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On the cover:
Elizabeth Sheridan was among the Honors at Iowa scholars recognized in May at the Honors Commendation Ceremony. She offers parting words on page 21.
Word from the Director

Art L. Spisak

Greetings for the Summer of 2019 to our Honors Program students, faculty, alumni, and friends.

HONORS COMMENDATION CEREMONY: THE CLOSING OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR
We put a strong emphasis on recognizing the accomplishments of our students. Thus, on May 10th the Honors Program celebrated the graduation of 319 honors students with a public ceremony in MacBride Auditorium here on campus. There were about 600 people in attendance – family and friends of our graduates, Honors Program staff, and university dignitaries. We also have graduation with University Honors appear on both our students’ transcripts and their diplomas.

Graduation from the University of Iowa Honors Program indicates that students have been that much more serious about their education and about using their capabilities to best advantage to contribute to their profession and society in general. In this newsletter you’ll see a photo spread and a short article on the ceremony. You’ll also see the address that one of our honors students, Angeline Vanle, gave at the ceremony. It’s worth your reading in that it gives good indication of the challenges honors students face and how well they are able to meet them. In regard to Angeline’s particular challenges, she showed courage and a maturity that were extraordinary and especially inspiring.

COLLEGE ATHLETES IN THE HONORS PROGRAM
One question we regularly get at recruitment events is whether students involved with athletics would be able also to be part of the Honors Program. We have structured the honors experience here at the University of Iowa so that it meshes as well as possible with other opportunities students have on campus. So, the answer to the question on student athletes being part of Honors, as you’ll see in this newsletter, is yes.

You have a chance to get a glimpse into the world of honors students who are athletes in the mini-profiles of three of our Honors Program athletes. One of the three is from the Iowa Women’s Basketball Team, which this last academic year won its first Big Ten Tournament Championship since 2001.

HONORS STUDENT PROFILES – UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH
Half the Honors Program curriculum is experiential learning – learning by doing – and most honors students choose to use undergraduate research to fulfill the honors experiential requirements. As a result, around 80 percent of honors students participate in undergraduate research (as compared to about 30 percent of all University of Iowa undergraduates). In this issue you’ll get a look at two of our students who are part of a research program – how they got involved, what it entails, and its value, both to the student and to the community at large. Most people do not realize the effect that research done at universities has on our quality of life. For example, in some cases undergraduate students with their research contribute to discoveries that improve health care or even save lives.

HELPING STUDENTS WITH THE COST OF EDUCATION
State appropriations for public higher education have since about 1980 been on the decline despite steadily growing student demand for higher education since the mid-1970s. This is true for nearly all states (Wyoming and North Dakota are the two exceptions). On average, states have reduced their support by anywhere from 14.8 percent to 69.4 percent between fiscal 1980 and fiscal 2011. This decline in state support for higher education leads directly to increased costs for students. Specifically, inflation-adjusted tuition and fee charges have increased by 247 percent at state flagship universities, by 230 percent at state universities and colleges, and by 164 percent at community colleges since 1980 (https://www.acenet.edu/the-presidency/columns-and-features/Pages/state-funding-a-race-to-the-bottom.aspx).

Mindful of the high cost of a college education, the Honors Program offers its students several ways to help with costs. For example, we offer various employment opportunities to our students. Most of the financial support we give our students, however, comes in the form of scholarships and fellowships. In a typical year we award about $1,150,000 in honors scholarships and fellowships to entering and current Honors Program students. These funds come from donors – usually private citizens who have chosen to help young people with their education. In this issue you’ll read about the newly created Dr. Donna Parsons Scholarship, which commemorates a person who was very special to honors students, the Honors Program, and the University. You’ll see how and why the Parsons Scholarship came about, and also how it will help our students. The generosity of the Parsons’ family will, I’m sure, bring support to honors students that will change the course of their lives. We are very grateful for their gift.

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.

Art L. Spisak, PhD
Director, UI Honors Program
Past President, National Collegiate Honors Council
An Athlete and a Scholar
Balancing Athletics and Honors

By Jason Kerst

Varsity student-athletes face significant time demands and strive to achieve balance between classes, practice, travel, studying, and competition. Many people see this list of commitments and assume that it would be impossible for an individual to take on any more responsibilities. But what about those that go above and beyond—by being a part of the Honors Program?

From the Court to the Classroom

My name is Jason Kerst, and I am a rising senior from Ann Arbor, Michigan. I study management in the Tippie College of Business with minors in Spanish and sport and recreation management with a Certificate in Leadership Studies. I am a member of the Iowa Men’s Tennis Team, and I have been in the Honors Program since my first year at Iowa. During my first three years, I’ve participated in research, service learning, independent study with a faculty member, and completed two internships. I’m often asked how I handle all the roles and tasks that I tackle on a daily basis. The easy answer to this question is prioritization. I realize, of course, that this answer isn’t exactly the most elaborate, and as the question kept arising, this topic eventually led to some interesting self-reflection. I decided to chat with a pair of fellow student-athletes to discuss how they’ve managed to handle their elite collegiate athletics careers while excelling in the Honors Program.

