



THE DISTINCTION

FALL 2021

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Omaha

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Abigail Williamson, Editor

December 2021 Graduates

Carmella Monico

College of Arts and Sciences, College of Public Affairs and Community Service

Bachelor of Arts in English; Criminology and Criminal Justice major
Agatha Christie: A Look into Criminal Procedure and Gender

Advisor: Charles Johanningsmeier

Afrah Rasheed

College of Arts and Sciences

Bachelor of Arts in Sociology & Bachelor of Science in Psychology

Undergraduate Research Motivations Among UNO Students

Advisor: Dan Hawkins

Elizabeth Reisher

College of Arts and Sciences

Bachelor of Science in Bioinformatics

Analyzing Gene Expression: Profiles of a Virus and its Host During Infection

Advisor: William Tapprich

Andrew Griess

College of Information Science and Technology

Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity

CollaborCrack: A collaborative password cracking solution for windows penetration testing

Advisor: Matt Hale

Grace Guenther

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

Bachelor of Science in Education; Elementary Education

Preliteracy Development of Sound Blending: Teaching Consonant Vowel Consonant Words Through Differentiated Instructional Strategies

Advisor: Sandra Shillingstad



Graduate Symposium



Exploring Authenticity

Kelsey Lowe

Authenticity wasn't a term I'd thought of much before deciding to take this colloquium, but from the beginning of this class, we dove into the concept on every level— food, culture, art, race, and music. With my classmates in Authenticity, I studied the “realness” of living in a new way. We attended art shows together, looking at the representation of old and modern Native American culture. Each of us spent the semester learning a new skill, dedicating two hours a week to learning something new and journaling those frustrations and feelings that come out at our most vulnerable (and authentic!) moments.

Of the many readings we discussed exploring authentic identity, we read Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady*. This novel had several points of authenticity for us to devour with the discussion of the characters and storyline, but also in Cather's personal writing. As an influential Nebraskan known for her eclectic view of life on the prairie, we discussed the truth behind Cather's portrayal of Nebraskan living. As part of this discussion, the class took a trip to Red Cloud, Nebraska, the childhood home of Willa Cather.

I expected this day trip to consist of us comparing Red Cloud to Cather's writing, but we didn't just go to Red Cloud to judge Willa Cather. We worked closely with the Willa Cather Foundation to take on museums from an anarchist perspective: our whole mission was to tell the museum what we hated and what we wished museums would make the experience into. We were given behind-the-rope access, allowed to touch anything or sit anywhere or play with whatever we wanted to pretend as if we were Willa Cather. In a way, we were judging how meaningful of an experience a museum could give to its visitors. This brought about conversation of authenticity among us and the people of the Willa Cather Foundation, as museums often struggle in providing an experience that offers more than a glimpse at a different life. I think I can speak for the class when I say that we all enjoyed that authority. After all, what feels more real in a historical house than acting like we actually live there?

While it was fun for us to give the Cather Foundation our ideas and hopes for their museum's future, I'd

say we got to experience something more than just anarchy from that trip to Red Cloud. The day trip turned out to be a total Breakfast Club-esque experience. In talking about historical homes and stories of the past, I created authentic connections with the people around me. And that turned out to be the best part of this class, that diving into what authenticity means for different facets of culture could actually inspire us to develop a space where we could be vulnerable and authentic around each other. With everything that Authenticity had to offer, I think we all left Red Cloud, and the classroom, feeling a bit more like ourselves, and knowing what that really meant.



Criminal Justice Internship

Abigail Osterhaus

With senior year quickly approaching, I knew I wanted to complete an internship that would give me first-hand experience in the criminal justice system. I reached out to Kimberly Retzlaff, the internship coordinator for the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, to discuss possible opportunities, as I was a little overwhelmed with all of my options. Professor Retzlaff helped me narrow my decision down to corrections after talking about my future career goals. My goal is to work in the mental health department in a correctional facility where I can provide those who are incarcerated with mental health services.

After reading about the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) internship position, I knew it was the right agency for me. I loved the value the department placed on teamwork, integrity, respect, compassion, growth, and excellence; and that is ultimately why I chose to apply for the internship position.

After completing the application process, which included an application, an interview, and a drug test, I was offered the position of a corrections officer intern at the Diagnostic and Evaluation Center. I started the Staff Training Academy in the summer of 2021. Throughout my six weeks at the Staff Training Academy, I received training in many different areas including but not limited to procedures, report writing, searches, mental illnesses, firearms, CPR certification, pressure point control tactics, and crisis intervention conflict resolution. The purpose of the six-week training academy was to prepare us for working inside the facilities.



Upon entering the facility, I was tasked with running housing units, working in control stations, turnkey, utility, and the front entrance. All of these posts presented different tasks, many of which included opening and closing doors, building rapport with inmates, pat-searching inmates and staff, and keeping official records of inmate movement throughout the facility. By the end of my official internship, I was training new staff on the duties that I had been taught only months before.

