



The Distinction

University of Nebraska Omaha
Honors Newsletter

Fall 2022



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A Letter from the Director

By Dr. Lucy Morrison

There's an odd vitality to a Nebraska winter: leafless trees stand like skeletons and yet just under the bark growth goes on; squirrels gather remnants of food before they settle into their nests to weather the harsh cold; a patina of ice covers lawns and lakes, but still the sun glistens on these surfaces like a living bit of light. The rivers freeze over, but just beneath, keep pushing us toward change, toward progress.

While the last few years have offered plenty of opportunity to concern ourselves with the frozen, students in the University Honors Program continue to thrum beneath the surface. Whether they were already at the University and have managed the pandemic and all the changes it wrought independently, or they had to navigate both high school and the University through different teaching modalities and operations, many of them were exposed to the elements of the pandemic's impact. Faculty and staff did their best. But there was no substitution for social support circles that were dissolved by remote learning practices. Most of us have been lonely. The university resumed full operations last year, but this fall is the first semester since the pandemic began that campus operations have felt full and engaged. And the students are very much back; the ice has melted.

That means our institution has been the current pushing students forward, has kept them from succumbing to the freeze: they have met and forged

new connections with students in their classes as well as in walking across campus. Whether they have a lead role in sold-out Black Box performances this fall, are traveling independently all over Europe while spending a semester studying in the U.K., building community in Mav Village in a residence hall, or impacting city policy as a growth of independent thinking and learning opportunities, Honors students are returning to full torrent. That they do so is remarkable: they choose to do more, push further, work harder so as to get the most out of their educational opportunities here at UNO. They do so even as the pandemic continues to threaten a new winter—with family illness, loss, with being challenged themselves with resurgent illness that dents their progress and requires they bounce back by working harder.

We have all faced and met challenges we could not have dreamed of since February 2020. The resilience of Honors students, their determination to keep their education flowing, to keep the movement of ideas fluid, inspires me every day to work as hard as they do to encourage and support them. As this Newsletter shows, they are amazing young people thirsty for more knowledge and opportunities in their lives, and their efforts enrich and inspire us all to continue to work with them in their education and opportunities. My hope is you will read and learn from their stories in this Newsletter—and will join me in admiring the flow of their achievements. Their energy and effort keep us all warm.

"While the last few years have offered plenty of opportunity to concern ourselves with the frozen, students in the University Honors Program continue to thrum beneath the surface."

Honors Student Association Executive Board

President
Jack Cosgrove



Vice President
Makayla Gordon



Vice President
Jared Dingman



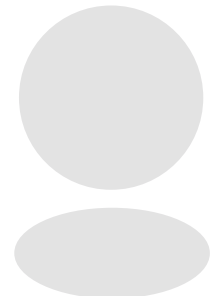
Treasurer
Navya Khandavalli



Secretary
Eryn Busenbark



Public Relations
Lasaisha Dunagan-Eviglo



Honors Student Association Representatives

First Year

Delaney Ham - McKenna Hornacek - Emily Schroeder - Alissa York - Chloe Hansel



Second Year

Katy Koch - Htoo Say



Third Year

Amy Wagner - Brooke Bluhm - Mya Winjum



Fourth Year

Alecia Keller - Sophie House - Katie Hill



Honors Graduates - Fall 2022



Meg McCoy

Bachelor of Science in
Communication

*"Apprehension in Romantic
Relationships and Effects on Mental
Health"*

Mentor: Chin Chung (Joy) Chao



Bailey Licht

Bachelor of Science in Computer
Science

*"The Challenges of Teaching
Runtime Analysis"*

Mentor: Harvey Siy



Kayla Farley

Bachelor of Arts in Spanish
Bachelor of Science in Biology

*"The Effectiveness of
Accommodations for Students with
ADHD at UNO"*

Mentor: Brigitte Ryalls



Cassandra Peterson

Bachelor of Science in Psychology

*"Implicit and Explicit Attitudes Toward
Prison and Parole Among
College Students"*

Mentor: Rose Strasser



Kaylie Hill

Bachelor of Science in Biology

*"An Examination of the Perceived
Quality of Senior Care in Assisted
Living Facilities Following the
Outbreak of COVID-19"*

Mentor: Christine de la Vega



Matthew Thiele

Bachelor of Science in Molecular and
Biomedical Biology

*"A Machine Learning Approach for
Predicting Mortality with Heart Rate
Variability Statistics"*

Mentor: Dario Gherzi



Alecia Keller

Bachelor of Science in Social Work

*"Religiosity, Spirituality, and
LGBTQ+ Homeless Youth"*

Mentor: Nancy Kelley



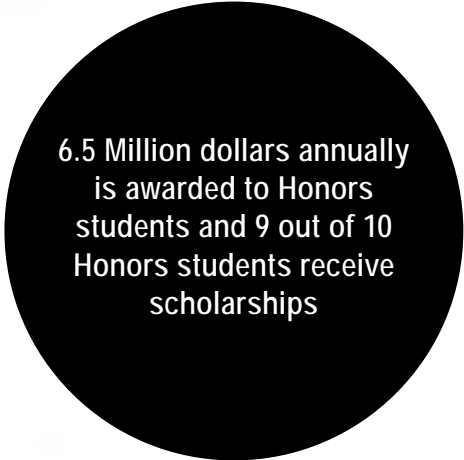
Teagan Vaughan

Bachelor of Science in Education

*"Operational Meaning of Multiplication
and Division: Teaching the Relationship
Between Multiplication and Division
Through Differentiated Instructional
Strategies"*