Brains and Baskets

Paula Valiño Ramos is a junior on the Iowa Women’s Basketball Team from Ourense, Spain, studying biochemistry. She is a 2019 Big Ten Champion and highly involved in research and community outreach. Paula is a research fellow through the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates and works with Dr. Josh Weiner, department of biology, studying neural development. This summer, she was one of two Hawkeye student-athletes selected to travel to Vietnam with Coach for College. This non-profit organization sends a select number of NCAA student-athletes to disadvantaged schools in rural Vietnam to teach subjects such as English or math. In addition, student-athletes are responsible for coaching children in their sport. She understands that competing at the highest level of collegiate basketball while engaging in experiential learning requires immense discipline, but believes that it is attainable for those with the ambition for great success in multiple parts of life.
Research and Rehearsals
Kaitlyn Crutchley is a junior on the Iowa Dance Team majoring in mathematics on the pre-med track. She was the 2018–19 IDT Dancer of the Year, while researching in the Shinozaki Lab within the psychiatry department of the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. Her research is focused on uncovering a simpler way to screen for and prevent delirium. On top of this, she is also involved in multiple campus ministries. She admits that for most Hawkeye student-athletes interested in honors, the greatest obstacle to overcome is “finding the time to fully take advantage of the opportunities offered through the Honors Program.” Crutchley believes that student-athletes shouldn’t be hesitant to pursue honors. “You just have to manage your time wisely and make it a priority,” she says. In order to benefit from the advantages that honors provides, she needed to rearrange her four-year academic plan several times, but affirms that the decision was absolutely worth it.

Some Self-Reflection and a Look Ahead
It hasn’t been easy, but taking part in experiential learning opportunities during my time as a student-athlete has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Our staff at the Gerdin Athletic Learning Center has been phenomenal in providing the support and resources necessary to reach greatness on the court, in the classroom, and beyond. My hope is that other student-athletes will not limit themselves during their years at the University of Iowa. In my senior year, I will serve as a senator in UI Student Government, Chair of the Iowa Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, and a Leader in Athletes in Action, a sports ministry. Opportunities are boundless on our campus for students of all academic backgrounds, and I challenge anyone to find a place that allows one to dream bigger and accomplish more than what they once thought possible than Iowa City.
Lauren Opatrny investigates protein aggregates, or clumps, that contribute to muscular and neurodegenerative diseases. She started her undergraduate education at the University of Iowa not knowing that research meant more than papers and learning.

Now in her senior year, set to graduate in May with a degree in Human Physiology with Honors, Lauren works with Dr. Vitor Lira in the Department of Health and Human Physiology.

Some of the research in the lab is conducted by undergraduate students who look to gain experience before pursuing graduate or professional programs. For Lauren, this means starting physical therapy school in the fall.

While she will not continue bench research in the future, she shares, “research has given me a greater appreciation of science. [...] It really opened my eyes to: ‘wow’ there is so much science that I had no idea about—it’s really rewarding to see.”

In the Lira lab, researchers like Lauren are interested in protein turnover, or how quickly proteins are recycled. Specifically, Lira is studying this turnover in cardiac and skeletal muscle. He shares, “in aging, turnover slows down and the proteins that are expressed in the cells tend to not be as functional.” This is a common aspect of natural aging.

In conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and neurodegenerative diseases, protein turnover also seems to slow down. By studying the mechanisms responsible for reduced protein turnover in these conditions, the lab can identify potential targets for therapy.

Lauren has loved working in the lab, but not all students enjoy the first lab they join. Lira urges students to do their research and “find labs studying topics that seem interesting to them.” However, students might “start out doing something and realize they want a different experience, more clinical research for example, and that’s okay,” according to Lira.

No matter the interest, a benefit of attending a major research institution is the wide variety of labs available to join. Lauren shares, “it is really nice to be at The University of Iowa because there are so many different areas of research and they’re all so different.” Her experience has certainly been fulfilling, sharing, “it’s fun and I learn so much every day.”

Like many researchers, Lauren’s day to day activities vary in the lab. Using mice as a model to study the protein aggregates, she genotypes the mice to identify the ones that have genetic mutations that contribute to protein aggregation and reduced turnover. She also measures and harvest tissues, and carries out PCR reactions which amplify DNA from one copy to many copies. Over time, Lauren has gotten more involved with experiments and assays as she has gained confidence with several techniques.

Lira likes to have students begin their time in the lab with becoming comfortable with techniques such as Western Blots, EKGs, and functional assays to learn how to collect and interpret results. Solid foundations then allow students to venture into projects with graduate students.
From the Bench: Lauren Opatrny Appreciates the Rewards of Science (cont.)

Much of Lauren’s current work is with a graduate student in the lab, Kristen. Lauren shares, “Kristen is awesome. She is very thorough with how she explains things; it’s nice to be on the same page. She is a list person and so am I.”

The graduate-undergraduate student mentorship is an important aspect of research in the Lira lab. It allows undergraduates to learn from students closer to them in age, and makes the graduate students more comfortable with teaching techniques.

Lira shares, “once you’re studying something for a while, you take some concepts for granted. The undergrads come with a very fresh mind and they come ask questions that make you think.” This creates a dynamic environment that, according to Lira, “helps the graduate students solidify what they have been learning and what they are trying to test.”

Undergrads in the Lira lab are typically pursuing science degrees, but certain majors are not a requirement. Students at Iowa are encouraged to get involved in research that excites them. Interested students who have a passion to learn are often successful in the lab, regardless of their major.

Students are also able to take research for academic credit. Many do this while pursuing Honors in the Major, like Lauren. “In that case,” Lira shares, “students receive a letter grade at the end of the semester.” Taking research for credit is a great way for students to get credit towards the Experiential Learning component of the University Honors Program as well.

Getting involved initially can be daunting, but for Lauren, the process was smooth. After emailing many professors, she was able to get connected with Lira and start in the lab during her junior year to develop skills to be more independent during her final year.

Professors enjoy having undergrads in their labs. Since beginning his lab at Iowa nearly 6 years ago, Lira has had many undergrads come and go over the years. He shares, “I really like to have undergraduates in the lab. I think they bring energy and they are learning in a way different from what happens in the classroom. Here we are discovering.”

For more information on research in the UI Department of Health and Human Physiology, check out https://clas.uiowa.edu/hhp/research.

