THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Honors Newsletter

FALL 2015
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On the cover: Students in Glenn Storey’s Primetime workshop on The Future of Archaeology: Ground Penetrating Radar collect data at a local cemetery.
Photo credit: Suzanne Carter Squires
My greetings for the Fall of 2015-16 to our Honors Program students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends.

WELCOME TO OUR HONORS ALUMNI/-AE

In recent months we’ve been able to identify University of Iowa alumni/-ae who have participated in either departmental honors or University Honors since the inception of Honors at Iowa in 1958. The database covers from the early 1960’s down to the present, and the approximate number of people we found is 12,000. This is the first time these names have been collected, and this will be the first Honors Newsletter that will be sent out to such a comprehensive listing of UI Honors participants. Also, we are right now creating a special section of the Honors website specifically for alums. This will allow our alums to communicate more easily with us and each other. We’ll keep you posted on progress.

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA HONORS ADVISORY BOARD

Speaking of UI alumni/-ae, Honors at Iowa last year created an advisory board comprised mostly of alums, and most of them, alums of Honors. Our Advisory Board met for the first time last Spring, had a conference call during the summer, and had its second on-campus meeting on October 12th. Honors already has both a student and a faculty advisory group, but the Honors Advisory Board gives us the advice and support of those now outside the Honors Program and university. This viewpoint and support are essential to both us and our students, since it keeps us in tune with the world outside academia and also with the international community. We thank the fourteen Honors Advisory Board members who have given their time and resources in support of us.

Note that one of the Honors Advisory Board members is featured in this Newsletter — Richard Tyner. Dick is an Iowan, with a family farm in Shenandoah, and an alumnus of Iowa and Honors at Iowa, who then went on to work internationally as a lawyer. His accomplishments are many, as you’ll see from the article, and we’re indebted to him for his very generous support of Honors. Dick has already made several generous gifts to the program this last Spring – two $1,000 gifts to the Honors Program Development Fund, and a $5,000 gift to the Presidential Scholars Program. I think you’ll find the story of his career remarkable.

HONORS STUDENTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Honors at Iowa continues its heavy involvement at the national level in honors education, both by participating in and presenting at the annual National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) conference, and by being part on the NCHC’s leadership. This year the NCHC national conference is in Chicago (in November), so most of our staff will be attending, as well as four of our students. Most of the staff will be presenting at the conference, and three of the four students are also presenting. The fourth student, Sean Finn, is a candidate for the position for a student NCHC Board of Directors representative — a position that carries much responsibility. If elected, Sean will join his voice with mine as an NCHC Board member, as I continue my term as NCHC Vice President this year, and then move to president elect next year, and then president in the following year. I’m certain that having the national and international perspective on honors education that the NCHC leadership positions give us will benefit our own program in any number of ways. More on that in later Newsletter editions.

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
Director, UI Honors Program
We are now in full swing of the Fall 2015 semester. Time is flying fast, and students (including the first-years) are now accustomed to life on campus. Adaptation is especially hard for those just learning the ways of university life, and that’s where orientation helps out the most. In regards to the Honors at Iowa students, it was the Honors Ambassadors who helped make the transition from high school to campus life a little bit easier. Readers had a bit of a look at this group’s goals for the 2015 orientation in the Summer Newsletter earlier this year, and now it is time to follow up with the Ambassadors to see how it went.

Honors students join the Ambassador team for various reasons, one of which is to learn more about the Honors Program themselves. Iain O’Connor, a third-year Economics and Finance double major, said it best when reflecting on his own reasoning behind becoming an Ambassador.

“I decided to be a Summer Ambassador as a way to get involved while I was working here this summer,” O’Connor stated. “I wanted to learn more about the Honors Program while helping new students get set up and make a smooth transition. I found the experience rewarding and interesting as well. I met some great people, made an impact on some incoming students, and learned a lot about what the Honors Program has to offer me at Iowa. My favorite part would have to be meeting the new students and breaking the ice. It’s fun to let them know that even though we’re helping them pick classes and we may seem official and serious, we’re just students like them.”

In addition to their vast knowledge of the Honors Program, the Ambassadors do have the added advantage of being close in age with the new students, as Iain O’Connor stated above. Yet, students (new and returning) should know that the Honors Professional Staff members are easily accessible and always eager to help.

Ben Ross, a junior Vocal Performance and Music Education double major, believes that the most crucial information students should know about Honors is that: “The professional staff serve not only as great advisors for the Honors Program, but they also have great advice on what opportunities to take advantage of both at Iowa and other places. Talking with them has really helped me firm up what shape I want my future career to take.”

When it all comes down to it, however, it is the Honors student that controls the path of his or her Honors education. There are many opportunities to be taken, and all students need to do is utilize their connections through Honors to find those opportunities, as stated in the Program’s motto, “Make Your Connection.”