Mentor: Sandra Shillingstad

Honors students
hail from 11 states
and 43 Nebraska
Counties



Celebrating Academic Excellence

Excellence Scholars 2022

Zoe Euteneuer
Journalism and Media Communication
Delaney Ham
Pre-Social Work
Hanna Herian
Interdisciplinary Studies
Isabella Manhart
Pre-Elementary Education
Jenna Marshall
Pre-Dental
Kendall Martin
Biomechanics
Jenna Mullendore
Neuroscience

Connor Neville
Interdisciplinary Studies
Hannah Renner
Library Science
Clayten Roth
Business Administration
Emi Rupp
Secondary Education
Caden Sorgenfrei
Computer Engineering
Madeline Swanson
Pre-Medicine
Cecelia Ward
Mathematics

Distinguished Scholars 2022

Makena Colson
Communication Studies
Carmen Kosmicki
Psychology
Aleksz Solomon
Interdisciplinary Studies
Tim Troxel
Psychology
Christian Vihstadt
Music Education

Distinguished Honors Scholars 2022

Autumn Fisher
Music and Computer Science
Maddax Frye
Architectural Engineering
Giovanni Gomez
Business Administration
Kyle Rix
Pre-Pharmacy
Annabelle Ziegerer
Pre-Secondary Education

Police Procedure Edition

By Emma Ehmke

For my first Honors contract, I was lost in the numerous choices that I could possibly make.

The class that held the most opportunity was Homicide Investigations, yet with a research paper and presentation already planned, I had to think outside of the box. When thinking about homicides, it reminded me of the board game CLUE, except I wanted to create a correct version that follows police procedures.

While the rules stayed the same, I chose to change everything else about the game. I have created a detailed story that outlines the specifics of the crime scene about the death of a police captain. From the story, new characters with intricate motives and weapons that cause a consistent cause of death emerged. Additionally, the locations on the game board needed a double meaning as a possible murder location but, also, a place to interview people connected to the investigation.

With all of these details, my police procedure edition helps provide a more transparent look at homicide investigations in real life. Players can understand the many steps in an investigation and the duties of a detective. Although players compete to win, it is easy to understand the teamwork needed in an investigation to ensure the best outcome. There are no shortcuts taken in the game or a real investigation as each player will visit each location on the board and analyze each weapon.

Personally, I found creating this board game to be more enjoyable than writing a research paper. Learning about the dedication that is needed for homicide investigations, I have an increased respect for all detectives who devote so much to their communities.



Oil and Water: Four Years of Studying IT and Theatre

By Zander Gibney

While I sit backstage during a performance of *Into the Woods* and almost miss a song number because I was working on coding up a Java algorithm for pixelating a JPG image with bit-slicing, I have to laugh at the absurdity of the situations in which I find myself. Studying Information Technology Innovation (IT) and Theatre for almost four years now has given me many of these moments. I sit in acting classes thinking about the usability of my interfaces or the bugs in my code, and I sit in programming courses thinking about identifying the super-objective and tactics of the character whose lines I'm memorizing. It's quite the duality of man. And for the past two semesters, I have not been required to be in any theatre productions for my minor, so, of course, I've done three--all while balancing capstone projects, database classes, screenwriting workshops, and (can't forget) my own health.

And despite upwards of 18 hours of rehearsal a week for any given show, theatre has provided tremendous levity to even the heaviest course loads for me. I think it's because I'm constantly reminded I'm not alone, even if I have completely different coursework than the average cast/crew member in the show. Everyone has everyone else's back. Nothing has shown this better than our recent production of *Into the Woods*. The show has approximately a million moving pieces and requires precise coordination and, of course, care from everyone in the cast and crew. Even a smaller show such as *The Thanksgiving Play*, in which I appeared earlier in the semester, with only four actors and a handful of crew members backstage, needs a certain love, affection, and understanding for your team of fellow creatives so that everyone can make it a success.



The surprising thing, for me, has been that software development works the exact same way (if only with a few additional semi-colons and for-loops but the same amount of banging your head against a wall when something isn't working). I feel like most people see IT and Theatre mixing like oil and water, but there's more connections than one would expect. As the world of IT shifts to focus on human-centered design, for example, computer professionals are basically being taught the work of an actor. Using empathy to understand users' motivations, wants, and needs and then develop user "personas" is exactly the same as the character analysis I have done for any of my performances as an actor. With this, the computer world is shifting to require an understanding of humanity, and where better to learn that than in theatre?

What I'm really trying to say is two-fold. First, if you have any interest in getting involved in UNO Theatre, no matter what you're studying, you absolutely without a doubt should. They'd be more than happy to have you. Second, if you think two of your interests mix like oil and water, give them a bit of a stir, and you may just be surprised at how well they work together.

