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On the Cover:
With the arrival of the fall semester, the University of Iowa will open the doors of its newest residency hall, Catlett. Catlett will house 70 honors students. Read more on page 14.

Photo provided by Elizabeth Sheridan
Word from the Director

Warm greetings for the Summer of 2017 to our Honors program students, faculty, alumni, and friends.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF OUR STUDENTS

As usual, you’ll see in this Summer edition of our newsletter many articles on the accomplishments of our students – studying abroad, working on research fellowships, helping us with recruiting and orientation. It’s always a topic rich with content. One student accomplishment, however, that typically goes unmentioned is the work our honors student writers and editors do on the Honors newsletter. Although Holly Blosser Yoder, Honors Advising Director, oversees the newsletter, our students do the writing and most of the editing. In some cases I’ve witnessed firsthand the amount of work the students do in researching and then writing a story. If you’ve ever done it, you know how much goes into producing a good story. The students responsible for this newsletter are noted near the end of the newsletter. Our thanks to them. They do this for the love of their craft, the experience, and not for any wages.

WHY HONORS EDUCATION

My leadership experience with the national organization for honors education, the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) – first as a director on the board, and for the last three years as an officer – has, as you would expect, given me a much wider perspective on honors education. For example, in the upcoming fall newsletter you’ll read about an honors education conference, called the Honors Education for Research Universities (HERU) conference, which was held on the campus of Ohio State University. Three of us from Honors at Iowa presented at the conference, but I was also there to represent the NCHC. Specifically, I was part of a plenary panel session on the topic of “Variations and Commonalities Among Institutions with Honors Education.” My involvement with that issue and panel is just one instance of how the field of study of honors education was opened up for me. Specifically, it helped me to see honors education more as a distinct field of study rather than just an add-on program that some colleges and universities consider more as a recruiting tool than as an essential part of higher education.

My leadership role with the NCHC also took me recently to a conference at Windesheim University in the Netherlands. In Europe, honors education is a relatively new area – just over a decade old – and as a result the NCHC has been the guide for the development of honors education there. China has also begun developing honors programs and colleges and is using the NCHC as a guide. Why are European countries and China putting substantial resources into developing higher education programs specifically for high ability students? They realize the need for excellence in education, which is exactly what honors education represents, in order to address the challenges countries face today.

In our own country, it took a threat to our national security to spur education in general and also as it applies to high ability students. Specifically, honors education began in earnest not too long after the Russians put the first satellite, called Sputnik, into space (in 1957). The fear that this country was losing the Space Race, which was tied closely to the arms race in that the rockets that carried and launched the satellites could (and would) alternately carry warheads, spurred increased government funding for education (the National Defense Education Act). That initiative led to the formation of gifted and talented programing and also to funding for honors education at the college and university level.

Honors education is even more vital today in that the problems and challenges we face nationally and globally are more serious in degree than in the fifties. We at Honors at Iowa see our honors students as potential solutions to these in some cases life-threatening challenges. That’s how we view our students – what we do to enable them in their education is our way of answering national and global issues. They are our most valuable resource and always the foundation and inspiration for what we do as honors educators.

As always, please feel free to contact me via email (art-spisak@uiowa.edu) or phone (319-335-1681) with any comments, questions, or concerns you have about the Honors Program. I’m happy to have such conversations.

Art L. Spisak, PhD

Director, UI Honors Program
President, National Collegiate Honors Council
This year, the start of the fall semester brings with it a new set of faces for the peer mentoring system, previously called honors peer advising. This year’s seven peer mentors are ready and excited to share their Honors at Iowa expertise with other honors students.

“Unlike other types of resources, peer mentoring is unique because each meeting is tailored to each student’s specific needs,” remarked second-year student Olivia Sandvold, who utilized the program during her first year.

Students can schedule a meeting with a mentor or come during walk-in hours to ask questions about everything from classes to professors to research opportunities. Sandvold cited a great personal experience with peer mentoring, saying, “I’ve learned more about courses that pair well together, opportunities for fellowships and research, and gained deeper insight into what I hope to pursue for a career!”

The name change, from peer advisors to peer mentors, “better reflects the aims of the program, which goes beyond just finding classes and meeting requirements,” according to Honors Advising Director Holly Blosser Yoder. “Peer mentors listen to students’ interests, gain an understanding of what’s important to them, and support them with connections to opportunities, resources and people, often based on their own experiences.”

The Honors Program promotes making connections, and a great way for students to do that is by finding a peer mentor with the kind of knowledge and experience that best fits their needs.

