



University Honors Program

Fall 2016 Newsletter

Edited by Chris Winchester
and Abby Wayman

GREETINGS FROM THE HONORS STUDENT ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT: ANANYA MITRA

Fall semester always seems to be a time filled with excitement, enthusiasm, and a readiness to dive right in. The Honors Student Association (HSA) is a facet of the Honors Program which creates opportunities for Honors students to interact with each other in engaging discussions and interactive activities. 2016-2017 HSA is off to a great start! We elected some very intelligent and dedicated students to lead our organization. These students come from a variety of different backgrounds and contribute a broad spectrum of skills to HSA and the Honors community.

So far, HSA has had a very busy semester. All the representatives worked hard to plan and execute the many events we hosted this fall; such as the Scavenger Hunt, Debate Watch Party, HSA Social, and the Blood Drive. The Scavenger Hunt saw a great turn out. Students came to hunt for clues all around campus with their friends while learning more about the UNO campus and community. Our Blood Drive had even more students participating than ever before. With the help of the Honors community and the students of UNO, we got over ninety donations.

In the new year, HSA will work harder to have an even bigger presence on campus and we have some great events planned. Our goal is to have meaningful events that will spark dialogue among the students about controversial and societal concerns to make a difference! One way we hope to do this is through more community service. We are implementing a monthly community service initiative for our members and other interested students. We are also planning to take part in sustainability projects to make our campus more eco-friendly; but to achieve all these goals, we need the help of everyone in the Honors community. We are going to start off the year right with an HSA-sponsored Karaoke Night. All University Honors Program students are automatically members of the HSA and are therefore invited to all meetings and events. We hope you will bring your enthusiasm and ideas to the meetings and partake in all of the "honorific" events we have going on!



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SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES TO COMBAT RACISM

By Xavier Royer

An Honors section of Hate and Terrorism at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) is looking to fight hate doing what kids these days do best: sharing on social media.

The Refugee Perspective is a social media campaign which aims to positively change public opinion on and behavior toward refugees in Omaha. "We spent the first part of the semester learning about what hate groups do to 'market' their ideas about refugees, and then we decided to use some of their own techniques against them to share our ideas to counter extremist beliefs," said Dr. Gina Ligon, professor of UNO's Hate and Terrorism course and START researcher for University of Maryland. Taking what students have learned about how groups from the white supremacist movement sway uncommitted populations to hate refugees, their goal is to leverage what they know already works to provide a new perspective: the refugee perspective.

The class is executing this campaign as part of the Peer to Peer (P2P) Challenge, a national competition sponsored by the marketing firm EdVenture Partners and the United States Department of State, to counter violent extremism using social media. UNO is one of many universities across the country selected to create a social media campaign to counter violent extremism, which can include anything from white supremacist organizations to radical religious groups such as ISIS and Boko Haram. The top six schools selected will have an all-expense paid trip to DC to present their campaign to the US State Department, US Department of Homeland Security, Facebook, and EdVenture Partners. Previous winners and participants include West Point, the United States Air Force Academy, and Missouri State University.

The Refugee Perspective Campaign features videos of refugees providing their own accounts of their time in America and their experiences as a refugee. The campaign hopes these videos will remind the public that refugees are real people outside of how they are portrayed by hate groups online. Another major goal of The Refugee Perspective is to encourage relationships with refugees, as studies in extremism have indicated close exposure with outgroup members can reduce negative feelings about them.

One way the campaign does this is by facilitating UNO students to attend dinners hosted by refugee families around Omaha. A unique perspective the campaign hopes to provide through its video content is the experience of UNO students visiting a refugee home for dinner for the first time. Viewers can share the moment of cultures coming together with the students who were present.

Rather than attack the extremist groups themselves, the Refugee Perspective hopes to counter extremism at its root: hatred. The campaign hopes to break down the stereotypes Americans have been led to believe about refugees and eliminate the cultural anxiety which leads to violent extremism.

While the class does hope to perform well in the competition, the class's true goal is to have a positive and substantial effect on the public opinion of refugees in Omaha. "Our project is important to us because of the rising tension toward refugees the media and political climate in the US has produced," explained class member Alex Chase.

Follow the campaign on Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, and Twitter. Have questions or want to know how you can get involved with the campaign? Contact The Refugee Perspective at: Xroyer@unomaha.edu; Simonesmith@unomaha.edu

HONORS CONTRACT GOES TO THE NEXT LEVEL

By Dominika Jedinak

This semester I began to fully understand what being a part of the Honors Program can be. In one project, I was given the opportunity to take my interests and skills and apply them to something honors-worthy in the form of an honors contract. This is because the project was, from beginning to end, my own.

