# Table of Contents

3 | **Word from the Director**  
   Art Spisak

4 | **National Presidency yields local benefits**  
   Dr. Art Spisak finds new ways to improve Honors Program

6 | **Fueling Thoughts: The UI Food Pantry**  
   Honors students work to increase food security for students

7 | **Demystifying the Teaching Practicum**  
   Students earn honors credit as teaching assistants

8 | **Brothers in Honors**  
   Joshua, Jonathan and Michael Abdo share unique experience

10 | **Fall Undergraduate Research Festival**  
   Students present their research to appreciative audience

11 | **Transnational Honors**  
   How Chinese culture and language is changing me

13 | **Writing Fellows**  
   An English and Journalism Student’s Shot at Education

14 | **Window Into the Frontier of a Subject**  
   Students discover their passions through Honors in the Major

16 | **Eyes Towards the Sky**  
   Williams named 2017 recipient of alumni award

18 | **Student Profiles**  
   Five questions with Anastasia Hertz and Tom Werner

20 | **Share your Rhodes Dunlap Stories with us today!**

21 | **Honors Thesis Archive**  
   The Benefits and Challenges of the New Honors Thesis Archive

22 | **Meet the Writers**

---

**Find the Honors Program on Social Media!**

- [Facebook](https://honorsatiowa.wordpress.com)
- [LinkedIn](https://honorsatiowa.wordpress.com)
- [Vist our blog at](https://honorsatiowa.wordpress.com)
- [Twitter](https://honorsatiowa.wordpress.com)
- [Instagram](https://honorsatiowa.wordpress.com)

---

**Claire Jacobson,**  
Newsletter Editor  
**Bailey Zaputil,**  
Design Editor  
**Holly Blosser Yoder,**  
Staff Adviser

---

**On the Cover:**  
**Fueling Thoughts.**  
Executive Board members Aparna Ajjarapu, Sydney Hofferber, Ben Marks and Sarah Ingwersen started a Food Pantry at UI to help with food security for students and staff. Read more on page 6.

*Photo provided by Sydney Hofferber*
Greetings for the Winter of 2017 to our Honors program students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends.

HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS
In this Newsletter issue you’ll meet Mr. Brett Williams, an Iowa alumnus, who has gifted our Program both with his service and his funding of Honors scholarships. This is especially welcome when many public universities across the country, including ours, are facing diminished State funding for the coming fiscal year. In dealing with the cuts, besides trying to make the very best use of the resources we have, we are also being helped by gifts that have been and are made to our Program. As for Mr. Williams, I guarantee you’ll find him to be a wonderfully unique and highly accomplished individual. He presented on self-discovery to my Presidential Scholars seminar this last Fall (2016) by using his own personal life-journey. We were amazed by his many talents and accomplishments (e.g., he has 21 patents; also received the 2014 Global eBook Award for a literary fiction).

HONORS AT IOWA AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL
This last October I took office as the President of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). This is after one year as vice president and then a second year as president elect. Unless you’re part of honors education, you probably don’t know about the NCHC. It’s the only national organization for honors education, been in existence since 1965, currently has over 850 institutional members, and represents over 300,000 honors students in America and Europe. My first contact with it was through one of its annual conferences back in the late 90’s, when I first started teaching honors classes. These conferences, because of the numbers they draw (1,500-2,000 attendees), are held in major cities throughout the U.S. They are three and a half days of workshops, panels, presentations, and various other sessions on all aspects of honors education. It is the place to go if you want to learn what others are doing at their honors programs and colleges, both through the organized events and presentations, and also through casual conversations with fellow attendees. My own engagement with the annual conferences – I’ve been a regular attendee for many years – led to my involvement in the leadership of the NCHC. I began with committee work, then ran for and was elected to the NCHC Board of Directors. While still on the Board, I was encouraged to run for an executive leadership position. I was the next year elected as vice president, which is the first year of a four-year executive leadership position. Why do this – become part of the leadership for a national nonprofit organization? These are volunteer positions, but anyone who has served on the board of a major nonprofit can tell you how much you gain otherwise by serving. Besides the satisfaction of influencing and contributing to your profession, you get invaluable experience. I bring this experience back to Honors at Iowa to help us to give our own students what’s best in honors education nationally.

HONORS AT IOWA’S INFLUENCE ON THE COMMUNITY
Finally, you’ll see below a story on connections Honors now has with the University of Iowa Food Pantry. This connection began about three years back with the creation of a pilot program, called Engaged Social Innovation (ESI). Honors at Iowa developed ESI at the behest and with the support of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. It’s for a special type of student – one who’s entrepreneurial (self-motivated), but who also is passionate about giving back to the community. That description fits Sydney Hofferber, a Volunteer Coordinator and the current Pantry Manager, who is an Honors Program ESI student. You’ll hear more about Sydney in the story below. The description of entrepreneurial and passionate about giving back to his community also fits Ben Marks, a co-director of the Food Pantry, whose ESI capstone project last year was instrumental in starting the Food Pantry. More on Engaged Social Innovation and other projects created by ESI students in the next Honors newsletter.

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
University of Iowa Honors Program Director Dr. Art Spisak strives to learn as much as he can about ways to improve honors education at the University of Iowa. To do this, he often goes to conferences, like the annual National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) conference, where he can learn from honors educators from across the nation about the different methods they are using in their respective honors programs.