All the program’s peer mentors are taking advantage of the great things the Honors Program has to offer, and they’re spending their busy summers preparing to share their knowledge with underclassmen. Current students may meet with a peer mentor during walk-in office hours or scheduled appointments.

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Madeline Beauchene is a biomedical engineering major on the pre-medicine track who spent her summer participating in undergraduate research and traveling throughout the US and Europe. In the coming year she is looking forward to the start of classes and the football season.

Logan Drake, joining peer mentors for the first time this fall, is majoring in economics, philosophy, and ethics and public policy, with a minor in psychology. This summer, Logan assisted with research in the Political Science Department and played with his adorable cat, Finley. He is looking forward to being part of the Iowa Policy Research Organization in the fall.

Marina Gibbs is a human physiology and chemistry major on the pre-medicine track and is earning a certificate in clinical and translational science. She embraced opportunities to travel and explore the world this summer, spending time in Chicago and Arizona, as well as Mexico, Washington DC, California, and Oregon.

Grant Gullion is new to the position of honors peer mentor but—as a two-time Daum resident assistant—is not new to mentoring honors students. Gullion is a fourth year student on the pre-dental track, majoring in Human Physiology and minoring in chemistry. This summer, he enjoyed traveling and relaxing after completing the DAT and applying to dental schools.
Peer mentoring becomes tailored to students needs, cont

**Anya Kim** is a senior biology and Spanish language student with a certificate in clinical and translational science. This summer she worked as a research intern with the Stevens lab at Boston Children’s Hospital/Harvard Medical School, studying how the immune cells of the brain help shape the neuronal circuits of the visual system.

**Alex Lemoine**, a fourth year student with a double major in English and journalism and mass communications, spent her summer in Italy studying literature and teaching English to Italian students. In addition to peer mentoring, Alex serves as an honors writing fellow and a writer for the Honors Newsletter.

**Benjamin Ross**, who spent his summer singing and doing research abroad for an upcoming Honors Thesis in Music, is studying music education and voice performance with a minor in communication sciences and disorders. His summer study abroad and research locations were Vienna, Austria and the United Kingdom.

**Honors at Iowa Alum Connection**

Are you an alum or friend of the University of Iowa Honors Program? Make your connection at our [website](#) and get involved!
As a part of the University of Iowa Honors Program, students take courses made especially for them. These honors courses, of which honors students are asked to take a minimum of 12 semester hours, make up the classroom component of the honors experience. What makes these courses different from the rest of the courses on students’ schedules? “Not more work, but more appropriate work,” is the shorthand explanation often heard, but what do instructors and students say?

Among the differences between honors and non-honors classes is the way professors plan out their courses. Dr. Spisak, the director of the Honors Program and the professor of Self-Discovery Through Ancient Greek Myth, focuses on making his honors seminar “learner-centered” by “planning in more of the students’ voices and student participation in the structure of the course and the material we cover.”

Dr. Jennifer Buckley, who teaches English and Rhetoric courses, shared that she “structure[s] an honors course to ensure that each major assignment draws deeply upon all of the texts we have studied to that point,” and asserted that “honors students are required to engage with the oeuvre in a much more comprehensive way.”

Honors students like Alyssa Mendenhall, a fourth-year biomedical engineering major and Bharabi Pandit, who graduated in May, have observed that honors classes stand out regarding course structure, including the structure of the physical classroom. Mendenhall said that she “especially enjoy[s] the flipped classroom for the engineering honors courses, because it gives you a chance to solve problems with someone over your shoulder to help you out.”

Pandit, who majored in Health & Human Physiology, added that “being in a relatively smaller lecture made the change from high school to college style lecture easier.” Indeed, many honors sections have fewer students in the class and are held in classrooms rather than a lecture hall, encouraging communication among the students and faculty in a more friendly environment.

When it comes to class material, Dr. Spisak promotes intellectual curiosity by asking his students to “look at another culture and the way they do things that are different than what we do” and to reflect on their own lives. As is mentioned in his course title, he focuses on self-discovery, something that the Honors Program strives to encourage in students.

The Honors Program stresses the development of practical skills as well. Dr. Buckley says that “Honors students in English and Rhetoric should become expert writers, capable of participating effectively in every communicative encounter by employing every relevant linguistic implement in the largest possible rhetorical toolbox.”

Professors strive to teach students in ways that will impact their interactions outside of the classroom and help them better engage with the people and world around them. “I build honors syllabuses and assignments with the intent to enable students to participate in a wide variety of academic, cultural, and political discourses,” Buckley explained.