I enrolled in and contracted an independent study this semester where the study's objectives were to design a marketing program for the Urban League of Nebraska, specifically the organization's Career Boot Camp, a three-week-long job training course which guarantees career placement for those who successfully complete it. The marketing program was expected to include bus benches, print advertisement, and any additional recommendations we might have had. However, rather than being a traditional marketing course, this independent study centered around social marketing, or the idea of attempting to use marketing concepts to solve societal issues. Additionally, The Urban League of Nebraska works primarily with underprivileged and impoverished members of the Omaha community. When designing any marketing material for such a program, one had to consider race and the systematic implications of race. Thus the course was anything but a typical marketing lecture.

I chose to complete my honors contract by writing a report about the students in the course and their experience within an independent study, the subject of which included typically heated issues such as race and systematic racism, which the Urban League of Nebraska brought to the spotlight. I am not a marketing major, and I have never had much interest in marketing in general; however, I have always been interested in the social of social marketing (that is, I put effort into reading about race, gender, and other social justice issues which play a role in the world around me, and I love people in general). Working on this contract has allowed me to take these interests and combine them into something I am proud of, in my own way, on my own time.

Although it may sound slightly cliché, my experience working on this course has been unlike anything I have taken on before. This is because I decided it would be even more challenging, and fun, to contract the course for honors credit, and I am very glad I did. I have completed projects for other classes in which I spent a lot of time and energy, and in the same way I have spent a lot of time on my contract, though none have been something I could connect to in the same way that I have with this one. That is because, for the first time, I was able to design a project from beginning to end on a topic which truly interested me.

COMMON READER EXPERIENCE PROVIDES MORE THAN EXPECTED

By Patrick Hodson

The common reader experience in the UNO Honors Program is a social experience designed to get incoming honors students to interact and foster relationships with other students who are going to begin their voyage into college life. It is an opportunity for students to both think critically about an important issue facing society, and help them become more comfortable engaging and participating with other bright students in an educational setting. This is achieved through group discussions the day before school starts and continues well into the academic year with social events Honors students are encouraged to attend.

I have had the wonderful opportunity to participate in the Honors common reader experience two times so far in my college career. The first was as an incoming freshman, when I was still unaccustomed to the ideas and culture of the UNO Honors Program. As such, I did not take advantage of the great opportunity given to me, and I did not read all the book we were assigned. Even though I dropped the ball my freshman year, by the time I was offered the chance to participate in the second reading, I had changed a lot. Instead of seeing the Honors Program as an obligation I needed to fulfill in order to get a stamp on my degree, I saw it as a dynamic community of intellectuals with near-endless opportunities to better myself and make a real impact in my community. This shift in my way of thinking happened for a couple of reasons. First and foremost, I had volunteered as part of the group which would help decide on the incoming distinguished scholar recipients.

Participating in this event really opened my eyes to the fact I was no longer the young kid who had to follow in the footsteps of other people, but, instead, I had the power to create my own path and help guide younger students to do the same. This realization helped push me to take a bold step and apply to be a second-year class representative in the Honors Student Association. When I was actually elected to the position, I knew it was time for me to step up and do my part to help lead the honors program. For these reasons, when Dr. Morrison asked me to participate in the common reader experience again, but this time as a facilitator, I saw it as an opportunity to help foster intellectual discussions between gifted students and a chance to meet some of the fine young men and women we would be welcoming into the Honors community.



This year, I decided to attend every common reader event and help volunteer my time in any way I could. The first thing I was able to do was to help lead a discussion before school started. The discussion went really well, and it was great to hear the insight the incoming students had on the dangers of technological progress. I had never had such an in-depth conversation about texting and driving or the larger ideas which it encompassed. This event sticks in my mind as a time when I got to meet many new friends and also engage in meaningful dialogue with them. As the semester progressed, I volunteered to help run the distraction games event, which was a blast! The booth I helped run made the students spin in circles until they were dizzy and then attempt to read a page of writing while walking in a straight line. Even though we were rained on, I never got tired of watching the freshmen tumble to the ground while struggling to read the page of text we provided. While, the first two events were a lot of fun, nothing compared to the emotional impact Reggie Shaw's live speech had on me.

I had read the book twice over, and I knew and understood Reggie's story, but listening to him in person hit me hard and left me with chills. It was a great opportunity to hear the story firsthand, and I think a lot of students really valued the event. Perhaps the most exciting part of this event for me was being able to go to dinner with Reggie after his speech. It was truly amazing to be able to meet the guy I had read an entire book about. Reggie was very down-to-earth and I believe everyone who got to go to dinner took something away from our time with him (other than leftovers). There were other events the common reader experience offered this year (such as the community service event and meeting Dr. Strayer), but the ones I listed had the biggest impact on me.

In summary, I have had a wonderful time with the common reader experience this year, and I hope to be involved in years to come. It provided me with opportunities to be a leader, meet new friends, and discuss a very real problem with which our generation is grappling. It was an invaluable tool for encouraging friendships and personal growth, and I would strongly recommend this experience to incoming Honors freshmen and any other group debating whether or not to implement a common reader experience for students.