“When you’re at one institution, no matter how good your program is,” he said, “at different places, people are doing different things, and it’s valuable to see what’s going on from the national level. And I realized that I wanted to do that – to get involved in a position that would give me that national overview. I don’t just want to go to conferences and get my dose like that; I want to be working with those people.”

Now, as the President of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), Dr. Spisak works with NCHC members from educational institutions all over the United States, and he can see the world of honors education from the national level every day.

Dr. Spisak has been preparing for his NCHC presidency for a while. The NCHC leadership is actually elected for a four-year term. This is the third year of Dr. Spisak’s term; he spent the past two years as Vice President and President Elect, respectively. Next year, he will remain on the NCHC Board of Directors as the Immediate Past President.

As President, Dr. Spisak runs the NCHC’s board meetings, three times a year. He also holds monthly meetings via conference call with the other executive board members and works closely with NCHC’s Executive Director, who handles the business side of NCHC’s operations. The NCHC is a non-profit organization that provides resources for honors education, including events like their annual conference. At the conference, faculty and staff have the opportunity
Dr. Art Spisak finds new ways to improve Honors Program, cont.

to learn about methods of honors education and share what has worked at their own educational institutions.

Students get the opportunity to present at the conference as well, and several University of Iowa students have; for more information on UI student involvement at the NCHC conference, see the Fall 2016 Honors Newsletter. The NCHC also publishes the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC)*. While other journals may occasionally publish articles about honors education as it relates to the field the journal is actually about, the *JNCHC* is the only academic periodical in the United States with honors education as its main topic, making it a major resource for people interested in honors education.

“Honors education is not that old,” said Dr. Spisak. “It’s fighting a battle that every discipline has fought at one time. Someone had to come up and say, ‘This is important enough that we need to create a discipline about it.’ Before, the attitude was that gifted students didn’t need any extra help or resources... As a result, gifted students can shut down because they’re not being challenged, and you lose – but the worst part is that you don’t know what you lose.”

A few years ago, the NCHC board, including Dr. Spisak, realized that there was no official definition of “honors education.” Even though many institutions had programs that they called “honors,” there was no way of evaluating these programs because there were no standards to compare them to. The NCHC decided that honors education needed to be defined, so that honors programs could be held to standards and overall be improved.

“If you call something an honors program, but it really isn’t, the people who are hurt are the students,” said Dr. Spisak. “The NCHC is focused on protecting students. With anything we do, we think about how it’s going to affect the students. If it’s good for the directors but isn’t good for the students, then we don’t want to do it.”

In order to protect students and support honors education, the NCHC needs people with two mindsets: academic and business. The need for the latter mindset was a surprise for Dr. Spisak.

“It’s really been an education for me,” he said. “For instance, when you run a conference, you have to put on your ‘business hat’ so you don’t go over-budget, but you also have to keep on your ‘education hat’ so the conference you create is something that will benefit people involved in education.”

So how does Dr. Spisak, who admits he has not had to wear the “business hat” before, lead the NCHC?

“I’m not the one who says, ‘do this’ or ‘do that,’” he explained. “I’m the one who figures out who’s the best person in the Executive Committee or on the NCHC board to make these decisions. Sharing governance is a challenge, but it’s also very fulfilling. I have a collaborative style, so I fit the role well.”

In addition to finding the best people for all of NCHC’s endeavors, Dr. Spisak has another goal as President: increasing transparency. The NCHC President writes a monthly newsletter, and in it Spisak explains not only what the NCHC Board of Directors did in the past month but also what they have planned to discuss in the future.

“I want to keep people posted on what’s going on,” he said. “If someone has something to say about a project, I want them to know when we’re talking about it so they can give their input, instead of learning about what we decided after the fact. When you get more input, you make the best decisions.”

It’s a strategy that has worked well for Dr. Spisak, who has always sought to learn from the nation’s honors educators in order to help make the University of Iowa Honors Program as great as it can be. His leadership will undoubtedly help the NCHC support America’s honors programs and keep honors education on the right track.
Tucked away in a hallway of the Iowa Memorial Union is a small room with one door and one window, filled with hundreds of food items. Shelves line the wall, stocked with nonperishable food items, and a fridge/freezer holds items like fruit and bread. This is the Food Pantry, which opened last semester and provides food and necessities to staff, faculty and students who have limited budgets and cannot access enough food.

The Food Pantry is considered a student organization, and is supported by the student government and donations from individuals and organizations like the Crisis Center and Table to Table. The goals of the organization revolve mainly around keeping the pantry accessible, safe, and full of diverse options. But they also branch out into unexpected areas, such as education about healthy foods and preparation.

Sydney Hofferber, the Volunteer Coordinator and Pantry Manager, says that “We’re...really trying to figure out the best way to get education out there for people who have limited time as it is...that’s something we’re continually trying to grow.” The food pantry also has a focus on sustainability through the use of reusable bags, recycling, and salvaged food.

There are currently seventeen volunteers working at the Food Pantry, most of whom are Honors students. Their jobs vary depending on what days they volunteer. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, volunteers help clients with forms, shopping and weighing food. On Fridays, they collect donations, weighing and shelving these, or work outside of the pantry, handing out fliers or staffing the free produce cart when it is in operation.

For volunteers, their work offers an opportunity to learn about food insecurity, to give back to the community around them and, as Hofferber says, “There’s a certain level of ownership...over this initiative on campus because you are there working in the pantry, keeping the doors open. There’s also a lot of room for promotion or advancement in the organization.”