Ambassador Deepon Sarkar, a sophomore Pre-Med Microbiology major and Spanish minor, believes: “The most effective way of excelling within the Honors Program is to take the initiative to get involved. The program provides many opportunities for students to grow as leaders and scholars and also to be better prepared for the future, but nothing will be handed to the students. One must strive for and actually take action by leaving his or her comfort zone to experience new opportunities.”
Agreeing with her fellow ambassador, third-year Biomedical Engineering major Rae Ann Corrigan stated: “The Honors Program can be tailored to fit the students; not the students to fit the program. Honors at Iowa exists to help students get the most out of their undergraduate education and is meant to be made specific to them.”

To continue this role over the semesters, many of the Ambassadors, including Ross, Sarkar, Corrigan, and O’Connor, have been or are currently Honors Peer Advisors during the regular school year because they are very eager to continue helping students. In fact, it is Ross’s favorite part of working for Honors.

“I love interacting with new and incoming students, so I found it very rewarding to give advice and help orient students to the Honors Program,” Ross said. “My favorite part is seeing the incoming honors students around campus and checking in with them. I hope I will see some of them again soon in my role as a peer advisor!”

In the words of Advising Director Holly Blosser Yoder, “The ambassadors are like a microcosm of the Honors Program student body. We had a great variety of majors and personalities in our group this summer, all interesting individuals and excellent scholars, all very accessible and relatable for the incoming first-year students.”

“One must strive for and actually take action by leaving his or her comfort zone to experience new opportunities.”

- Deepon Sarkar

With the help of the Honors Ambassadors, the Honors Program has seen a great start to the academic year for the first-year students, with many of them eager to participate fully in the Honors community.
In late August, while walking around the campus of the University of Iowa, you may see huge plumes of water erupting from trashcans, or a group of writers workshopping with one another. Elsewhere you may see students talking to local business owners or pushing ground penetrating radar devices across a graveyard.

These are all part of Honors Primetime. A yearly event for incoming freshmen in the university’s Honors Program, Primetime consists of a series of small academic workshops, each taught by a different faculty or staff member with the purpose of introducing students to other students and professors, the academic environment of college, the campus, and Iowa City.

Primetime was created in 2009 as a way to expose incoming honors students to the university’s Honors Program. It is structured around three-day workshops based in categories such as science, writing, singing and politics. These workshops serve both to benefit students and as a laboratory for instructors to experiment with new ideas. In the past two years, Primetime has become more experiential, with a new focus on taking students out into Iowa City to interact with the community.

There were many fascinating Primetime classes offered this year, from Memory and Amnesia to Community Arts and Public Engagement. One of these workshops, which has been part of two previous years of Primetime, was Trashcano! How Volcanos Work, taught by Dr. Ingrid Ukstins Peate, an Associate Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University.

In her workshop, Dr. Ukstins Peate taught students about volcanic eruptions by conducting and recording the results of simulated explosions, using liquid nitrogen and water.
in trashcans. She was inspired to begin this activity in her Natural Disasters class after reading an article in the *Journal of Geoscience Education*, Volcanoes in the Classroom: A Simulation of an Eruption Column. When she received tenure, she applied to teach at Primetime, where she has taught her Trashcano workshop since 2013.

One of Dr. Ukstins Peate’s goals for her Primetime workshop is to create a positive initial college experience for students through an experiential activity. She aims to set a tone for incoming students, showing them that college is enjoyable and exciting, a time to do things that they may never have imagined they could do and gain valuable knowledge.

“If everyone’s excited about college, then I’ve done my job,” Dr. Ukstins Peate said. Through Primetime, she is also able to give students an introduction and better understanding of the field of geology and what it encompasses. Not only do students benefit from Primetime; the instructors benefit as well. Dr. Ukstins Peate noted that the really special aspect of Primetime for her is interacting with students at the beginning of their college careers.

It seems that most Primetime instructors share her feelings about the event. Susannah Shive, the Distance Learning Coordinator for the International Writing Program (IWP) at the University, also taught a workshop at this year’s Primetime.

Her workshop, #nofilter: SelfInvention, Selfie Fiction, was structured around using flash fiction and photography to learn about different filters, such as character motivation, and their use in fiction. The inspiration for this workshop came from one of the programs Shive coordinates at the IWP: the Narrative Witness Program, where a group of writers and photographers worldwide collaborate to illustrate a certain theme.

This was Shive’s first time teaching a Primetime workshop. Her main goals were to expose students to the creative writing classes at the university and to give them a new approach to fiction and writing through breaking down stories to see how their components work.