Ted and Wally's

By Micah Dunwoody



In the Spring 2022 semester, I intended to return to Ted and Wally's after two years and two months of not working there. I texted the owner in late May. He responded, "Yes...Good to have you back, thanks!" Serving long lines, cleaning dishes – sometimes the same ones over and over again – always puts a smile on my face.

By late June, most of my shifts were spent in the daytime. I would freeze 2.5 gallons of ice cream in the barrels we have. One can bet that they get heavier as the ice cream freezes, and it is such a great workout. To this day, I try to lift up the canisters by the ridges using two fingers on each hand. A lot of people like to see the ice cream in the freezing process. Thanks to having taken the Lord of the Rings class offered by the Honors Program, I always said, "Our skills come from the ancient Elvish city of Gondolin."

In September, I received a text from one of my managers. She said that she wanted to promote me so I could make ice cream. I started my training in November, and I look forward to making it on my own.

Currently we anticipate serving Star Wars themed flavors next May 4th for Star Wars Day. I keep thinking of flavors to invent, and my coworkers are always happy to provide ideas and feedback. I have to wait until I have had more experience making, but hopefully I will be able to make a Lord of the Rings themed flavor by March 25th.

"In September, I received a text from one of my managers. She said that she wanted to promote me so I could make ice cream."

Teacher Scholars Academy

By Annabelle Ziegerer

My first semester at UNO in the University Honors program has been full of many opportunities. I attended the Honors orientation in June and signed up for my first Honors class—an urban studies class with Dr. Morrison. In late June, I found out that a spot had opened up for me in the Teacher Scholars Academy (TSA). Each year, twenty-five first-year education majors are selected for the TSA cohort, and I was lucky enough to be one of them. TSA students are a part of the Honors program, to give them a broader perspective of the education system. Classes that qualify for Honors credit are built into the TSA's program requirements, including a capstone project. Education majors typically student teach the final semester, so having a capstone that is built into our program will help more TSA students graduate from the Honors program.

Another great thing about the Honors program's collaboration with TSA is that it gives you so many opportunities. One of the classes TSA students are required to take is Human Relations for Bias-Free Classrooms with Dr. Huber, which my cohort will be taking this spring. In this class, we will have the opportunity to work with 5th graders from an OPS middle school about the history of redlining in Omaha, and we get to design a project with them. The collaboration between the two programs allows us to get into the community in a way that we would not always be able to in a regular classroom.

In my urban studies honors class this semester, several of my classmates were also a part of TSA. Although we are still getting to know each other, it has been nice to see familiar faces in class each week. Even if was just small talk about the 7:30am monthly seminars



for TSA or the team-building activities we have throughout the semester, having other people with the same goals made Honors classes more welcoming.

Additionally, the colloquia that the Honors program offers cover so many diverse topics, including opportunities to learn more about the communities in Omaha. One of the classes I am enrolled in for Spring 2023 will be comparing the urban design of cities in Norway and Omaha, with a study abroad portion at the end of the semester. Because two colloquia are required, TSA students broaden their horizons and expand their skill sets. My entire future is not planned out yet, but the Honors program is helping me explore interests I didn't even know I had.

"Astonishingly Transformative": Art Appreciation

By Anne Thomas



Every semester presents students with opportunities for growth and realization. In my first few months at UNO, I have learned how astonishingly transformative a required check-off-the-box general education class can be. Enrolling in “Art Appreciation” with Professor Adrian Duran has not only boosted my confidence in an academic setting but made me a better human at the same time as it refined the way I view my community.

The class can be described as anything but ordinary. Perhaps my favorite aspect of it was the academic diversity of the students. As a biology major myself, an art class was new to me, and I was not alone in this novelty. Each of us was pursuing something different,

and not one major was remotely related to the arts. This is unfamiliar for an “Art Appreciation” course, but it created dimension, brought new perspectives to discussions, and proved how the arts can serve a diverse group of individuals. In its unconventional fashion, the first class consisted of Professor Duran admitting to us that he had no idea how to define “art”, that it is anything we can imagine it to be, and that the purpose of the class was to appreciate it. He then preceded to do something I had never seen before: invite his students to help write the syllabus for the class.

His methods are unorthodox, but they are fruitful. For hours we collaborated and offered our input, and the result was the structure of a class that we all cared about and looked forward to. We unanimously decided that seeking art out in our city and appreciating it in person was more beneficial than classroom lectures. We began on campus and Duran sent us on an art scavenger hunt around UNO. We stopped at paintings we would normally walk by and give no thought to and admired sculptures and statues that we could have gone 4 years without noticing. We also took a trip to UNO’s costume shop and the Special Archives department in Criss library.

