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**On the Cover:**
Honors at Iowa is currently striving to find more ways to incorporate “self-discovery” into the program. Junior Nicholas McCarty, a gifted biochemistry student, is one such person who shows what true self-discovery looks like.

*Photo by Lindsay Marshall*
Word From The Director

My warm greetings for the Spring of 2016 to our Honors Program students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends.

MAKE YOUR CONNECTION THROUGH HONORS: SELF-DISCOVERY

Please note the last line of the Honors Program mission statement and especially the last word: Honors at Iowa enriches the undergraduate experience by cultivating intellectual curiosity and practical skill through challenging coursework, creative engagement, and experiential learning to nurture a deeper understanding of one’s discipline and self.

Our tagline for our program is Make Your Connection, and by that we mean our goal is to help our students connect with each other, the faculty and staff at the university, their particular academic discipline and specific career path, but first and foremost among those connections, with themselves. Without the base of a strong personal identity to guide us, we are only wandering, sometimes getting lucky, at other times wondering what went wrong, or just moving along indifferent to the richness and potential of our lives.

We try to instill that sense of identity in our students by, first, treating them with respect and giving them our personal attention whenever they need it. In fact, I believe that is one of the things that especially distinguishes Honors at Iowa—that our staff gives such personal treatment to our students. I maintain that it helps our students to feel acknowledged, more confident, and even empowered, which in turn permits them to question who they really are and what they really want.

We also try to steer our students to those areas and opportunities which best fit and suit them. This sometimes requires them taking a risk, but choices made from the heart, although they oftentimes take courage because they run contrary to peer and societal pressure, are the ones that lead to long term fulfillment. Put another way, we do our best as a staff to discourage our students from resume-building—that is, doing something only to have it on a resume rather than for its intrinsic value.

Read further below on what we’ve been doing lately to help our students find themselves and their path.

OUR REMARKABLE HONORS STUDENTS AND STAFF

In my opinion, the accomplishments of our honors students have increased in recent years. You’ll see below profiles and articles that highlight several of things they’ve done. Why have they been accomplishing more in recent years? First of all, of course, credit goes to the students themselves—their capability and determination. They also seem more serious about their education and using it to help others rather than just being successful for their own sake. That shows maturity and an awareness of the importance of community—both local and international. You’ll see this mentality in the two students we’ve profiled in this newsletter.

I think the other reason the accomplishments of our honors students have increased in recent years is because of the Honors Program staff. The seven honors professional staffers with whom I work are a very rare group indeed because of their specific backgrounds and talents, general high ability, collaborative nature, dedication to their particular areas of concern, and most especially because of their commitment to our students. In my fairly long experience in higher education, I’ve never worked with such a positive and proactive group of colleagues. My thanks to them for all they have given to our students in helping them succeed.

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
The Honors Program charter declares, “Honors at Iowa enriches the educational experience of academically talented undergraduates by engaging them in the process of intellectual growth and self-discovery.” Intellectual growth is easy to recognize, with opportunities such as honors coursework and research creating the curriculum that most people think of when they envision an honors program. But self-discovery is a different story.

So different, in fact, that it’s difficult to articulate exactly what it is or how the Honors Program can engage students in the process of it. That was the problem facing the honors steering committee a few years ago, when they revised the mission statement to include self-discovery as a primary goal.

“Self-discovery is in our charter, but we wanted to find out how that translates into action,” Director of Honors Dr. Art Spisak said. “What does this mean? How do you do it? What does it mean to know yourself better?”

To a certain degree, self-discovery is inherent to the Bildungsroman that is the college experience. “When you come into college you have certain ideas of who you are and what you want to be,” Dr. Spisak said. “As you experience things, you change that.”

The number of students who change their major during their first few semesters is testament to that. But such self-revelation can take many forms.

“I actually never changed my major, which I think is pretty rare,” said Iowa senior Laura Wang, who is majoring in Chinese and English/creative writing. “I just wanted to learn the language. I don’t think a career really informed my decisions. If it had, I definitely wouldn’t have picked the majors I did! It was rooted in a very personal and selfish reason—I couldn’t talk to my family, and I just wanted to be able to talk to my family.”

But, Wang said, she “added things along the way,” like her creative writing emphasis, as well as a writing certificate and the recently inaugurated minor in translation.

“I was in this panic, like ‘how am I going to make my majors work together?’ And this seemed like the obvious way.” Wang is working furiously on her final capstone project, translating a short story by Taiwanese writer Zhu Tianwen into English.

While some students eventually find their way from coursework to research, junior Nicholas McCarty went the other way.

“The thing that motivated me the most and finally made me care about academics was my involvement in the lab,” he said. “Science was the thing that I finally cared about—I felt like I was a member of a team ‘exploring the unknown.’ It’s still exciting to me today, and it has shaped nearly every other decision that I’ve made.”

McCarty began conducting research in biochemistry at the beginning of his freshman year. His research in 2014-15 was funded by the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates, or ICRU.

The next steps for honors towards facilitating self-discovery are happening next fall—Honors is putting together a mentoring program, per the request of a focus group of honors students. According to David Gould, it is sort of a “human library.” “While
you've got energy, idealism, new ideas, someone my age has 
resources and connections and experience," he explained, “and 
Honors wants to help connect students with those kinds of people.”

“A lot comes down to mentors,” McCarty said. “I have a research 
mentor, a biochemistry mentor, a writing mentor. You’re your own 
person, of course, but they’re the ones teaching you, so of course 
you’re going to look up to them. The people you end up associating 
with, that’s the kind of person you’re going to become.”

And as far as coursework goes, self-discovery will be newly 
emphasized in some sections of Honors Rhetoric, and Honors will 
be pilot testing Gould’s new course, the Green Room.

“Within the Honors mission statement is the notion of self-
discovery,” said Gould. “And while 
a lot of students in Honors know 
what they’re trying to accomplish 
here academically, we might not 
be providing ample opportunities 
for them to address those larger 
questions that are not professional 
or career trajectory.”