When it comes to all the diverse advantages honors classes have to offer, students and faculty members often have a certain aspect that they personally find most beneficial. For Dr. Spisak, mutuality is a primary benefit. Teaching an honors course allows him to gain knowledge and see things from his students’ point of view. “If you teach people who are truly interested and want to explore, it broadens [you],” he explained.

Dr. Buckley agreed, saying, “I truly enjoy working with students taking classes at every level of the course catalogue, and I learn a great deal from them all...The relentless intellectual drive of honors students pushes us all to a level of critical and writerly achievement that we might not reach if we did not gather and work together.”

When it came to the student perspectives of Mendelhall and Pandit, the learning environment and the connections they made with their peers seemed most important. As Pandit described it, being in classes with fellow honors students who were truly invested in learning allowed him to “make [his] connection with fellow classmates.”

Although honors coursework is a requirement in order to graduate with University Honors, students also find them beneficial for both personal development and for forming connections with professors and peers. With smaller class sizes, passionate professors and built-in opportunities for self-discovery, it’s no surprise that many honors students jump at the chance to enroll in honors courses and sections.

By Jennifer Wu

What makes honors courses different?
Perspectives from professors and students
Morocco, Revisited
A reflection on travelling abroad

By Claire Jacobson

As a sophomore, I spent a semester as an exchange student in Morocco. Now I’m back. I’m spending six weeks at Qalam Wa Lawh Center in Rabat, the capital city, to study in a semi-intensive Arabic program. Basically, that entails four hours of class every day (punctuated by a tea break), evenings of homework, and staying with a host family where I can practice my language skills when I get home from class (10/10 would recommend, by the way).

I’ll be a senior at Iowa this fall, and I’ve spent the last several years, including that semester abroad, studying Arabic and French, which happens to be my major. And what else is there for a language major to do, except apply to grad school? (Seriously, is there anything else? Please, let me know. This is all I’ve got.) So this year, I’m working on an application to the American University of Cairo’s Masters program in Arabic, and one to a similar program at Georgetown University, and a Fulbright grant to teach English in Palestine, and a couple of other things. Basically, it’s a good thing the language center has fantastic wifi (pronounced wee-fee here), because all of that is starting to happen already including all of the requisite communication with advisors and recommenders, et cetera. It’s a wonder I have any time at all to study Arabic.

My sophomore year, during my fall semester exchange program, I lived on campus at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, which is a university town up in the mountains pretty far removed from anything like real life in Morocco. This time, nothing could be farther from the truth. Rabat is just... normal (except for the fact that you can’t spit without hitting someone’s foreign embassy). But while many other big cities (like Fès, Marrakech, or Tangier) are well-known destinations for tourists drawn to their thousand-year histories, cultural icons, or thriving black markets for cheap weed, Rabat is filled to the brim with commuters, mothers with small children, students of both the Moroccan and foreign variety, the occasional ambassador, men on their way to noon prayers... basically, real life. The other day, my friend and I sat in a maqha (café) for three or four hours, shooting the breeze and drinking coffee, and just watched the neighborhood in action. I love that I get to be a small part of it while I’m here, even if that small part is mostly “regular taxi customer.”

If anything, the biggest difficulty for me so far is practicing oral communication. I can read, write, and comprehend Arabic much better than I can speak it, mostly because I’m actually pretty shy around people I don’t know well. (Most of my friends and colleagues would confirm that it takes me a long time to feel comfortable talking much, even in English.) But that means I end up not practicing as much as I should in Arabic. I’m pretty sure the number of language instructors I’ve had tell me “you need to speak up more in class” is in the double digits at this point in my life, including my academic advisor at Iowa; my Arabic instructor here is no exception. But they’re not wrong. That will be my challenge throughout the remaining weeks – to speak up even when I’m afraid. In fact, that’s not a bad challenge to keep in mind for the rest of the time, either.

At any rate, Arabic is why I’m here. It’s not just relevant to my research (though it is), or something to help my grad school applications (though it does). I want to speak Arabic because until I do, I will always experience the myriad Arab cultures through the lens of a foreigner, at best handling it through gloves rather than with my bare hands. One of my professors once told me, “When you’re talking to people in Morocco, don’t use French or English with them, because they won’t give you honest answers. They’ll just say what they think you want to hear. If you want the truth, speak to them in Arabic.” And that is exactly what I want. True interactions, and ultimately true stories. In the end, I know I won’t be satisfied with anything less.
Self-Discovery and Lifelong Connections
Honors Alumni & Friends Mentoring Program
By Eilidh Spery

For students, the most frequent and daunting question they face during their time at the University of Iowa is “What are your plans after graduation?” Deciding how to enter the real world after college is an ambiguous and overwhelming concept, and it can be hard to figure out how to start on this path. The Honors Alumni & Friends Mentoring Program aims to help students with this process by pairing them with mentors, many of whom are graduates of the University of Iowa.

