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On the cover: Senior Madeline Ungs dons her graduation garb in preparation for spring 2019 commencement. Read about more of our Honors at Iowa scholars on page 4.
Greetings for the spring of 2019 to our Honors Program students, faculty, alumni, and friends.

NEW STAFFING FOR THE HONORS PROGRAM
The Honors Program prides itself on the level of care it gives to the students. Being strongly student-centered is a legacy from the founding director of the Iowa Honors Program, Professor Rhodes Dunlap. Dunlap, who directed the program from its founding in 1958 until his retirement in 1981, had a reputation for showing individual attention to students. As Dewey Stuit, the former Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, who was instrumental in the creation of the Honors Program, said: “Samuel Dunlap was an example of a person who puts students first. He always looked out for the individual.” In that tradition, the Honors Program has in the last six months filled two professional staff positions that have been vacated, and hired one person for a new part-time position. All three persons were chosen in good part because they share the trait of being student-centered. You’ll learn more about our new professional staff members in the article included in the issue.

DR. BOB KIRBY’S NEW ROLE
Many Honors Program alumni will know Bob Kirby, Associate Director for Honors at Iowa, from his nearly twenty years with the program. Bob’s kindness and care have made him highly popular with all those with whom he works, and his extensive knowledge of the Honors Program and the workings of the university in general have given him knowledge and judgment that are invaluable. What many people may not know is that for at least the last eight years Bob has in addition to his position with Honors also been the director of the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU). He has in the role connected countless undergraduate students with faculty at Iowa for the purpose of doing research. In the article below you’ll see that Bob has taken on the position of Director of ICRU full-time and hence has recently left Honors. I’ve worked very closely with Bob for nearly eight years and hence know better than anyone, I think, how much we will miss him because of the many good things he brought to the program. More than anyone he embodied Dunlap’s spirit of being student-centered.

HONORS PROFILES
Also in this issue, as usual, you’ll get a closer look at several of the remarkable students we have in the program. Experiential learning, which is learning by doing, comprises half the honors curriculum. You’ll see that the two students profiled, Tess and Jordan, have taken full advantage of the types of experiential learning they can use for honors credit. Another one of our students has been involved as an editor for the undergraduate research and creative journal for the National Collegiate Honors Council, the national organization for honors education.

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

Elizabeth Sheridan will graduate with a major in English and minors in mass communication and gender, women’s, and sexuality studies this spring. She involved herself in the Honors Program early on, living in Daum Hall her freshman year and loading up on honors classes during her first two years at the university. Sheridan served as the Editorial Specialist for the newsletter last year and currently works as the Honors Publications Editor.

It wasn’t until Sheridan began serving as an honors summer ambassador two summers ago that she realized how much the Honors Program had influenced her. “Truthfully, it was quite out of the ordinary for me to apply for a job that involved leadership and public speaking,” Sheridan said of the summer ambassador position, which involves orienting incoming honors students during their first-year orientation. “But I found that I really enjoyed connecting with incoming students who were interested in the arts and humanities, and it was rewarding to be able to answer their questions and help them feel more comfortable looking ahead to their first semesters.” During Sheridan’s first summer as an ambassador, Honors Advising Director Holly Yoder offered her an editorial role with the Honors Newsletter. “It ended up being an amazing opportunity for me to get editing experience and eventually lead a class for our talented student writers,” Sheridan said.

Along with her involvement in the Honors Program, Sheridan works as the editorial intern for the University of Iowa Press and volunteers at the Iowa City Public Library. This summer, she will attend the Denver Publishing Institute, after which she plans to pursue a career in the publishing industry.

Until then, Sheridan continues to attend events across campus. She believes it’s important for honors students to involve themselves in things beyond the classroom. “I think every honors student should pay attention to what events are happening on campus or downtown,” Sheridan said. “There are always amazing lectures, readings, and panels taking place in Iowa City, which can open up new academic areas of interest that you hadn’t previously considered.”

Eilidh Spery

A native of Lakewood, Colorado, Eilidh Spery’s interest in writing led her to make the trip to the University of Iowa as a freshman. “I distinctly remember visiting the English program before my freshman year and just seeing people who were clearly happy to be here,” Spery said. She described being drawn to the passion evident on campus, a passion she would come to share as an English major.

She lived in Daum residence hall her freshman year and commented that the experience helped cement a sense of belonging. During her first two years, she participated in the university’s Swing Dance Club, and even served as event coordinator her second year. Spery also spent a semester studying abroad in Spain her junior year. In relation to her literary interest, she participated in a publishing class that oversaw the Iowa Chapbook Prize. This semester, she has been part of the Editorial Fiction Assistant team for The Iowa Review. She has also been writing for the Honors Newsletter since her freshman year and fondly remembers the articles she wrote. “I wrote a piece on ‘love connections’ in honors where I interviewed students and alumni who started dating while they were in the program,” she recalled. “That was a lot of fun.” Spery is receiving honors in the English major; her thesis deals with female authorship in detective novels. While the writing process was long, she commented that the research was fascinating.