The Green Room is “a course like 
a first year seminar, but not in the 
first year, to allow people to explore 
outside their major,” according to Dr. Spisak. This class is designed 
to provide students with the space to think about just those kinds 
of questions. Gould commented, “This is an age-old idea. It goes 
back to Plato. Plato believed that once you took care of making your 
living, you’re required, demanded, to ask yourself these eternal 
questions.”

And what questions might those be? “Why am I here? What’s my 
life about? If I could live the life I wanted, what would that look 
like? And it’s more than just what kind of job you want. It’s what 
makes me happy. How do I see myself, how do I see myself living, 
what kind of things would I like to do, what’s important to me?”

Those kinds of questions have definitely been a part of Wang’s 
college journey. “When I came to college, I had a very unclear idea 
of what I liked and what I was interested in,” she said. “I found 
out I’m really not interested in politics at all, but I am interested 
in gender, race, and social inequality. I think that not just China’s 
politics and economy need to be in the global conversation, but also 
its culture.”

Born and raised in the United States, Wang said that while “here at 
Iowa, I think that seeing how Chinese international students were 
treated really forced me to confront my race....It had always been 
an issue, but I didn’t really have to confront it before.”

Self-discovery and introspection take place as much in the sciences 
as in the liberal arts. As an example, Gould brought up Dr. Paul 
Kalanithi, the late neurosurgeon who wrote the New York Times 
bestseller When Breath Becomes Air after receiving a diagnosis of 
terminal cancer. “He loved writing, and he also loved neuroscience 
and the brain. He’d decided to ‘go and learn what books couldn’t 
teach him.’ Really what he was chasing was a meaningful life.”

“But why does the world need chemistry? is a very 
different question than about 
salary or the job market,” 
Gould added. “What is the 
heartbeat behind what you 
do? There’s an amazing 
sense of wonder and beauty in 
the world that we have, 
and how it fits together. We 
have so much still to learn, 
and learning doesn’t make it 
less enchanting, but makes it more so.”

But a little closer to home is McCarty, who would say that this sense 
of wonder has been integral to his studies and his research. “I’m 
studying biochemistry because it’s amazing. It is this beautiful 
discipline which combines the greatest aspects of the sciences,” 
McCarty said. “And yet one of the most influential things for me 
was when I started writing. When you do research, hopefully you’re 
still learning things, still finding new things that make you curious.”

His research and interests, while fascinating, are also supremely 
practical. “As a biochemist, I could reasonably see a patient, notice 
their problems, document them, and then do bench work to figure 
out how the problem arose,” said McCarty. “It became important 
to me when it made a tangible impact, when I made my first big 
discovery, and I found out it could make a real impact in clinical 
work.”

And that, Gould would argue, is the key—that students know why 
they are doing what they’re doing, and why that matters, no matter 
what field they’re in.”
Student Profile: 
Six questions with Sean Finn

**Hometown:** Marshalltown, Iowa  
**Year:** Sophomore  
**Majors:** Ethics & public policy and economics

1. How did you get involved in the Honors Program, and how has it helped you?

Honors has given me countless opportunities to connect with passionate and hard-working peers that are involved with so many different departments and organizations at Iowa. Those relationships and connections, as well as the ones I’ve made with staff and faculty as a result of being in Honors, are my favorite part of being an honors student at Iowa.

2. I understand you are serving as a board member for the National Collegiate Honors Council. How did that come about and what does it entail?

I was approached by Honors Program Director Dr. Spisak about running for a position on the Board of Directors for the National Collegiate Honors Council. At the time I didn’t know what this organization was or what kind of relationship the University of Iowa had with it. So I did my research and found out more about the NCHC’s annual conference at which honors students, staff, and faculty come together to share research and experiences regarding honors education. NCHC provides a network for those involved with honors throughout the country as well as multiple opportunities for extended learning through its signature programs. As a board member, I attend the Board of Directors meetings and contribute to conversations about the direction of NCHC by providing a student perspective.

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

In Spring 2015, I founded the UI Trans Alliance, of which I am now the president. I am also the outreach director for Spectrum UI. I serve on the Committee for Gender Inclusive Policies and Practices, and am also part of the Presidential Scholars Program. Finally, I am a member of Delta Lambda Phi social fraternity, a progressive fraternity that offers social and service opportunities for all men, irrespective of sexual orientation or gender expression.

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

My advice is to dive into the University of Iowa! Find at least one organization to become a part of and get to know your peers—this has been the most rewarding part of my time at Iowa so far. My involvement keeps me very busy, but I couldn’t imagine my life without it.

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

When finding a balance, it is extremely important for you to know yourself and your limits. The only way I am successful at keeping a balance is by being organized. By knowing exactly what I’ll need to accomplish over the next week, I can use time to be social some nights without worrying that I’ll get behind in my schoolwork. Also, it’s important to be involved in things that you love. I love my academics and my student organizations, so spending a lot of time on them doesn’t require as much “relief” as if I were trudging through my work.

6. What will you do over the summer?

This summer I am staying in Iowa City to do research with political science professor Rene Rocha. We will be doing research about immigration in the United States and the expanding bureaucracy of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).
Student Profile: Six questions with Yaqiong Wang

Hometown: Jinan, Shandong Province, China
Year: Senior
Majors: Psychology and engaged social innovation (ESI)

1. How did you get involved in the Honors Program, and how has it helped you?
I took an honors section for one of my psychology classes and also for the interpretation of literature general education requirement. I am graduating with honors in psychology and am working on my honors thesis with a psychology professor. I really enjoy this research experience as it enables me to see what kind of things I am likely to do in graduate school, which is my plan after graduation. I think I got more involved in the Honors Program through my participation in the new major, Engaged social innovation.

2. You’re involved with the Engaged social innovation pilot major. What is your project on and how has it played a role in your education?
Taking the ESI major is one of the best decisions I’ve made for my college education. ESI is not a standard major that requires students to learn from lectures and textbooks, and then assess their knowledge through assignments and exams. Rather, ESI is a learn-by-doing major, which is the most attractive aspect to me. It allows students to craft their own coursework and field experience based on what they truly care about.