“I think we already are all storytellers,” Shive stated, and through her workshop she helped students approach one way to tell these stories. She also benefited from and enjoyed participating in Primetime, especially as she was able to teach, which she does not do frequently.

Primetime serves as a kind of expanded orientation for first-year students entering the Honors Program, exposing them to the program and easing them into college life through exciting experiential classes. For instructors, Primetime is an opportunity to teach smaller, experiential classes in which they can try new ideas and introduce students to different areas of study. Primetime has a lasting effect on all involved, and serves to both create connections and strengthen the community within the Honors Program.
Dick Tyner, a farm boy hailing from Shenandoah, Iowa, entered the University of Iowa in 1966 with the goal of becoming a lawyer, but his passion for language and international affairs initially led him on a path away from that plan.

"I was first generation to go to college," said Tyner, who was drawn to the French language once he entered the university. "I studied pre-law and political science, but then my love of French led me to have a double honors major."

While an undergraduate at Iowa, Tyner became involved in many student activities. In addition to being an Army ROTC cadet, "I was a dorm adviser at Rienow, and I was elected President of Union Board," said Tyner. "I really enjoyed being active on campus."

In answer to those who decry a "liberal arts" education as useless, Tyner stated: "College isn’t about getting a job. It’s about getting an education. Once you have it, you’ll never lose your education. Parents are so worried about kids getting a job. As a freshman in college, how can you know what you want to do? I’m sort of 'exhibit A' for ‘you can’t plan.’"

And Tyner’s path to his chosen career has certainly been a wandering one, beginning in Iowa and then leaping across the ocean to Europe on a Marshall Scholarship, and beyond.

"I had never even heard of the Marshall," said Tyner of the award that paved the way for his studies in the United Kingdom.

"Rhodes Dunlap [the founder of the Honors Program at Iowa] literally handed me the application when I walked by his office one day, and said ‘Here, I thought you might like this,’” said Tyner.

Nonetheless, in 1970 Tyner became the second student from the University of Iowa to win the Marshall, and used it to earn a Master’s Degree in Government at the University of Manchester.

The Marshall Scholarship is similar to the more well-known Rhodes Scholarship, in that recipients receive funding for postgraduate studies in the U.K.

"After the Rhodes, the Marshall is about the most prestigious,” Tyner said in explanation.

One difference is that Rhodes Scholars study only at the University of Oxford, while Marshall Scholars may choose to study at any one of a number of British institutions. “Also,
the Rhodes Scholars were initially only men,” said Tyner. “The Marshall has always been for both men and women.”

“You can’t really have a plan; you just make the most of the opportunities as they come along.”
- Dick Tyner

Tyner went on to further graduate study at the London School of Economics (LSE), and during his time there developed an interest in international relations, obtaining a Ph.D. Having graduated through ROTC and been commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the US Army, his international interests began as primarily military. At LSE his studies focused on French military history, which was also a direct application of his language studies at Iowa. “Without French, I couldn’t have done my thesis.”

But once again, his passions derailed his plan: this time his goal was to become an academic.

“I wanted to be a professor of international relations, but then I realized that there were other things I could do. My cousin bet me that I could get into either Harvard or Yale Law. I didn’t think I could, but I applied to both.”

At the time, Yale Law’s application process consisted mainly of an open topic essay, so Tyner stated, “For my Yale application I wrote an essay called ‘Maybe Yale Needs a Farmer.’ And they let me in. You know, someone like me is very diverse for an East Coast institution like Yale.” After obtaining his J.D., Tyner practiced international corporate law and spent over 25 years as a lawyer in Saudi Arabia.

Tyner’s story is probably not what many undergraduates hope for when making their post-graduation plans.

“You can’t really have a plan; you just make the most of opportunities as they come along.” Even though Tyner states that going to law school was actually going back to what he had wanted to do before, this time he was led by the interests that he discovered rather than by a predetermined plan.
The Living-Learning Communities (LLCs) are one of the integral parts of a first-year experience at the University of Iowa. When a student joins an LLC, they are joining a community of people who share similar interests, and it is through this experience that many students make lifelong friends and discover useful resources to guide them through their college experience. The STEM Scholars is still fairly new on the list of LLCs offered at the University of Iowa, and stands out as unique amongst its fellows. It’s currently in its first year and is home to 52 students, which takes up one floor of the building. The future of the LLC is looking up as the department and the resident assistants learn more about the successes of the program and its direction, allowing it to be refined for its future.

This LLC is not selectively for prospective researchers going into medicine — it is open to all fields of research within STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). It is located in the new Petersen Residence Hall on the west side of campus, as opposed to the Daum Honors House on the east, which in the past has housed only the non-thematic Honors LLC. Location in the Petersen Residence Hall places the students of the LLC conveniently near the College of Medicine, College of Pharmacy, the hospital, and the many research facilities on campus.