Our time off campus was spent at the Union for Contemporary Art, the Bemis, El Museo Latino, KANEKO, and the Durham Museum. We spent about three hours at each museum and were given personal tours. Every museum was different and offered new perspectives in our discussions. The most gratifying aspect of the entire class was learning about different cultures and communities around Omaha. Admittedly, I have lived in Omaha, Nebraska nearly my whole

life and I have learned more about the city in my one semester of Art Appreciation than in my eighteen years. I had never been to most of the museums the class visited, and they enabled me to see my city in a new light. El Museo de Latino opened my eyes to Hispanic culture in Omaha. The Union, located in North Omaha, showed us the garden that they plant with the purpose of supplying produce to those who cannot afford it.

Through experiences, Professor Duran's class taught me something that textbooks and lectures cannot. I learned how to appreciate not only art, but the city I live in and cultures that are not my own. Consider this when enrolling in your next "check-off-the-box" class. And maybe you will also get to be a part of service learning too—we engaged in the Maverick Philanthropy Initiative with the Service Learning Academy (SLA), and got to choose, as a class, an arts place we had visited to benefit from a financial grant!

"I have learned how astonishingly transformative a required check-off-the-box general education class can be. Enrolling in "Art Appreciation" with Professor Adrian Duran has not only boosted my confidence in an academic setting but made me a better human at the same time as it refined the way I view my community."



Space, Place, and Self: A Reflection

By Kyla Talavera



Space, place, and self is a course designed to discover a better understanding of oneself in the surrounding environment. The course begins with analyzing and discussing texts that are like no other; each reading offers an opportunity to derive deeper meanings and messages in a way that connections can be established on an individual level. No matter how unusual a text may be, like a story about a human turning into a bug in ‘The Metamorphosis’, significance can be established by deep analysis and reflection. To that point, the contributions of students are essential for allowing a true seminar-like course to occur. Without student participation, the possibility of gaining a better understanding and meaning to each story would be non-existent.

This is not a hard task to undertake in this particular course as it is difficult for students to feel timid about sharing their thoughts due to the presence of Dr. Richardson’s motivation and inspiration. He quickly established an open and involving environment and made it seem as if there was no wrong answer to be given. His vast knowledge of relevant matters and his ability to assist in getting students’ minds to wander into a state of ponder allowed each student to contribute meaningful thoughts and ideas. Rhetorical and non-rhetorical questions will be posed, but both are equally valuable because the process of deep contemplation encourages the mind to grow.

These opportunities to share raw thoughts and ideas with a class and discuss those topics further truly allow students to grow and realize the capabilities of their minds, and it personally inspired me to become a better scholar not only in college but in life too.

The meaning of community and space is too often underappreciated. This course creates appreciation for the local atmosphere and society that encircles our current lives. It exposes students to a raw outlook on the space that is most relevant and prevalent to one’s life. For students at UNO, the most prevalent place currently is Omaha. The mission of this class allows students to discover the place that many have called home for years or some for a mere couple of months.

Regardless, traveling to different areas of Omaha allows one to realize just how big the city is and how diverse different areas are. Class visits to more established places such as the newly reconstructed Gene Leahy Mall exposed students to an environment outside of the classroom while still being able to discuss relevant educational content, but also to have some fun and fulfill the compelling need to test out the playground slides! The usage of public transportation to travel to the mall created an authentic experience to “tour” the east side of Omaha, as few students had ever used the bus before, so various new perspectives were formed. Other visits to more underdeveloped areas of Omaha, such as the visit with Canopy South, where their efforts to re-build the community were discussed and presented, exposed students to a more raw and emotional space in the city. In addition, guided tours, such as the viewing of the Redline Exhibit here at UNO, revealed a crucial problem within our city and addressed the limitations of communities to intermingle.

Good Evening, Ladies & Gentlemen

By Jared Dingman

What other two-syllable state capital rhymes with Boston? Crepes Suzette is traditionally flavored with which citrus fruit? “Waltograph”, a typeface available as freeware, is based on the handwriting and signature of whom? There is a 50/50 shot that you are either wondering the answer to these questions, or saying “what the heck?”. These questions are not just random. They are my job. I am a trivia host. I go around to different bars and restaurants around the Omaha area to do 2 hours of being a healthy balance of sarcastic and enthusiastic to groups full of drunken strangers. First, I would like to note that I am not 21 years old. I am an eccentric 20-year-old junior Honors student at UNO. I first heard of a job opening for trivia hosting through Indeed. Occasionally, I just like browsing the lists of job openings the same way one would browse for items on Amazon. However, after seeing a Trivia Host opening, I read the description and thought that I would be the perfect fit. I met with the director of operations for a company called America’s

Pub Quiz. After a quick bonding about being former swim team competitors, he offered me the job.

My first show was with a zany character named Kevin, who wore a taxi driver hat and had a solid dose of sarcasm in most of his comments. He told me about the ins and outs of managing crowds, how to pick playlists that wouldn’t make people groan, etc. One of the more interesting obstacles that I was met with was the amount of free beer and liquor being offered to me. Kevin tried offering me a beer, but I told him I wasn’t of age. He seemed to have a mix of laughter and pity when he responded. I would like to note almost all of the trivia hosts that I have met have a myriad of different jobs besides hosting. It could range from being a data analyst to a mortician (I know; creepy right?). Trivia is my sort of “side gig” at times as I am also a resident assistant on Scott Campus.