Though the volunteering time slots are currently full, the Food Pantry is open to volunteers in case of scheduling issues, and those who can assist with special events. There is also a need for donations of food or necessities. The Food Pantry provides an opportunity for Honors students to give back, and to gain a better understanding of the varying situations of the people around them.

Those interested in volunteering can contact Sydney Hofferber, the Volunteer Coordinator and Pantry Manager, at sydney-hofferber@uiowa.edu. Those interested in donating can contact Hofferber or studorg-foodpantry@uiowa.edu. The pantry is open for donations on Friday from 12-4, but please email the organization before bringing anything in. The Food Pantry is located in room 209 in the Iowa Memorial Union, and is open to clients on Mondays from 3:30 to 7:30, Wednesdays from 12:30 to 7:30, and Thursdays 5:30 to 7:30.
Demystifying the Teaching Practicum

Students earn honors credit as teaching assistants

By Alex Chasteen

Kelcie Eisbrener ’17 (Business Analytics and Finance) and Emma Greimann ’18 (Biology) share their experiences with the Honors Teaching Practicum, an independent study course which counts toward the experiential learning component of Honors coursework.

1. What class are you working with? How did you choose this class? What are your duties/responsibilities?

KE: This semester I am working with the course Optimization and Simulation Modeling. I previously took this course and thoroughly enjoyed it. I contacted my professor about the Teaching Practicum option and he was on board to try it out and see what I could do to help the class. My responsibilities involve me assisting with in-class instruction, developing problems/solutions for the class to work on, monitoring exams, developing review session ideas, and holding office hours.

EG: I worked with the introductory biology course, Foundations of Biology. I took this class as a freshman and I chose to work in this class for two reasons. First, as I take advanced classes within the biology major, I have come to realize what an important course Foundations of Biology is. Second was that I really enjoyed learning from Professor Leicht. She has a genuine interest in her students learning and works far beyond what is required of her to connect with each student. Every week, I attended lecture and assisted with classroom activities, answering questions and working with students. Outside of lecture, I held a weekly review session; after going through review slides I made, we worked through worksheets given in class together. Lastly, in addition to answering questions via email, I met with students one on one to explain concepts or go over past exams.

2. What surprised you most about teaching?

KE: I was surprised at how welcoming the classroom was to my help. Normally I feel people prefer professors over TAs, but it was nice to have just as many students asking me questions during class and office hours.

EG: I was surprised by how much teaching changed my own engagement with the material. In going back and reviewing the material, I solidified my knowledge of it, and learned a lot myself the second time through.

3. How has your outlook on a class or professor changed from taking the class?

KE: I think I have a greater understanding of how hard it is to develop class materials and that students should be more patient with some professors. Sometimes it just isn’t that easy to develop a problem that everyone understands.

EG: As a student in Professor Leicht’s course I was inspired by her work ethic. After teaching with her for a semester, this has only grown. She puts in a lot of time outside of class: making interactive Powerpoints and worksheets, coming up with interactive class demonstrations, responding to emails promptly and meeting with students. Such professors should not be taken for granted.

4. What is your favorite part about the teaching practicum?

KE: My favorite part about the teaching practicum is the opportunity to help others. When a student suddenly gets the material, I am thrilled.

EG: My favorite part of the teaching practicum was helping students understand difficult material. It was so rewarding to help students tackle difficult material while easing their stress. Watching them gain confidence over the semester, both with class content and in their ability to succeed, was awesome!

5. Is there anything you would tell an honors student thinking of pursuing a teaching practicum?

EG: Do it! It helps you really understand the material when you teach it. In addition, you gain a huge appreciation of all the work and consideration that goes into orchestrating a course, while getting to know an accomplished faculty member. It is fulfilling and inspiring to meet dedicated students; I feel they taught me just as much as I taught them. On the last day, students who regularly attended my review gave me a card that they had all signed… it is now one of my most prized possessions!
For many, college can be a tough time when students experience being away from family for the first time. However, that is not always the case, especially when the family seems to come with you into the same tight-knit program. Three brothers, Joshua, Jonathan and Michael Abdo, discuss what it’s like to be in the Honors Program with their unique family dynamic.

The three are native to Iowa City, graduating from Iowa City West High School. Joshua is a senior majoring Marketing, Spanish, and International Business; Jonathan, also a senior, is studying Finance and minoring in Spanish in addition to a certificate in Risk Management & Insurance; and Michael, a freshman, is majoring in Business.

Upon finding out that all three are in the Honors Program, Joshua said, “People are usually shocked and say ‘there’s so many of you!’ They often confuse us for each other... even my younger brother, who has red hair... not sure how that happens. My family is excited for us because they know we each are confident in our decisions to be here. Plus, my Mom appreciates us all being so close.”

“It makes school a lot easier to have family and people who understand you close by.” —Michael Abdo

And close they are. When asked about the perks of all being in the program, they cited the fact that it allows them to be closer together at school. Joshua is an RA at Daum, where Michael also lives. Jonathan says he enjoys the little things, like “unexpectedly passing one of them while walking down Clinton St. or the T. Anne Cleary walkway.”

They noted that they are closest usually during finals week or other times of academic intensity. “It’s a lot of fun. I get to see them almost everyday and we study together sometimes,” Michael said, “It makes school a lot easier to have family and people who understand you close by. Especially during finals week when everyone was stressed out, it helped to be with the bros. They always make me laugh and help me de-stress.”

Jonathan commented, “Finals week seems to be a time that always draws us together, so things like Pancake Breakfast at the IMU or late-night study sessions in the BHC stick out in my mind.”