The goal of the STEM Scholars LLC, as explained by Honors Associate Director Robert Kirby, is to begin allowing undergraduates to become involved in research early on in their college careers.

Kirby put it the most effectively by saying, “It’s all about finding great fits.” Because research is a less-addressed career opportunity, the LLC teaches its students both what research really involves, how it fits into different careers, and how it works as a stand-alone career. This LLC allows them to explore the area of research in unique and immersive ways, allowing the students to really become responsible for something their own — a useful skill, particularly in this area of interest.

The LLC offers unique opportunities for its residents. Students in the STEM Scholars LLC will have the unique opportunity to meet with ICRU Research Ambassadors — a group of sophomores, juniors, and seniors that have been and/or are currently active in the field of research. This gives students various connections early on in their college careers that they can turn to in the future as they pursue their interest in STEM research.

This is also an opportunity for the students to learn about the faculty. Not only do they have the chance to work with the faculty in a one-on-one environment very early in their college career, but they can also work out their future research interests so that they can meet with the appropriate faculty members come spring.

This LLC is not set up in a way that is meant to intimidate students or thrust them too quickly into the heat of heavy research. If anything, Kirby insists that it is more
preparation, trying to recognize how this research will fit into their first years. It’ll give students a more in-depth idea of possible courses they can take, time management, friendships, study needs outside of the classroom, and how research would fit in with all of that throughout their college experience.

It also works at answering questions such as, “What is it like to be a college student?”, “How much time do I have?”, “How much time could and should I put into research?”, and “How much time do faculty members in this area expect me to put in?.” These are useful questions that can prepare freshmen for their futures in STEM research and help them refine their interests in a way that allows their work to be effective.

The STEMS Scholars LLC is formatted specifically to be as helpful as possible for the first-year honors students. These students will be able to attend research festivals where they can talk to other students already involved in research, specifically in regards to the faculty who they’re working with, and also get a better idea of how to go about research.

It is accompanied by two outstanding RA’s: Ava Lynn and Lance Heady. Prior to being an RA for this LLC, Lance lived in a research community, and is one of the ICRU Ambassadors that the students will be working with to answer questions and guide their research and interests.

The STEM Scholars LLC will be starting its second year in Fall 2016. The program can only grow and improve, and those involved are looking forward to welcoming new students to be a part of its unique environment.
Two years ago, I stepped out of my parents’ car and onto Iowa Avenue for the first time. Besides my clothes and other dorm possessions, all I had were childhood dreams of writing young adult novels and children’s movies, and vague promises about how the University of Iowa could help me achieve those dreams. Phrases like “Top creative writing program in the nation” and “City of Literature” bounced around in my head, but I had no idea what they actually meant, and my first-day-of-college nerves were compounded by my wondering if I had made the right choice. I worried that Iowa City might not be the right fit for me, a bibliophile and aspiring writer. I need not have worried. My nerves were soothed almost the moment I set foot on Iowa Avenue, also known as the Literary Walk. There beneath my feet were words, quotations from authors set into the very pavement of the city. I spent that whole first afternoon of college with my eyes on the ground, gleefully reading the words of writers I knew and loved, and marveling at quotations from works that I had never heard of before but was suddenly eager to read. Over the next few days, I would discover the Haunted Bookshop and its thousands of used books, and Prairie Lights Bookstore with its enthusiastic staff and weekly readings, both of which would reintroduce me to my old favorite novels as well as expose me to new stories. Iowa City welcomed me, an Illinois bookworm, with a warm embrace and a whispered assurance that this was a place where people who loved reading and writing gathered.

Soon after discovering that this city is a place where a writer can happily live, I also discovered that this university is a place where a writer can learn and grow. My first writing class at Iowa, for which I was registered thanks to my membership in the Iowa Writers Living-Learning Community, was Writing Commons – a nonfiction class. That would not have been my first choice of genre to learn about; I graduated high school convinced that nonfiction was nothing but dry history textbooks and that fiction was the only kind of writing I enjoyed. It didn’t take me long to realize just how wrong I had been about nonfiction. Through Writing Commons, I read so many creative, engaging nonfiction essays that I have to laugh when I think about how I once thought that nonfiction was dry and boring. Right from the start, the university led me to appreciate a style of writing that I had neglected, leading me to grow as both a reader and a writer. The assignments in that class contributed just as much to my growth as the readings. They pushed me to tackle new kinds of projects and expand my boundaries: finding the interesting stories in Iowa City’s history, interviewing the homeless of Downtown Iowa City, and incorporating media such as audio and photography into my work. Since Writing Commons, I’ve taken courses in fiction, poetry, playwriting, and screenplay-writing. Every course has introduced me to something new and challenged me to do something more, and I have grown as a result.