When asked what she was taking away from her undergraduate experience, she emphasized how important it was to build a community. “Knowing the strength of that community is important. You get to make connections; they support you and you support them. With them, you can make changes and do bigger things than you could do alone.” As for short-term plans, she plans to spend the summer working at her aunt’s bookstore. Her experience with publishing in Iowa City has created an interest that she hopes to develop more in the coming years with internships and other opportunities. She also has a desire to explore. “After this summer, I would like to move to a different state. I want to go somewhere completely new and see what happens.”
Logan Drake

As a freshman, an introductory honors course spurred Logan Drake to choose philosophy as one of his majors. Now a senior graduating in May, Drake is currently working on an honors thesis in the subject. “My thesis advisor, Katarina Perović, is awesome,” Drake said. “She has helped me so much, both on my thesis project and also with navigating the graduate school admissions process.” Along with philosophy, Drake is majoring in economics as well as ethics and public policy.

Working closely with faculty and honors staff has allowed Drake to solidify his interests. While working with Director of Scholar Development Kelly Thornburg in applying for the Marshall Scholarship, Drake realized that he was interested in education policy as a discipline. During one of his early meetings with Thornburg, Drake mentioned that he was working on a fun side project designing a curriculum for his ideal high school. “Kelly immediately jumped on this idea and really pushed me to interrogate both my own ideas as well as the current state of education and schooling,” Drake said. “I’m not sure I would have thought to pursue education policy as a career if it hadn’t been for Kelly.” While he didn’t win the Marshall Scholarship, Drake said the process of applying proved conducive to shaping his interests and plans for the future.

Within the Honors Program, Drake has worked as a summer ambassador, a peer mentor, and has been a front desk admin for two years. Along with his involvement in the Honors Program, Drake works at the Public Policy Center with sociology professor Sarah Bruch. There, Drake helps conduct education policy research for the Iowa City Community School District with a focus on racial, gender, and socioeconomic equity and improving all students’ school experiences. He is also part of the Bertrand Russell Society, which is a philosophy book club, and the Direct Admit Peer Mentor Program in the Tippie College of Business.

After graduating, Drake will pursue a PhD in the University of Iowa’s Schools, Culture, and Society program in the College of Education’s Department of Educational Leadership and Policy. When asked about what advice Drake has for honors students, he emphasized independence and forging one’s own path. “Your family and advisors on campus can be fantastic resources for support and advice, but make sure you recognize it as that: advice. Your college experience is your own, and every decision is ultimately up to you.” He further stressed the importance of agency, saying, “If you take ownership, you can create a wonderful and valuable experience for yourself here. If you limit yourself to what other people tell you that you can or should do, then the whole thing is all the less valuable and all the less you.”

Mikaela Mallin

Mikaela Mallin is graduating this May with a double major in biomedical science and dance, a minor in chemistry, and the Certificate in Clinical and Translational Science. Her main academic interest has been research; Mallin has been involved with undergraduate research for three and a half years, working as a research assistant in Dr. Robert Cornell’s Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology lab. “In his group, I use zebrafish as a model organism to study melanoma from a developmental genetics perspective,” Mallin said. “I’ve been able to travel and present this research at local, regional, national, and international conferences and symposiums.” Mallin also conducted research with Dr. Rebekah Kowal in the Department of Dance, studying how the influx of international dance forms to the United States in the 1940s and 50s actively shaped immigration policy and changed Americans’ notions of national identity.

This year, Mallin began an individual project, studying the relationship, similarities, and differences between the advent of post-modern dance and the rise of second-wave feminism. Additionally, Mallin has been involved with the Department of Dance’s touring student company, Dancers in Company.

Along with her science and dance-related activities, Mallin served as an undergraduate teaching assistant for Foundations of Biology and as a peer and research mentor for the Secondary Scientist Training Program. She also studied abroad to work at the Meenakshi Mission Hospital and Research Center in Madurai, India. Mallin is a two-time recipient of the Rhodes Dunlap Scholarship. Mallin’s future plans include pursuing a PhD in biomedical sciences, focusing on cancer biology. Throughout grad school and beyond, she envisions using dance as a form of science communication. Mallin encourages students to find creative outlets that can inform their main area(s) of study. “I find that I am a better student and a way better scientist when I take the time to dance a few times a week,” she said. “My deep contact with both science and dance led me to realize the ways in which my two practices enhance each other, so much so that I can’t envision a future without them both.”
Angeline Vanle

Angeline Vanle is a human physiology major from Sioux City, Iowa. She admitted that as a high schooler, she never thought she would attend the University of Iowa. It took an invitation to tour the Honors Program to convince her: “I was really impressed by how the students seemed like they were all friendly, like a family, and very community oriented.” This sense of community made her feel like it would be a welcoming environment.