This initiative is a new way the Honors Program is working to educate Honors students by giving them additional resources to use during their time at Iowa. Though the process of developing the Mentoring Program began last year, the inspiration came far earlier: Two years ago, while revising the mission statement to include self-discovery as a primary aim, Honors staff asked a student focus group for feedback and found that mentoring was a popular request.

This same idea came up in an Honors Program Advisory board meeting more recently when Lana Zak, a board member, suggested instituting a mentoring program. To begin the process of creating this program, the Honors Advisory Board formed a Mentoring Committee, headed by Pat Rolston, the interim president of the Advisory Board. This committee is where the Mentoring Program started, with a group of distinguished alumni who were interested in creating a system for Honors students to connect with mentors. Rolston (’78, Business Administration) conducted research into similar programs at other universities and determined that a software system was needed to connect mentors to students.

Advisory Board member Brett Williams (’83, Physics & Astronomy) began developing the “business rules” for the software and started work on the software itself. Later, Honors student and now graduate Tom Werner (’17, Computer Science) took over the technical development of the program. Werner, who had prior experience with similar technology, developed the database and currently works on maintaining the software, a role he has volunteered to continue in the future.

Designing this software was only half of the program’s foundation however. The other vital component was finding and recruiting mentors. Rolston believes that by sharing “experiences we have as alumni, we can find a way to give back,” and a large portion of his work has been recruiting individuals to be mentors for the program. He and Dr. Art Spisak, the Honors Program Director, collectively recruited over a hundred individuals to serve as mentors. Rolston would attend the Iowa City Foreign Relations Council (ICFRC) meetings and ask guest speakers to become mentors, and remarked that hardly anyone has said no. The future mentors include both alumni and non-alumni, individuals in a wide range of career fields and interests, and people throughout the entire country and overseas. These mentors range from the former president of the University of Minnesota to high level scientists at Intel, involved in process automation. And this is an ongoing project: Dr. Spisak and Rolston plan to continue recruiting mentors, continually adding to the database.

These hundreds of professionals may sound intimidating to a honors student looking for a single mentor, but the system is designed as a space to easily facilitate these connections. The program will feature a menu of options and students will be able to conduct a targeted search based on their career interests. They will then be presented with a list of potential mentors to choose from. Mentors will each have an individualized profile with information about themselves, as well as the manner in which they wish to communicate. Students will be able to contact these mentors to learn from their experiences and get advice.

The ultimate goal of this program, said Williams, is “to facilitate optimal links between mentor and mentee, such that a life of mentor experience can be transferred to students about to enter their careers. This often results in lifelong connections to the benefit of both parties.”
Connecting with a mentor can help students figure out who they are and what they want to do, as Dr. Spisak notes. Mentees can start to determine their trajectory and take control of their future. They can decide upon their career path in an external sense, and in an internal sense decide whether it will be personally fulfilling. However, students will not be the only ones who benefit by the program: Dr. Spisak states that the second half of the program’s benefits are for the mentors. The opportunity to give back, as Williams, Rolston, and Werner can all attest to, is unique and very rewarding. The hope is that as the program continues to grow, mentors will become more involved with the Honors Program and the process of mentoring will enable more self-discovery for mentees.

This fall will mark the Mentoring Program’s entrance into the world of the Honors Program. It will be piloted first with the Presidential Scholars Program in order to get feedback, find bugs, and generally improve the program, and eventually be opened for all Honors Students to use. Those on the Mentoring Board plan for the program to continue evolving and growing over the years, perhaps extending into additional events, potential networking opportunities, and research about its effects on self-discovery. As Rolston said, “The sky’s the limit in terms of how this ends up evolving.”

In fact, the only potential concern for the program is one that all mentoring programs share, and one which will depend on the mentees themselves: student involvement. A great deal of the program’s success relies on student awareness and participation, and students are often hesitant to contact a stranger who has a lot of experience and credentials. All the individuals involved in forming the program encourage students to connect with mentors. Dr. Spisak notes that all the mentors are enthusiastic and well-intentioned, and that even if you do not find the best fit with your first mentor, you should try again. Williams emphasizes the personal and professional rewards which a well-matched mentor can present, while Rolston states that there is huge value in building your community at Iowa through mentoring, on both sides of the program. And Werner sums up the ideal mindset for those intimidated by mentors: “It can’t hurt to contact someone, and you can form a connection.”