Vitor Lira, Lauren Opatrny, and Kristen Turner work to find out how protein turnover, or recycling, contributes to obesity, aging, and more.
Elizabeth Kruse investigates cellular responses to brain injury. As a third-year student working in Dr. Michael Dailey's lab in the Department of Biology, she studies biology and mathematics inside the classroom and contributes to neurobiology research outside the classroom.

Kruse’s experiences demonstrate the translational benefits of research on education and the value of approaching topics in a hands-on manner. “It is really cool to have the stuff I do in class translate over to what we do in lab,” Kruse said. “It makes me feel like what I am learning is applicable. I do what I learn in lab.”

Principal investigators (PIs), the researchers who run the lab, also understand the translational aspect of research to an education. Dailey explained, “Most of the education that students have gotten up to this point is, ‘here’s the textbook, here’s the lecture; this is the way it is.’ In research you are discovering how knowledge is created.”

Not only is it beneficial to classroom learning, but research has helped Kruse “develop a lot of great critical thinking skills” that can’t necessarily be taught.

At the University of Iowa, many undergraduate students like Kruse work to develop these skills in the research lab. When students start research, very few have prior research experience. Despite this, PIs are still eager to take undergraduates into their labs because of the dual role they play. “There is an educational component to it,” Dailey said, “but there is also a productivity component to what you might expect students to do.”

Kruse began her involvement by emailing PIs. After sending emails to five PIs, she met with Dailey and quickly began work in the lab, ready to learn. Her first few months were dedicated to familiarization with serial dilutions, pipetting, and practicing sterile techniques to avoid contamination. After taking time to get comfortable with these basic techniques, Kruse began work on a more hands-on project studying the effect of a specific drug on microglia, a specialized type of brain cell.

Along with practice at the bench, Dailey said, “many times when a student [starts], I will have them read several of the papers that the lab has published so they have some understanding of what we’ve done in the past. Typically, a research project will be extending some aspect of those studies.” This is beneficial to help students understand why the lab is interested in what they are studying, which puts the research into context.

The Dailey lab is primarily interested in microglia. Little information is known about this type of cell, making it an active area of research. Researchers in the lab want to figure out how these cells respond to brain injury. In order to do this, the lab studies these microglial cells in mice. While day-to-day activities can vary across weeks and depend on the project, a typical day in the lab for Kruse can include harvesting and staining brain tissue in the mice, using chemicals to fix the tissue for analysis, and using laser confocal microscopy to examine the tissues.

Studying brain tissue is certainly different than the typical day of biology lectures that she attends. Research works to apply concepts from the textbook into a laboratory setting, allowing students to experience how science is used in practice and develop valuable critical thinking skills.
Skills like these can be hard to develop in the classroom, but come in handy for students, such as Kruse, who are in pre-professional programs preparing for exams like the MCAT, GRE, and DAT. While she is busy studying for the MCAT this semester she has cut back her time in lab, but still finds time to come in 2-3 days a week.

Many science and pre-professional students take advantage of research opportunities, but research is not limited to a certain field or major. Kruse said, “All my friends do research; even my friends who aren’t in STEM do research,” a testament to how rich the research community is on the UI campus.

In their early years, undergraduates get involved because they have more free time and want to do something productive with it. As early as freshman year, students can begin research work in labs across campus. As Dailey shared, “it is never too early to get involved.”

As a freshman, “you might have to do a little bit of coaxing,” Dailey said, but willingness to learn is more valuable than age to most PIs. Early involvement during a student’s freshman or sophomore year allows for time to grow and complete projects, often culminating in the opportunity for a student to present their work as a poster or to be part of a journal publication. “The student’s initiative is a large part of where their research takes them,” Dailey said. “It can be what the student makes it.”

Dailey himself began his research career as an undergraduate student. Growing up in Washington, DC, surrounded by PhD scientists at the National Institutes of Health, Dailey was aware of what research was from a young age, knowing that was a possible route to take. For him, this meant getting involved in research during his undergraduate years, and later attending graduate school at Washington University in St. Louis. The Dailey lab has now called Iowa home for the past 20 years.

Dailey’s own early involvement has helped him understand the importance of fostering the next generation of scientists. “Somebody had to take the time to train me, and I’m glad for it. So, I invest in someone.”

For more information on research in the UI Department of Biology, check out [https://biology.uiowa.edu/](https://biology.uiowa.edu/).

Brianna Lupo is a third-year student pursuing a B.S. in Biochemistry and is a Latham Fellow. As a fellow, she has developed Readsearch, a series of articles highlighting the undergraduate research experience at the University of Iowa from both the PI and undergrad viewpoint. Check out [www.stem-o-sphere.org](http://www.stem-o-sphere.org) to find the rest of the articles and other cool projects from fellows!
An Undergraduate Perspective

Why Honors Outreach Ambassadors?

By Gracyn Tabor

Many students on campus understand the Honors Program here at the University of Iowa to be just a community of students who are deeply involved in the academic environment on campus. While true, the Honors Program is also heavily involved in outreach, specifically when it comes to incoming first-year and transfer students. Many prospective applicants are interested in joining the Honors Program here at Iowa, but many do not understand all of the aspects of the program’s structure and opportunities. This is where the UI Honors Program’s outreach ambassadors come into play. Working alongside professional staff members, outreach ambassadors work to share personal experiences as well as general information concerning the Honors Program during the academic year. The following is a Q&A with three current undergraduate honors outreach ambassadors, in which they discuss some important information concerning their role with the Honors Program.