HONORS LEARNING COMMUNITIES

By Dr. Matt Patton, Honors Faculty

New Faces in Honors

This semester the Honors Program welcomed a lot of new faces to UNO, including mine! I have had a chance to meet many of you, but for those of you who do not know, I am the new Honors faculty hire and am beyond excited to be working with everyone in Honors!

My arrival to Omaha took an interesting geographic route which would make many lost Renaissance explorers proud. It began at Ashland University (OH) where I *triple* majored in history, political science, and baseball. After an elbow injury, I graduated and began graduate studies, earning a master's degree in geographic information sciences from Central Michigan University. While there, I discovered my passion for geographic education and turned that passion into my doctoral work, which I completed at Texas State University. I spent the last two years at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln working on a National Science Foundation grant aimed at improving STEM education. Over the course of my undergraduate and graduate studies, and the beginning of my professional career, I began, and continue, to blend these varied experiences. Interdisciplinary education is at the heart of my pedagogical philosophy. I strive for all of my students to think critically and spatially about global issues as well as issues facing our greater Omaha community.



Dr. Patton climbing Mt. Elbert (CO)



International Bakery, South 24th Street



Dreamland Park at North 24th St and Lizzie Robinson Drive

Honors Learning Community Excursions

New to the UNO Honors Program this fall is the creation of two Honors Learning Communities. Both communities engage in the community through our class excursions. Our first excursion was to El Museo Latino, where we learned about Omaha's longstanding Latino heritage. Our exploration of the South 24th Street community culminated with some well-deserved treats, compliments of International Bakery. I encourage you all to take a break from studying and pick up a treat or two, or ten.

Our second trip of the semester saw the Learning Communities travel north where we were treated to a personal tour of North 24th Street courtesy of Restoration Exchange of Omaha. The tour guides provided us with a history of the jazz scene in Omaha as well as two homes listed in the Negro Motorist Green Book, which were safe havens for African Americans traveling across the United States in the 1930s through the 1960s. We also visited with local business owners and learned about the relationships between local businesses and the community.

Both walking excursions allowed our group to experience the history, culture, and geography of Omaha firsthand. We use Omaha as our classroom to connect concepts learned in the classroom and see how they fit within our community.

Our fall semester excursions concluded with a trip to the Orpheum Theater to see Giacomo Puccini's 1896 opera, *La Bohème*. The spring 2017 excursions include supporting the UNO hockey and softball teams, exploring the Durham Museum, and sampling the regional varieties of Indian cuisine. Each excursion enriches the UNO honors learning experience by engaging students and instructors with the greater Omaha community, demonstrating the incredible diversity of Omaha, and strengthening the sense of community shared by these intrepid members of the Honors Learning Communities.

Coming to America Book Project

One of the most exciting projects unfolding over the fall 2016 semester began with a meeting in the summer. Lyn Holley, Matthew Marx, and I were brainstorming on how to link gerontology, English composition, and geography courses. In collaboration with Jennifer Gentle and Emma Lockard at Lutheran Family Services and Kirsten Case, our Community Liaison in the Service Learning Academy, we designed the Coming to America Book Project. The project's main objective aims to build bridges among generations from an "old" home in one country to a "new" home in another country. To accomplish this, teams of Honors students in the linked courses (GERO 2000, ENGL 2160, and GEOG 1000) met with a family receiving help from Lutheran Family Services to make a new home in the United States. Working with translators, our Honors students interviewed family members from different generations to learn about the family's experience of coming to America. Through this ethnographic study, students were able to provide a notebook for the family which tells their story.

Each group of four students worked together to craft the stories of family experiences in coming from Afghanistan,

Bhutan, Burma, and Sudan. In addition to learning about these individuals, students were able to listen to each person speaking in their native tongue (Arabic, Karen, Pashto, and Nepali), enriching the overall experience.

The semester-long project culminated in a celebration hosted by UNO in December. Each family received a book chronicling the interviews and experiences in coming to America. Additionally, students presented on the regional variations in elder care across North Africa, Southwest Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia.

The tremendous success of this project is due in large part to the Service Learning Academy, Lutheran Family Services, the UNO Honors Faculty, the leadership of Dr. Morrison, and, most importantly, the hard work of our students. Thank you all for your dedication to this project!

Each individual course contributed to the success of the project by addressing specific elements of it. In this way, students are able to see how three distinct courses are actually interdisciplinary in nature, which is a hallmark of our Honors Program.



