



# THE DISTINCTION

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## SPRING 2022

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
Omaha

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Abigail Williamson, Editor



# May 2022 Graduates

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## Elizabeth Bender

College of Public Affairs and Community Service

Major: Criminology and Criminal Justice

College of Arts and Sciences

Major: Foreign Language and Literature-Spanish

“Anger in the Overlooked: A gendered analysis of the January 6th, 2021 Capitol Hill Breach”

Mentor: Erin Kearns

## Zachary Byar

College of Business Administration

Major: Business Administration (Accounting)

“Analysis of Audit Procedures in the Wake of the Early 2000s Accounting Scandals”

Mentor: Jennifer Riley

## Cody Camenzind

College of Public Affairs and Community Service

Major: Emergency Management

College of Arts and Sciences

Major: Biology

“The Utilization and Effectiveness of Non-transport Advanced Life Support (ALS) Intercept Services in Rural Communities and Their Benefits in Nebraska”

Mentor: Tom Jamieson

## Ryan Chapman

College of Information Science and Technology

Major: Bioinformatics

“Investigation of Microbe and Host Tissue Interactions Contributing to the Pathogenesis of Colorectal Cancer”

Mentor: Dhundy Bastola



# May 2022 Graduates

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## Katelynn Dobbs

College of Arts and Sciences

Major: Biology

“Immunity and Anxiety: Affecting The Body and Mind”

Mentor: Kristen Johnson

## Hannah Fisher

College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media

Major: Music Education

“Remedial Rhythm Reading: A semester-long project in sixth grade band”

Mentor: Shelly Cooper

## Griffin Gillen

College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media

Major: Music

“The Fire of the Creative Spirit: An Analysis of a Composer’s Creative Process (for non-musicians)”

Mentor: Chris Leach

## Morgan Goslar

College of Arts and Sciences

Major: Psychology and Criminology and Criminal Justice

“The Impact of Stimulus Age on Emotional Face Recognition”

Mentor: Rose Strasser

## Joey Gruber

College of Information Science and Technology

Major: IT Innovation

College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media

Major: Communication Studies

“ECO, a sustainability education chatbot”

Mentor: Ann Fruhling

# May 2022 Graduates

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## Sidney Hanel

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

Major: Secondary Education (Science)

“The Impacts of Positive Praise on Science Achievement Levels of Female Students”

Mentor: Sheryl McGlamery

## Hannah Im

College of Arts and Sciences

Majors: Neuroscience and Philosophy

“Pre-Health Students’ Perceptions of and Experiences with Medical Ethics”

Mentor: Brigette Ryalls

## Sharik Jimenez Zuniga

College of Arts and Sciences

Major: Sociology

College of Public Affairs and Community Service

Major: Criminology and Criminal Justice

“The Representation of Women in Disney Movies”

Mentor: Julie Pelton

## Coleton Kanzmeier

College of Arts and Sciences

Major: Mathematics

“Attempting to Predict the Unpredictable: March Madness”

Mentors: Steven From and Andrew Swift

## Courtney Kilroy

College of Arts and Sciences

Major: Political Science

“Diets, Detoxes, and Dysmorphia: Health, Wellness, and Misinformation on TikTok”

Mentor: Liam Heerten-Rodriguez



# May 2022 Graduates

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## Annika Kuchar

College of Arts and Sciences

Major: Biology

“UNO Student Access to Emergency Contraception: A Needs Assessment”

Mentor: Liam Heerten-Rodriguez

## Miriam Marcus

College of Arts and Sciences

Majors: Sociology and Political Science

“Helicopter Parenting and Young Adult Well-Being: Differences by Immigration Status, Gender, and Race”

Mentor: Dan Hawkins

## Derek McLaughlin

College of Business Administration

Major: Business Administration (Economics)

“Major League Baseball: The Meaning and Impact of the Lockout”

Mentor: Dustin White

## Bobbie McWilliams-Leesley

College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media

Majors: Studio Art and Art History

“Suzanne’s Story”

Mentor: Regina Robbins-Idoate

## Cassidy Mentink

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

Major: Early Childhood Inclusive Education

“Spelling Intervention Strategies: What Works Best?”