Joshua said that the only downside he could think of with the three of them in the program was with “the slightly heightened competition we have on top of the competition that naturally comes with being an Honors student.” But to him, that is all outweighed by the fact that they have an extra community to help each other navigate the college experience.

Jonathan said that besides them getting regularly confused for each other, there is no real downside. “We encourage each other to work hard and put our best foot forward in whatever we do.”

The Abdo brothers each entered the Honors Program because they all wanted to be challenged academically. While they all shared a fondness for their Rhetoric classes, the three have found different niches for themselves here at the University of Iowa: Joshua as an RA at Daum, while still enjoying his passion for running and music; Jonathan getting involved in intramural sports and until recently served as president of the business fraternity Gamma Iota Sigma; and Michael finding time for playing soccer and strategic board games, and “creating the next hit song.”

While they have a unique and even fun dynamic, the brothers gave some advice to other potential families in the honors program.
Joshua encouraged other older siblings to “reach out and help shepherd your younger sibling. Yes, let their experience be unique and let them make decisions, but also make yourself available for help with school, a late night conversation, etc. I guarantee you’re a role model to them, for better or worse.”

Similarly, Jonathan advised, “To the older students: be honest with your sibling about your experiences. Let them learn from both your victories and their mistakes. At the same time, let them make their own decisions – they are charting their own path in college, just as you did when you were in their shoes. To the younger students: Find your own passions. You don’t have to do everything the way your older siblings did. Choose what areas you want to emulate and what areas you want to explore for yourself.”

And as the youngest, Michael suggested to not be afraid to ask for help. “Sometimes I end up acting like a fool because I am too proud to ask for advice. Your best friends are your family. They know you better than anyone else. True, they’re annoying sometimes...most of the time...but they’re always there for you. Make sure you listen and love. You don’t want to lose something so special.”

Joshua and Michael pose at Michael’s freshman orientation.
At the atrium in the Old Capitol Mall, students, faculty, family and friends learned about undergraduate students’ research. These semi-annual festivals, organized by ICRU (Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates), are held every fall and spring to celebrate undergraduates’ contributions to research, scholarly and creative work at the University of Iowa. All photos by Tamar Kavlashvili

Middle Left: Aparna Ajjarapu and Eric Mettauer help with poster judge check-in.
Middle Right: Megan Helms and Anya Kim at the poster judge check-in. ICRU Ambassadors were essential to running FURF successfully.
Bottom Right: Hundreds of people gathered last November to celebrate research.

Interested in ICRU? Applications for research funding are due March 6th for summer and March 31st for the fall or academic year. Contact Melinda Licht with any questions.
Transnational Honors
How Chinese culture and language is changing me

By Astrid Montuclard

When I enrolled to the University of Iowa as a Track Student-Athlete in August 2013, I declared Chinese as a major along with my premedical interest track; I did not want to lose my hardly-acquired language skills, which I had been practicing since ninth grade. Upon my enrollment, the Honors Program welcomed me.

In Summer 2015, I spent two months in Tianjin, the biggest Chinese city after Beijing and Shanghai, where I deepened my language skills and completed an Honors Study Abroad research project entitled “Chinese Health care: Combining Times, Cultures, and Knowledge.” Using the knowledge which I had gained as an ICRU Research Fellow over the previous year, I investigated how China combines both Western and Chinese medicine in an increasingly globalized world.

In January 2016, I decided to apply for a Chinese Government Scholarship which would cover all expenses for a whole year in China. Since going to medical school in August 2018 will considerably slow down my Chinese language-learning, I decided to follow my UI Chinese international friends’ advice: with eight years of practice behind me, I would only reach a comfortably fluent Chinese level by spending a decent amount of time in China. I felt prepared thanks to the trip I had made the summer before and my experience with the Chinese language. A one-year study abroad trip seemed like the perfect plan and would hopefully slow down the language decay I would experience in medical school.

After being nominated in March 2016 by Iowa’s Chinese Department (which had introduced the scholarship to me) and after being awarded a full scholarship by the Chinese Consulate in Chicago in April, I was accepted in July by Zhejiang University (ZheDa), an ancient but well-known university located in Hangzhou, the city of the G20.

At the time of application to ZheDa, I expressed the desire to enroll in Chinese language classes in the Fall and take regular public health classes in Chinese in the Spring. When I got to ZheDa last September, however, I was told that public health classes in Chinese would be more beneficial for my language skills than language classes; I could only register for Master’s and PhD classes, apparently a better fit for foreigners. Public health was my passion but my school schedule in Iowa had only allowed me to take two undergraduate public health classes so far. My feeling of being prepared for the “China experience” was shaken.

In the Fall and Winter semesters, I enrolled in a total of four postgraduate public health classes like public health economics and public health services research, and served as a part-time research assistant for different professors in the public health department. Additionally, throughout the semester, I got involved with the International Student Union, theater group, and karaoke club. In November, I played ukulele and sang French and Tahitian songs to the annual Zhejiang University International Festival where I represented my country, French Polynesia.

Getting involved in both the university life and the community life is important to me. On a weekly basis, I volunteered for the Children’s Hospital of Zhejiang University where I helped a hematology-oncology doctor practice her English skills. Going with her on rounds in the emergency room and participating to a conference allowed me to get a better idea of what being a doctor in China means. Once, I volunteered to play with children and when Christmas approached, I initiated and co-organized a Christmas event for them with the International Student Union. The international student community donated presents and it was a memorable experience.