For my capstone project, I’m very passionate about promoting positive youth development, with a focus on their social and emotional well-being. I learned a lot of theoretical knowledge from my coursework and research experience, but was never given the opportunity to apply what I’ve learned to real world. So the Engaged social innovation major grants me the opportunity to work with the Dream Center (a local youth-empowering non-profit organization) and help build a new project.

The project is called “I-Belong” which aims to overcome social and pedagogical barriers African American students are experiencing at City High. A group of teachers, staff at the Dream Center, social workers, and student volunteers cooperate closely to help participating students to define their identities, explore life goals, and let their voices and stories be heard by teachers and community members.

Doing this project definitely lets me see what it feels like to transform scientific knowledge into real-world practices, which is what I would like to do in my future career. And I have learned that unexpected things could happen in real world. I should always be prepared to adapt my timeline, and the theory I want to apply, to real-life contexts.

3. In addition to the Honors Program, what other organizations have you been involved in?
I have been a member of Psi Chi-International Honor Society in Psychology since I was a sophomore. I was the secretary of the organization during my junior year and became the president this year.

4. If you could offer one piece of advice for incoming students, what would it be?
Do not avoid taking difficult courses if all you are worried about is getting good grades. Challenge yourself and try the things/courses you are really interested in or passionate about, even if they are hard. What you take away from it is usually better than what you could have imagined.

5. How would you advise students to successfully balance college life?
To successfully balance college life, I think we should always be aware of what is the most important thing at the current moment. And many of us might have varied degrees of procrastination, which brings on a lot of trouble and impairs our ability to finish assignments well and on time. I would suggest that students start to work on any assignment or exam as soon as possible. In that way, the quality of the work can be guaranteed and you do not need to worry about your schoolwork while getting involved with extracurricular activities.

6. What will you do over the summer?
I am graduating this May so I probably will go back to China and then come back in August for graduate school. During the time in China, I plan to find an internship either in a psychology lab or related to working with children.
New to the Honors Team: Honors Welcomes Assessment Director Emily Johnson

In February, Honors at Iowa welcomed Emily Johnson as the new assessment director. Johnson discussed how both her personal and professional life are changing with the position.

A Rock Island native, Johnson graduated magna cum laude from Augustana College in 2008 with degrees in sociology and French. After graduating, Johnson worked briefly as a community organizer, and then worked the next seven years at her alma mater as an admissions counselor.

But what led Johnson to the UI campus? Johnson said she found out about the position in Honors at Iowa by “stumbling on it accidently.”

“I knew that I was ready for a new challenge. I was pretty lucky in my first job in that they let me create or take on some projects that they hadn’t done before. They let me run with some things because they were interesting to me. But, I also felt like I had kind of hit my ceiling there.”

This past summer, Johnson started a master’s degree program in library and information sciences through the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and she said that her new job is “a better fit” with what she is studying.

Now that she is working for Honors at Iowa, Johnson has two main responsibilities as the assessment director. The first one requires her to take a “big-picture look” at the honors program, and make sure it is serving students in the way that the program is meant to. Her second responsibility is ensuring that individual students complete the program in order to graduate with the designation of University Honors.

In addition to her two main tasks, Johnson also takes on other projects for the program. One project she is currently working on looks at longer-term trends from the start of the first-year experiences that UI honors offers (such as Primetime, living in the honors residence hall Daum, and taking honors courses as a first-year student) and then studies how these experiences correlate with honors and university retention rates and grades.

When discussing the things she has taken out of her various positions, Johnson said that something she has learned from her professional life is that there's always some room to find your own interests in whatever you're doing.

“What brought me to this job was that I was willing to take a look at my last job, and see how I could do it in my own way. I’m excited to see what new interests [this job] might introduce me to or what this might expose me to.”

Overall, Johnson said she hopes to be able to help make the honors program do the best that it can for the students in it.

Though only a couple months in, Johnson said she really likes her new job, even though it was a big transition, both personally and professionally. Johnson moved from the Quad Cities to Iowa City this spring, which was a large change for her as she has never lived outside that area before. In addition, her alma mater, Augustana, is much smaller than UI.

“Everyone is really welcoming in Iowa City, and I think the nice thing about Honors here is that it’s kind of a microcosm in a bigger place. That made the transition more natural for me.”

Her family and friends have also been supportive, though, she explained with a laugh, growing up in family of Illinois alumni and sports fans has provoked some playful teasing.

“My mom in particular is a pretty rabid Illinois fan,” Johnson said. “So they’ve had a lot of comments. They kind of joke with me about not wanting to see my Iowa shirts, but in general, they’ve been really supportive.”

Left: Emily Johnson, left, at the state capitol in Illinois, advocating for college students in March 2015. Photos provided by Emily Johnson.

By Bailey Zaputil
Q&A with Recent UI Graduates: Where Are They Now?

During my time as an underclassman at Iowa, I made friends with many students older than myself. As they have all graduated by now, I figured it would be good to know what these recent alumni of the University of Iowa Honors Program are up to.

The people I interviewed are:

Brady Campbell (BC): A biochemistry major who graduated in 2015.
Sophie Amado (SA): A double major in English and Spanish who graduated in 2014.
Hannah Philgreen (HP): A double major in French and international relations who graduated in 2015.
Nick Rolston (NR): A double major in physics and mathematics who graduated in 2014.
Allison Kindig (AK): An industrial engineering major who graduated in 2015.

Geographically speaking, where do you live now?

Brady Campbell: I am currently living in the greatest state in all of the land: I live in Des Moines.
Sophie Amado: Right now, I’m living in the city of Chicago and loving it.
Hannah Philgreen: I am currently in Monterey, California, about a five minute walk from the beach.
Nick Rolston: I am geographically in the midst of palm trees and the paradise that is Northern-California utopia.
Allison Kindig: Cambridge, UK.