Hosting by myself for the first time was a little nerve-racking. I hosted at a bar in the Blackstone District called Scriptown, one of

the favorite bars at which I have hosted. The people are extremely friendly, and there is almost always a good turnout. One time I had just a little under 100 players for one game! The venue was very “trendy” and I had to start choosing my music. I found myself playing some Fitz and the Tantrums and Tyler, the Creator. It took a lot of reading the room and seeing how people responded to the music to see what songs I should play. Now, I have a dedicated playlist for different venues of hosting trivia.

After a lot of nerves and shaky jokes, I made it! I did my first trivia show where someone came up to me and complimented me on my “buttery” voice. Thank you! Now I have been hosting trivia across Omaha since May. You can find me at 1912 (the rooftop bar) on Tuesdays, and Deer Creek Cantina on Thursdays. Additionally, I also pick up random shows at the Blackstone District, Benson, etc. I would love to see you there!

(Also, the answers to the questions listed above are respectively Austin, Orange, and Walt Disney.)

Internship with Senator Ben Sasse

By Keith Allen



This fall semester, I am interning at Ben Sasse's Omaha office. This internship has been a great experience and it has allowed me to get more insight into my future career in politics. I have completed many projects, such as contacting all the high schools in the state of Nebraska to have updated information about them. Another project I participated in was creating cover letters for Military Academy Service Applications. I have also had many interactions with constituents. I am in charge of answering calls from constituents, listening to their opinions and messages, and then writing them up on a government website so they can be passed along to the Senator. Some constituent interactions are face-to-face. On one Monday morning, there was a protest outside our office, which was a stressful yet exciting experience. The protest involved people who were in favor of the proposed Afghanistan Adjustment Act; the protest also included many news outlets, which were recording and taking pictures outside our office. I might even be in a *Washington Post* article as I was the one primarily

interacting with the protesters and media outlets. Another great insight that I have come from weekly Memorandums, in which I have to be a Legislative Assistant for the office. I listen to nominations and hearings on the Senate Judiciary Committee, as Senator Sasse currently sits on the committee, and summarize all the important information back to the staff in the office. The memorandum project is actually quite fun to do because you get to watch senators on the committee debate about proposed judicial nominations and bills. In all, this internship has been a great experience because I have gotten to witness real-world problems and situations being handled effectively by the Omaha office.

“This internship has been a great experience and it has allowed me to get more insight into my future career in politics.”

Team Rubicon Disaster Response: Hurricane Ian

By Sophie House

On September 28th, 2022, Hurricane Ian made landfall near Fort Myers, FL as a devastating category 4, becoming one of the deadliest storms in the region since 1935. State emergency managers and federal weather analysts made models predicting landfall over 120 miles north in Tampa, so evacuations for the hardest impacted communities were issued only hours before landfall, which contributed to a record high fatality rate. On October 7th, five days after the storm dissipated on the east coast and nine after the storm made landfall in Florida, I traveled to “ground zero” with an international disaster response organization called Team Rubicon (TR). Founded by veterans and mostly composed of veterans, retired healthcare professionals, and retired first responders, civilians are able and encouraged to join TR.

Our mission was to assist the communities of Cape Coral, Fort Myers, and the barrier islands (Sanibel, Pine, Matlacha) by responding via three resource capabilities: roof tarping, debris removal, and chainsaw work. TR uses the nationally implemented Incident Command System (ICS), which is a management structure consisting of an Incident Commander (IC- think executive director, president, etc.) who oversees four branches: Operations, Logistics, Planning, and Finance. For this mission, the operation branch was divided into three divisions, East, North, South—there was no West division because the severity of destruction on the islands was beyond our resource capabilities during the first phase. I was part of the East Division operating in central Fort Myers, the lowest income neighborhoods in the entire mission area. My job title for the eight days of my operating time was Lead Site Surveyor. I was to

obtain legal releases, make initial damage assessments, create resource needs reports, and conduct community outreach for the entirety of the East Division. TR was actively using a GIS program fed by data from a crisis hotline and accessible by local, state, federal, and other non-governmental organizations, allowing us to see and share progress in real time. However, while each division was able to finish 1-5 jobs per 8-hour work period, the program had over 1000 jobs coming in daily. Despite our efforts, even with 100 volunteers, we were short-staffed, lacked critical resources, and had to work in difficult conditions. There was no potable water running through the local water system, so all drinking and cooking water had to be outsourced. Electricity, Wi-Fi, and cell service went in and out, making our fully electronic operations very difficult—this also meant no A/C in 97-degree weather with 90% humidity.



TR has limited internal resource capabilities, meaning that logistics must routinely procure resources locally on operations. However, in this disaster it was nearly impossible to obtain resources such as food, tools, batteries, tarps, garbage bags, etc., locally because we were competing with other organizations, private contractors, and the community itself. Our operation was headquartered out of a community center in Cape Coral, but East Division relocated into a baseball field locker room in Fort Myers halfway through the operation period to free up space for incoming volunteers and reduce transit time for tasks.