Working in a prison was challenging. The tense work environment, the stress of staff members due to staffing issues, and lack of communication, at times, were frustrating. However, this opportunity provided me with experiences and skills that I apply in school, life, and will continue to apply in my future career. This internship made me realize just how important it is to have communication skills. I used communication in my everyday life as a corrections officer

to build rapport with my coworkers and inmates and to deescalate tense situations. Without communication, I wouldn't have succeeded in my internship, and at worst, could have been assaulted. Adaptability was also crucial in my position as an intern with the department. I worked in many different areas, in some of which I never received training. I adapted to those situations and relied on critical thinking and problem solving to work through issues that arose.

This hands-on learning experience has impacted my outlook on corrections and the confidence I have working in the criminal justice system. I went into prison as an individual overwhelmed with the dangers and tense working environment of a prison, and I left as an intern confident in my ability to do my job correctly and efficiently. I am genuinely grateful for the opportunity I had to work with the department as an intern and the connections I have made along the way!

The Room Where it Happens

Emily Shultz

Honors students take a trip to see *Hamilton*, the world-famous musical about early American history.

Theatre is a unique experience that the students in the Honors course Founding Documents were able to enjoy. By the incredible generosity of the Honors Program and professor Dr. Rhonda Saferstein, students enrolled in the course had the opportunity to see *Hamilton* at the Omaha Orpheum Theatre on November 3rd. As an avid history fan myself – particularly of the American Revolution era – I was very excited to see *Hamilton* and I had a wonderful night. When *Hamilton* was

first released on Broadway, I could not wait to be able to see it. Then when Dr. Lucy Morrison told those of us enrolled in the course that we could go see the show, I was ecstatic!

I have never been to live theatre before, and when I say it is a life-changing experience, I mean it. You were able to feel the music as the actors sang and danced through the show. Also, the beauty of not only the costumes and the stage but the theatre as well was something everyone should be able to see.

In the course, we discuss the founding documents of America and the debates that ensued after the

Revolutionary War ended, such as the Federalist Papers, the Constitution, and the Constitutional Convention. Also, we look at their place in today's society and how that has changed since the late 18th century. Being able to connect our readings and our in-depth discussions from class to such an experience as *Hamilton* was amazing. *Hamilton* wrote most of the Federalist Papers, so being able to understand and see his story gave life to his writings that we have analyzed.

The students who attended this event send their gratitude and appreciation to the UNO Honors Program and Dr. Lucy Morrison for giving us this incredible opportunity.



Community Leadership Award

Lavanya Uppala

Honors student Lavanya writes about receiving the Marian Ivers Community Leadership Award

I have had the privilege to be a part of various extracurricular activities throughout my undergraduate career, and I am honored to have received the 2021 Marian Ivers Community Leadership Award for these efforts. Reflecting on my community service and leadership experiences, my hopes in being involved with such efforts are to foster a community that welcomes everyone, is supportive, and is committed to integrating evolving ideas and diverse perspectives. I have had the opportunity to pursue such ventures through my Stanford University Innovation Fellowship (UIF) and volunteering with the Resource and Wellness Center (RWC) at Nebraska Medicine, and the results of such. With my team (fellow UNO students Joey Gruber, Marissa Morales, and Ryan Chapman) through the UIF program, I am able to help provide students with the means to challenge the status quo, thus allowing a great deal of innovation to be enacted to address issues that otherwise go unseen due to institutional oversight. For instance, in partnership with the UNO Department of Student



Success, we recently founded a paid internship that will allow students to take advantage of their academic skills in pursuing projects that better their community, such as establishing a student law office. In turn, at the RWC, I help support cancer patients by helping fit them for prosthetics and wigs as they undergo chemotherapy, as well as connect them to social services in the community. I hope to pursue a career that helps me to aid others

with similar issues. My goal is to become a physician scientist who can effectively remove any barriers to wellness and success. As I have discovered through my community service experiences: if all members of the community feel cared for then empathy and compassion are more widespread. By earning this honor I have only been encouraged to be more involved in community service and volunteering, and I hope that others will too.

Lincoln Police Internship

Morgan Goslar

During the summer of 2021, I had the amazing opportunity to intern at the Lincoln Police Department (LPD) under the acting chief of police. My internship was full-time for just over a month, which allowed me to be involved in a wide array of experiences. I attended press conferences about breaking headlines, looked at Lincoln's crime data with Crime Analysis, organized missing person reports, researched policy implications, watched the police academy's physical fitness testing, acted in the academy's scenario day, went on a few ride-alongs, and so much more. Each day gave me the chance to connect with new people, learn more about law enforcement, and get hands-on experience in the field.



There are so many aspects of this internship that I liked, but I would say that my favorite part about my experience at LPD was the ride-alongs. Not only did I get to see what police officers encounter on a day-to-day basis, but I was able to talk to seasoned officers and learn a lot about their experiences. It was really neat to finally apply the information that I have been learning in the classroom with actual real-world occurrences.