Mentor: Saundra Shillingstad

# May 2022 Graduates

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## Rhett Milner

College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media

Majors: Creative Writing and English

“A Collection of Publication-Ready Short Stories”

Mentor: Kevin Clouter

## Byron Moore

College of Information Science and Technology

Major: IT Innovation

“One Ubiquitous Digital Identity”

Mentors: Deepak Khazanchi and Ann Fruhling

## Abigail Osterhaus

College of Public Affairs and Community Service

Major: Criminology and Criminal Justice

“Memory Errors: Schema-Consistent and Schema-Inconsistent Memory Tasks”

Mentor: Beth Lyon

## Brianna Parr

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences Major: Public Health

“Expand NEMT Across Central and Western Nebraska”

Mentor: Richard Stacy

## Rachel Riede

College of Public Affairs and Community Service

Major: Social Work

College of Business Administration

Major: Business Administration (Human Resource Management)

“Redeveloping Homeless History and Chronicity Documentation: A Study for Heartland Family Service”

Mentor: Aaron Banman



# May 2022 Graduates

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## Caleb Sandall

College of Arts and Sciences

Major: Molecular and Biomedical Biology

“A Mechanistic Study on the Immunological Effects of a Novel Anti-Schistosomal Compound”

Mentor: Paul Davis

## Grant Van Robays

College of Arts and Sciences

Major: Political Science

“Hate in the Heartland: Examining Hate Groups in Nebraska’s Past and Present”

Mentor: Michelle Black

## Lavanya Uppala

College of Information Science and Technology

Major: Bioinformatics

College of Arts and Sciences

Major: Biology

“Identification of Synonymous Genes and Pathways Implicated in Irritable Bowel Disease and Pancreatic Duct Adenocarcinoma”

Mentor: Dhundy Bastola

## Alaina Wallick

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences Major: Secondary Education (Language Arts)

“Taking the Time: Implementing Best Practices within the Classroom”

Mentor: Sandra Shillingstad





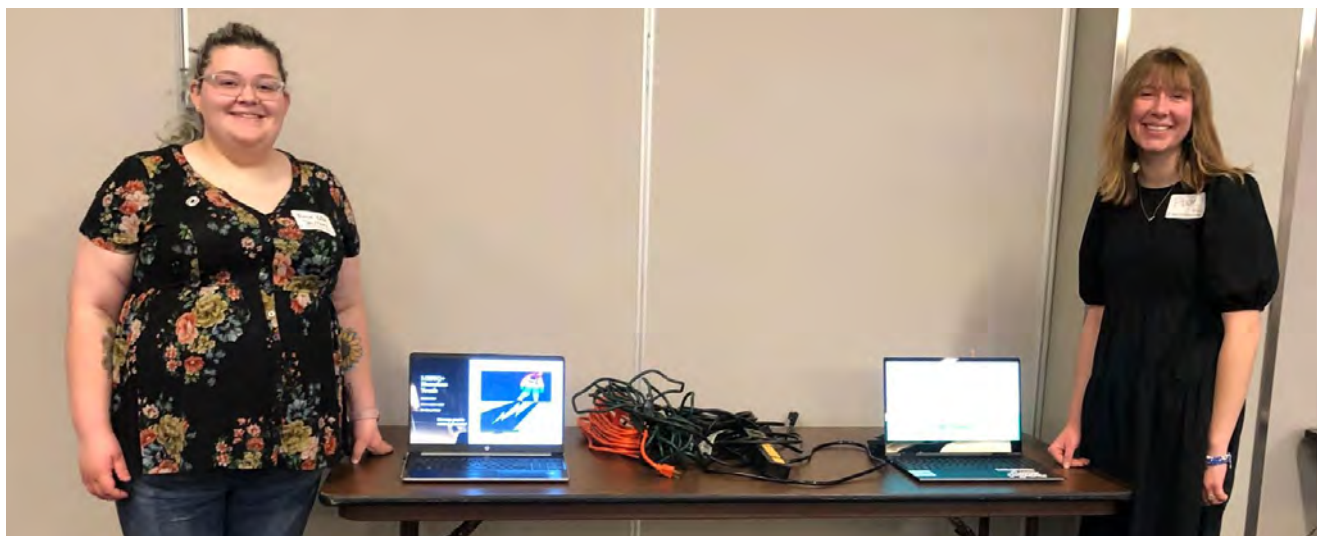
# HSA Formal

On April 15th, HSA held a formal event, Vegas Night, at the Milo Bail Student Center. The event was black tie, and all UNO students were welcome to come and eat food, play games, and dance! The event was also held as a food drive for the Maverick Food Pantry.