The Honors Mentoring Program offers a unique opportunity for Honors students to connect with diverse individuals with extensive experience in many fields. Students can ask questions about their careers, take control of their futures, and form potentially life-long connections with mentors. Mentors benefit as well, as they get the opportunity to help students, and many are able to give back to the university and Honors Program that supported them during their time at Iowa. The program is perhaps best described by Rolston, who states that “There’s a new opportunity here to realize your dreams.”

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Left: Tom Werner, who created the software for the program and continues to maintain it, speaking at last year’s Advisory Board Dinner. Right: Brett Williams, a member of the Advisory Board Mentoring Committee, with Betty Williams and prior Honors Director Dr. Nelson in 2009 when establishing the Williams Scholarship.
Research in the Sun
2017 Summer ICRU Fellows research a variety of fields

Ashley Chong, International Studies; Anthropology Minor; Writing Certificate

Senior Ashley Chong is researching for the International Writing Program’s new podcast, “Origins,” which interviews writers from the Fall Residency program. Chong’s tasks includes reading through writing samples, learning about the writer’s countries’ histories and their craft. “It’s like tracing backwards from an established writer,” Chong said. “It’s an incredible learning opportunity that both lets me learn about different countries and also about writing in general.”

Chong said the goal of her project is to be able to piece together questions that explore the writers’ cultural, linguistic and literary origins. In addition, Chong says her honors thesis and writing capstone will be the reverse of this motion. “I will be exploring Korean-American identity from context and creating from said context. Doing research for Origins makes me more familiar with the field that I am interested in.”

This project aligns with her interests and her major, International Studies. Chong says that with her degree, she is used to studying the context of texts such as history and anthropology, but this project allows her to explore the literary value as well. This experience helped her practice condensing broad ideas, conducting research, and drafting interview questions.

“Long term, I hope to use my International Studies knowledge in writing and other creative fields, so researching the ways international writers have been influenced I believe prepares me for my goals,” she said.

She decided to perform the internship in the summer because she felt it was a “good in-between time to expose myself to different concepts and the workings of a literary organization. I would have the space to bounce around my ideas and be curious in more freedom than during the semester.”

No stranger to international affairs, Chong has lived in five different countries: Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Canada and the US. She hopes to one day be a literary translator for Korean, English and possibly French. She also would like to be published one day.

In future projects, Chong is interested in joining or starting a global art collective, because she loves connecting with people in creative and emotional ways, and the relationship and products of these connections.

Anne Edwards, Global Health Studies, Psychology Minor

Under the Iowa Department of Public Health, junior Anne Edwards conducts data abstraction and analysis for the Iowa Violent Death Reporting System. While most of her work is confidential, Edwards says that she is working on analyzing data and putting together reports to advocate for awareness and statewide policy changes.

Edwards was interested in an summer research position because she wanted to gain exposure to different careers and jobs within the health field. “I really appreciate that the ICRU fellowship opportunity works to pair students directly with a faculty mentor, but especially that the project is so student-directed which allows me to feel more like I am involved in the decisions for the research process,” she said.

“I was interested in participating in my project in the summer because I was hoping that this timeframe would allow me to devote more time to my work so I can be more involved. My schedule is more flexible in the summer and I was really interested in what this particular group would be doing over the summer months.”

She credits ICRU and the honors program for aiding her in creating contacts with university staff and locating a mentor for her project. “I appreciate that they are always helping students look for new opportunities even if we are already pretty involved. The honors program and ICRU have also both been

By Bailey Zaputil

Ashley Chong

Anne Edwards
2017 Summer ICRU Fellows research a variety of fields, cont.

really flexible which I have been grateful for.”

For Edwards, this is the most health-related job she has ever done before, and she considers it a valuable experience. After her summer term, she hopes to find more opportunities in this field, because she thinks this an area where more interest should be focused.

In addition to her summer internship, Edwards is a Leader Board member at UIHC, a Standardized Patient at MERF, and is involved in Women in Science and Engineering (WISE).

As for career aspirations, Edwards hopes to one day attend medical school and work with children in some capacity. “I have interests in health globally and I think there is a lot to be learned from data locally that can be more easily implemented in countries with ailing health systems, so I would like to focus on related issues in my future endeavors.”

Mikaela Mallin, Biomedical Science and Dance, Certificate in Clinical and Translational Science

For junior Mikaela Mallin, this will be her third ICRU project, with a fourth one scheduled for this fall. Mallin is returning to study under Dr. Robert Cornell’s lab in the department of Anatomy and Cell Biology for the third time this summer, and will be studying with Dr. Rebekah Kowal in the department of Dance this fall.