Klaudia Golebiewski
Second-Year Student
Major: Neuroscience (pre-med)
Hometown: Des Moines, IA
Additional Campus Activities:
- Career Development Supervisor for UI EMS Interest Organization
- Research Assistant in Dr. Hwang Cognitive Neuroscience Lab
- CPR Instructor for Red Watch Band
- Volunteer at UIHC

Abbie Eastman
First-Year Student
Major: International relations and ethics and public policy
Hometown: Ames, IA
Additional Campus Activities:
- Director for KRUI
- Spectrum UI Executive Board
- Hawkeye Caucus

Tyler Rose Voas
First-Year Student
Major: Psychology with a human relations minor
Hometown: Ames, IA
Additional Campus Activities:
- Hawkeye Sparkles spirit squad
- Honors ambassador

Why did you choose to join the University of Iowa Honors Program?

Klaudia: I chose to join the Honors Program because I’ve always been passionate about learning, and I like that the honors community helps foster that curiosity and provides opportunities that I wouldn’t normally have come across otherwise.

Abbie: I chose the Honors Program to be a part of a smaller community and orient myself at the university. Honors also offers opportunities that I was interested in like fellowships, scholar development, and scholarships.

Tyler: I was interested in the Honors Program because I knew it would provide me with a lot of resources to help me pursue opportunities that I wanted to get involved in, such as research and study abroad. I also really wanted to be part of a community of people that are as dedicated and motivated toward academics as I am, so that they could help keep me accountable for getting stuff done in college.

What drew you to join the Honors Outreach Ambassadors Program specifically?

Klaudia: I was drawn to the Honors Outreach Ambassadors Program because I’m a people person. I love talking to families and incoming students because I can remember what a profound impact tour leaders and college students had on me when I was trying to navigate the college decision process. I also like being able to help and guide people toward opportunities within the Honors Program that would be a benefit to them.
An Undergraduate Perspective: Why Honors Outreach Ambassadors? (cont.)

**Abbie:** I was drawn to outreach ambassadors because I was a part of my high school’s student ambassadors and loved being able to meet families and help them feel more welcome.

**Tyler:** I moved in [before freshman year] expecting to hate campus and was considering transferring to Iowa State for the following semester. However, after the first day of Honors Primetime all of those fears went away, and I knew I had chosen the right school. If it hadn’t been for the Honors Program, I wouldn’t have formed relationships with the students and staff that are now some of the most important people in my life. After doing that complete 180 on my feelings about Iowa, I wanted to be in a position where I could show prospective students how amazing this school is, and why they should love it here as much as I do. Being an outreach ambassador provides me that opportunity.

**What are some interpersonal skills that you have begun to develop and use since joining the Ambassador team?**

**Klaudia:** Being an honors ambassador has helped improve my public speaking skills tremendously; I’ve grown in my ability to communicate with all types of groups and students effectively and efficiently. I’ve also gained valuable leadership, planning, and teamwork skills from working on different committees and coordinating events.

**Abbie:** I’ve been developing a lot of speaking skills. I learned how to navigate speaking to larger groups while still individualizing what I’m saying, so I can connect with more students.

**Tyler:** Through the ambassador program I’ve learned the importance of being dependable and responsible. If I sign up for an event, then I know I need to see it through (regardless of how much I may want to sleep in instead). I’ve also learned to think on my feet because sometimes people will ask me questions that I’m really not prepared to answer, and I have to be able to quickly present them with a coherent response.

**What is your favorite part about being an outreach ambassador?**

**Klaudia:** My favorite part about being an honors ambassador is the daily campus visit! I love being able to connect with a small group of students and tailor their experience at Iowa with the Honors Program to give them the information they may be looking for, and make their college decision process even just a little bit easier.

**Abbie:** My favorite part is working with the other ambassadors and staff.

**Tyler:** I love being able to interact with prospective students. Whether it’s answering questions they have about the Honors Program or just about living in Iowa City in general, I like being able to make them feel more reassured about college life. It’s really fun to be one of the first faces they see on campus when they come to visit and know that I get to be a step toward their college decision.

**Do you have any advice for current students who might be interested in joining this program?**

**Klaudia:** My advice for students who might be thinking about joining the honors outreach ambassador team is to be brave and go for it! You don’t have to be a great public speaker to join; I certainly wasn’t. All you need is a friendly smile and the willingness to grow, learn, work, and make an impact on visiting students and families. The skills you learn while being an ambassador are skills that can help you for the rest of your life. Becoming an ambassador has been one of the best decisions that I’ve made here at Iowa.

**Abbie:** [Because it is a service learning class] my advice for students interested in Honors Ambassadors is to make sure you’re able to [devote time to the various activities in which ambassadors are able to assist].

**Tyler:** Do it! If you’re passionate about the university and the Honors Program then this is a great group of people to work with that also share that passion. It’s a fun way to get involved on campus, and I love how connected it allows me to be with the honors community.

“**The skills you learn while being an ambassador are skills that can help you for the rest of your life.**”  
-Klaudia Golebiewski
Honors Commendation 2019

This year’s Honors Commendation Ceremony—an annual celebration for graduating honors students—was held on May 10 at 6:00 pm. MacBride Auditorium, where the ceremony took place, was packed with students and their families, as well as honors faculty members. So many people attended the celebration, in fact, that the ceremony will be moved to a larger space in the IMU next year. In addition to the presentation of medals to all of the graduates, several students and faculty members were recognized with individual awards. Shaun Vecera, a professor in the Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences was the 2019 recipient of the Honors Teaching Award. Lori Branch, associate professor in the English Department was the 2019 recipient of the Honors Mentor Award. Near the end of the event, Angeline Vanle gave her student address to the crowd—the entirety of her speech can be found on page 20.
Top: University Honors Class of 2019 listens attentively during the commendation address.
Bottom left: Aleisha Norton, one of 21 Honors at Iowa Scholars recognized at the Commendation Ceremony, poses for a photo on the Pentacrest following the ceremony.
Bottom right: Angeline Vanle, who presented the student address, poses with her mother, Joanna Nguyen.
Get to Know the 2019 Honors at Iowa Scholars!