Apart from school and in order to manage the stress provoked by culture shock, I made time for hobbies like going to the gym, writing, reading, and playing guitar and ukulele.

I also spent time with Chinese students and international students. With my Chinese peers, I usually go to karaoke to sing after going out to eat and spending hours talking. Chinese students introduce me to the modern culture of China, different from the one I learned in books. In the hotel where I live (the dorms were full, so many postgraduate international students were sent to a hotel for a year), over twenty nationalities are represented and discovering my
How Chinese culture and language changed student’s experience, cont.

peers’ culture is amazing. I made friends from Germany, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Argentina, Peru, Uzbekistan, Nigeria, and more! Most students are between twenty-four and forty years old, so I learn from their wisdom.

As I am reflecting over the past six months, I realize how much humility, tolerance, flexibility, and Chinese characters I’ve learned. I was blessed to meet extraordinarily courageous people from all around the world who challenged my definitions of freedom, respect, truth, suffering, and resilience. I am grateful for the opportunity I received from the Chinese government and encourage any Honors student to visit China if they have a chance to.

Want to hear more about studying in China? Read Astrid’s blog posts in International Accents, the study abroad blog for UI International Programs!

Study Abroad with UI
From the deserts of Morocco to the cities of China, Iowa’s International Study Abroad Program can take you anywhere.
When I came to the University of Iowa in the fall of 2014, I was very unsure of where my career path would take me. In fact, I had yet to find a path worth pursuing. I had come into college with a passion for writing and literature that had been cultivated throughout my childhood and high school years; intent on making the most out of Iowa’s stellar program, I declared an English major.

A year of reading, writing and literary analysis had gone by when I decided to explore journalism. I picked up a second major in Journalism & Mass Communications and began to see the world of writing from a new, far more succinct perspective. It gave me the best of both worlds—I learned how to push my limits in creative writing classes, explore the work of writers across centuries, and simultaneously pare down these skills to write in the journalistic style. In the back of my mind, however, was a nagging feeling that I was ignoring a significant passion of mine.

From a young age I have been influenced by education. I grew up in a family of teachers and naturally, was raised to see school as a priority. One of the curses of being an educator’s child is that it often becomes second nature. By the time I was in high school, I was teaching in some capacity in almost every aspect of my life; I tutored my peers after school, volunteered at elementary schools as an extra-curricular, taught horseback riding lessons at the stable where I had been riding for years—in short, it was a large part of my life. But this familiarity with education made me want to venture out in college, to rebel against the refrain that I would follow in my parents’ footsteps and make an excellent teacher. The problem was that once I abandoned this part of my life, I realized how much I missed it. It was then that the opportunity to become a Writing Fellow appeared.

As an honors student, I was grateful to the program for providing such an opportunity; as a writer, I was more excited at the prospect of editing and improving papers than most; as someone passionate about education, I was thrilled. Being a Writing Fellow, a role that is ingeniously referred to as a “required luxury”, gives me the chance to interact and conference with my peers about a skill that is near to my heart. Going over their papers, poring over structure, thesis statements and organization is an important part of my job, but it is not the most rewarding. Seeing students become motivated about their work, gain confidence in their writing, and develop an open mind is what really makes me feel like I’m making an impact.

Writing Fellows has allowed me to indulge my affinity for education in a unique way. Based on my experiences, students and their tutors benefit proportionately from the program and most importantly, it works to shift college students’ mindset about writing. Through this form of collaboration, it becomes less a form of drudgery and more a forum in which to share their thinking. For me, I get to continue exploring my interests as a writer and a journalist without compromising my passions. This program truly embodies the idea behind experiential learning and solidifies the impact that Iowa’s academic community can make.

Interested in being a Writing Fellow?

Who? Current, highly motivated freshman, sophomore, or first-semester junior Honors students are welcome to apply.

What? The Writing Fellows program is a peer-tutoring program sponsored by the Honors Program and the Writing Center in the Department of Rhetoric. Fellows are trained in peer-tutoring methods and practice and then assigned to a specific course. Fellows provide written feedback and meet with each student individually to discuss points of improvement.

When? The application deadline is March 27, which requires a letter of recommendation from a professor. First-time Fellows are also required to enroll in the fall 2017 course HONR 3220 Honors Writing Fellows: Writing Theory and Practice.

Where? The Writing Center website or the corresponding page on the Honors Program site.

Questions? Contact Carol Severino (carol-severino@uiowa.edu) or Megan Knight (megan-knight@uiowa.edu).
Window Into the Frontier of a Subject

Students discover their passions through Honors in the Major

By Madison Creery

The difference between earning University Honors and Honors in the Major can be a source of confusion for many students. The process of earning University Honors, while flexible, is largely the same for most students, but the process of Honors in the Major depends entirely on your academic department.

Once a student is enrolled in the Honors Program, the process of earning University Honors is fairly straightforward. After attending an Honors orientation session and, for first-year students, enrolling in an Honors First-Year Seminar, students must complete 12 semester hours (s.h.) of honors coursework during their first four semesters in the program. The second component of University Honors is Experiential Learning, which can begin at any time – this means earning 12 additional honors credits, but instead of taking regular classes students engage in experiences that promote discovery of the self and academic field.

Some options for completing the Experiential Learning component include any combination of study abroad, internships, earning Honors in the Major, independent research, and independent study courses. By completing Honors in the Major, students can fulfill the entire Experiential Learning requirement, but it looks different in every academic program. The College of Engineering, the College of Liberal Arts, and the College of Business each offer a path towards departmental honors though requirements vary.