What are you doing/studying/working on there?

BC: I am taking a gap-year before beginning medical school at the University of Iowa in August. I have been working three part-time jobs and travelling regularly. I have been working for a non-profit called Hopeful Africa, and will be traveling to Kenya in May to visit the schools that we partner with, so that’s exciting.
SA: I am a graduate student at Columbia College Chicago studying Creative Nonfiction Writing. When I’m not a student, I teach an undergraduate rhetoric course. When I’m not doing that, I also work part-time at a local pub.
HP: I’m attending the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, getting a MA in Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies, and taking classes with experts in the field.
NR: I am currently engrossed in a quest to manufacture printable, robust solar cells from ultralow-cost processes. The goal is to produce devices that are brighter than the sun.
AK: I am completing my master’s in engineering for sustainable development. My research is on network reliability in sustainable food systems. I am also part of the MCR committee for my college (Trinity Hall), a member of the Cambridge University Triathlon Club (CUTriC) and recently cofounded a social enterprise partnership called Change for Stamina.

What has been the most exciting thing you’ve done since graduation?

BC: Last summer, I took a month and went on a road trip across the western United States, visiting national parks and a select few cities. It was a great way to disconnect from everything... If you ever get the chance to visit Yosemite National Park, do it. Right away.
SA: Living abroad in Madrid, Spain. One of the most exciting things I did last year was meet the King of Spain at an event. I went there through the Fulbright program, which had won the Spanish Prince of Asturias’ award in 2014.
HP: Participating in the Army War College’s Strategic Crisis Negotiation Exercise. I was the Team Lead for Pakistan, which entailed negotiating an end to a hypothetical crisis in the Jammu-Kashmir region that threatened to turn into a full blown war.
NR: Just keeping up with my hobbies—playing basketball, working out at the gym, or taking small but enticing steps forward in the lab.
AK: Getting to race my hand-built-at-Iowa triathlon bike for Cambridge against Oxford in the February varsity duathlon match round a 2012 Olympic Games venue. I found myself competing in the snow and in a woolen sweater.

What hobbies have you developed?

BC: I began working at a rock climbing gym in September, and that has since absorbed all of my free-time.
SA: I live by a Title boxing gym and love it.

Allison Kindig competing in the varsity duathlon this past February.
Photo provided by Allison Kindig.
Where Are They Now? continued

By Nate Hua

NR: I like to listen to trashy pop at excessively loud volumes.
AK: River punting!

What is your next endeavor?
BC: My next endeavor is to figure out my next climbing trip. I’m serious when I say that climbing has absorbed my life.
SA: It’s my goal this summer to intern with a publishing house or through a literary agency to gain a better sense of a career path I want to pursue after my master’s. I am also constantly trying to plan trips to settle my wanderlust and would love to do other trips to see more of the United States.
NR: I want to be a Tesla owner… It’s gonna happen and I’ll be a chick magnet.
AK: My next endeavor will most likely involve problem-solving to overcome challenges associated with achieving global food security and/or sustainable urban development.

What does being a college graduate/adult feel like?
BC: I now read books, and rarely stay up past midnight. I have shed as much responsibility as possible, and try to find different ways to have fun every day instead.
SA: Days in my adulthood post college feel larger, like I can explore a new part of the city (or country) outside of my college town.
HP: There’s no longer the safety net of your parents to fall back on, especially when you’re halfway across the country. There’s also more pressure to act as you think an adult should act.
NR: N/A. Not an adult.
AK: Feelings are real, but certainly personal and quite fleeting. We all experience trials and triumphs, which is why I prefer to hold fast onto faith in the things I believe rather than the feelings that I experience.

If you were to deliver the commencement address this year, what would you say?
BC: Just do it. Don’t make excuses, life gives you crap sometimes, but there is always opportunity.
SA: There are many more choices to be made instead of choosing Burge over Hillcrest for dinner or figuring out how to configure yoga into your course schedule. The fact is, it’s up to you to embrace the uncertainty.
HP: Be flexible… don’t be afraid to continue exploring your interests and be willing to let life take you in unexpected directions.
NR: My solution has been the emergency sandwich. Les Brown once said, “If you take responsibility for yourself you will develop a hunger to accomplish your dreams.” [The emergency sandwich] gives me the comfort to dive into the figurative black space—the unknown—in order to find the questions that I want to ask.
AK: Be grateful and thankful for all things. Take time to smell the roses and the coffee.
Undergraduate Research Highlight: 
Meet Nicholas McCarty

Nicholas McCarty routinely “goes where no man has gone before.”

At least that is how the junior describes being a part of a research team. He reasons that “every time you conduct an experiment, you are serving to advance the realm of human knowledge. Ultimately, you hope to significantly improve the lives of others.”

McCarty, a biochemistry major from Geneva, Illinois, has been working as an undergraduate researcher since the first semester of his freshman year. He contacted several faculty members and set up interviews to talk about research, ultimately choosing to accept a position in Dr. E. Dale Abel’s lab because he “was interested in diabetes due to familial issues and wanted an opportunity to work with living biological systems.”

McCarty, a biochemistry major from Geneva, Illinois, has been working as an undergraduate researcher since the first semester of his freshman year. He contacted several faculty members and set up interviews to talk about research, ultimately choosing to accept a position in Dr. E. Dale Abel’s lab because he “was interested in diabetes due to familial issues and wanted an opportunity to work with living biological systems.”

The Abel Laboratory, a member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles Diabetes Research Center located in the Pappajohn Biomedical Discovery Building, focuses on molecular mechanisms leading to cardiac dysfunction in diabetes and the regulation of myocardial growth and metabolism by insulin signaling. McCarty explains, “Type 2 diabetes is characterized by failure of essential tissues to absorb insulin, which is produced in the pancreas. We are seeking to understand essential proteins in the insulin-signaling pathway, which is very important for the maintenance of the heart under conditions of diabetes.”

