Iowa experience that encourages students to consider what they would like to do in life and set their plan into action.
Would you like to give back to Honors at Iowa? There are many ways you can support our program, including scholarships to students, funding for students to present at professional conferences, and stipends for Honors study abroad. It’s easy to give back—just click “DONATE TODAY” to visit our Foundation website!
THANKS TO

Our Contributors and Advisors

Erin Marshall
Ali Cassity
John Hartnett
Kristin Thelander
Jessica King
Jennifer Brook

Brianne Richson
Mary Rechtoris
Lindsey Marshall
Holly Blosser-Yoder
Art Spisak
Bob Kirby