La Bohème at the Orpheum

LEARNING THE RIGHT WAY TO EAT

By Sean Watson

On November 9, 2016, my girlfriend and I attended the etiquette dinner hosted by Diane Gottsman. Arriving in our most formal attire, we walked into the ballroom at the Milo Bail Student Center. Upon taking my seat, the first thing I noticed was the array of plates, glasses, and utensils in front of me. Considering I attend one or two formal dining occasions a year, my initial reaction, as usual in this situation, was to feel uncomfortable. The standard questions arose in my mind: "Why do I need all of these forks?" and "Which water glass is mine?" Although I initially felt nervous, I quickly realized this dinner was different than others I had had in the past. Instead of being expected to know the proper etiquette, I was there to learn it.

Being introduced as a "Nationally Recognized Etiquette Training Expert," Diane Gottsman was the host of the dinner. Her resumé is impressive – primarily focusing on etiquette training for high-ranking executives, including those employed by Forbes 500 companies. Knowing this made me confident she knew her subject well. She made a point to say many companies will incorporate a dining experience into the interview process – emphasizing the importance of acting appropriately. Throughout dinner, she gave

thorough, step-by-step instructions on everything from the proper way to eat soup (two different ways, depending on if the soup is chunky or not) to the proper way to use a fork and knife during formal dining (European style). I even learned the proper ways to pass the salt shaker and bread basket. She made everyone in the room comfortable by answering questions throughout the dinner. Towards the end, she spoke about proper attire (both men and women) for formal dining. Again, it was nice to know her background in working with executives so I knew I could trust her advice.

There are so many intricacies involved with formal dining that it was slightly overwhelming to try and do everything right. Ms. Gottsman made me feel better by pointing out it is preferable to be overwhelmed while learning than to be overwhelmed (and thus acting awkwardly) during an interview. I, as many of those enrolled in the Honors Program, hope to have a successful career. There are going to be many formal dining experiences, with the possibility some of them will impact my entire life. Ms. Gottsman's lessons will help me be more confident in formal situations and, for that, I am truly grateful.

UNIQUE HONORS ART COURSE OFFERS CHANCE TO LEARN OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM

By Gabi Gergen

Instead of meeting in a boring classroom every Wednesday at one in the afternoon, this honors art history course meets at the Joslyn Art Museum, and instead of looking through a textbook or watching a professor lecture with a powerpoint, Professor Adrian Duran ensures our class has the opportunity to wander around the museum. We would stand in front of pieces of art while Duran listed important facts about the artistic technique, historical relevance, and artists' biographies. This class focuses on art anywhere from the Renaissance up until the present. We learned about classicism, baroque, landscape painting, romanticism, orientalism, impressionism, and cubism along with many other artistic styles throughout the past five centuries. Along with having Duran guide us around the museum, we each had two presentations to give in front of actual pieces of artwork. We also visited the Schragger collection, Kaneko collection, and the Union of Contemporary Art. Before taking this course, I would go to museums without any idea of how much work goes into them, but professor Duran invited employees of the Joslyn Art Museum to speak to our class about their jobs, and so I learned more.

I had never thought about taking an art class before college. I always thought it would be very fun but also impractical to go into a career centered around art. Thanks to Duran, my opinions about studying art in college have slowly changed over this past semester. I am a psychology major, but my sister is going to be a freshman at UNO next year. She enjoys art and I am advising her to add an art minor, or to even major in it. Not only does art history help students become better writers, but it also forces us to look at the world from many different points of view. So, when asked about this course from fellow honors students, I will surely recommend it.

By Delaney Jackson

Survey of Western Art History II quickly became my favorite course of the semester. All of the Honors courses I have taken at UNO thus far have been incredibly engaging, but this class was on a different level.

Being in a museum setting literally immersed us in our subject material. Having access to real, physical examples of different art styles as we covered them through text and presentation made the material more interesting. As the semester progressed, we also had chances to visit art institutions in Omaha and observe the course material being applied in our community. Suddenly, art became not only a mean of expression for the talented few, but a method of communication capable of making political statements and empowering communities.

I watched as this course skillfully revealed art's intersectionality with other disciplines and excited a class primarily full of STEM majors. This excitement and eagerness to continue exploring western art history made the assignments given so much more meaningful. Speeches, presentations, and concise essays allowed each individual student to feed her personality into her classmates' comprehension of art history. We learned just as much from each other as we did through class lectures and readings.

This was an awesome course and I look forward to seeing more like it.

HSA SCAVENGER HUNT

By Chris Winchester

As an Honors student, my college career is jam-packed with challenges and amazing opportunities every day; and on Saturday, October 8, I attended the Honors Scavenger Hunt, a unique and entertaining event to build teamwork and friendships amongst Honors students on campus. The event began with a catered-in Qdoba nacho bar for lunch as we all enjoyed various YouTube videos. While this was a simplistic aspect of the event, it epitomizes the way Honors students need very little to connect and entertain each other. For nearly an hour, we all relaxed from the hours of coursework, extracurricular activities, and jobs we put so much effort in, to enjoy each other's company. I was expecting a quick lunch and was shocked at the length of time I had enjoyed simply sitting amongst my peers and conversing with them. This changed my whole perspective of the Honors program and students on campus, as I now saw each person as untapped potential for friendship, connections, and amazing stories. I simply just need to attend events such as the scavenger hunt to become more integrated with each person, a simple and entertaining task to do.