By Abi Paravasthuramesh

Every year, the University of Iowa’s Honors Program bestows its highest recognition upon a group of graduating students by naming them Honors at Iowa Scholars. This award commends honors students for their experience, knowledge, and skills while emphasizing their achievements and academic performance. Awardees were also chosen based on their contributions made to the university community. In addition to being recognized at the Honors Commendation Ceremony, the students’ profiles were shared with the wider honors community via social media. Congratulations to our 2019 Honors at Iowa Scholars!

Extended profiles for all of this year’s scholars can be found at https://honors.uiowa.edu/honors-at-iowa-scholars.

TIPPIE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Logan Drake
Economics, Ethics &
Public Policy, Philosophy
Dubuque, IA

Drake’s research interests include racial and gender equity in schools, especially related to achievement gaps, K-12 liberal arts curriculums, and the importance of school climate in driving student experience and achievement. His work with the Equity Implemented Partnership and the Iowa City Community School District has focused on evaluating the effectiveness of an implicit bias training program for teachers, teacher diversity policies, and authoritative school climate. This fall, Drake will be joining the UI College of Education Department of Educational Policy and Leadership Studies as part of the Schools, Culture, and Society PhD program.

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Madeline Beauchene
Biomedical Engineering
Ames, IA

Beauchene is immensely grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in research with Dr. Joe Assouline during her time at Iowa. She also volunteered at the Johnson County Crisis Center and UIHC. On campus, she has worked as an honors ambassador and honors peer mentor, where she had the opportunity to talk with fellow students and share her own experiences, including her time studying abroad, exploring Italy. Next fall, Beauchene will begin medical school at the University of Iowa’s Carver College of Medicine.

Aaron Buelow
Biomedical Engineering
West Des Moines, IA

Buelow began research the spring of his freshman year and was an ICRU fellow every semester since then. His research focuses on muscular dystrophy and spinal cord injury. Buelow is Co-President of the Pre-Physical Therapy Club and recording secretary for Tau Beta Pi. He has been an honors summer ambassador for two years and tutors at the Gerdin Athletic Learning Center. Buelow will have a short summer before continuing his education to earn his Doctor of Physical Therapy through the University of Iowa.

Ojas Pradhan
Chemical Engineering, Computer Science
West Des Moines, IA

At Iowa, Pradhan conducted research on dry powder therapies for lung infections and served as the President of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers and as VP of Omega Chi Epsilon, the chemical engineering honors society. In 2018, he was awarded a Goldwater Scholarship which recognizes undergraduates with potential to become future research leaders. Pradhan will be attending the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) to earn a PhD in chemical engineering.
Get to Know the 2019 Honors at Iowa Scholars! (cont.)

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

Mikaela Mallin
Biomedical Sciences,
Dance
Waterloo, IA
Mallin studied science, dance, and their intersections. She was heavily involved in research in both fields, investigating developmental genetics, tracing sociopolitical powers of choreography, and learning how both science and dance function as creative agents of choreographic change. Serving as a longtime member of the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates and Dancers in Company, Mallin developed deep interests in arts and sciences outreach and aims to cultivate dance as a form of STEM communication and education. After a summer trip through Europe, Mallin will begin a PhD program in biomedical sciences, focusing on cancer biology, at the University of California, San Diego. Throughout her graduate studies, she aims to use her dance practices (moving and choreographing) as a form of science communication and community STEM engagement.

Aleisha Norton
Biology, Psychology
Dubuque, IA
Throughout Norton’s undergraduate experience, her engagements stemmed from her enthusiasm for volunteering, mentorship, and interest in cancer. She was greatly involved with Dance Marathon leadership, was a mentor to volunteers at UIHC, and served as a mentor to honors peers. Norton’s research examined quality of life in ovarian cancer patients and she hopes to continue similar research. In the future, Aleisha aims to go to medical school to pursue a career as a physician.

Liam Crawford
Computer Science,
Philosophy
Stuart, IA
Since 2016, Crawford has been working under Professor JP Hourcade designing learning applications for preschool-aged children. He has been heavily involved in the Association for Computing Machinery and the Presidential Scholars Program, most recently serving as president of both organizations. Outside of campus life, Liam has completed two software engineering internships, most recently at Google in Mountain View, California. In August, Liam will be moving to the San Francisco Bay Area to begin working full-time as a software engineer at Google. Before the move, Liam is planning on spending 2+ months traveling, literally, around the world. Right now, his plans involve visiting 11 new countries, which will bring his total number of countries visited to 29.

Nicholas Dolan
English
Des Moines, IA
Dolan served as an officer for the university’s English Society, a group that promotes the undergraduate literary community, and for the past year Dolan has been president of Alpha Tau Iota, an honors society on campus. Aside from these activities, he has worked many student jobs to support his own education. 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 being a TA for Honors Primetime. This summer, Dolan has plans to teach at the University of Notre Dame’s Robinson Community Learning Center.
Kathleen Kiesewetter
English, Art
Hanna City, IL
Kiesewetter graduated in December 2018 with a BFA in graphic design and a BA in English, as well as a minor in gender, women’s, and sexuality studies. During her time at the University of Iowa, she focused on incorporating intersectional feminist activism into her writing, research, and works of art. Her BFA show, Burn Her, was a radical (and witchy) response to notions of gender inequality and sexual assault throughout history, executed within a contemporary context. Since graduation, Kiesewetter has been working full-time as the Graphic Designer & Marketing Coordinator at Big Grove Brewery in Iowa City. She also bartends part time in Big Grove’s taproom. Big Grove offers her a platform to get involved in local issues, but she is still trying to find time and space to continue her more conceptual art practices and guerrilla art activism. Kiesewetter hopes to attain her MFA sometime in the future, but in the meantime she’s embracing life outside of educational spaces and remembering how to breathe.