As a site surveyor, I distributed over 1,200 outreach forms, utilizing local churches that served as community leaders in my service area. Additionally, I developed a handful of critical assets to assist in the continuity of operations by connecting with food vendors, medical aid NGOs, and organizations that had surplus supplies. This was my second major operation with Team Rubicon and my first major disaster response operation. The emotional toll on disaster victims and responders alike cannot be understated, nor can anyone truly prepare for it. Most residents in my service area had no form of insurance, no means of transportation (cars had been totaled by flood damage) and had limited funds to stay in alternate locations (hotels, etc.). Central Fort Myers was a critical needs area, especially in neighborhoods closest to the river that had been completely flooded, because these communities had the least amount of outside support/financial safety net. This was contrasted by the South and North division service areas that had substantially more severe damage, but the demographics were temporary residents (winter/secondary/tertiary homes) with insurance, disposable income, and access to government aid. Initially, I was unfamiliar with the area and did not recognize the disparity, but when I visited a house that my muck-out team had been called to assist with, my team and I were struck with an unsettling feeling of injustice. With the support of my division chief, I advocated strongly for all divisions to move closer to my service area so that we were helping people who did not have

any other options. As a result of my efforts, I received a TR distinction award from the IC, and we were able to focus all division operations temporarily on the worst hit streets of central Fort Myers.

This was the largest response effort TR has ever conducted (there were three other identical operations on the east coast and central Florida) and there were severe issues in certain operating practices, volunteer management, and continuity protocols. However, the operating period will stay open for months, hopefully allowing the organization to adapt and to overcome some of the more serious problems. This experience has reaffirmed not only my passion for this career field, but my long-term goals of advocating for robust and equitable preventative policy across the United States. A dollar in prevention equals four dollars in response, which could save a life and that life might be yours.



From Honors to Action: Protesting the Omaha Bike Lane Removal

By Isabella Manhart



Local policy in Omaha is an enigma. It no doubt affects your everyday life, but it's near impossible to understand what exactly is happening and why. Even as someone looking to change local systems, I found myself in a reactive cycle, struggling to understand and engage with the policies impacting my community before they became issues.

So, I jumped at the chance to take Urban Studies: Planning, Policies, and Contemporary Issues, an Honors class focused on contextualizing urban studies topics in Omaha. It wasn't long before my learning translated into action. It's one thing to study transportation policy; it's another to be a part of shaping it.

The Harney Street Midtown to Market Bikeway is Omaha's only protected bike lane, where cyclists can ride in their own lane separated from fast-moving cars by bollards. It runs just two miles from around Dewey Park to 10th street downtown but has had a huge impact on the culture of cycling in Omaha,

increasing ridership by 30% and bike share usage by 69% according to the 2022 one-year evaluation by Bike Walk Nebraska (who maintained the pilot project). Despite the overwhelming success of this lane, a unanimous vote by the city council to continue maintaining it, and no issues with funding, Mayor Jean Stothert decided in late September to remove the lane. (Although no real cause was cited by the mayor, Harney Street is on the planned route of the streetcar the city is seeking to install downtown.) Fellow activists and I organized a "Bike In" protest in response, occupying the street to demand the city maintain the bike lane. Around a hundred cyclists gathered and bravely rode through the street in protest. The result demonstrated the impact of collective action. As we packed up, we received a call about a press release from the mayor: the bike lane would remain for the next 18 months with support from a private donor.

I see this outcome as a step in the right direction. It's not a solution, because the problem is bigger than one bike lane. We've been made to believe streets are just

for cars and aren't spaces we have the right to occupy. But streets aren't just pathways from A to B; streets are public space, the largest single use of public space in our city in fact, and they should serve us. The real solution starts with a concept that needs to enter both city policy and the collective psyche: streets are for people.

To create streets that provide all people with effective traffic management, green infrastructure, and multimodal transportation, we need to create collective awareness of these possibilities, demand action, and hold our city officials accountable. We deserve more

than one protected bike lane. We deserve a whole network of streets that serve us! And what I've learned from my urban studies Honors class and my work on the Harney Street Bike-In is that we all have the power to make that happen.

“Around a hundred cyclists gathered and bravely rode through the street in protest. The result demonstrated the impact of collective action.”



Honors Living Learning Community

By Teresa Gibbons



The University Honors Program has filled a dedicated building in Mav Village for years. The Honors' residence building provides many students with connections to peers with similar academic goals. As a freshman myself, I found that the Honors program was the only campus organization in which I was consistently involved, so when I was asked if I would be willing to be the RA of an Honors Living Learning Community, I jumped at the opportunity. Upon looking at my building roster at the beginning of the year, I found that I had already known a quarter of my residents before being their RA, either through Honors colloquia classes or through the various events hosted throughout last year.

The students in my building are phenomenal. I take every opportunity to boast about how willing my residents are to talk to me. I have made meaningful connections with every student in my building and do everything I can to support them in their academic and social endeavors. Tyler Baldwin, a sophomore and second year Honors building resident, values the "connections with people that have made his transition

to college significantly easier." He says many students in our building help each other with homework and studying, because they've either been through the classes already or because they are in the classes with each other.