While I learned a lot of information from officers, I think my biggest takeaway was how ahead of the times LPD is. They were very focused on eliminating biased policing, making policy changes, and analyzing data to make changes for the future. The leaders took initiative, didn't cut corners, and followed through with their work. Everybody seemed to be working for the good of the department and the community rather than simply showing up to get a paycheck.

All in all, I cannot emphasize enough how incredible this opportunity was and I would encourage anyone considering an internship to go for it! I found out about a lot of different internship opportunities by attending various presentations through UNO. They have great speakers come in where anyone can attend, regardless of your major – I went to an FBI panel in which FBI agents spoke about their jobs and fielded questions at the end. I've also attended some zoom sessions with professionals in the correctional and crime scene

analysis fields. For me, listening to these presenters helped me determine where I wanted to intern because I was able to hear about the details of each position. I had done some research online about different fields, but it's much more helpful to hear directly from someone who's personally worked in that position.

After attending some of these presentations and deciding to intern at a police department, I looked online and found LPD, which seemed like a great opportunity. I applied, had an interview, and then started orientation a few weeks later. For this step in the process, I would advise applicants to be professional, regardless of the position. My interviewer was really laid back, but she also appreciated that I dressed appropriately, had a copy of my resume, and was thorough in my answers. Another tip I have is to be assertive – I had to call and email a few different people to make sure my application was received, my interview was set up, and things like that. At first, I felt like a bother, but my supervisor later told me she appreciated my initiative in the hiring process.

Overall, my experience at LPD has been the highlight of my college experience and I was able to learn a lot about criminal justice in a real-world setting. To anyone considering an internship, I would say to attend presentations on campus, talk to experienced professionals, find an internship that suits you and apply for it – you will not regret it!



R.A. Work-Life Balance

Katie Hill

Hill Describes the difficulties and rewards of being a student R.A., and how she plans on continuing to organize her time efficiently.

Balancing life as an RA on top of my academic commitments has been nothing short of interesting. It's my second year as an RA, and it's been a wonderful experience. I'd say my favorite part about being an RA would have to be the connections I've made over the last couple years- both with my residents and my fellow RAs. However, it's not the easiest job. When you live, work, and go to school all in one place it can become very overwhelming. I make sure to specifically set time to take care of myself, and I typically try to leave campus to do so if at all possible. It really makes a difference. I've recently begun a new job substitute teaching, so I know I'll have to be extra aware of my physical and mental health through this upcoming spring semester. Simply being cognizant of these efforts can be incredibly beneficial to one's wellbeing.



Apply to be an R.A.!

<https://www.unomaha.edu/student-life/housing-and-residential-life/about-us/resident-assistant.php>

NE STEM 4U

Sarah Alsuleiman

Alsuleiman writes about participating in NE STEM 4U and her experience taking on the role as a summer lead.

Over the summer, I had the opportunity to lead summer programming for the NE STEM 4U organization on campus. NE STEM 4U is a student-run, faculty-advised organization that aims to provide quality educational after school activities focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) for K-12 students in the Omaha Public School District.

The organization provided hands-on STEM activities for over 7,000 youth in Omaha. Myself and other leads such as Maggie Kehler and Javier Rodriguez-Flores put in a substantial amount of work to ensure programming went smoothly by coordinating and managing different components of programming such as lesson schedules and activity supplies as well as working with countless mentors. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we worked on both in-person and virtual programming, which introduced an element of complexity as we tried to navigate uncharted territories with our hands-on activities. This required flexibility

and being able to adjust lessons.

My previous role in the organization was limited to only mentoring, so taking on a leadership position with far more responsibilities was a challenging but rewarding adjustment. Our team had multiple meetings every week, which included check-ins with the program coordinators Dr. Christine Cutucache and Nik Stevenson. I learned a great deal over the summer not just from the leadership position itself, but also from the regular professional development sessions we had to identify weaknesses and improve on them. Topics included time management, setting goals, communication, and becoming a valuable team member.

During my role as a summer lead, one highlight was a workshop project with Parent University, a family engagement program of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, which was created to assist school districts in creating new opportunities for students and families. By partnering Parent University, we were able to host an engineering workshop that I facilitated with Maggie and Javier. Families who participated were able to design, build, and test models of bridges as part of the workshop. Although I was initially nervous about delivery, I couldn't be happier with how it turned out – families were quite engaged, and it was a great opportunity to cultivate an interest in the STEM field.

This workshop was a successful one: these collaborations with Parent University carried on into the fall semester. I have had a delightful time



facilitating a couple more workshops and working with talented people to deliver engaging, hands-on activities for families all over Omaha. In fact, there is one being held this month with a holiday theme and more coming in the Spring. What started as a leadership opportunity for me over the summer turned into a large-scale, impactful project aiming to encourage interest in STEM in different groups of people with different backgrounds.



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HSA makes a donation of canned goods to the Maverick Food Pantry after hosting event fundraisers

HSA Activities



HSA put on many honors student activities this semester, including a scavenger hunt, snowflake making, and a *Squid Games* Competition.



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