Meagan Woodard
Human Physiology
Mt. Pleasant, IA
Megan Woodard served as a peer mentor and ambassador for the Honors Program. Outside her involvement with honors, she has explored her interests through a wide variety of programs, including Medicus, Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students (MAPS), Circle K International, UIHC volunteering, the University of Iowa Mobile Clinic, OnIowa leadership, Students to Assist Recruitment (STAR), Cru, band, and Taekwondo Club. She has also participated in undergraduate teaching, research, and the Summer Health Professions Education Program.

Eli Bratsch-Prince
Political Science
Ames, IA
As an undergraduate, Bratsch-Prince studied abroad in Morocco and Jordan, served as the president of the political science honors society, and interned with the City of Iowa City. This year, he worked as a tutor in the Arabic Department and wrote his honors thesis on U.S. foreign policy decision-making in the Arabian Peninsula. Bratsch-Prince is also an avid vegan cook and baker. He will spend the summer studying the Arabic language in Oman before starting a nine-month Arabic program in Jordan as the recipient of a 2019 Boren Award. Upon returning from his year abroad, he intends to pursue a master’s degree in Middle Eastern and North African studies.

Jordan Hansen
Psychology, Communications Studies
Spencer, IA
At Iowa, Hansen has enjoyed interning with the Office of Academic Support and Retention, studying abroad in India, and inspiring honors students to make their experience more than a classroom education. Mentoring students as a resident assistant for three years motivated her to pursue her master’s degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs at the Ohio State University. Through her graduate assistantship with Ohio State’s Office of Residence Life, Hansen is excited to continue supporting and mentoring college students as an Assistant Residence Hall Director.
Madeline Ungs
Human Physiology
Urbandale, IA
Ungs has served as an honors peer mentor, President/Co-Founder of Ballet Club at Iowa, and an honors ambassador. Her research involvement in the Dance Department led to performances at Space Place, Hancher Auditorium, and Cornell College. Ungs’s engagements in scientific and creative movement research have contributed to her interest in studying the intersections of the arts, humanities, and medicine. Madeline will be taking the year to audition for professional dance companies across the U.S., and hopefully land a position at one. This summer she will be working as a ballet and dance instructor at local studios. In addition, she will attend a collaboration summer intensive with Cirque Du Soleil and Joffrey Ballet School to study circus arts and network with industry professionals. Ungs will take the next few years to dance professionally, and perhaps take classes in American Sign Language-English interpreting. After taking on the dance world, she plans to attend medical school. If she could have three dream jobs, Ungs would choose to be a professional ballet dancer, ASL-English medical interpreter, and internal medicine physician.

Cassidy Shubatt
Economics, Mathematics
Dubuque, IA
After working on a number of political campaigns on campus, most recently as a Data Fellow for NextGen, Shubatt became interested in the intersection of data and community organizing. She believes that community organizing is an important tool for shaping the questions we ask as researchers, and that rigorous data analysis can help us improve upon our organizing strategies. Her most recent research focused on the effect of television media coverage of elections on voter turnout. After graduation, Shubatt will be heading to the University of Chicago to work with Drs. Sendhil Mullainathan and Ziad Obermeyer at the Laboratory for Systems Medicine. She will be applying machine learning, biostatistics, and econometrics to the world of medical diagnoses, interventions, and outcomes. After two years here, Shubatt intends to enter a PhD program in economics.

Austin Hughes
English and Creative Writing, Asian Languages and Literature
San Antonio, TX
Hughes has been the co-president of the English Society, a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Tau Delta, and the recipient of numerous awards and scholarships, including the Beinecke Scholarship, a highly selective fellowship offered to students to pursue advanced degrees in the arts, humanities, or social sciences. A 2019 Rhodes Scholar, Hughes will study pre-modern Japanese literature and representation of Japanese culture in English literature over the same historical period at the University of Oxford. He ultimately hopes to become a professor in comparative literature, Japanese or English, as well as a writer.

Melissa Lauer
Art, English and Creative Writing
Des Moines, IA
Lauer completed her creative nonfiction thesis on Wheatley-Provident Hospital, an abandoned building in Kansas City, and Dr. Perry, its founder. Her collection of essays, Initialing, was a winner of the 2019 Iowa Chapbook Prize. She worked for four years in the University Conservation Lab and interned for two with the Iowa Youth Writing Project. She is also the proud former co-president of the English Society. Lauer will spend the summer continuing her work in the Conservation Lab, serving as the Iowa Youth Writing Project’s Summer Coordinator, and looking forward to applying to graduate programs in the fall.
Get to Know the 2019 Honors at Iowa Scholars! (cont.)

Gustave Stewart  
Political Science, Economics, Social Science Analytics  
Iowa City, IA  
Stewart has been involved as an intern at the UI Office of Sustainability, a resident assistant with UI Housing, and a City Liaison for the student government. Throughout these positions, he has worked on issues such as promoting sustainable forms of transportation, forming community, and creating partnerships to navigate local government policy issues. Stewart plans to take on a planner internship in the Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization in Cedar Rapids for the summer. Starting in August, he will begin working in the Office of Management and Budget in the Illinois Governor’s Office through the Dunn Fellowship program, which will last a year. Afterwards, he is keen on furthering his work in city planning and policy issues.

Elizabeth Sheridan  
English  
Denver, IA  
While at Iowa, Sheridan has served as the Honors Program’s publications editor and as a summer ambassador. She was also the editorial intern for the University of Iowa Press for two years. Sheridan will be attending the Denver Publishing Institute this summer in Colorado and will then return to Iowa City, where she hopes to begin a career in the book publishing industry.