While the Abel Lab has several different studies in progress, McCarty’s focus has been directed primarily on a studies examining cardiovascular metabolism in the mammalian heart. “Essentially,” he says, “we deleted (or knocked out) insulin receptors in the heart, which results in a loss of insulin signaling. This means that cells are no longer able to take up and utilize glucose. This is a model for diabetes. After this knockout, we ran a series of tests to determine if heart failure occurs as a result of loss of insulin signaling.”

“I love the studies that I have been working on. They offer very practical clinical insights that I can draw upon in a future biomedical research career in order to help treat patients,” McCarty says. As of now, he plans on pursuing either a PhD in Biochemistry or an MD/PhD, stating that his experience in the Abel Lab has affirmed these aspirations.

McCarty thinks that once students get involved in research and start working with “thinkers of the highest caliber,” they often decide to make a positive change in their own scholarly development. “For me,” he says, “research has actually helped...”
Meet Nicholas McCarty, continued

me achieve higher grades - not only because it makes me a better thinker (I’m challenged to think critically about everything that I do), but because it has given me goals about where I want to go and the requirements that are necessary to start a career in research or enter medical-scientist programs.”

He is well into his professional development, admitting “I have received a number of fellowships and presentation awards because I just apply for everything and have gotten good at talking about my work.”

It isn’t that simple, of course. McCarty is intensely dedicated to research. He spends about 20 hours per week in the lab during the academic year (and more during the summer), all while balancing coursework as a member of the University Honors Program and extracurriculars like leading The Global Education in Medicine Initiative, a student organization that goes abroad to assist with public health measures in developing countries (the most recent was a trip to El Jazmin, Costa Rica).

Not only does he like the research he’s doing, he really enjoys telling others about it. He routinely takes advantage of opportunities to present – he is a familiar face the Fall and Spring Undergraduate Research Festivals here on campus and seeks out funding in order to present at professional meetings of interest.

His hard work (and ability to talk about it in audience appropriate language) has been rewarded in the form of fellowships. McCarty spent the 2014-2015 academic year working as an ICRU Research Fellow and this summer he was selected for two prestigious fellowships. He was one of twelve students (from a national application pool that included first year graduate and medical students) to be chosen as a summer fellow of the Endocrine Society. The American Heart Association also selected McCarty as one of ten students from the Midwest for their summer undergraduate fellowship and he was recently awarded a prestigious Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, a national award for outstanding undergraduates in STEM.

As much as he has gotten out of his research experience, is isn’t a surprise that McCarty wants to pay it forward. “I would love to become a PI and provide students with the same opportunities in research and mentorship that I have been fortunate enough to receive.” McCarty says that although his PI is very busy, he is committed to mentoring the undergraduates in his lab. “Dr. Abel offered me a research position in his laboratory despite the fact that I had never taken a college level course. He has overseen my development, offering essential feedback on research, presentations, and applications, all while pushing me to excel.”

“Research,” he says, “gives me a unique and personal connection to a topic in a scientific field. While it can be frustrating at times, the personal and professional development that it provides is priceless.”

- Nicholas McCarty

“Research gives me a unique and personal connection to a topic in a scientific field. While it can be frustrating at times, the personal and professional development that it provides is priceless.”

This article originally appeared on the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU) website, in their Undergraduate Research Spotlight.

Follow us on Social Media for the latest Honors events, opportunities, updates and more.
Fostering Education and Community:
Honors to Expand Advising Staff

By Eilidh Sperry

The Honors Program, tucked away in the Blank Honors Center, may seem like a small organization. However, it provides students with a wealth of opportunities ranging from unique classes to important connections with faculty. Honors also gives support to students in the form of the Honors Peer Advising Program. In addition to assisting the program staff with outreach and recruitment, the Honors Peer Advisors use their experiences and expertise in Honors to help advise other students so that they are familiar with the requirements of the curriculum.

As the current curriculum was first introduced in 2013, Honors in 2015 began assessing program outcomes for the first groups of students who entered the program under the new requirements. Early findings have prompted changes in the peer advising structure to expand advising support with the goal of increasing the percentage of honors students who complete Level I of the University Honors curriculum (12 semester hours of honors coursework) on time, within their first four semesters of membership in the program.

To provide the expanded support, the Honors Peer Advising program will branch out into two programs starting in the fall of 2016. The first, the Honors Outreach Ambassadors, will continue doing recruitment, outreach, programming, and interest-specific advising. The second program, called the Honors Peer Advising Staff, will conduct required general honors advising for students who have not yet completed their Level I requirements for University Honors.

The Honors Peer Advising Staff is made up of six honors students, all of whom are juniors and seniors who have been highly involved with the program as peer advisors or summer orientation ambassadors in the past. These six students share the belief that honors is not just an achievement, but a community which fosters growth, connections and education at a higher level. Each student brings their own goals and interests to the staff, and all are excited to take on a new leadership role in the Honors Program.
Honors to Expand Advising Staff

The Honors Peer Advising Staff

Marina Gibbs is a human physiology and chemistry major on the pre-medicine track, and is earning certificates in clinical and translational science. She has been part of many activities in the Honors Program, ranging from contract courses to research practicum, and believes the true value of the program is in the connections students make with peers, professionals, and themselves. She hopes to foster these connections and support the values of the Honors Program as a part of the peer advising staff.

Kelly McElroy, a major in history and philosophy who is also pursuing a teaching certificate in social studies secondary education, was motivated to join the Honors Program by his wish to be surrounded by “academically motivated students.” He has accomplished that goal in many ways, which include living in the honors residence hall Daum and participating in the Honors Opportunity Program. Kelly’s goals as part of the staff are to build students’ confidence and increase their comfort in being a part of Honors and completing the requirements of the program.

Benjamin Ross, aside from being a peer advisor, attends ICFRC lunches and has lived in the honors residence hall Daum and honors apartments in Centerstone. He is majoring in music education and voice performance, and minoring in communication sciences and disorders. Benjamin believes that the Honors Program provides students with many opportunities for connection and community, and he hopes to help honors students realize that these beneficial experiences are readily available.