Vanle joined honors staff her sophomore year as an outreach ambassador. In her junior year, she began teaching Diversity and Cultural Competency workshops to other honors student staff members and has done it every semester since. This past fall, she became involved as a teaching assistant for the Honors Outreach Ambassadors course and has since then worked on coordinating honors events. Outside of the Honors Program, she runs the university’s mobile clinic, which serves the immigrant, refugee, and non-English speaking community. She also volunteers at the hospital, teaches ESL with the Friendship Community Project, and is involved in student government.

When asked about her plans after graduation, she stated that she will be starting as a student at the Carver College of Medicine this fall. As for her long-term goals, she said, “I’d like to be an emergency physician/medical school professor. And I would love to work with underrepresented populations, so I would like to open up Iowa’s first clinic for immigrants and refugees that provides culturally competent care.” Vanle expressed that her education so far has been enriching in that she felt it was helping her become the person she wanted to be, and she would like to carry that into the future. To current undergraduates, she said, “Do what you feel passionate about. Your education is your own—don’t take that for granted. Pursue opportunities that you feel genuinely represent you as a person.”

Nick Dolan

Nick Dolan is graduating with a double major in English and history. Originally from Des Moines, Dolan decided to attend the University of Iowa for multiple reasons, one of which was his love of literature: “In what other midsize Midwestern town are you apt to have more than one live author reading or scholarly lecture to choose from on any given day, along with, by my count, three annual literary festivals?”

For two years, Dolan led a monthly book club at a local retirement home, an experience he described as very rewarding. He also served as an officer for the university’s English Society, a group that promotes the undergraduate literary community. For the past year, Dolan has been president of Alpha Tau Iota, an honors society on campus. He’s also been involved in Iowa City community activities. “I’ve planned and co-planned events here and there as part of the Iowa City Book Festival, my favorite being a marathon public reading of Moby-Dick,” Dolan said. Aside from these activities, he has worked many student jobs to support his own education. Dolan is graduating with honors in the English major. In addition to his thesis work, he’s gotten involved in the program by producing material for the Honors Program’s 60th Anniversary, working as an honors summer ambassador, and a TA for Honors Primetime.

This summer, Dolan has plans to teach at the University of Notre Dame’s Robinson Community Learning Center. “After that, I will be following my partner to England where he will pursue his master’s degree, and I will teach English for a year or two,” Dolan explained. “After that comes graduate school for myself, where I will pursue a PhD in English literature.” When asked if he had any advice for current students, he said that students should not shy away from courses that don’t pertain to their major. “A requirement of any serious learning is an orientation toward the unknown, uncomfortable, and surprising, and if the public university doesn’t allow for the cultivation of that mindset, then that’s a shame. Fortunately, I think it does, or can in the hands of the right individual.”
Bringing University Research Together
The Relocation of the ICRU Office

By Abinaya Paravasthuramesh

The Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates, otherwise known as ICRU, is relocating to the VP Office of Research in Gilmore Hall. While the Blank Honors Center has housed ICRU and supported its creation and development over the past 12 years, this new shift is aimed to broaden the research efforts of the university.

Bob Kirby, director of ICRU and former associate director of the Honors Program, said that the relocation of ICRU will make it more accessible to undergraduates while also integrating it with other types of research, including graduate research and summer programs that bring undergraduates from other institutions to the University of Iowa. Ultimately, he and the rest of the ICRU team hope that this move assists in motivating a greater number of undergraduates to get involved in research.

When the undergraduate research office was housed in the Blank Honors Center, there was a physical separation from the rest of University of Iowa’s renowned research departments. “This is a nice statement by the university to show that undergraduate research is not just a sidebar in the research efforts of [the University of Iowa],” said Kirby, who said he believes that this move will bring unity to the broad scope of Iowa’s research.

Kirby said that this transition is meant to not only benefit ICRU, but also the Honors Program, since it should clear up misconceptions about the association of honors with research. While the partnership between ICRU and Honors brought many joint events, its separation is intended to allow for more specific events which focus on the main goals of each body. In addition to research, honors encompasses many other experiential learning opportunities, including study abroad, fellowships, and internships.

ICRU’s move does not signify the end of teamwork with the Honors Program. Melinda Licht, Program Coordinator for the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates, noted that Honors will still have a vested interest in getting students involved in research for experiential learning credit. Kirby added that ICRU will now be able to assert that research is an opportunity plausible for all undergraduates, not just honors students, making its initiatives serve a broader population of students.

“Honors has been a good place to raise up ICRU,” Licht said, citing the support of the other honors staff members. “I am excited about keeping that partnership together.”

Those interested in learning more about ICRU or getting involved in research can visit the new office in Suite 6 on the lower level of Gilmore Hall.
Building Bridges
From Undergraduate to Nonprofit CEO

By Anna Magaña

No stranger to the University of Iowa or the Honors Program, Avery Bang was the keynote speaker in a special edition of The Green Room, an honors experiential learning course, in Spring 2018: “Prompt for the Planet” to celebrate Earth Day. Bang was featured in this year’s “60 Notable Honorables” series, and the following is an extended version of her profile. To view the original, visit https://honors.uiowa.edu/alumnifriendshonors-60th-anniversary/60-notable-honorables.