Mallin has been in the Cornell Lab since February 2016, but said she wanted to take her involvement to the next level by working on her own project. She says she was particularly interested in summer research as she was already taking summer classes and would have more time in the lab with less activities that come during the academic year.

Mallin’s research this summer will be on development genetics, using zebrafish as a model organism. “My work focuses on pinning down the elements of the gene regulatory network that regulates the development of melanocytes, the pigment producing cells of the skin. By understanding all of the genes and genetic regulatory elements that monitor melanocyte development, we will be better able to pinpoint genetic causes of melanocyte-related disorders, such as premature hair graying and melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer.”

Through ICRU, Mallin has had the opportunity to present her research at events like the Fall and Spring Undergraduate Research Festivals, Research in the Capitol, and the Marshall Undergraduate Research Conference. She is very excited, however, to partake in the International Pigment Cell Conference in Denver, Colorado to present her research in the Cornell Lab.

ICRU has enabled Mallin to fully pursue research and research presentation, both in the lab and as an undergraduate research ambassador. “Becoming involved in the Cornell Lab has solidified by love for science and fortified my ambitions to work in medical-related research for the rest of my life. Additionally, it has taught me patience, perseverance, and a great set of problem-solving skills for when things don’t go as planned. It has provided me with the beginnings of a network of scientists who I can learn from, as well as new students who I can begin to mentor.”

These experiences will no doubt benefit Mallin in the future, where she intends on earning a PhD and continuing biomedical research.

Angela Olvera, Biomedical Engineering

Senior Angela Olvera works in the Abel Laboratory, which is part of the Fraternal Order of the Eagles Diabetes Research Center. Olvera focuses on type-II diabetes, with the goal of her research being able to determine the specific contribution of Optic Atrophy 1 (OPA1), an inner mitochondrial membrane protein that plays a fundamental role in mitochondrial fusion and respiratory function, to adipose tissue physiology during a high fat diet.

To conduct her research, Olvera uses mouse models or cell lines. “So far, we have seen that mice lacking OPA1 in adipose tissue are resistant to diet-induced obesity and insulin resistance,” Olvera said.

According to Olvera, summer is an incredible time to get lab experience. “Even with 10-20 hours in the lab a week during the school year, it is still difficult to run long experiments. For example, a western blot takes two days to finish. During the school
2017 Summer ICRU Fellows research a variety of fields, cont.

Still, the research is not without its challenges. “The greatest challenges in lab for myself is finding the patience to keep trying. There are times that you can get stuck in a rut with your experiment. It gets a bit frustrating to do the same experiment repeatedly, changing one thing at a time and not getting it to work. However, that moment it does finally work makes everything else worthwhile,” she said.

ICRU has helped Olvera by not putting “a boundary” on her achievements. “I have never been told by someone in these programs that I cannot accomplish something. I have only ever had support and suggestions along my way.”

After graduation, Olvera hopes to enter a medical scientist training program, and work with patients while moving the research forward on the disease they have. “The focus of my work will hopefully be cardiovascular disease in pediatric patients. I am excited that I began this adventure in a lab at the University of Iowa. The community here has truly changed my life for the better.”

Devyn Lee Stewart, Biochemistry

Sophomore Devyn Lee Stewart knew coming to Iowa that he wanted to get involved in scientific research. The opportunity came when his Principles of Chemistry professor, Dr. Chris Cheatum, asked Stewart to join his lab this summer.

According to Stewart, Dr. Cheatum’s lab utilizes femtosecond lasers to perform imaging of molecules. “A femtosecond laser is just a laser that shoots off very short pulses of light (on the order of femtoseconds, which are \(1/1,000,000,000,000,000\)ths of a second). My job is to help write a program that will allow the femtosecond laser’s measurements to be processed much more quickly.”

The challenge, then, is that gathering meaningful data with the femtosecond laser can take a very long time, as many as a couple of days. The goal of the program is to produce a mathematical formula to reduce this delay to scale of minutes to hours, in order to quicken the overall research performed in Dr. Cheatum’s lab.

Stewart has found his experience very rewarding. “I was especially excited to work over the summer because I could focus completely on research much more over the summer than I ever could during the semester whilst trying to stay on top of academics.”

What was surprising to Stewart was how hands-off the experience has been. “There has been very little hand-holding; I stepped into the lab day 1 and was treated like any other member of the research team. I feel like I’ve gotten a more authentic and overall more valuable experience doing research because of that. I don’t have any particular critiques of the way ICRU helped me pursue research. I think because they allow so much freedom in how you do research, it varies a lot from lab to lab, and I was fortunate to have a good mix of guidance and allowance for independence.”