Every department has an academic or faculty advisor to guide students through the process of completing departmental Honors requirements. For example, Martha Kirby advises students in Political Science and International Relations. “There is no prize for doing the minimum,” she reminds her students; it’s not about simply producing an end project, but about the journey and exploration that takes place along the way.

In the Department of Political Science, Honors students maintain a minimum G.P.A. of 3.5 and complete two honors seminars with the end goal of producing a final project. Interested students are advised to look up professors in the department to find out who is doing interesting research, and who they might want to work with on that project. “Start early,” is Kirby’s advice, “so that you can change your mind as many times as you want as you discover your passions.”

As for the College of Engineering, the requirements are a little different. Students maintain a minimum G.P.A. of 3.33 and conduct an independent project under the supervision of a faculty member during an Honors seminar. Upon completion, students present the project to a panel of faculty and departmental advisors.

One piece of advice from Engineering faculty member and Mechanical Engineering Honors Advisor Dr. H.S. Udaykumar for students considering pursuing honors in the major through the College of Engineering is that “research is a window into the frontier of the subject.” Doing research gives students a glimpse into where the field is going in the years to come. The Honors Program is not about checking off boxes in order to get “University Honors” and “Honors in the Major” written on a diploma. The Honors Program and Honors in the Major are meant to help students discover a passion that indicates a future route for them to pursue.

In the Tippie College of Business, in addition to keeping a minimum 3.5 G.P.A. and completing an independent research project, students are required to present their findings at an undergraduate research fair. The result is that students reach...
a larger audience and develop the skill of explaining their work to a diverse group people who may or may not always be familiar with their field of study and research.

Even though many College of Business students already complete internships in addition to regular coursework, Honors offers students the opportunity to demonstrate initiative and the ability to self-direct on a project which can be an asset when searching for a job in the industry the student hopes to go into. A project, such as researching market trends for a certain industry, can lend insight into the field during the interview process, and shows that the student is truly knowledgeable about what an employer needs or is seeking.

The college has begun to offer an off-cycle, one-credit course that introduces students to conducting research in business, in the hope of creating a pathway for Honors students seeking to graduate with Honors in the Major. Tippie Associate Director of Recruiting and Admissions Michael Schluckebier has one piece of advice for interested students: “Keep some sort of...record of interesting questions that arise that you can’t seem to answer out of a textbook, in class, or in the news. These are the seeds that can turn into a legitimate research question.”

---

**Read more about the steps students can take to get Honors in the Major [here](#)!**

---

*Top: Andrey Sazonov receives his cords from Andy Willard. Sazonov graduated this December with honors in International Relations and a minor in Arabic.*

*Bottom: Alexandra Bartlett receives her cords from Andy Willard. Bartlett graduated with degrees in Finance and Chemical Engineering, with honors in both. Her thesis can be read [here](#).*
The 2017 recipient of the Honors Award for Alumni and Friends, Brett Williams (1983 B.S.), became fascinated with astronomy at a young age. The Cedar Rapids, Iowa native grew up in a home where a telescope was a treasured gift and noted physicist and physics professor James Van Allen was a household name.

But when Williams eventually began school at the University of Iowa, he was swept away by the college atmosphere. "I majored in girls," said Williams. He ended up leaving school not long after he began. While working in a factory, he studied basic math and chemistry to prepare to reenter the university later on. Upon his return to the University of Iowa, Williams began working towards a major in Physics. He was advised by none other than Professor Van Allen himself, who made a point of teaching general physics courses and mentoring undergraduates in physics as well as graduates.

The subject fascinated Williams from the ground up, beginning with the foundational mathematical concepts of calculus. "[Calculus] was like the oracle to me," he said; it both bewildered and amazed him, and he considers it the most gratifying B he ever earned. Even when he encountered quantum mechanics, a subject that is known to stupefy and rattle the brains of many undergraduate physics majors, he persisted. And it paid off – even though the quantum course was a struggle at the time, Williams now holds several patents in the field.

Soon after receiving his undergraduate degree in physics in 1983, Williams took a position at the Ling-Temco-Vought Corporation, now Lockheed Martin, and spent his immediate post-undergraduate years working on antimissile missiles there. Also known as PAC3’s, they are meant to destroy other projectiles by colliding with them at incredible speeds. Williams noted how the hopes of them working were initially not very high: "[The missiles] were thought to be impossible," he says, "but we did it."

While at LTV, Williams also focused on creating yet another revolutionary piece of physics: a highly directional, plasmonic antenna to block unwanted signals that may be picked up by typical antennas. The antenna design, along with a photonic radar receiver built by OEW waves, were significant progressions in radio technology, and Williams holds the patents on both.

Following his time at LTV, Williams worked in environmental research at Houston Advanced Research Center and became captivated by the strange things plants do that are all detectable using technology. "Plants do the weirdest things," he said, from the way they move and orient themselves to the way they function internally. His research revolved around monitoring the health and status of crops from satellites.

After a number of years working as a consultant and traveling, Williams returned to Lockheed Martin, the former LTV, and worked with an applied research group there until his retirement at the age of 55.

Williams currently lives in Iowa City, a place he considers a
Alum Brett Williams on his “astronomical” career, cont.