Writing Commons also introduced me to Iowa’s workshop style, which every other writing course I’ve taken here has utilized.
In workshop education, each member of the class has a day in which every other student as well as the instructor reads, responds to, and critiques his or her work. This was a huge factor in my growth as a writer. There is nothing like having about twenty people take the time to discuss and provide feedback on a piece of my writing. A writer cannot improve without feedback, and my classmates and teachers have given me so much of it here. Everyone comes into the classroom with different experiences in reading and writing, and in just two years their combined experiences and valuable criticism and suggestions have helped me greatly improve my writing.

As for those childhood dreams I mentioned earlier, I spent last spring semester off-campus, participating in the Disney College Program in Orlando, Florida. While working at an Animal Kingdom attraction was a lot of fun, the highlight of that experience was the opportunity I had to network with people who have turned their dreams of writing for a living and creating stories that children and grownups alike enjoy into a reality. Their repeated advice to me was to keep reading, writing, learning, and growing, so that after I graduate I will be able to return to Disney, this time as a writer. There is no doubt in my mind that the University of Iowa’s creative writing program will continue to give me the education I need to get there.
Since its conception in 2007, the Honors Peer Advising program has given Honors at Iowa a way to reach students at all levels. Through ongoing outreach and upcoming improvements, it is only expanding its influence.

Associate Director of the Honors Program and Director of ICRU Bob Kirby, says that peer advising began as an effort to answer students’ questions about what it’s really like to be in the Honors Program. He aimed to follow the model of student advisors he had seen operate within the Psychology department; advisors began to hold weekly meetings and created opportunities for outreach. Since then, the program has nearly doubled in size.

Though twice as many students serve as peer advisors, their mission remains consistent. Their responsibilities revolve around interacting with fellow honors students, recruiting those looking to become involved, and delivering personal experiences to prospective students to exemplify all the Honors Program has to offer.

In looking for peer advisors, Advising Director Holly Blosser Yoder has certain expectations. “It’s important that they are good communicators. It’s important that they already have some experience with the Honors Program and can articulate why Honors is valuable to students,” Yoder stated.

The opportunity to take on the role of a peer advisor immediately appealed to the program’s current teaching assistants, Kelly McElroy and Monisa Saravanan.

For Saravanan, a junior at the University of Iowa in her fourth semester of peer advising, it seemed like a logical step after her involvement as a student ambassador in high school. Now her position as a TA has shown her just how much goes on behind the scenes to make honors a success.

Kelly McElroy, also a junior, said: “As soon as I saw the offer for the undergraduate teaching position for Honors Peer Advising, I knew that it aligned perfectly with what I want to do with my life. I want to work with gifted kids and Honors Peer Advising plays well into that.” His efforts as a TA have not gone unrewarded.

During a student panel this summer, a coordinator of Talented and Gifted (TAG) from a local school district offered McElroy a position. “She premised it with, ‘How would you like a job immediately after graduation?’” McElroy stated. He credited an experience like this to his interpersonal communication skills, which have largely been developed through his role as a peer advisor.

Holly Yoder echoes the idea that peer advising does more than provide a service to other honors students. “I think peer advising has always been a group of students representing different majors that forms a community within Honors. Peer advisors are friends. They learn to know each other pretty well. I think it becomes an excellent network.”

The program will surely continue to do this for peer advisors even as it ventures in new directions. Bob Kirby confirms that next year a new division of students, a paid staff of peer academic advisors, will come to fruition. As this new group of advisors will focus more on academic requirements and guiding undergraduates in their decisions, students will continue to fulfill the role of existing peer advisors.

They will focus on outreach and communication with students as they do now, just under the title of “ambassadors.”

“Right now advising is voluntary,” Yoder stated. “In the future, we hope to make it more of an assumption.”

It’s a step that should bring more visibility to the Honors Program and capitalize on the influence Honors Peer Advising has generated over time.

The perspective peer advisors provide, the personal experiences they can offer, and their level of dedication to the Honors Program have proven to be an invaluable resource, and in the years to come it will surely become even more of an asset to Honors at Iowa.
This past summer and school year, twelve honors students have stepped out of university education to gain professional experience at various places in the world.

On Friday, October 9th, these students presented their honors study abroad and internship projects in the student center of the Blank Honors Center. It was a spectacular display of creative ingenuity, hard work and adventure. Some of these presenters studied abroad in countries such as Ireland, South Korea, England, and France, while the others were interns based in cities such as Cedar Rapids and Chicago. One student combined both of these elements and interned abroad in Spain.

People attending the poster session that afternoon could see how studying and working outside the university provided students with a unique set of knowledge and experiences that cannot necessarily be found on campus.