Avery Bang is one of the many alumni of the University of Iowa and the Honors Program dedicated to bettering the world around her. She serves as the current President and CEO of Bridges to Prosperity, an organization dedicated to building footbridges in communities where geographic isolation contributes to poverty. Bang graduated from the University of Iowa in 2007 with degrees in civil engineering and studio art.

She was originally drawn to the University of Iowa after being offered a soccer scholarship. As time passed, she focused her academic interests into solid majors: “I came for my sport and ended up being really driven into engineering. I added the art program degree almost right away.” She mentioned that while she was naturally inclined toward math and spatial reasoning, it was also important for her to study the humanities: “I find that the coursework around the humanities are really important just to be a good human in the world and to have some context around what’s happening.”

Once she’d found her footing as a student, particularly as an honors student, Bang looked for ways to tie her studies into her honors thesis. She had spent time studying abroad in Fiji, and the perspective she found there inspired her to think globally. After doing some research, she found Bridges to Prosperity and reached out to see if they would let her build a bridge: “Ken Frantz is the founder, and I remember him saying, ‘Nope, we don’t do that.’ I was kind of just sitting back and going, well that was a hurdle, what now?” After reaching out a few more times and collaborating with the university to organize a team, she had what she needed to build a bridge. “I ended up having a phenomenal team that made it possible; they made the whole thing work.” By the end of the long project, Frantz was thoroughly impressed and suggested that she join the board of directors as a student representative.

“I was able to use my extracurricular interest in doing work in an overseas environment, and I was able to package that into my honors project. I was doing this work overseas that really motivated me to think more critically and deeply about the experience that I had. Ultimately, that led to my application to graduate school. I used a lot of the same content and thinking that I had developed in my thesis, and I translated that into writing my narrative and my intent for studying at the graduate level,” Bang said. She earned her master’s degree in geotechnical engineering from the University of Colorado.

In 2008, Bang officially joined Bridges to Prosperity. Gradually, she worked her way up to her current position, CEO and President. While her work keeps her busy, it isn’t the only thing she has been up to. She spent a few years teaching at the University of Colorado, and she serves on the UI Civil and Environmental Engineering Advisory Board and the Young Alumni Advisory Board. She has spoken at TEDx and at numerous other conferences and was featured in the 2017 IMAX film, Dream Big.
Building Bridges: From Undergraduate to Nonprofit CEO (cont.)

“Go and understand what makes [organizations] different and unique, and what their vision in the world is. Ask yourself how you imagine taking your experience and your passion and being helpful through that mission.”

She has received the Distinguished Young Alumni Award, been named one of the American Society of Civil Engineers’ New Faces of Civil Engineering in 2011, and was named one of the Engineering-News Record’s (ENR) Top 25 Newsmakers in 2012.

When asked what advice she would give to current students who want to do something to make a difference in the world, she said, “I think one of the few lucks of my life that really worked out was that I found someone who had already done the thing that I was passionate about, and I was just really willing to do anything. I feel like if people really care deeply about their community and about helping, there’s often a lot of vehicles to do that, but it may not take the form that you immediately believe it to.” Bang emphasized that when working to achieve something for the greater good, taking help from others is oftentimes necessary, and ultimately more effective. “Go and understand what makes [organizations] different and unique, and what their vision in the world is. Ask yourself how you imagine taking your experience and your passion and being helpful through that mission.”

Photo courtesy of Bridges to Prosperity
A Broader Perspective on Honors Education

Spisak Reflects on His NCHC Leadership Connection

By Ajla Dizdarević

The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), founded in 1966, is the oldest and largest organization for honors education in the world. Of the 1,600 universities with honors programs in the United States, nearly 900 are institutional members of the organization. The University of Iowa is one of these institutional members and the Honors Program’s very own director, Art Spisak, has held integral roles in the influential organization.

Spisak became involved in NCHC leadership in 2012 when he was elected to the Board of Directors. While serving on the board, Spisak grew to understand the importance of NCHC in defining honors education. “NCHC helps define what honors programs should be and what honors education is,” Spisak explained. “It sets standards to make sure the product is being delivered as it should.”

Seeking to have greater influence in the organization, Spisak ran for vice president and was elected in 2015. Election to NCHC leadership is a four-year sequence so, in 2016, Spisak became president elect; in 2017, he became president; and in 2018, he served as immediate past president.

As president, Spisak presided over the annual board meetings and monthly executive committee meetings, crafted agendas, watched over standing committees, created ad hoc committees, and gave attention to the daily operations of the organization when necessary. Spisak also addressed national issues related to honors education. In one instance, a for-profit entity called American Honors, Inc. sold honors curricula to two-year colleges. NCHC received complaints, and Spisak formed an ad hoc committee to investigate American Honors and create a report on their findings. American Honors has since stopped their operation for the most part because their product was called into question by NCHC. According to Spisak, the report on American Honors is an example of NCHC’s mission to maintain the quality of honors education and set standards for how that education should be delivered.