Upon completion of lunch, the true competition began. The scavenger hunt was composed of three different teams, who each had their own set of clues dispersed around Dodge Campus. I was privileged to be on the winning team and took home a free movie ticket to Aksarben Cinema. As thrilling as this was, one of the most amazing qualities of the event was watching some of the smartest students on campus decipher clues together meant to challenge those of the highest intelligence. The level of intellect coordinated together with the physical attributes of running across campus a plethora of times filled me with a euphoric rush with each accomplishment of discovering another clue. My team would have been incomplete without the other three members as we all had equal parts in completing the scavenger hunt the quickest of any team. The quality of the teamwork we had was amazing, especially considering we barely knew each other prior to the event. This proves when Honors students are provided the opportunity, they will shine beyond many people's expectations, even if at an event as minor as a scavenger hunt.



LESSONS ON WAR THROUGH LITERATURE

By Emma Flynn

It is my last year of college, and I only need a few more Honors credits to graduate. I took Literature and War, mostly because literature is what I am good at and it sounded interesting enough. I rolled into the class with absolutely zero expectations; I could not even begin to think of what I could expect from this class.

We started with WWI and read through and discussed some “classic” texts. The soldiers / husbands played a central role in the plot, and the issues discussed felt so distant from where we are today. Granted, infidelity and marital strife are still present in many relationships, but texts written in the early twentieth century about rich people in the early twentieth century do not exactly resonate with a group of college kids in 2016.

As we moved on to WWII and *Sophie’s Choice*, the focus of the texts and our discussions became more about the effects of war on a civilian population. Issues discussed became more real, starting to hit closer to home. At this point in the semester, a few of us went down to the Orpheum to see a production of *Basetrack Live*, but we will come back to that. WWII became the Rwandan Genocide, then the civil war in the Balkans. Again, these texts dealt primarily with the effects of war on a civilian population, which, while important, is challenging to relate to for those of us who have not seen these effects firsthand in our own homes and communities.

After Thanksgiving, we started reading Phil Klay’s *Redeployment*, a collection of short stories from the perspectives of Marines in the Iraq War. Klay was deployed to Iraq as a Marine in 2004 and has worked extensively since then with veterans groups to use writing and storytelling as a method of therapy for these men and women coming home. The focus of the texts, obviously, shifted back to the soldiers on the frontlines. Suddenly, even though I have never been to any of the places Klay was writing about or experienced a spouse coming home from a deployment, these stories being told became so real. The experiences of the characters both in Iraq and back home were gut-wrenching experiences people I know and have interacted with have dealt with on a daily basis. This is where our field trip to *Basetrack Live* comes in.

Basetrack Live is an exploration of the effect of a deployment in Iraq or Afghanistan as a soldier, but also on his or her family back home, particularly spouses. The show is a multi-media stage experience with DJ, two actors, music, and visuals. The entire script, as we learned at the end of the production, was compiled of lines from interviews with various infantrymen from the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines and their wives, while drawing primarily on the story of real-life Marine AJ Czubai and his wife Melissa.

There were clips of interviews with infantrymen and their wives and pictures and videos taken by embedded journalists being projected on a screen above the stage, while the two actors playing AJ and Melissa conversed and told stories on stage. Some of what they told was funny; some was heartbreaking. There was not really a happy ending to their story, but the messages from both *Basetrack Live* and

Redeployment were clear: there are young men and women dealing with some serious baggage, and what resources they do have when they come home might not be adequate.

I did not have any expectations when I started this class, but I think what my classmates and I have gained has been invaluable. War is not going to go away anytime soon, and we need to address the mental illnesses and trauma from soldiers coming home, providing resources for both them and their family members. What do you say to your husband when he is having a nightmare and you are a little afraid he might hurt you? What happens when your wife is gone for days and she will not / cannot tell you where she has been or what she has been thinking? Art and literature have been the mediums of communication for millennia, and when they are providing a call to action to help our fellow humans, we have an obligation to listen and answer.