The Williams Award recognizes students of physics or the natural sciences who are applying the knowledge and skills gleaned from their education in the Liberal Arts and Sciences to environmental challenges. Patrick Adrian, Mathematics, and Paige Noble, Biochemistry, were winners for the 2016 award. Photo provided by Honors Program

beautiful and dear community to be a part of. In addition to his ample achievements in a variety of scientific fields, Williams has published a novel and enjoys painting landscapes.

He has been active in the Honors community through his support of scholarships for undergraduates in the Honors Program and in the Department of Physics and Astronomy. He became a founding member of the Honors Program Advisory Board in August 2014, and sits on the Honors mentoring and fundraising committees.

Williams founded the Betty J. and Guy D. Williams Award, created in honor of his parents in 2009. He recently added two additional scholarships for the UI Honors Program. 2016 Williams Award recipient Paige Noble said, “Receiving the Williams Scholarship was an honor and gave me confidence, in addition to the financial help. I am very grateful for the award and the support it has given me.”

Mr. Williams will be presented with the annual Honors Award for Alumni and Friends at the Honors Recognition Ceremony which will take place on April 1, 2017. The Honors Award for Alumni and Friends is presented to honor an especially distinguished alum or friend who supports and promotes honors education on campus and in the community.

Dani Lipman

Writer Dani Lipman is a second-year Physics & Astronomy double major. Of the interview with Williams and the opportunity to talk with him about his career, Lipman says, “He’s an amazing storyteller and has a very interesting story to tell.” She is involved in organizations such as the Society of Physics Students, and is part of the Writing Fellows program. She enjoys writing and communicating scientific research, and finds science communication and engagement an important part of today’s society. She intends to pursue a graduate degree in physics or astronomy and ultimately find a position in academia.
Student Profile
Five questions with Anastasia Hertz

Hometown: Herscher, Illinois
Year: Senior
Majors: Biomedical Engineering

1. How has the Honors Program helped you grow as a person?

Being in the Honors Program has helped me continue to hold myself to a higher standard: in my classes, how I act, and my goals. I have been fortunate to have had Honors professors that pushed me to learn material in a holistic manner, rather than just memorizing facts. I have become a better learner through classes that I have taken through the Honors Program.

Outside of classes, the Honors Program has allowed me to broaden my horizons and meet new people that think differently from me. I lived in Daum, the Honors dorm at the time, my freshman year and still am close friends with most of the people on my floor. We would go over to Blank to study together, get cookies or ice cream at the Honors events, and would try to push through finals studying knowing that the Honors Treat Trolley would be coming through soon. Honors was the bond for us at the beginning, but that bond has withstood 4 years in college so I think that’s pretty special.

2. What do you plan to do after graduation?

I’m graduating with a biomedical engineering degree with a focus in cardiovascular biomechanics. I am currently deciding between a few offer letters from medical device companies in both the Midwest and East coast. My goal is to work with a team to design heart valves, come back to school to pursue a MBA degree, and then work in product management for a medical device company.

3. What was the most challenging aspect of college?

My most challenging moments in college centered on moments when I was unsure about what I wanted to do after graduation. I came into the University of Iowa as a biomedical engineer with the sole intent of going to medical school. I tended to focus on getting A’s in classes rather than learning the material in a real-world application way of thinking. I then decided to take a full-time internship with a medical device company and it completely changed my future plans and confidence.

I always knew that I wanted to use my talents to help people, and I realized through my internship that the best way for me to help the most people was through medical device design. It was difficult trying to make people understand that I wasn’t giving up on pre-medicine because it was too hard or I wasn’t good enough, but rather that I had found a more fulfilling way to channel my purpose.

4. How do you stay motivated?

Staying motivated is the name of the game in college. Once you find your niche, cling to it. For me, I found out that picking student organizations or extra-curriculars that reminded me that I was good enough, smart enough, and could make an impact were what drove me through 30 hour long project work days. Being an Engineering Peer Advisor has provided me the opportunity to share my experiences with younger students who are grateful for advice; the Society of Women Engineers High School Conference that I organize has helped me remember that I can multi-task, re-adjust, and enjoy working on a team; and Dance Marathon has helped me see the impact that an individual can have on another.

5. If you could give any advice to younger honors students, what would it be?

Honestly, try and do something outside of your comfort zone that helps others. It will help you to continue learning about yourself while also making you feel good!
Student Profile
Five questions with Tom Werner

Hometown: Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Year: Senior
Majors: Computer Science, Mathematics and Statistics & Actuarial Sciences

1. How has the Honors Program helped you grow as a person?

I think the Honors Program did a really good job of both pushing me to figure out what I wanted to do after college, and giving me a space where I could try ideas out. For a long time I wasn’t sure if I wanted to continue on with research and go to grad school, or go directly to work as a software engineer. I was able to explore a number of different research opportunities because of honors, and it let me start to see more of what a career in research would look like. Honors was also able to connect me with amazing people. I’ve been able to meet and talk to amazing people from different majors, jobs, and a wealth of experiences, and being exposed to that has been incredibly valuable for me.

2. What do you plan to do after graduation?

I’m headed to Google to work in their Madison office as a software engineer.

3. What was the most challenging aspect of college?

Managing everything that wasn’t classes - balancing research, projects, interviews, and trying to keep something close to a social life is always really hard, but during sophomore year it was especially difficult.

4. How do you stay motivated?

I try to work on things that really interest me. It’s really hard to stay motivated while working on something that isn’t interesting. When I can, I try to work on other things, take different elective classes, and other things like that. But when that isn’t possible, I

5. If you could give any advice to younger honors students, what would it be?

Meet as many people as you can and be sure to get to know the honors staff! They can help push you to answer tough questions about yourself. Also, don’t try and do everything - pick a couple things that really interest you, and if you still have more time, add more. I found it was easy to get overwhelmed, especially during freshman year.