Navya Mannegi’s motivation for joining the Honors Program was the opportunity for connection and growth which it provides. She is majoring in finance and management, and has participated in the Spring Undergraduate Research Festival as well as other honors events. She first became a peer advisor to give back to the honors community. Her motto is “live as if it’s your last day, and learn like you’ll live forever,” which prompted her to become a peer advisor, as Navya believes that the Honors Program provides both meaningful learning and life experiences.

Anastasia Hertz has participated in many honors events, including events for pre-medicine and an event where she went into the medical helicopter at UIHC. She is majoring in biomedical engineering with a focus in cardiovascular biomechanics. Anastasia values the Honors Program as it fosters higher level learning both in and out of the classroom, and she became a peer advisor as a way to be more involved and give back. She aims to help students have a well-rounded experience at the university.

Monisa Saravanan joined the Honors Program ultimately thanks to the honors students who impressed her when first visiting campus. She majors in human physiology on the pre-medicine track and is minoring in both global health and psychology. She values the opportunities to form connections through the Honors Program, and her favorite part of the Peer Advising Program is interacting with students and advising them, giving them advice from her experiences as a honors student. She hopes to continue doing this as part of the Honors Peer Advising Staff.
As of writing this article, University of Iowa junior Lauren Freeman, a finalist in the Truman scholar competition, is waiting to learn the end result of an application process that has demanded from her over six months of hard work. Since November, Lauren has presented her application to both a committee on campus and the Truman foundation as well as participated in rigorous practice interviews leading up to the finalist panel interview over spring break. Now, winners of scholarships and fellowships like the Truman, the Goldwater, and the Rhodes obviously benefit from the lengthy process, walking away with a prestigious title and a lot of money.

But given that thousands apply for these awards, the odds of winning are very low. It makes one wonder, what’s the point of putting in so much time and effort when any college student has a hundred other assignments and activities demanding their attention and the chances of ending up a winner instead of a “loser” in one of these competitions are so slim?

“Losers? We really need to come up with a much better word than that,” said Kelly Thornburg, University of Iowa director of scholar development and a Truman Scholar herself. “To lose is the opposite of gain, but everyone who goes through the process of applying for a scholarship or fellowship gains something, even if it isn’t the big money prize.”

Thornburg sees scholar development as a “long game,” a much larger investment than even the six-month road to becoming a Truman Scholar. Fellowship applications require essays and personal statements, and in order for a student to write such a statement—one that is truly their own and that successfully communicates who they are and what their goals are—Thornburg coaches them through practicing reflection and self-observation.

When discussing the self-reflection and work that Lauren Freeman put into her Truman application and interview, Thornburg said, “She’s so much farther ahead in her graduate school applications and in considering specifically what it is she wants to do when she goes to work after school. And that hard-earned development won’t disappear if she doesn’t win the scholarship.”

At college, students are put under pressure to figure out in four short years who they are, how they want to make an impact on the world, and how they can make that impact. That’s easier said than done. Thornburg thinks that the teacher-student classroom scenario common to the college experience isn’t always the most conducive setting to figuring those things out.

“I think we train you guys so well to look at meeting our expectations and finding out what we want you to do,” she said, “but if you’re interested in doing research, or anything that needs you to look at results and measurements and be able to offer proof of what you’re doing, you need to be able to articulate yourself. You need to have a vision for what you’re trying to prove and then be able to walk people through it in a way that they can understand and relate to what that proof is and what can be done with it from there. That’s not easy. It takes practice even for people who do it all the time. It’s
The Benefits of Applying Regardless of the Outcome, continued

Thornburg thoroughly believes that the fellowship process can help anyone build that vital self-expression muscle. But that isn’t to say that the fellowship process is easy, and Thornburg admires each and every student that steps up to the challenge.

“There’s something very brave about really honestly engaging with a question on paper,” she said. “You can talk about anything, as long as you’re talking about it with heart…if you’re willing to let people in on that, you create something that’s really great to read.”

In the end, whether or not students win, they always walk away with important self-development.

“I know the process can feel kind of painful because you have so much else going on, and you feel the pressure—often there’s financial support or getting into a school or disappointing other people that’s at stake—but I would say that in general it’s so exciting when people are willing to try. I think this kind of challenge—national-level fellowships in particular, but starting with building that skill when you’re younger with our competitions on campus, and other opportunities like ICRU—this kind of challenge really allows you to grow.”

Honors Recognition Ceremony Highlights

Featured in Photos

Left: Valerie Drake was the Dewey Stuit awardee for excellence in the second year. Top right: Maya Amjadi, left, is congratulated by Dr. Spisak for receiving a Rhodes Dunlap Collegiate Scholarship. Amjadi also presented the student address. Bottom right: The 2016 Rhodes Dunlap Second Year Scholars, from left to right: Jacob Isbell, Laura Fischer, Lance Headly, Naomi Cochran and Alora Krause. All photos by Lindsay Marshall.
Honors Recognition Ceremony:
Celebrating Excellence in Honors

By Katie Kiesewetter

What do you care about most? Why? The answers to these questions are what granted many honors students the opportunity to win some incredible awards through the Honors at Iowa Scholarship Competition. Students, faculty, family, and friends gathered at the Pomerantz Center on April 10 to recognize these students as well as other award winners in the honors community. A reception followed at the Blank Honors Center where the Honors professional staff members, awardees, donors, presenters, and their guests were able to celebrate a happy and successful year in academia.

Speaking during the ceremony, Director of Scholar Development Kelly Thornburg lauded students who applied for and received awards at the national level. “Oftentimes,” Thornburg began, “we have a lot of students interested in national scholarships like the Truman and the Goldwater, but we don’t get a lot of follow through. This year, I was able to work with students who really went above and beyond.”

Thornburg gave special thanks to the Department of Physics and Astronomy, a department she said particularly encourages students to apply to these large scholarship pools on top of getting involved in research and “sharing their work both on campus and elsewhere.” The Department of Physics and Astronomy was awarded the Scholar Advocate Award and was represented by Fred Skiff, professor and department chair.