As a part of the curriculum, the Honors Program provides students with the opportunity to create a project and delve deeper into their experience, and then share what they have learned with others.

Jey Moriconi, a junior studying English and Classical Languages, spent the summer in Dublin researching the lives and works of James Joyce and Bram Stoker, who are both natives of Dublin.

“This project turned the experience of what would have been a normal study abroad adventure into a scavenger hunt spanning much of Ireland and England,” Moriconi said. “It was frustrating at times, but the outcome was rewarding.”

Jey Moriconi discusses her Dublin study abroad project with Peter Kim and Emma Husar. Photo credit: Jessica Waldschmidt

Moriconi created a poster comparing the lives of these two influential writers and how the map of Dublin, the space in which they grew up, influenced their fiction. As an English major this was a useful way to enhance her education.
Another study abroad project was that of fourth-year student Emily Szymanski. After living in France for a year, Szymanski compiled various tips into an accessible booklet aiming to help new students as they prepare for their duly exciting and nerve-wracking study abroad experience.

“Instead of conducting traditional research, I decided I wanted to write a little booklet based off my own experiences,” Szymanski said. “Before I left for France, I know I spent a lot of time worrying about everything, so with this project I hope to help ease the minds of students going to study abroad. Also, it is nice to have a physical thing to directly help students.”

Several students who did not go off to another country had similarly exciting experiences in interning and enhancing that internship with an honors project. Ben Bullerman pursued an internship with Financial Resource Advisors.

“I was inspired to complete an honors project because I had a previous internship experience and while it was a valuable time, I felt like there was more I could have gotten out of it if I was able to go the extra step to set up an independent project,” Bullerman said.

As a part of his project, he aimed to improve the business he worked with and succeeded in setting up a database that was more efficient for employees, as determined through interviews he conducted with them.

“The project gave me something that was my own to work on and be proud of,” Bullerman concluded.

Another benefit of pursuing a project was well-explained by Amanda Hart, a fourth-year Art History student who spent the last year in Madrid.

“It is my passion to tell people why art matters,” Hart stated. “This project was the perfect way for me to create a comprehensive assessment of Spanish architecture and place it in political, historic, economic backgrounds to tell my peers about why we should care.”

Not only did this project allow Hart to share her discovery on art’s significance in human history and present culture, but she said that it helped her figure out what she wanted to do in life, as she is now more interested in research.

It was inspiring to see students reaching out to the world and teaching their peers about what they have discovered. In sharing research on topics such as how America and England respond differently to the problem of mental health, and even how South Korean women deal with the pressures of being a mom and a professional, these honors students have found a way to engage more deeply with their internships and studying abroad so as to get the absolute most out of their experiences.
Oh the Research You’ll Do Exploring the Realms of English and Theatre Arts

Research is an intimidating term. It’s a saturated term. After repeating it several times, one’s tongue starts to cramp as the word starts to lose meaning. So what is research? The truth is, it can be a lot of things. There is a common misconception that research only refers to the process by which scientific discoveries are made. But that is simply not true. Research is a process by which discoveries are made, both scientific and beyond. It’s not just pipettes and lasers beams. It’s creative understanding and application.

The University of Iowa is a place where research thrives. Every department on campus participates in cutting edge research. The possibilities for students to do research in an interest of theirs are unlimited, and the Honors Program at Iowa encourages students’ pursuits.

Alyssa Cokinis, a junior majoring in both English on the Creative Writing Track and Theatre Arts, and Amanda Harwood, a senior majoring in Theatre Arts with a Performing Arts Entrepreneurship certificate and International Relations minor, are two research superstars that are helping to eliminate the misconception surrounding research.

Starting this past summer, Cokinis worked as a student research assistant for Lisa Daily of the International Writing Program on an Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU) fellowship. For her research, Cokinis assisted in the programming of the youth summer exchange program “Between the Lines: Peace and the Writing Experience,” a program she herself attended in high school, and one that brings together young writers from Russia, Palestine, Turkey, Armenia, and the U.S.

Cokinis worked to implement events for Between the Lines students, created an original event focused on Theatre, and facilitated the two-day Peace and Theatre Workshop, which culminated in students writing their own plays and monologues and performing them in Theatre B at the University of Iowa Theatre Building. Additionally, having an interest in cultural exchange and peace across different, and often conflicting, countries and cultures, Cokinis worked with Between the Lines students to learn their personal stories, their writing and how their culture influenced it, and their interactions with other students—conducting informal video interviews along the way.