Chloe Hansel, a freshman in our building (and a first-year Honors Student Association representative) also notices how connected our building is compared to other residence halls. I've had the privilege of organizing building events throughout this fall semester that have kept my residents engaged with each other and me, including one event that our very own Dr. Morrison attended to check in on our Honors residents. As UNO has become less covid restricted, I enjoy seeing the faces of my residents at my events and around campus. It means a lot to me to know that the students are building connections within both Honors and Residence Life, and I can't help but feel a bit proud that I am able to be a part of their Living Learning experiences.

South Africa Study Abroad

By Molly Andreasen



For the last two weeks of June, I traveled alongside Dr. Kari Morfeld and her research team with her non-profit organization “4-elephants”. I traveled throughout South Africa to the Ndzuti Safari Lodge, Mica Village, Hoedspruit, and Krueger National Park. The experiences I gained from this trip are beyond compare; I am very thankful that I was able to partake in this journey with Kari and her team.

En route to the Eppley airport, the Lion King soundtrack was playing in my roommate’s car as she drove to drop me off to begin my adventure in Africa. I was as nervous as ever; not only had I never traveled abroad without family before, but I did not know anyone embarking on this trip except for Dr. Kari. Luckily, as soon as I walked into the airport, I found Dr. Kari and her family in the check-in line. To our surprise, her daughter and I were “stuck” at the Omaha airport unable to travel to Johannesburg because there was a problem with our COVID-19 tests. After speaking with many Delta employees and taking an at-home COVID test in the airport lobby, we were given the go-ahead. We caught a different flight to Atlanta and met the rest of the team before heading to Johannesburg. I got my seat upgraded because of that problem and made friends with the South African

sitting next to me, “Martin”. He was a very lovely farmer with whom I shared wine on the 16-hour plane ride.

We landed in Jo-Berg, as everyone calls it, made it through customs, and then I found an airport worker in the bathroom. She cleaned the bathroom (it was her job) but then asked for tips as I left; it was a bit weird but normal for this country. We shuttled to our hotel and ordered fast food. It turned out to be uber eats, which we all thought was funny. The food reminded me of McDonald’s, many of which were seen when driving down the road.

The next day we made the drive to Ndzuti Safari camp. Along the way, I saw many “Townships”, which were run-down camps where some South Africans lived. Driving felt like I was still in Nebraska because we passed by many cornfields and cattle, sheep, and goat farms. The three days at Ndzuti were very animal-filled! We went on a safari drive each morning and afternoon. Each drive was around three to four hours and somewhat cold. When the packing list was sent out, I did not listen the best. I did not think I would be needing gloves, a winter coat, and a stocking cap, but I was wrong. It got down to almost 40 degrees at night and into the mornings, which made it very cold on the safari rides.

In the mornings we would stop halfway through for coffee, tea, and hot chocolate and then do the same for afternoon rides, except with wine and snacks. The drives consisted of many different animal encounters. The experiences ranged from seeing elephants at a distance drinking at a watering hole to them walking right behind our jeep. One instance that I remember

very clearly was Justin, our safari guide, explaining to us that elephants are spooked very easily. They all have a different level of comfort, which tells us how close we can get to them. He backed up the jeep very slowly about a couple of inches and that was too close for one female. She trumpeted, mock charged at our jeep, then stomped away towards the rest of the herd. Another cool encounter was when our group came across a pride of lions not once but twice. The first time, they walked very close to our jeep; if I would have reached my hand out, I would have touched them. There were six in this pride. I found that lions are very tame and did not care about us watching them, and they travel very far distances. We had been tracking them for the past two days by the tracks in the sand on the road. It was very interesting seeing how quickly our guides could spot tracks and then follow them to where they would go back into the bush. Surprisingly, lions travel lots on the road so there were always many tracks for us to follow. Besides the lions and elephants, we saw zebra, giraffes, leopards, crocodiles, hippos, warthogs, hyenas, waterbuck, buffalo, impala, kudu, and many more.

By the fifth day, we made our way to Mica Village. This is the home to the 4-Elphants research lab. They work closely with Elephants-Alive!, a non-profit based out of South Africa. They collect the elephant fecal samples that are run in the South African lab. While in Mica we ran 400 elephant fecal samples, with dates ranging back to 2019. There are two tests run on each sample: for bulls (male elephants), cortisol and testosterone; for cows (female elephants), cortisol and progesterone. While at Mica, lab work was the main thing that occupied my time. I was very thankful to be able to contribute to the work 4-Elphants is doing by being a fecal weigher and test tube labeler. This was a very tedious job, yet it needed to be done so the more trained research assistants could finish running the samples. I am anxious to see what the results are of the samples that were run. Kari mentioned that it will be interesting to see the results of the cortisol tests and compare them, as there are some from pre, during, and post the covid-19 pandemic. I am wondering if the

cortisol levels (stress hormones released from the adrenal gland) may be decreased during the pandemic. Yet we will not know if it is “good stress” or “bad stress” hormones that are being released. Dr. Kari is researching to find out just this. Another hormone called DHE will assist in this, since the closer the DHE and cortisol ratio is to one, the more “good stress” hormones are released.