Stewart plans to continue his research with Dr. Cheatum after the summer. As a student on the pre-med track, he is interested in attending medical school, in hopes of one day becoming a surgeon.

Follow us on Social Media for the latest Honors events, opportunities, updates and more at UlowaHonors
Guided Reflection
The New Experiential Learning Process

By Erika Renkes

Honors students participating in internships and study abroad adventures have a new exciting and valuable way to earn their experiential learning credit, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. The new seven-step process—including features such as a pre-experience questionnaire, a post-experience questionnaire, and a narrative—is designed to help students obtain certain skills from their experiences and reflect upon what they have gained from studying abroad or participating in an internship.

Previously, honors students had to propose an independent project and execute their project in the midst of studying abroad or interning to earn experiential learning credit. Andrew Willard, the University of Iowa Honors Experiential Learning Director, stated that the number of students participating in the process has increased since the new system was implemented. Before this fall, he explained, approximately 25 students completed an independent project for experiential learning credit over the past three years. This year, by comparison, there are 170 students who have started the process of earning honors credit for their study abroad experiences and internships.

Not only is this new process more manageable for students to complete on top of their coursework, it is drawing more students because of the way it supplements the self-discovery component of internships and learning abroad. “It provides the students with a set of questions and opportunity to reflect systematically. It is a guided reflection, not open-ended, [and] more deliberate and intentional,” says Willard.

Students say that they have profited from the guided reflection this new process involves and feel that it helped them learn more about themselves, their experiences, and their own skill set. Maria Martinez, a fourth year biomedical engineering major, who recently studied abroad in New Zealand, said, “The biggest benefit from this program was that it forced me to think about my expectations before leaving and list the goals I wanted to accomplish while abroad, which helped me make the most of that time.” Martinez developed independence and gained new perspectives of the world from the people she studied abroad with and those she met on her journey.

Rylee Hayes, a fourth year cinema and theatre arts double major, studied abroad in England and traveled widely in Europe during spring semester. In her Honors Reflection Narrative, she wrote that she valued “learning about the world from a different country’s point of view” and added, “Although adjusting to the different education system had its difficulties, I think I am better prepared to be more flexible and problem solve.”

Other students have benefited similarly from this new experiential learning process. Madeline Unger, a third year human physiology and dance major, who chose to reflect upon her advanced teaching internship in the Foundations of Biology class, felt that this new structure allowed her to realize what she gained from her experience and to perceive the importance of her internship and the impact it had on her. “My experience gave me several opportunities to practice professional skills such as reflection writing, scientific writing and observations, public speaking, teaching and mentoring, and biological and scientific laboratory techniques,” Unger commented.

Molly Monroe, a fourth year economics major, and Catherine Rasmussen, a fourth year management major, both of whom completed the new experiential learning process, believe that the new procedure encouraged them to identify what they wanted to learn from their study abroad experiences and helped them discover their own ambitions—all without being as intimidating as an independent project. The new experiential learning process has had successful rates in student participation and proves to grant benefits to those who pursue credit by completing the seven-step procedure.

More information about the new process can be found here, and any questions can be directed to Andy Willard at andrew-willard@uiowa.edu.
Summer Highlights: Catlett Hall

Sneak peek of the new residence hall

By Elizabeth Sheridan

Towering above the neighboring buildings, Catlett Hall is hard to miss. Its speedy construction and impressive dimensions (it’s twice the size of Peterson!) have been talking points across campus for over a year, and the wait is nearly over. This fall, Catlett will house 1,049 students from 5 Living Learning Communities: Arts, Hawkeye Pride, Journalism and Mass Communication, Political Matters, and Honors. The grand opening occurred July 28.

Catlett’s 9th floor was chosen as the new home for about 70 first-year honors students because, as Honors Director Art Spisak explained, “its floor layout lends itself well to an honors community and because it is such an attractive space.”

A major factor was the ideal location—the BHC is just a short walk away through Catlett’s covered walkway. “That proximity benefits our students in the Honors LLC because it allows them to easily utilize the Blank Honors Center and it allows our staff the chance to take part in activities with our students in Catlett,” said Bob Kirby, the Associate Director of the Honors Program. “Additional Honors housing has been a need for many years because we have more entering students each fall than we have residence hall space,” Kirby continued, “and our students have greatly appreciated being part of the Honors LLC.”

As the Honors Program grows, honors housing has become increasingly popular, and the program is working to ensure that those who want to be a part of the Honors LLC have an opportunity to do so.

Grant Gullion, a two-time Daum resident assistant, believes that honors housing is “a great experience for academically focused students with a variety of interests.” Unlike other LLCs, Honors isn’t focused around a single interest area, giving students the opportunity to make connections with peers from all majors and disciplines.