HONORS INTERNSHIP BUILDS ON CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

By Jonathan Dormady

Throughout my time at Union Pacific, I have had two projects I have primarily kept my focus on: Cycle Scheduling History and BRMS service tables. For the Cycle Scheduling History project, I spent most of my time learning the intricacies of creating, editing, and maintaining a program on Union Pacific's network. For the first part of the program, I developed the user interface (UI), the part of the program which the customer uses to access and call information from the site. The Cycle Scheduling History UI requires an input from the customer, such as an Equipment Identification Number, which will return the cycles the unit has participated in displayed in a table below the input. A second table calls and displays all of the calls and changes made to the selected cycle from the first table. Rather than generate the data manually to populate the tables for each possible query, the UI would need to make the calls to retrieve the data and handle the data to display it correctly. In order for this to work, I worked with both HTML and JavaScript to create the service calls the program would make, along with creating the structure of the tables for the data to be added to.

As the UI portion was reaching completion, my focus was shifted from the Cycle Scheduling History to the BRMS service tables. The workflow for working with the BRMS tables had minor differences which made the project unique to generate and work with, but it was an excellent project to apply everything I had learned from the Cycle Scheduling History program. Rather than creating an entirely new site for each table, they were all contained and accessible from a base site by using a drop-down menu for all of the options. When a table is selected, then all the data

associated with that specific table would be called and displayed, allowing for editing by the user. Through working with other developers, I was able to set-up the UI for most of the tables on the site and set-up the back-end service calls which would actually find the data and update it once the changes were finalized and validated. With this project, I expanded my knowledge from the front-end and the languages it primarily used (HTML and JavaScript) to better understand how the back-end of the projects are set up and the language they primarily use (Java). By working through the two projects, I familiarized myself with the process associated with creating and maintaining a project aside from the general coding aspects.

Outside of Union Pacific, my internship enhanced my academic career significantly more than I was anticipating. As far as coding goes, my work with HTML, JavaScript, and Java has not made me an expert in any language; however, working with them has helped my understanding of how different languages operate grow and helped me become better at debugging code to locate where the issues can be found. Additionally, having a part-time job and school at the same time was a learning experience for me. Before this semester, I had not worked a significant amount of time in a professional setting while having classes in the same day, so improving my time management skills occurred naturally to avoid being overwhelmed with my studies and my work at Union Pacific. On top of all of this, it gave me an outlet to actually apply what I had learned from my classes in a real-life setting rather than just in-class assignments. Seeing and applying what I have learned, along with enjoying the internship, has significantly boosted my confidence that I am on the right path to maximize my potential both academically and professionally.

UGLY SWEATER DAY SPREADS HOLIDAY SPIRIT



HONORS STUDENTS PRESENT SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE

By Bailey Sweeney

This October, I was given the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C. to present a poster on a Service Learning Honors class I took during my first semester in college. The experience was thought-provoking, intellectually challenging, and most of all, a ton of fun. For two hours I was able to answer questions and provide insight into the Service-Learning project I had done last year.

The education professionals who attended the conference were highly interested in how the Service Learning project worked and how they could apply that project to their university. Having the opportunity to provide new ideas for other universities to become involved in their communities was a wonderful and eye-opening experience. It challenged me to think 'outside the box,' and to adapt the project I had done to the needs of universities around the country.

Although before attending the conference, I thought I had a strong grasp on the implications and logistics of my project, presenting it to other people gave me a deeper understanding of my own project and of the impact it could create in the Omaha community and other communities. Aside from presenting, the first morning of the conference there was a large buffet-style breakfast provided; and there were a few keynote speakers who talked about the advancement of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) organization and about other pressing issues in the education system and in metropolitan areas.

One keynote speaker was Wes Moore, whose presentation was inspiring. He talked about becoming the CEO of Bridge.edu and about his book, "The Other Wes Moore." He explained the book was about a man, the same age as him, who grew up just blocks away from his home. Similar to Wes Moore, this man had grown up without a father and in a Baltimore neighborhood; his name was also Wes Moore. The book goes on to analyze the different lives each man led and how and when their paths diverted. One man became a Rhodes Scholar, the CEO of a company, and experienced many other accomplishments; the other man sat in prison with a life sentence for murder and armed robbery.

I loved hearing Wes Moore talk about this book and about the soul-searching journey he took to find out why his life was overwhelmed with accomplishments while the other man's life was surrounded by bars. It led me to analyze my own life. How did I get to where I am today? How will I get to where I want to be tomorrow? What things did I do that made my life different from the people I went to high school with? His speech also made me believe in the power of education and self-determination, and that circumstance does not determine success.

Aside from Wes Moore's seemingly faultless speech, there was another highly successful and intelligent speaker, David Dyssegaard Kallick, who spoke on the implications of immigrants settling in urban areas. He gave his speech in a matter-of-fact manner and tried to not insert any biases or personal feelings into the speech, but the facts spoke for themselves. Kallick showed statistics and facts which all pointed to the fact that greater amounts of immigrants in a city led to growth and usually prosperity. This was an advantageous speech, coming just in time for the November presidential election. It shed light on a subject that is so controversial without anyone becoming angry or defensive. Everyone paid attention to the facts with no opinions or judgment.