Spisak currently serves as the co-chair of the NCHC Advocacy Committee and acknowledges that his time volunteering in leadership roles has influenced how he directs the Honors Program here. Through NCHC, Spisak connected with honors education programs in Europe and China, something he believes helped expand his view of what an honors education can encompass.

“NCHC gave me a broader perspective on honors education,” Spisak said. “I was part of an international scene rather than just being here in one university. I got to see what other institutions were doing in the United States and abroad, which gave me the perspective to evaluate our own program and see if we’re doing the best things possible.” Spisak hopes that his involvement with NCHC and the reference point that it provides will ultimately benefit Honors at Iowa too.

Dr. Art Spisak speaks at a recent NCHC conference.
From Biochemistry to Patent Law
An Undergraduate’s Journey

By Brianna Lupo

Patent law may seem like a 180-degree-turn from biochemistry, but understanding the science behind patents is crucial to the field. Sophia Vogeler, a fourth-year Biochemistry student, will be attending law school in the fall to pursue her dreams of becoming a patent lawyer.

Vogeler had her plan laid out before even stepping foot on campus. “I wanted to be a patent attorney and practice pharmaceutical law, so a Biochemistry degree was a really important first step on that path,” she said. “The best way to prepare myself was research.” Wasting no time in getting involved, she emailed Dr. Charles Brenner in the Department of Biochemistry in the fall of her freshman year. Sharing a mutual interest in metabolism with Brenner, she believed the lab would be a good fit. Vogeler’s targeted interest allowed her to conduct research in the lab for the past four years. As a result, she is currently running her own study from top to bottom—an opportunity that most undergraduates do not get. While Vogeler does not plan to conduct bench work post-graduation, research is a beneficial way for her to develop critical thinking and analysis skills that will benefit her in law school.

Over the years, undergraduate students in Brenner’s lab have pursued many paths after graduation. While some have gone on to earn PhDs at institutions including Washington University and UCSF, others have gone into medicine and have held positions at the Mayo Clinic, the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, and the Miami Dolphins. Brenner commented that, “there is such a wide range of things you can do with a background in research.” Research does not confine students to specific career paths but rather helps them to discover areas of interest to further explore. According to Brenner, “professors are eager to work with first and second year students because they have so much time ahead of them and can make a sizeable contribution to the lab by the time they leave.”

Sophia Vogeler and her research mentor, Dr. Charles Brenner
Photo courtesy of 3Light Photography
From Biochemistry to Patent Law: An Undergraduate’s Journey (cont.)

Vogeler’s early commitment to research allowed her to make these contributions and be part of the lab’s recent scientific publication in the journal *Cell Reports*. Of the authors on the paper, three are undergraduates at the University of Iowa, one being Vogeler. In the Brenner lab she studies how metabolism can be boosted by the vitamin nicotinamide riboside (NR). NR can ultimately be turned into a form of fuel for the body. Brenner discovered NR as a vitamin and has pioneered NR research for the past 15 years. The lab’s most recent paper studied the effects of NR supplementation to postpartum mothers (in rats and mice). They discovered that this leads to an increase in milk production and weight loss for the mothers and improved development for the offspring. In the future, this could be a great help to women and their children.

In Brenner’s lab, undergraduates contribute to the majority of experiments. “When they collect data, the undergrads are the first ones in the world that get to see the results of their projects. It’s exciting,” shared Brenner. Like Vogeler’s work, these results can be incorporated into publications, posters, or talks. This spring, she will present her work in a talk at the department’s Lata Symposium.

It is often forgotten that principal investigators also began their careers as undergraduate researchers. For Brenner, this experience began the summer after his sophomore year at Wesleyan University. For one month he was helping a professor write a book on Sigmund Freud, and for another month he was engaged in molecular biology research. Brenner recalled, “during the month working on intellectual history, the professor gave me a list of index cards with quotes from Freud with which I was in charge of finding exact citations. No creativity on my part was requested.”

During the month of molecular biology research, he began research on fruit flies to determine what specific factor on the Y chromosome makes the flies male. “It turns out,” recalled Brenner, “the hypothesis was wrong, and the sex determinant is the dosage of the X chromosome.” Tolerating failure is a major part of research at all levels and this didn’t defer Brenner from continuing to pursue a career in research. Today, his lab continues to make cutting edge discoveries and to train skilled undergraduates.

Each undergraduate student’s experience with research is unique, contributing to the culture of discovery here at the University of Iowa. Students get involved at different times and will go on to pursue different paths. Regardless, they develop invaluable critical thinking and creative skills. While many students waver on committing to research, Brenner urges students to simply “give it a shot. There’s nothing like discovery.”