“I was able to explore a number of different research opportunities because of honors.”

By Samantha Westphal

Follow us on Social Media for the latest Honors events, opportunities, updates and more
“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’.”

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.

Share your Rhodes Dunlap Stories with us today!
The archive for Honors theses has moved. Now, students undertaking Honors in the Major—instead of submitting a hardcopy to a paper archive—will now submit a digital copy of their theses to a new online archive—a.k.a, the Honors Thesis Repository.

It was Honors Program Coordinator Jessica Waldschmidt who produced this idea and led the demanding transition from a physical to digital archive of student Honors theses. Having previously worked at the university’s library archives, she was familiar with the hefty amount of work, time, and people involved to organize, bind, and store the theses in the previous archive system. Taking approximately two years to finally materialize, this transition has involved an elaborate process of planning, finding the right people (one of whom was Wendy Robertson, the digital scholarship librarian), creating an infrastructure for the database, getting student feedback, and coming up with any potential problems.

This shift has brought with it a big basket of benefits, in addition to sparing the library staff much labor and time. Waldschmidt indicates that there has been a great return on investments, and that she “enjoys hearing from students who like it.” First of all, the new archive facilitates the submission and application process for students, especially since most are more familiar with turning things in online.

Previously, students doing Honors in the Major were required to undergo a cumbersome process of printing out a specific title page, obtaining three signatures on this page, getting a seal of approval and so forth, ultimately making several trips back and forth to the Honors Center before turning in a hardcopy of their thesis. Thus compared to this, the new process that comes with the repository is a welcome breeze.

However, the benefits do not halt once students graduate—even after graduation, authors can return and update their thesis, which was, of course, not a feasible option with the paper archives. Furthermore, the new online archive boasts of another terrific feature. The Honors Thesis Repository is also part of a vast database in the university, which brings a new dimension to Honors in the Major. Instead of sending their theses to be stacked with the other theses from Honors Past in a room unseen by the world, students now have the option of making their thesis viewable to a worldwide audience. Waldschmidt says that this larger database enables readers from around the world to “click their way to these theses.” An even snazzier feature yet on the repository page is a little yellow map of the world, on which small grey spheres bounce onto locations where readers around the world have downloaded a thesis from the repository in recent history. Of course, for those who may not want such vast exposure, this worldwide publicity is optional, as authors have complete control over who can read their thesis.

This transition to a digital archive is not without its challenges, though these are few. The main challenges stem from the recentness of the shift. Since the greatest influx of Honors theses streams in during the spring semester, Waldschmidt says, this is when the archive will get its first real taste of action and have time to “smooth out the kinks.” A bigger challenge, however, lies in informing people about the new digital archive. Because this is still a fresh thing, word about the transition has been slow to spread, and thus still few are aware of this exciting development in Honors in the Major.

The next stage, after all is smooth sailing, will be to digitalize the hard copies of theses currently stored in the paper archive, which will prove to be a considerably toilsome endeavor. But for now, it is satisfaction enough to see the archive up and going; Waldschmidt says that now “I can sit back and watch it work.”
Meet the Writers
Honors Students at Your Service

Alex Chasteen
Alex Chasteen is a first-year studying English, Creative Writing, and French. She serves as Editor in Chief of Ink Lit Mag and writes for Note to Self, the UI Honors blog. She loves bad movies, makes bad jokes, and needs to stop buying so many yellow jackets.

Madison Creery
Madison Creery is a senior majoring in International Relations and Political Science. She is currently conducting research with Professor Lai, in which they analyze foreign terrorist attacks and the public’s reaction.

Claire Jacobson
Claire Jacobson is a junior 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.

Alex LeMoine
Alex LeMoine is a junior majoring in English and Journalism & Mass Communication. She works with the Honors program as an Outreach Ambassador and also as a Writing Fellow on campus. She loves getting the opportunity to write for the Honors Newsletter and connect even further with the Honors community here at Iowa. Go Hawks!

Onae Parker
I am a sophomore from Adair, Iowa, double majoring in Linguistics and Japanese Language and Literature. In addition to being crazy about cats, coffee, and classical music, I am also a Trekkie blithely celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Star Trek.

Elidih Spery
Elidih 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.

Samantha Westphal
Samantha Westphal is a senior studying Human Physiology and Spanish. She loves to travel and studied abroad in Valparaiso, Chile for a semester during her sophomore year. After graduation, she would like to pursue a Master’s in Public Health and eventually work at an organization such as the World Health Organization. She enjoys listening to podcasts, making “to-do” lists, and eating breakfast foods.

Madison Creery
Madison Creery is a senior majoring in International Relations and Political Science. She is currently conducting research with Professor Lai, in which they analyze foreign terrorist attacks and the public’s reaction.

Alex LeMoine
Alex LeMoine is a junior majoring in English and Journalism & Mass Communication. She works with the Honors program as an Outreach Ambassador and also as a Writing Fellow on campus. She loves getting the opportunity to write for the Honors Newsletter and connect even further with the Honors community here at Iowa. Go Hawks!

Bailey Zaputil
Bailey Zaputil is a junior 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.

To make a donation:
Visit www.givetoiowa.org/2016hp
Email us at honors-program@uiowa.edu
Call us at 319-335-1681