Harwood was also a student research assistant this past summer working on an ICRU fellowship. Assisting Melissa Turner in the Department of Theatre Arts, Harwood worked to create a stage management database. Her interest in problem solving from a hands-on approach and desire to learn new skills drew her to the idea of using a program she’d never used before to create something tangible and useful for the Theatre Department. As Harwood describes, stage managers serve as the communication hub for a production. They are assigned the task of coordinating all of the different aspects that go into a performance including costumes, sound, lighting, line notes, props, etc. Furthermore, stage managers assume the responsibility of documenting all activity and changes that occur from rehearsal to rehearsal in order to keep the design crew, cast, director, and playwright aware of all the progressions happening on all ends as the production develops.

Researching program coordination efficiency and student backgrounds in relation to the interconnection between culture and writing, Cokinis gained and practiced organizational knowledge and accumulated cultural understanding. She is working to create a map documenting where every Between the Lines alumni has ever lived to connect culture, writing, and the outreach of the Between the Lines Program.

Harwood also served as a student research assistant this past summer working on an ICRU fellowship. Assisting Melissa Turner in the Department of Theatre Arts, Harwood worked to create a stage management database. Her interest in problem solving from a hands-on approach and desire to learn new skills drew her to the idea of using a program she’d never used before to create something tangible and useful for the Theatre Department. As Harwood describes, stage managers serve as the communication hub for a production. They are assigned the task of coordinating all of the different aspects that go into a performance including costumes, sound, lighting, line notes, props, etc. Furthermore, stage managers assume the responsibility of documenting all activity and changes that occur from rehearsal to rehearsal in order to keep the design crew, cast, director, and playwright aware of all the progressions happening on all ends as the production develops.
Harwood describes the central question surrounding her research as how stage management efficiency can be improved. By using Filemaker Pro, Harwood and her mentor created the database they sought to make—one that reduces the amount of paperwork and redundancy of information entry for stage managers. By understanding the role of a stage manager and then using a software to provide a solution to an inherent difficulty within the role, Harwood was able to craft a tool to help increase stage manager, and subsequently rehearsal, efficiency.

While Cokinis and Harwood have both made fantastic strides in their fields through their research, both were subject to the misconception surrounding research before beginning their work. The two researchers cited that they thought research was just lab coats, bench work, microscopes, Petri dishes, etc. before getting involved. But after conducting their research over the summer, both Cokinis and Harwood came away from the experience with new definitions for the term. Cokinis now sees research as a pursuit of desires and ideals to gain understanding for forwarding society, and Harwood now views research as anything that is exploring or creating something new and innovative to provide valuable information that was previously unknown. Both researchers have relinquished their old preconceptions on what research is and developed the mindset that all should have towards research—it is inclusive of all fields of study and unlimited in its potential for knowledge and application.

While external capital and gain often accompanies research, it is important to address the internal capital and gain as well. Both Cokinis and Harwood had self-discoveries through the process of their research, a value and development that the Honors Program supports and heartens.

Cokinis stated that because of her research, she has become committed to either joining the Peace Corps or at least working for a non-profit organization and using art as a means to promote talk about peace and cultural understanding. Harwood identified that her research helped her connect the Theatre Arts major and Performing Arts Entrepreneurship that she is pursuing and that she gained and developed an innovative spirit, which she hopes to continue to apply in future endeavors to bring ideas to reality.

To Alyssa and Amanda, thank you for being research superstars and helping to break the research stereotype. To all future researchers, oh the research you’ll do. The possibilities for discovery and application through research in all fields are boundless and waiting to be pursued.
**Student Profile** Astrid Montuclard

**What has been the biggest challenge you’ve faced since beginning college?**

The biggest challenge I have faced since the beginning of college has been adapting to the United States’ culture and social norms. I grew up in Tahiti where the pace of life and personal interactions are much more relaxed (imagine beaches and the sun, but don’t forget about school!). So two years ago when I was plunged into this new culture, I had to adjust to a new pace of life in order to be successful (in Tahiti, if you are ten minutes late, that’s when you are early). But most importantly, I learned that mistakes are an opportunity to bounce back and to shape something better for myself and others. I learned how to be far away from my family, and I learned that you can become what you want if you work hard enough.

**How do you balance school, work, and extracurricular activities?**

The key words are: enough sleep, enough physical activity, incredible friends, supportive family (my brother is in Iowa!), and mindfulness. “Mindfulness” is a concept that I learned about in the class Mindfulness Foundations, where I learned exercises that are scientifically proven to increase concentration, attention to others, relaxation, and emotion regulation. Challenging our limits is part of our job as honors students, but so is being mindful about our health too. A few classmates and I decided to create Mindfulness@Iowa, a new student organization open to anyone in the community who wants to practice mindfulness or get a glimpse of it. Thanks to this organization, I keep up with mindfulness practices and somehow manage to stay sane.