Brianna Lupo is a Latham fellow. The Latham Science Engagement Initiative allows selected students to develop science communication skills through coursework and generate projects to engage the general public in science. To apply or find out more about the program, visit [https://latham.uiowa.edu/](https://latham.uiowa.edu/). For more information on research happening in the UI Department of Biochemistry, check out [https://medicine.uiowa.edu/biochemistry/](https://medicine.uiowa.edu/biochemistry/). The full published paper can be found at [https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211124719300154](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211124719300154). Readsearch provides undergraduates with the opportunity to read about what research looks like across different departments at the University of Iowa.
Spring into Experiential Learning

By Gabbie Meis

On March 27th, 2019, the booths of the Honors Experiential Learning Fair filled the atrium of the Blank Honors Center. The months-long planning of the fair paid off for Advising Director Holly Blosser Yoder and the Honors Outreach Ambassadors, a group of thirty honors students dedicated to sharing their experiences in the program to help guide current and potential students in their own honors educations. Experiential learning makes up the second-tier requirements of University Honors, in which students are responsible for selecting opportunities that suit their academic, co-curricular, or career interest.

Featuring spring-themed cookies and cross-departmental experiential learning booths, honors students were in for a treat. Presenters and booths included: Study Abroad, Service Learning, Research, Writing Fellows, Honors in the Major, Undergraduate Teaching Practicum, Internships, and Peer Mentors.

Regarding the conception of the fair, Ambassador Angeline Vanle, a fourth-year human physiology student, said, “Our biggest goal was to educate and empower students on the opportunities and support that the Honors Program offers. By bringing together students, faculty, and staff, we were really able to showcase the community that the Honors Program brings and also the amazing opportunities available. We hope that students were able to walk away feeling more informed, excited, and motivated to really make their education their own. We wanted to give students the tools they need to develop into who they want to be, both as students and as people.”

Sheyna Nathwani, a fellow organizer and a third-year biomedical sciences student, added, “Experiential learning is something that each student should feel they can take charge of — it is a chance to grow in a setting outside of the structured classroom environment. It should not be viewed as a strict requirement, but as a way to shape their experience [at the University of Iowa] and to explore both personal and professional creativity.”

Given its necessity and popularity, the Experiential Learning Fair will return in semesters to come.
How has the Honors Program helped you in college?
Honors helped me make my college experience more than just what happens in the classroom and figure out what I wanted my career path to be. When I started at Iowa, I was majoring in engineering and math. I was doing well in my classes, but I realized I didn’t want to pursue either degree as a career. I had an opportunity to teach an honors practicum called More Than a Classroom Education with Dr. Willard, teaching honors students how to get credit through experiential learning and take their college experience beyond the classroom. As somebody who wants to work at a college, it was cool to help students see all that the University of Iowa has to offer. Not every student is going to have undergraduate experience with teaching, and being able to say that I co-taught this course for honors students will help me in graduate school.

“My study abroad experience was the India Winterim Program over winter break of my sophomore year. We worked with four different NGOs (non-profit organizations) in southern India to learn and help serve the people of that community. This helped redefine the way in which I want to help people and made me realize that it’s not about always doing some big project or making new technology, like engineering might have given me the ability to do. I really just want to know people one-on-one, and education is very important to me. India was a chance for me to not only learn about a new culture and help with these organizations, but also learn what I wanted my future to be. Doing it for honors credit was helpful because it encouraged me to reflect on it more than I would have if I didn’t earn the honors credit.”

What was the most memorable part of studying abroad?
On the weekdays we focused more on the organization, and on the weekends we had excursions in different places in the area. I remember one weekend we went to a local community and saw a bunch of farms. I grew up on a farm, and getting to compare Iowa agriculture to Indian agriculture and invest time with local people was awesome. A lot of times, the students I was with just want to go sightseeing—which is great, I loved doing that too, but I think meeting the local people and seeing how similar some things are to Iowa was cool. I liked that as somebody who was able to look at the connections.

What was your study abroad experience like, and how did it impact you?
My study abroad experience was the India Winterim Program over winter break of my sophomore year. We worked with four different NGOs (non-profit organizations) in southern India to learn and help serve the people of that community. This helped redefine the way in which I want to help people and made me realize that it’s not about always doing some big project or making new technology, like engineering might have given me the ability to do. I really just want to know people one-on-one, and education is very important to me. India was a chance for me to not only learn about a new culture and help with these organizations, but also learn what I wanted my future to be. Doing it for honors credit was helpful because it encouraged me to reflect on it more than I would have if I didn’t earn the honors credit.

Jordan Hansen
Hometown: Spencer, Iowa
Major(s): Psychology and Communication Studies
Positions: Resident Assistant (3 years) and Teaching Practicum
Year: Senior
How has the Honors Program helped you stay motivated as a student, and helped you as a person?
I think living with other honors students helped me stay motivated because I was able to connect with people who were facing the same challenges and taking the same classes I was. When you know you aren’t going through it alone, and you’re able to collaborate and connect with other people, it helps you stay motivated. The Honors Program was what motivated me to apply the things that I was learning. Whether that was through an internship, study abroad, research practicum, or teaching practicum, it gave me all these different avenues to put what I was learning into practice. It’s one thing to write papers and take exams, but applying it to the real world means a lot more.