The Honors Program presented the Honors Award for Campus Support to Keri Hornbuckle, the associate dean of the College of Engineering. In recent years, Hornbuckle has aided in developing a special and specific program of study for honors students in engineering, due to their already rigorous schedules.

Michael Schluckebier, the associate director for recruiting and admissions in the Tippie College of Business, was awarded for his exceptional support with honors advising. He oversees honors advising in the business college and teaches a course for students interested in research.

Four faculty members were recognized for their innovative moves in the realm of team-teaching. The Lane Davis Award for Honors Team-Teaching was offered to Adam Skibbe, Elizabeth Ridder, James Tamerius, and Eric Tate, all members of the Department of Geographical and Sustainability Sciences.

This year’s ceremony saw the debut the Richard Tyner Scholarship. In 2015, Honors at Iowa Alumnus and Advisory Board member Dr. Richard Tyner made a generous donation to the program, and part of this gift was put toward a scholarship to offer recognition and support for a current in-state student who was able to enter the Honors Program by becoming more engaged and academically successful during their first year at the university. The very first Richard Tyner Scholarship was presented to Eli Bratsch-Prince.

Closing remarks were given by Rhodes Dunlap winner Maya Amjadi, a Spanish and biology major who discussed the difficulties in this year’s scholarship essay prompt. Particularly interested in how “many of [the things we care about] come together,” Amjadi explained the benefits of students having to take a step back and reflect on their lives to find the underlying reasoning behind their hard work, emphasizing how our personal lives can aid in pushing our professional lives forward.

To learn more about our scholars, please visit www.honors.uiowa.edu and select “Scholar Profiles” under the “Scholarship” tab.
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 within their chosen disciplines and their exemplary academic performance. Awardees were also chosen based on their contributions made to the university community through a variety of activities such as research, volunteer service, organizational leadership, performance, and creative or intellectual engagement. The following students were recognized at a special ceremony on April 10th to celebrate their impressive accomplishments and their work both in and out of the classroom. Congratulations to our 2016 Honors at Iowa Scholars!

TIPPIE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Jeffrey Ding
Economics, Asian Language & Literature, Political Science
Iowa City, IA

Jeffrey will graduate with majors in political science, economics, and Chinese. A Truman Scholar and a Udall Scholar, Jeffrey is dedicated to building a more sustainable U.S.-China relationship. He studied Mandarin abroad at Peking University and interned at Hong Kong’s Legislative Council. His research interests include China’s environmental governance and foreign policy, as well as how to avoid doing laundry. Named a Rhodes Scholar in November 2015, he will study for a MPhil international relations at Oxford University.
Kathryn Langenfeld  
Civil & Environmental Engineering  
Iowa City, IA  
Kathryn is graduating with bachelor’s degrees in environmental engineering and mathematics. While studying at the University of Iowa, Kathryn has been a member of Dr. Craig Just’s research group in the environmental engineering department. In addition to research, Kathryn is serving in her third consecutive year as president of the student organization Continental Crossings. Kathryn will be starting her doctoral studies in environmental engineering at the University of Michigan.

Alexis Miller  
Biomedical Engineering  
Dubuque, IA  
Alexis will graduate with a bachelor’s degree in engineering and a minor in global health studies. She enjoys discussing her research experience in cell signaling pathways with her students and peers. Alexis delights in ballet, volunteering at children’s hospitals, and participating on the executive boards of the Presidential Scholarship Program, Hillel, Tau Beta Pi, and Omicron Delta Kappa. Alexis will be a research associate at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, California. Following this additional year of research, she intends to pursue a dual doctoral degree through the Medical Scientist Training Program.

Ian Nessler  
Chemical Engineering  
Iowa City, IA  
As a chemical engineering major, Ian has spent an extensive amount of time on campus, whether this meant that he was studying for rigorous courses or taking part in student organizations such as Continental Crossings, Men’s Rowing, or Badminton, among many others. After traveling to Nicaragua to build a bridge and research in the summer of 2013, Ian joined Dr. Schnieders’ group and gained experience publishing in two journals and interning at Genentech. Ian is looking forward to attending the University of Michigan this coming academic year to continue his research on pharmaceutical formulation.

Carter Bell  
Political Science  
Waukee, IA  
Carter will graduate with a bachelor’s degree in political science and a certificate in fundraising and philanthropy communication. She conducted research relating to racial disparity in jail incarceration and currently researches with a journalism professor on new media and social activism. She currently serves as the chair of the University Lecture Committee and served two years as the president of University Democrats and two years as the treasurer for the League of Women Voters of Johnson County. Carter looks forward to staying actively involved in the 2016 election and plans to attend law school in two years.

Maddie Bro  
Journalism & Mass Communication, Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies  
Ames, IA  
Maddie will graduate this May with majors in journalism, mass communication, and gender, women’s and sexuality studies, and a certificate in fundraising and philanthropy communication. As a Division I NCAA swimmer, Maddie earned the Big Ten Conference’s highest academic honors, including Big Ten Distinguished Scholar and Academic All-Big Ten. While in the Honors Program, Maddie served as research assistant to Pulitzer Prize-winning Journalist Stephen Berry and was selected as a national finalist for the Harry S. Truman Scholarship.

Christina Crowley  
English  
Des Moines, IA  
Christina has immensely enjoyed her time at Iowa. A few highlights have been playing in the Hawkeye Marching Band and Iowa Pep Band, traveling to Chicago with the Honors Program for the National Collegiate Honors Council, and completing an honors thesis through the English department. She will be going to graduate school to pursue a master’s degree in English with a teaching license.

Hannah Gallo  
Communication Studies  
Chicago, IL  
Hannah will graduate with a bachelor’s degree in communication studies. Hannah studied abroad in Barcelona to further pursue her interests in Spanish culture and language. Hannah is a research assistant for the communication studies department, where she assists on research that focuses on relationships and conflict. She works for the Honors Program as a student event programmer and a member of the Outreach Team. She plans to pursue a career in public relations. After graduation she plans to spend the summer traveling Europe. Hannah will move to Raleigh, North Carolina to pursue a career in public relations.