Our team was very fortunate to go out on a field day with Elephants Alive! I learned many interesting things about their non-profit. One important fact that sticks out to me is that some elephants in the area are collared. This means that they have a collar on with a GPS tracking device inside of it. They have a corresponding name too. When Elephants Alive! goes out, they will use their app to see where each elephant has gone in the past 21 days. They also have a location of the elephant that is updated every 4 hours. This can be useful when trying to collect a specific sample from a collared elephant. Sometimes, the rangers use the collared elephants to get samples of social behaviors from the other elephants they are with. Collaring elephants is very important, as it provides data that tells researchers what drives their movement (safety, sex, food, and water). Then a fear landscape can be made to show what areas they are avoiding.

Later in the week, our group got to go to the Elephants Alive! gardens. This is a research location for conservation efforts in South Africa. Currently, the project they are working on is with elephants breaking into camps and farms, wanting to eat the crops inside. A way to combat this is by using unpalatable, which are plants that elephants cannot digest; therefore, they will not eat. Yet that is more work for farmers, and they were not very keen on the idea when there was no profit out of it; they could just shoot or hurt the elephants to keep them out. Michelle found that essential oils are very high on the market, are easily transportable, and have a long shelf life. If the unpalatable are also essential oils, it will give the farmers another source of income. Additionally, Elephants Alive! works with bees. So having a couple of beehives around will help all the crops prosper and give the farmers honey too. Overall, it is a full circle of growth and development that is helping elephant conservation in the end!

Throughout this trip, I learned many new things about elephants and wildlife but also about myself. I realized how grateful I am for the place I live in. Some people in South Africa live in run-down townships and sell souvenirs on the side of the road yet are very content

with life. So, when we had power surges every couple of hours with no electricity, and no phone service for the whole trip, it made me think and be more thankful for where I am in life and how blessed I truly am. In South Africa fries are known as chips. Stop lights are known as robots. Torches are known as flashlights. Caucuses and succulents are all over the sides of the road and around people's houses. Baboons run alongside the road.

I cannot say enough how thankful I am that I was able to embark on this journey with Kari and her 4-elephants team. I came back to the U.S. with a new mindset about life and other options for my future career as a veterinarian. Being out in the bush with the wildlife added the idea of wildlife veterinary science to my future career board.

“Throughout this trip, I learned many new things about elephants and wildlife but also about myself. I realized how grateful I am for the place I live in.”



Accomplishments and Accolades



Ryan Chapman

2022 Honorable Mention for Best Oral Presentation at the Research and Creative Activity Fair.



Maverick Harrold

Honorable Mention for his piano performance in the Nebraska Music Teachers Association Young Artist Competition.



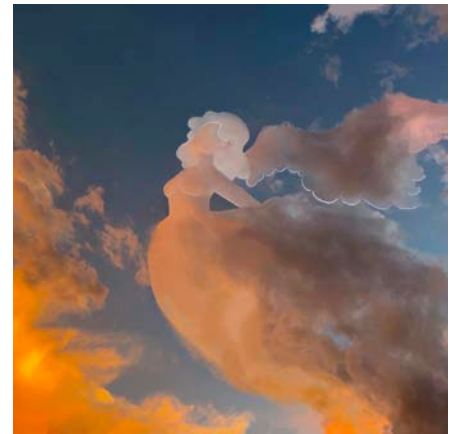
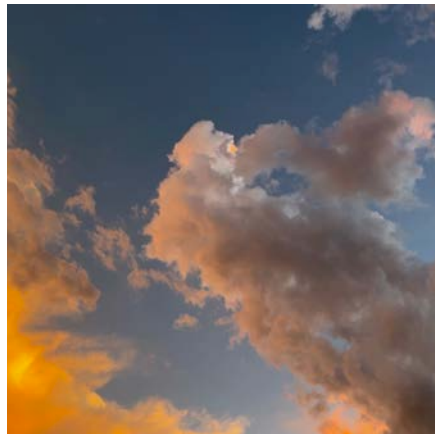
Brandon Villanueva-Sanchez

Barry Goldwater Scholarship recipient for his research regarding opioid dependency and early life stressors.

Honors Students Outside the Classroom

Kaylee Lahti

While working towards a double major in business and Spanish, Kaylee explored her creative side this semester. From left to right, “Wednesday Addams,” inspiration for one of her pieces, and “I See Angels in the Sky.”



Madeline Swanson



Being a student-athlete in the Honors program has been an amazing experience throughout my first semester at UNO. In the classroom, I have received the support of Honors faculty and fellow members, which has helped me maintain a 4.0. On the cross-country course, my coaches and teammates have brought me a lot of guidance as well, which has allowed me to set a personal record just short of 2 minutes. I also had the opportunity to compete at the Summit League Conference Championships and NCAA Regional Championships.

Giving Back



Your funds will support Honors students who want to present their work at regional and national conferences, who need support to enroll in travel courses, and who want to complete internships but need help with costs incurred as they do. Every dollar helps a student directly.



Search the number 01147090 at NU Foundation's website to support current Honors students through the UNO Honors Program Excellence Fund.



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Edited by Megan Quinn