If you had one piece of advice for a student going into the Honors Program, what would that be?
Honors students are people who typically excelled in high school and are used to doing well, so it might be difficult to ask for help or for different opportunities. Don’t be afraid to ask people for help — the honors staff are amazing. As soon as I started to get to know them, that’s when doors began to open. I think about the experiences that I’ve had because of honors that I probably wouldn’t have had without it. Staff members have encouraged me to get involved with research and internships, and they’re a great resource to help you to get more connected on campus.

“It’s one thing to write papers and take exams, but applying it to the real world means a lot more.”
Student Profile
Five Questions with Tess Van Den Hurk-Moran

By Sarah Berkowitz

What was your study abroad experience like, and how did it impact you?
I went to Madrid, Spain, last spring. It was like walking around in a different world, which was old and beautiful, and not what you see walking around Iowa, or even in Chicago or New York. I got to work on Spanish which was a big goal for me, but I also learned about intercultural communication while living abroad. You learn that you can handle new experiences and challenges that are intimidating at first. You just take problems as they come. Solving them was a scary thing at first, but it became exciting toward the end.

What was the most memorable part of studying abroad?
Being in a totally new environment that I wasn’t used to. It was definitely challenging in a lot of different ways, but there were so many amazing things to see day after day after day. At the same time, you’re getting accustomed to daily life in a different culture and situation. On the weekend you could go and visit a new city, seeing amazing sites, learning great things about languages, histories, and cultures. You start to feel like you belong somewhere that you never really imagined that you could.

How did the Honors Program impact your study abroad experience?
I took the idea of studying abroad a lot more seriously because of my involvement in the Honors Program. It had been a dream, a vague plan before I really got involved, and then with the quota for experiential learning credits I asked myself, “What would be an interesting way to do that?” I found a lot of interesting ways, but this was the most intriguing to me. The Honors Program was the last push I needed to actually [go abroad].

Van Den Hurk-Moran took a short trip to the Berlin Wall after studying abroad in Madrid, Spain. Photo courtesy of Tess Van Den Hurk-Moran.

Tess Van Den Hurk-Moran
Hometown: Emmetsburg, Iowa
Major(s): English, Publishing Track
Positions: Writing Center Tutor, Writing Fellow
Year: Senior
Student Profile: Tess Van Den Hurk-Moran (cont.)

How has the Honors Program helped you stay motivated as a student and helped you as a person?
There’s definitely the idea of keeping my grades up and doing things that fulfill the experiential learning, which started as a requirement and ended up being something that was really great for me, both learning-wise and professionally. What impacted me the most was living in Daum, the honors residence hall. I met a lot of people with whom I shared similar interests and my friends, who I’m still really close to and live with today. I was able to go home every day and rant about my life and my studies. I didn’t realize how important it would be for me until I lived there.

If you had one piece of advice for a student entering the Honors Program, what would it be?
You get out of it as much as you put into it. There are a lot of really great opportunities in the university that you see pass by your inbox all the time. There are things like the Iowa City Foreign Relations Council luncheons, which you can attend to learn random things and eat free food. You can talk with people who can help plan out your four years and connect you with scholarships. You can be pushed to do something, like joining the writing fellows program, that’s a little out of your comfort zone, but ends up being really good for you in the end.

Bobenhouse Receives Briggs Award  By Gabbie Meis

Phi Eta Sigma, a first-year inducted honors society, has been long associated with the University of Iowa Honors Program. In recent years, the organization has expanded widely, featuring service opportunities, study-ins, semesterly blood drives for the DeGowin Blood Center, and a growing unit of dedicated members.

The University of Iowa Phi Eta Sigma officers state, “Our organization is committed to promoting academic excellence, community service, lifelong leadership, and fellowship among our members. Feedback and communication are imperative to these goals, meaning we’re very member driven! Everything is about personal growth. Everything is about you. If you’re a freshman looking for a flexible, success-oriented organization on campus, keep an eye on your email for a spring induction invitation.”

Critical to their mission, Phi Eta Sigma is dedicated to the support of their undergraduates, like Michaela Bobenhouse, a fourth-year Human Physiology major, who is this year’s winner of the John Briggs award: a prize presented each May to a high-achieving Phi Eta Sigma Senior. When reflecting on her time here at Iowa, Bobenhouse says her most powerful learning experiences have been from serving on leadership boards for student organizations like Pre-Dental Club and Phi Eta Sigma, as well as dedicating time to her research. Through these experiences, she learned a great deal about taking initiative for her own ideas in addition to working with other student leaders to organize events. After graduation, Michaela will be attending the University of Iowa College of Dentistry.
The Climb, Canyon Ventures, and Critical Scholarship

Elizabeth Sheridan’s Editorship with UReCa

By Gabbie Meis

In the summer of 2018, Elizabeth Sheridan, then third-year English major, embarked on a solo-journey to Bryce Canyon, Utah. The destination? An editing boot camp for UReCA—the National Collegiate Honors Council’s Journal of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity—with 18 other undergraduate students from honors colleges across the country.