Nate Hua  
Chemistry  
Cedar Falls, IA  
Nate will graduate with a bachelor’s degree in chemistry and minors in theatre arts and English. During his time at Iowa, he conducted research, acted in several productions, volunteered at Wild Bill’s Coffee Shop, and worked as a standardized patient for the Carver College of Medicine, among a variety of other things. Iowa City is one of Nate’s favorite cities, and he is incredibly grateful for its cultivation of his personality. Nate will be taking a gap year to travel across Europe and Asia in hopes to gain cultural understandings and introspection by seeking out nontraditional forms of learning.
Recognizing Graduating Seniors in Honors, continued

Colton Jensen
Chemistry
Waukee, IA
Colton will graduate with a bachelor’s degree in chemistry. His passion for chemistry led him to conduct research with molybdenum coordination complexes and various organic ligands. Outside of the classroom, Colton worked as a resident assistant in the residence halls, a summer orientation ambassador for the Honors Program, and a teaching assistant intern for the Department of Biology. Colton will be attending the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine next year.

Marilyn Keane
Human Physiology
Webster City, IA
Marilyn will graduate with a bachelor’s degree in human physiology and a minor in chemistry. She has enjoyed being part of the Honors Program and taking advantage of unique course opportunities, including the Harry Potter and the Quest for Enlightenment seminar. Outside the classroom, Marilyn has had the opportunity to assist in research in Dr. Susan Lutgendorf’s lab in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences. Marilyn will be starting the Physician Assistant Program in the fall at the University of Iowa Carver College Of Medicine.

David Kessler
Speech and Hearing Science
Champaign, IL
David Kessler will graduate with a major in speech and hearing science and a minor in psychology. He is currently finishing his honors thesis under the supervision of Dr. Elizabeth Walker in the Pediatric Audiology Lab. Outside of class, David has worked as a tour guide for the university for the past three years. This fall, David will be entering the Doctor of Audiology program at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. He is currently interested in pursuing a career as a pediatric audiologist at a hospital but is excited to gain clinical experience with all types of ages and populations.

Ryan Kunkle
History
Boone, IA
Ryan Kunkle will graduate with honors in history, minor in Latin and philosophy. Ryan took part in a number of research opportunities and part-time jobs on campus, participating in the ICRU program for over two years with Professor Rosemary Moore, the Writing Fellows program for two years, and tutoring in logic for over two years. He has also been very involved in the university’s Kiwanis-affiliate Circle K chapter, as well as Habitat for Humanity. Ryan will be taking a year off in Des Moines following graduation and plans to attend law school the following year, specializing in the study of constitutional law.

James Ottavi
Economics
Dubuque, IA
James is an aspiring wave maker who has surprised himself with a degree in economics. He has done research in three departments, changed majors eight times, and survived a marathon For The Kids. He has acted as an over-exuberant recruitment chair, a captain who bumps up morale, and a balding nerd who loves data. He has asked questions about everything, found answers to (practically) nothing, and thanks everyone for their support throughout this magnificent journey. James will be moving to Dubuque, Iowa to begin a career as a business analyst at Cottingham & Butler upon graduation.

Emily Szymanski
English, French
Hickory Hills, IL
Emily will graduate with two bachelor’s degrees in French literature & culture and English literature. These past four years, she has enjoyed being a part of the UI Swing Dance Club, editing the Honors Newsletter, and drinking smoothies from the Campus Recreation and Wellness Center. Her favorite college experience was spending the year abroad in Montpellier, France. In July she will attend the Denver Publishing Institute in Colorado and then she intends to pursue a career as a copy editor and a translator.

Laura Wang
English, Asian Language & Literature
Cedar Rapids, IA
Laura Wang will graduate with bachelor’s degrees in English and Chinese, a certificate in writing, and a minor in translation for global literacy. Her involvement in two Hawkeye Service Trips and the Iowa Youth Writing Project sparked her interest in serving underprivileged communities. Ultimately, Laura sees herself as a writer, having engaged in Iowa City’s literary community and studied Chinese-to-English literary translation. Laura plans to spend a year working in China or Taiwan as a teacher or a reporter before returning to the United States.

COLLEGE OF NURSING
Anne Parker
Science in Nursing
Brookfield, WI
Anne Parker will graduate a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing. She is a member of the Sigma Theta Tau Honors Society of Nursing. She has extensive experience in cardiac nursing through her senior internship in the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit at UIHC and work in the main operating room as a scrub tech intern on the cardiac, vascular, and thoracic surgical team. Anne Parker will be working as a Registered Nurse in a hospital setting on a Cardiac Intensive Care Unit in the Chicago area. After a few years of experience, she plans to get an advanced degree as a nurse practitioner.
Meet the Writers
Honors Students at Your Service

**Arianna Chronis**
Arianna Chronis is a junior on the pre-law track 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. Shortly after graduating in May, she will be attending law school.

**Nate Hua**
Nate Hua is a senior about to graduate in May. He’s hoping to do some traveling and eat chicken nuggets and procrastinate adulthood for as long as possible! Go Hawks!

**Claire Jacobson**
Claire is a sophomore majoring in French and Arabic and recently returned from a semester in Morocco. She hopes to eventually pursue a career in translation, and will be conducting research funded by ICRU with the International Writing Program this summer. While not in class she can usually be found in a library, any library, getting lost in the aisles of books.

**Sophie Katz**
Sophie Katz is an English and Psychology double-major in 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.
Katie Kiesewetter
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 undergrad research through ICRU.

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

Emmy Szymanski
Emmy Szymanski is studying English and French and has mixed feelings about graduating in less than four months. 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.

Bailey Zaputil
Bailey Zaputil is a sophomore studying English and Informatics, with a certificate in Entrepreneurial Management. She enjoys drinking coffee, hanging with friends, working out, and reading books.
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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