“I learned so much about what things other majors must do and what kinds of experiences come along with those fields,” Gullion commented. “The RAs of honors housing are very knowledgeable on campus resources, especially pertaining to experiential learning opportunities.”

Colette Miller spent three years living in honors housing, one as a first-year resident and two as an RA for Daum. “I always had friends down the hall to lean on and spend time with. On a regular basis, we had fun and educational programs to attend, and resources were at my fingertips, especially those concerned with the Honors Program,” she said of her time in the Honors LLC. “I think breaking out of Daum’s walls and sharing the Honors spirit with Catlett Hall will have a positive impact in University Housing and beyond.”

The lucky students living in Catlett Hall this fall will be the first to have access to its lounges with a stunning view of the Iowa River and the west side of campus, modern study rooms, pod-style bathrooms, and fitness center. Fortunately, even non-Catlett residents will have access to open study areas and the new dining hall, with seven stations featuring everything from pizza to all day breakfast.
Sneak peek of the new residence hall, cont.

Top: This two-bed dorm room has completely new furniture and sleek hardwood floors, in addition to homey curtains.

Bottom: The closet space of the dorms include easy-to-use shelves for storage instead of the traditional wooden dresser. Photos by Elizabeth Sheridan.
Sneak peek of the new residence hall, cont.

Top: Students will be able to enjoy the atmosphere and the food in Catlett Hall’s dining room area. Dining will offer seven stations of food. Left: Students can get help at the fully equipped Residence Hall station. Right: Catlett Hall will host bathrooms for all genders, as part of a campus-wide initiative. Photos by Elizabeth Sheridan.
Sneak peek of the new residence hall, cont.

Top: Stained glass gives Catlett Hall life and color. Bottom: Laundry units include counter space for laundry items and activities. Photos by Elizabeth Sheridan.
Honors Ambassadors
Meet the team in charge of welcoming 635 freshmen

Thanks to a stellar team of Honors summer orientation ambassadors, Honors at Iowa oriented 635 new first-years this summer. During the school year, fall and spring semesters, Honors outreach ambassadors serve in a similar role, offering daily campus visits to prospective honors students and sharing about their experiences at Hawkeye Visit Days on panels, tours and lunches. Many of the 2016-2017 outreach ambassadors (above, top) will return to that role in August, joined by new members from the summer staff (above, bottom). Photos by Jessica Waldschmidt and Holly Yoder.
Do you have any memories of our founder Professor Rhodes Dunlap to share? Send them our way! Your stories may be featured in the Honors Newsletter when we celebrate the 60th anniversary of Honors at Iowa! Contact Holly Blosser Yoder at holly-yoder@uiowa.edu.

“I had never even heard of the Marshall,” said Marshall Scholar Dick Tyner of the award that paved the way for his studies in the United Kingdom. “Rhodes Dunlap literally handed me the application when I walked by his office one day, and said ‘Here, I thought you might like this’.”

Share your Rhodes Dunlap Stories with us today!
Meet the Writers
Honors Students at Your Service

Claire Jacobson
Claire Jacobson is a senior majoring in French & Arabic with a minor in translation. She is a Writing Fellow, and also works for the International Writing Program. She hopes to eventually pursue a career in translation and interpreting, and maybe add a fourth language to the mix.

Elizabeth Sheridan
Elizabeth Sheridan is a third-year student studying English and Mass Communication on the publishing track. She works as an Honors Summer Ambassador and editorial intern for the University of Iowa Press. She enjoys coffee, Broadway musicals, great books, and good grammar.

Eliidh Spery
Eliidh Spery is a sophomore from Colorado and is majoring in English. Besides searching for the best cup of chai, she spends her time lost in fictional worlds, playing guitar and traveling.

Jennifer Wu
Jen Wu is a fourth year student from Iowa City with majors in psychology and biology on the pre-medicine track. Among her various activities, she serves as an honors outreach ambassador, sharing about her experiences with prospective and current honors students.

Erika Renkes
Erika Renkes is a third year human physiology major on the pre-physical therapy track from Dixon, Illinois. She served as an honors summer ambassador during 2017 orientation and will continue as an honors outreach ambassador in the fall.

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

Write with us!
Writing for the honors newsletter is a great chance to build your portfolio, sharpen your writing and interviewing skills, network across campus, and find amazing opportunities through the honors program. No major requirements or experience necessary. Contact Claire Jacobson or Holly Blosser Yoder at claire-jacobson@uiowa.edu or holly-yoder@uiowa.edu.
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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