As I sat in a large conference room listening to these speakers, I was overwhelmed with happiness and appreciation of the

opportunity I had been given to come to the 2016 CUMU conference. Without that opportunity, I may have never known about the other Wes Moore or about the impacts of immigration on urban areas. I will never know if not listening to these speakers would have made my life different, but I know that I will never forget the morning I listened to those two inspiring men speak in Washington D.C.



By Emma Franklin

Prior to attending the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) conference, I had no intention of presenting my Intergenerational Service Learning project anywhere except to the Honors gerontology class. Bailey and I took Honors English and gerontology classes accompanied by a service learning component. The service learning element was geared at initiating dialogue amongst multiple generations. We facilitated conversation between Ralston High School students and an elder from the community about what it means to be a hero. Not only was it an effort to create intergenerational thinking, it allowed us to develop relationships with our elder and high school partners.

The final portion of the project resulted in a group presentation with the elder and high school student about our consensus definition of what it means to be a hero, as well as the experience all together. After deciding to advance the service learning project past this first presentation to a poster with the purpose to inspire other community leaders, I realized the service project was more than a set of requirements for a course; it was a chance to improve the community.

At the conference, I was not expecting a large number of professors and administrators to be present. The best part about the poster-sharing at the conference included the other attendees' genuine interest in our service learning model. They challenged us with questions regarding implementation of a similar project in their own schools; this forced us to think about how it could be successful in other community settings, not only at the Omaha level. Above all, we got the opportunity to present our experience and gain insight from other university members.

While the project itself, the development of the poster presentation, and the conference provided educational advancement, the experience was topped off by the location. This year, CUMU was held in Washington D.C. In addition to learning about student and faculty research and ideas from other schools, we were able to explore and appreciate our nation's capital. What started as a course project quickly developed into a great service learning project and experience at CUMU in Washington D.C..

HONORS HOUSING

By Alex Swenson

Throughout my first two and a half years here at UNO, I have seen the Honors Program grow in many ways. One major aspect of this development has been the evolution of the Honors Living Learning Community. When I was a freshman, I lived on campus but was not part of the Honors community. In fact, I am not even sure if one existed back then since I never heard of it throughout the year or met anyone who resided in it. However, big changes within housing were in store for my sophomore year. I applied to become a Resident Assistant (RA) towards the end of my freshman year and was fortunate enough to be selected. In addition to that, I was chosen to be the RA for the Honors LLC in Maverick Village.

As the RA for the Honors LLC last year, I had 36 Honors freshmen in my building along with twelve non-honors residents of varying ages. The community was great last year and I had countless amazing experiences with my residents. Since I enjoyed being an RA enormously my first year, I decided to reapply and was again placed again in Building M with the Honors LLC this year. The structure of the LLC has continued to evolve. Currently, all the residents of Building M are members of the Honors Program and 38 of the 48 residents are freshmen. While I have great memories of last year, current times are even better.

The community atmosphere within the building is a fantastic feeling and something I do not see in many other residence halls. Everyone was friendly and outgoing in the beginning of the year which made the potentially anxious start of their freshman year a fun experience for all. Additionally, members of Building M quickly became involved with housing and the programs I put on. Furthermore, many of the residents have class together and have really connected both in and out of class. Just like any typical member of Honors, the residents of Building M have also done a great job getting involved on campus and experiencing new things. From my vantage point as an RA, I believe the Honors LLC has done a brilliant job building relationships and has been a tremendous success in general. It is amazing seeing how exceptional all the members of Building M are.



By Tristan Martin & Jack Taylor

From the day we moved in, we were surprised at how friendly everyone was. Throughout the first couple of weeks, there were a variety of events which showed us Building M was different than the other buildings; it was not just a place to live, but it was a community. Resident Assistant Alex Swenson made himself available as an RA and as a friend. As time went on and classes began, we noticed many of the faces in our classes were also in our building, which led to the formation of many friendships within the Honors Community. Now the semester is ending, we find ourselves incredibly grateful to be a part of this close-knit unit within UNO.





SOGGY IN SEATTLE

By Abby Wayman

I had the opportunity to go to the National Collegiate Honors Council's annual conference in Seattle, Washington. Dr. Morrison invited me to go to help present the research we had been working on about Honors programs across the country and the contract requirements they have. I was so excited to go, not only because I had never been to Seattle, but because I was looking forward to the experience of going to an academic conference. I was not prepared for how much fun I would have or how much I would learn about myself.