In Utah, and throughout her tenure as an Associate Editor for UReCA, Sheridan gained and honed invaluable skills she hopes to utilize in her future publishing career. At the beginning of the editing retreat, the group brainstormed the history and future of the journal. Only in its third year of publication, UReCA was, and continues to be, in an active state of flux. New editors were granted free reign to discuss the future of the student journal and their goals to highlight and promote the work of undergraduate honors students. Sheridan joined the copyediting committee, which would later be tasked with reviewing the final submissions before publication. Each day, the group would work to build rubrics with which to assess incoming submissions later that summer, while also participating in bonding and team-building exercises, like meditative hiking through Bryce Canyon.

Back home in Iowa, though, the “real” review process for the journal began. Every editor evaluated submissions as they came in and reported back to the production team in Tennessee. The team doubled the submission rate from 2017, and Sheridan especially loved the journal’s ability to publish unconventional media—like “Palinoia,” a short film that discusses female beauty standards—on their digital platform. The accepted submissions for 2018 were published online at www.nchc-ureca.com in conjunction with the first day of the NCHC national conference in Boston, Massachusetts. In Boston, Sheridan participated in a student panel with other Associate Editors to discuss their journal and promote readership across other honors colleges. At the conference, Sheridan learned about how other schools and programs define the undergraduate honors experience.

Sheridan’s own experience in the UI Honors Program, she said, directly impacted and prepared her for her editorship with UReCA. As the previous Editorial Support Specialist for the Honors Newsletter, she came into her position with the interest and experience in editing necessary to do the job and do it well. Her collaborative, discussion-based honors coursework prepared her to make difficult, impactful decisions with the other honors editors, people she had met for the first time only after arriving in Utah.

As an editor, editing boot camp allowed Sheridan to have more faith in her gut instinct and trust in her own abilities as an editor and a writer. As an aspiring publishing industry professional, Sheridan learned how to separate and identify the difference between what writers were telling and what they wanted to be telling. Sheridan effectively navigated this thin line in her editing, providing suggestions and tweaks while ensuring the author’s intentions and voice remained loud and clear.

Through her experiential learning opportunities as an Associate Editor for UReCA and the Editorial Assistant for UI Press, Sheridan realized she loves to edit nonfiction, distilling the words of authors down to the most subjective and succinct writing as possible. With UReCA, Sheridan worked with other honors students and writers across the country to edit and publish a nationwide journal, earning tangible, practical skills she plans to apply to her future career in publishing.

Interested in submitting your creative work or research, or applying for an editorial position like Elizabeth? Keep an eye on their website: www.nchc-ureca.com.
Meet the Writers
Honors Students at Your Service

Elizabeth Sheridan
Elizabeth is a senior English major with minors in mass communication and gender, women’s, & sexuality studies. In addition to her role as the Honors Publications Editor, she is the editorial intern for the University of Iowa Press and enjoys coffee, Broadway musicals, great books, and good grammar.

Sarah Berkowitz
Sarah is a sophomore studying social justice with minors in rhetoric and persuasion and American Sign Language. She hopes to pursue a career in disability rights law and recently co-authored an article for the Illinois State Bar Association on emergency mental health treatment. Over the summer she plans to study abroad at the University of Oxford. In her free time, Sarah enjoys yoga, spending time with her Best Buddy, and FaceTiming her dogs from back home.

Brianna Lupo
Brianna is a junior from Eden Prairie, Minnesota. She is studying biochemistry with minors in Spanish, biology, and chemistry. When not in the classroom or research lab, you can find her being active in the community. In her free time, she loves to volunteer, go on walks, and eat ice cream. Brianna is a Latham Fellow through the Latham Science Engagement Initiative, where she works on science communication projects in the community.

Ajla Dizdarević
Ajla is a sophomore studying English and creative writing.

Abi Paravasthuramesh
Abi is a sophomore from Bettendorf, IA. She is pursuing a degree in biomedical sciences and she loves the campus environment, the people, and the opportunities at the University of Iowa. In her free time, she enjoys playing tennis, pickleball, and ping-pong.

Anna Magaña
Anna, a sophomore from Sioux City, IA, is studying English and creative writing with a minor in Latina/o studies. She enjoys going to readings at Prairie Lights and loves Iowa City’s literary history—and Yotopia, of course. For writing inspiration, Anna looks to author Sandra Cisneros.

Gabbie Meis
Gabbie is a junior studying English and creative writing with minors in psychology and Spanish. As editorial support specialist for the Honors Program and writing editor for Fools Magazine, she loves to read student writing. Apart from editing, she enjoys baking bread, drinking tea, and catching up on her favorite books on Goodreads.

Genevieve Cleverley
Genevieve is a junior studying psychology and art with minors in human relations and social work. She has enjoyed working on graphic design projects for the Honors Program this year. In her free time, she likes printmaking, NPR podcasts, and her cat and hopes to study mental health counseling in the future.
The financial support we receive from our alums and friends is given back directly to our students in the form of scholarships, professional development opportunities, and stipends for students to study abroad. Your gift directly affects the lives and careers of Honors students.

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