**What are you looking forward to most this school year?**

I am looking forward to seeing what the current student government can accomplish. We are currently working on several projects focusing on mental health awareness, students’ physical safety, and students’ health that I have confidence will have a beneficial impact on our community. In addition to UISG, I am looking forward to taking the MCAT in July, and to start applying to medical schools. Since I landed in the “Land of the Free” a little over two years ago, the experiences I have gained at the University of Iowa have given me a new understanding of the world, and I look forward to working further on my academic career. The latter should allow me one day to give back to the Honors Program as much as I received from it.
How did you get involved in the Honors Program, and how has it helped you?
I got involved in the Honors Program by living in Daum as a first-year student and taking honors classes. As a sophomore and junior, I was an RA with the Honors and Honors Research Living Learning Communities, so I made connections with different members of the honors professional staff through our collaboration. Then this past summer I was an honors ambassador, leading break-out sessions with incoming honors students and teaching them all about how to be involved with the Honors Program! I enjoyed being able to meet the next generation of Hawkeyes in the program and helping ease any apprehensions they may have had with joining.

What did you do over the summer?
This summer I was an honors ambassador. I also conducted research with Dr. Lou Messerle of the chemistry department with an Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU) Summer Fellowship. I also went fishing out at Lake MacBride as much as possible and visited the Maquoketa Caves State Park with some friends.

In addition to the Honors Program, what other organizations have you been involved in?
I’m an RA for the third year and I’ve also been part of Be the Match on Campus. Our mission is to sign up people for the National Marrow Registry and to fundraise to help with cancer research. Last year, I was part of Friends Without Borders where I was paired with an international student and was a resource for him. I was also a teaching assistant intern with the Biology Department this past spring and I have also volunteered at Mercy Hospital in Iowa City.

If you could offer one piece of advice for incoming students, what would it be?
I would tell first-year students to learn how to be comfortable being uncomfortable, pushing yourself to try new things. This could be participating in a new student organization, talking to someone different from yourself, or even just answering a question in class. Ultimately, being comfortable with trying new things allows for growth and new knowledge, and you have no idea where it will take you. I have embraced this philosophy, and it has truly made my experience as a Hawkeye something I will always value and never forget!

How do you balance school, work and extracurricular activities? How would you advise students to successfully balance college life?
My time management skills have really improved since I’ve started college, and they’ve been instrumental in being able to balance my schedule. There are countless things in which to be involved at Iowa, so I would definitely recommend that students focus on their passions. I’ve stuck with my academics, work, and extracurricular activities because I truly enjoy them and the impact they can have not how they’ll look on a resume.
Get to Know Our Contributors  Writer Biographies

Nate Hua is a senior majoring in Chemistry and minoring in Theatre Arts and English. He’s a goofy guy who enjoys pursuing creative new endeavors, and he can’t wait for what’s in store for his final year at Iowa and beyond. Go Hawks!

Emma Husar is a student at the University of Iowa majoring in English. She loves being outside, reading, writing, and eating weird vegetables.

Emily Szymanski is a senior studying English and French. After graduation she plans on attending the Denver Publishing Institute to start a career as a copyeditor and translator, and then she will finally adopt a puppy.

Eilidh Spery is a freshman from Lakewood, Colorado, and is majoring in English. She enjoys writing, reading, traveling, and playing guitar. She plans to pursue a career in creative writing.

Sophie Katz is an English and Psychology double-major on the University of Iowa Undergraduate Creative Writing Track who loves writing and reading more than anything. With a little luck, a lot of work, and just a bit of pixie dust, she hopes to live her dream of writing stories for Disney.
Get to Know Our Contributors Continued

Patricia Forg is a junior from San Diego, California. She is currently studying English with a prospective emphasis in Creative Writing. When she’s not writing or reading, she’s probably re-reading the Harry Potter series, spreading alien conspiracies, or trying to intellectually discuss superheroes.

Alex LeMoine is a sophomore studying English and Journalism and Mass Communications. She hopes to study abroad in the UK within the next few years and has intentions of pursuing a career in sports journalism.

Katie Kiesewetter is a sophomore majoring in English and Studio Art with a minor in Art History. Kiesewetter works for the Honors Program as a Student Admin, is on the Honors Outreach Committee, has also been an Honors Summer Ambassador, and conducts research through the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates.

Arianna Chronis is a Pre-Law junior from Palos Park, Illinois who is majoring in English with a certificate in Medieval Studies and minors in Psychology and History. This year, she is also Vice President of the UI Dance Club and Co-President of the Swing Dance Club.

Claire Jacobson is a sophomore majoring in French and Arabic and studying abroad this semester in Morocco. When she isn’t studying, she can be found reading and rereading books, volunteering, or writing stories. She hopes eventually to pursue a career in translation and interpretation.
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