The theme of the conference was "Know Yourself." The first day of the conference was spent in the city of Seattle, learning about the city and ourselves in the process. All of those participating were split into groups to explore different parts of the city. I was sent to a part of the city called Ballard with two other students. We were given a piece of paper with directions to get to Ballard and a time to get back to debrief. We were given points of interest to try to find and explore, but really it was up to us to learn what we wanted about the area. We paid the dollar fifty to take the half hour bus ride to the Ballard neighborhood and walked around in the rain. It was nice to be in a city which had a lot of public transportation, making it very easy to get around to different neighborhoods. This area of the city is somewhat up and coming and could be described as "hipster." It reminded me a little bit of the Dundee area in Omaha. We were able to find the locks (used to bring ships across waters of different levels), which led from Elliot Bay into Lake Washington, and we watched a couple boats come in from the ocean. It was fascinating to see how this area of town, which was historically blue-collar, has now become a somewhat gentrified and fashionable neighborhood in which to live.

The following day was more academic in a traditional sense. There were all-day presentations for a couple of days. There were also students presenting work they had done for their own Honors programs. I met a couple of students who were there presenting work they did as part of a contract for a class; so if you have a cool project you are working on, ask Dr. Morrison if it is possible for you to apply to present at a conference. It was interesting to sit in on other people's presentations on subjects about which they are passionate and want other people to know, or discoveries they have made researching.

One project I sat in on was to bring attention to the lack of diversity in Honors programs, not only for students and faculty, but also the lack of diversity in the curriculum. The presenters hoped to start a conversation to help combat this and to draw more diversity into Honors programs. The keynote speaker for the conference was Native American poet and author Sherman Alexie. If you have not read any of his books, I implore you to do so. Read his semi-autobiographical book *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. His journey to know himself is much different than what most of us experience. He is so amazing and would probably make fun of me for saying that, and for my thick-rimmed poor-person glasses.

I researched all the schools that have Honors programs across the nation to see if they have contracts like we do, where the student can decide their own expansion to the class to learn more about the topic and to gain Honors credit, and what the requirements of the contracts are. It is cool to see how other Honors programs work and then share those findings with one another. It was a little nerve-racking to present our research. I had only a small part to say, but when I sat up front and suddenly there were forty faculty and staff members from across the nation looking at me, I got a little nervous.

I really lucked out because we were in Seattle over my birthday, so we got to do some touristy stuff, too. We went to Pike Place Market and got to see the wonderful seafood and fish being thrown around. The market there had food so fresh it looked like it came from a giant's garden. We ate some seriously amazing food while we were there. We also saw the Space Needle, though decided not to go up since we could see the fog just fine from the ground. We saw the original Starbucks location and then more on every street corner downtown. We went to the aquarium and got out of the rain to see some otters.

Overall, the experience of going to an academic conference was amazing. I had a wonderful time and I learned so much, not only about what it is like at a conference, but also a little about myself, and a lot about Seattle. I am definitely going to that wonderful city again, mostly because I had such a wonderful time with the Honors Crew: Dr. Morrison, Dr. Patton, and James Keating.

HONORS DEBATE ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN FOR HEALTH

By Wenxian Zhou

In the fall of 2016, honors debate class hosted several advocacy campaigns to spread positive energy around campus. Our debate class split into four advocacy campaign groups, and each group focused on a distinct topic of interest. Four topics our class focused on this year were body image, sleep deprivation, eating and nutritional issues, and texting and driving.

Our group addressed eating and nutritional issues for our advocacy campaign started the project by surveying 136 students all over campus, and we also did internet research on causes and effects of unhealthy eating. Based on our research, around 250 million Americans live with diseases related to diet and inactivity, and the treatment of these preventable diseases costs the US nearly one trillion dollars per year. Our campus survey also revealed a similarly astonishing result: more than half of participants do not eat three times a day, more than half store neither vegetables nor fruits in their dorms, more than half are not satisfied with the school cafeteria, and 47% of them know their eating habits are not healthy. When we analyzed the data of 35 honors participants alone, the result does not show any significant difference. The most frequent reason for students to eat unhealthily are: healthy foods are expensive, healthy foods often cannot store long, and a lack of

knowledge of the serious consequences of unhealthy eating.

Considering the amount of time and resources available, we decided producing and distributing cookbooks to the student body would be the most efficient solution. Our cookbook includes healthy menus, nutritional facts, and statistics about the serious negative effects of unhealthy eating. Ingredients of our menus are relatively cheap and easy to store, so it will be very practical for college students. The cookbook we designed is twenty pages, double-sided. We printed 100 books and we distributed them to college students. We also donated one copy to the honors program for future students to reference. The cookbook will provide students information about why and how to keep a healthy diet, and it will hopefully make an impact on the student body's eating habits and health.

Overall, the advocacy campaign was very successful. The advocacy campaign provided honors students an opportunity to apply in-class knowledge to real life, and it gave honors students an experience of teamwork and goal setting for a long-term project. Furthermore, the advocacy campaign provided honors students a chance to give back to, and provide a positive impact to, the university.



HONORS PROGRAM

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