Eilidh Spery  
English  
Lakewood, CO  
During her time at Iowa, Spery pursued her interest in literature by writing for the Honors Newsletter and writing an honors thesis about female detectives and how they challenge domesticity in female-authored mystery fiction. She also studied abroad in Madrid last spring, and plans to continue traveling, reading, and writing after graduation. Spery will be returning to Colorado this summer, where she plans to work at a local bookstore. She hopes to apply to publishing internships either for the summer or the fall to get experience in editing. Eventually she hopes to move to a new state, travel, and generally keep learning and exploring the world.

Angeline Vanle  
Human Physiology  
Sioux City, IA  
Vanle’s commitment to service toward underrepresented and disadvantaged populations is the root of her work in the university and local community. She is the coordinator of Mobile Clinic, a free clinic that serves homeless and non-English-speaking patients. She also teaches ESL to immigrants and refugees. She will attend the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine in the fall.

Mila Kaut  
Gender, Women’s and Sexuality Studies, History, Music  
Des Moines, IA  
A Gilder Lehrman History Scholar and founding member of the Iowa Colored Conventions Project, Kaut is committed to pursuing a career in public service that integrates scholarship and advocacy. Centering her time at Iowa around explicating the links between education and enfranchisement, Kaut has organized anti-racist work in the School of Music, served as a member of the University Lecture Committee, and completed a thesis on Black Iowans’ constructions of citizen identities in the 19th century. She plans to spend the next two years working in local government in her hometown of Des Moines before pursuing a doctoral program in history.
In the past year, The University of Iowa community faced the loss of Dr. Donna Parsons. An educator, a colleague, and a friend to many, she is remembered by those who knew her as a compassionate individual who was always dedicated to her work as well as her students. As a means of carrying forward her legacy and helping future students, an upcoming scholarship has been announced in her name; the Dr. Donna S. Parsons Honors Scholarship.

Whilst a student of the university, Dr. Parsons received her Bachelor of Music, Master of Arts in Music, and a Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Studies with concentrations in music and literature. As a lecturer for the School of Music and the Honors Program, she carried the same enthusiasm of an student, a trait that helped her relate in the classroom. David Gould, an instructor in the Honors Program and administrator in the Belin-Blank Center, was a longtime friend and colleague. He remarked that she was one of the most passionate scholars he had ever met. “I don’t know that I’ve met too many educators like Donna. She loved to create classes; she had more classes on paper that she would like to come up with than anyone I knew. There was something magical about her because whatever it might be, Donna loved to dive into something she was excited about, and passionately learn all about it which would get her even more excited, and then to take that excitement and bring it into a classroom and share it with students who would hopefully feel the same. The Beatles class in particular was one of the most popular classes on our campus.”

Art Spisak, Director of the Honors Program, also commented on how Dr. Parson’s dedication to teaching contributed to her popularity. “She engaged students at a personal level, and she served as a mentor to them outside of class. She had a fan club. Also, her [Harry] Potter class would fill up in minutes after opening for registration.” Director Spisak stated that Donna was as engaging as a colleague as she was as a lecturer. “As a colleague, she was warm, engaging, always upbeat and positive, and wonderfully unique in her world perspective – e.g., she would sometimes remark on how good it was to be doing what she was doing (teaching).”

While Dr. Parsons was deeply invested in learning more about her own field and furthering her work, she always made sure to emphasize the accomplishments and listen to the hardships of those around her. Gould commented, “Donna was certainly working on her own book, but she would stall it every time a student needed her. The thing she would always put her own work on hold for was her students. She was a very strong advocate for them, in a way that I’ve rarely seen other faculty member be. Once you were her student you were always her student. In a way, this was kind of a growing family.” Dr. Parson’s commitment to her students and their advancement led to her family creating this scholarship.

The Dr. Donna S. Parsons Honors Scholarship endowment was created by her father, Donald Parsons Sr., and her brother, Donald Parsons, Jr. Director Spisak commented that the endowment has begun to generate funds for the scholarship and students will potentially be able to apply for the scholarship by 2021. As of now, the statement of purpose reads as follows: “It is to be used to support one or more annual scholarships to deserving students in the University of Iowa Honors Program. Preference will be given to students with financial need.” Specific award amounts will be determined at a later date. “The Honors Program gives heartfelt thanks to Donald Parsons Senior and Junior for their gift, which will keep Donna’s spirit alive through the help it gives to our students,” said Spisak.

Dr. Parsons wanted the best, not just for the students she knew personally, but those she didn’t know as well. Gould, reminiscing on what this scholarship would mean for her memory stated, “What she took the greatest pleasure in was trying to help move the lives of her students forward. So if you’re thinking about how do you honor that kind of a life, there’s really only one option. You try to support and give and fan the things she loved the most, which were her students. The scholarship is so much more meaningful when you realize it came from somebody who really dedicated their lives to helping students. Even in her passing, that continues.”

Check out our Fall 2017 issue to learn about Dr. Parsons’s popular honors first year seminar, Fantastic Beasts, Formidable Opponents, and the Pursuit of Justice here.
Appreciate the Journey

Angeline Vanle on Failure and Pushing Boundaries

By Angeline Vanle

Each year the Honors Program selects a graduating senior who well represents the spirit of the graduating class to give the student address at the Commendation Ceremony. Angeline Vanle, human physiology major, was this year’s speaker. This is her address:

When I first started college, I didn’t know what to expect. And it terrified me. My parents were immigrants and had never finished middle school, much less college. As the oldest in my family, I was the guinea pig. I was the first to take the ACT, fill out the FAFSA, and apply to college. Because of this, I felt this huge responsibility to do well in college, so that my younger brother and cousins could see that college was attainable. I knew that I wanted to become a doctor and to do that, I needed to go to college, ace my classes, and do well.

I entered college as an eager and enthusiastic pre-med student. During your first semester, most pre-health students will take Principles of Chemistry I. This is just the first science class in a sequence of pre-med classes that get progressively harder. Before our first exam, the professor was telling us that it should be easy and that even though this was our first college exam, it would be a review of what we had already learned in high school. I was feeling pretty confident about this exam. Why wouldn’t I? I had done well in high school, this class was supposed to be the easiest pre-med class, and this was supposed to be an easy exam. I took the exam, finished early, and felt good about it. When the scores came out, my friends were ecstatic about their As and high scores. When I checked my score, I couldn’t believe what I saw on the paper. I got a 42 percent.

I didn’t know how to feel in that moment, except scared. I was scared that I had just ruined everything. That the future I had imagined for myself was gone. I was scared that I had just ruined my career. I felt disappointed. I felt disappointed in myself and my abilities. I felt disappointed in the example I had just set for my family. And mostly, I felt ashamed. I hid my test score from my friends and said that I didn’t want to share my score. They just assumed that I had gotten a higher score than them and didn’t want to brag, but they had no idea that I had just failed.

Looking back on my four years of college, I feel the complete opposite of a failure. I was able to accomplish everything I wanted to, I achieved more than I thought I could achieve, and I got into medical school. But in that moment, I felt like a complete failure. I felt like a fraud and I felt like I didn’t belong in college. After getting that exam score, I ran to my ‘crying corner.’ It was this small space outside of my freshman dorm. It was located behind a wall of bushes and it was next to the vents for the laundry room. I liked going there because I could cry and nobody could hear me or see me. Plus, it was always warm and it smelled good. I remember calling my dad and telling him that I wanted to go home and that I didn’t think I could succeed in college. He replied, “Well, at least this is happening now and not later.” I was so confused. Why did my dad want me to fail? He explained that everyone has this feeling at some point in their life. Some people might feel it more than once. We get this feeling when we’re close to our boundaries. And in these moments, it’s our choice whether we want to expand our boundaries or back away.

I’m so glad that I felt this during my freshman year of college. Even though it was discouraging at first, I had to learn to work the hardest I have ever worked. I never again assumed that I was too good for hard work, discipline, and a strong work ethic. I learned to push myself and believe in myself, even when I was told differently.

If we think of ourselves as icebergs, the small portion we see floating on the water is what we proudly show to the world. It is made up of our successes, our accomplishments, and our achievements. However, deep under the water, pushed down as far as we can, lies the other 90 percent of who we are and what got us here. It holds our feelings of fear, stress, and invalidation. It is our mistakes, our failures, and everything that we have had to sacrifice to get to where we are. And I think that there is something wrong with that. We don’t give ourselves enough time to fully experience our failures and appreciate them for what they are. They are our opportunities to grow, expand, and overcome. In these moments, we are able to recognize who and what we are and choose to rise above.

Don’t limit yourselves with opportunities, jobs, careers, or projects that feel comfortable. They may not be the best fit. If you are in a position where you are asking yourself if you can even do it, if you are enough, if you can succeed, it means that you are at your limit. And by engaging in those opportunities, you can stretch your limits and find out what you are made of. My last message to the class of 2019 is to accept yourself. Accept everything about who you are and be proud of it. Be proud of your successes and be proud of your failures. Because once you can appreciate the journey, who knows where you might go.
Farewell, Honors!
An Editor’s Parting Words

By Elizabeth Sheridan

When I decided as a freshman that I wanted to live in Daum, I did not anticipate that the Honors Program would go on to play such a significant role in my college career. I chose the honors dorm because I wanted to live in an environment where bookishness was the norm, where I would be surrounded by bright students from all disciplines and be a part of a community that made a large university feel smaller and more manageable.

The next year, I applied to be an honors summer ambassador. I got to know Holly Blosser Yoder, who connected me with the Honors Newsletter. At this point I was already on the English department’s publishing track, and I knew that I was interested in an editing career. In these two simultaneous roles—as a summer ambassador and the editorial specialist—I grew to become a kind of Honors Program expert, and I got to know the honors professional and student staff well. During this time and after I transitioned to my position as the honors publications editor, I enjoyed reading about the varied and impressive achievements of the honors students we featured in the newsletter and loved working with our talented student writers.

When I graduated this May, I skipped the large CLAS ceremony. Instead of watching thousands of people I didn’t know walk across the stage to get their diplomas, I wanted to celebrate the end of my undergraduate experience with honors students and staff that I recognized and who had actively shaped my time at the University of Iowa. Sitting next to some of my closest friends at the Honors Commendation Ceremony, I cheered on my peers, some of whom I knew from my time in Daum, many of whom I remembered from an article in the newsletter.

I look forward to seeing all the amazing things my fellow honors graduates will go on to do, and to continue reading the Honors Newsletter to hear about current students’ research, travels, and accomplishments. I know that Gabbie Meis, the new editor for the newsletter, will do a wonderful job covering all things honors and cultivating the voices of our student writers. I leave you, and all the other Honors Newsletter readers, in capable hands.

Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Sheridan
Meet the Writers
Honors Students at Your Service

Elizabeth Sheridan
Elizabeth is a Spring 2019 graduate with an English major and 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.

Anna Magaña
Anna, a junior 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.

Brianna Lupo
Brianna is a senior from Eden Prairie, Minnesota. She is studying biochemistry with minors in Spanish, biology, and chemistry. When not in the classroom or research lab, 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.

Gracyn Tabor
Gracyn Tabor is a sophomore from Oglesby, Illinois, majoring in public health with a chemistry minor. She plans on getting involved in research in public health, specifically in the area of epidemiology. She joined Honors Outreach Ambassadors spring semester of her first year at Iowa. She loved Honors Primetime, meeting the other honors residents on her floor, and the relaxed yet engaging environment.

Abi Paravasthuramesh
Abi is a junior 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.

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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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