# Contract Celebration



# Contract Celebration

Katie Cooley

On Thursday, April 21, the UNO University Honors Program held a Contract Celebration to showcase the hard work students undertook to complete contracts this semester. Contracts are an opportunity to generate a creative or research project that is linked to a course curriculum. Under an expert professor's guidance, then, students can delve deeper into topics of interest to them and stretch their learning in classes accordingly. The project that the student decides to undertake is left open to encourage work that is exciting to the student; as long as the mentor agrees, the students can present quizlets, build websites, create music arrangements, etc. The possibilities are endless! The various projects were displayed via PowerPoint presentations and posters and original creative work in the ballroom at Milo Bail in an open house format where attendees could talk with students about their projects.

Contracts vary widely depending on the students' interest as well as their creative ideas. From Oscar Biesanz's presentation on medical illustration of immune response to Megan Roberts's print making to Molly Andreasen's economic analysis of veterinary medicine, many disciplines were represented through student work. Contracts allow students to engage fully in subject matter that they enjoy and that enthusiasm came across in abundance at the celebration. Professors who dropped by found themselves engaged in conversations with students beyond their areas of expertise, and all the student presenters could share their passion for their topics—and accomplish a professional presentation. Contract

work may initially seem intimidating, but time and time again students hurdle expectations and produce truly special projects with imaginative and original ideas. A complete list of those who shared their work at the contract celebration, as well as the project name and respective mentor, are included below:

## Aidan Hatfield

*A genetic scheme to determine how a gene, *desat2*, controls female mating behavior*

Mentor: Dean Castillo

## Molly Andreasen

*Equilibrium Analysis of Veterinary Medicine*

Mentor: Charles Howell

## Alexandria Vandenberg

*Paving the Way, Book by Book*

Mentor: Lisa Scherer

## Abbie Russman

*Interpersonal Communication in Conflict*

Mentor: Lisa German

## Alecia Keller

## LGBTQ+ Homeless Youth

Mentor: Sarah Abegglen

## Megan Roberts

*My Friend Crow*

Mentor: Howard Paine

## Micah Dunwoody

*She is the Martial Arts*

Mentor: Michele Desmarais

## Nia Acharya

*Ovarian Cancer in Healthcare*

Mentor: Danae Dinkel

## Oscar Biesanz

*Innate Immune Response Diagram*

Mentor: Katie Shirazi

## Sarup Kunwor

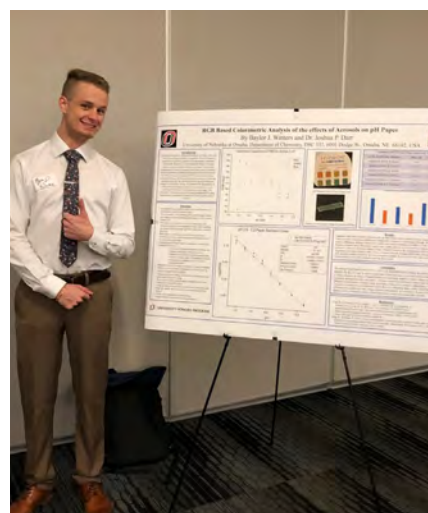
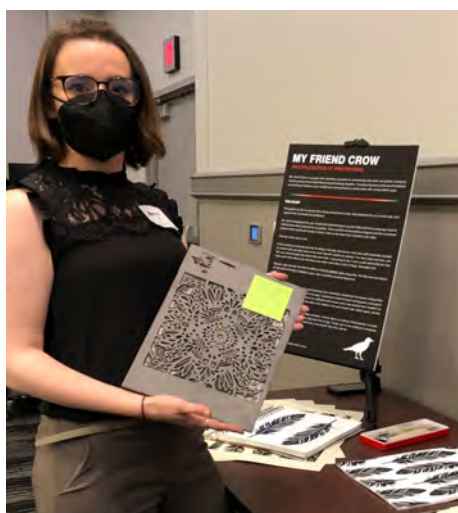
*Methamphetamine: A Tale of Diminished Connectivity, Neurotoxicity, Neuroinflammation, and DNA Damage*

Mentor: Ernest Chivero

## Baylor Winters

*RGB Based Colorimetric Analysis of the effects of Aerosols on pH Paper*

Mentor: Joshua Darr





# Medjugorje

Abbie Russman

**M**y first time out of the country was definitely a trip to remember.

Through the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), I was able to attend a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, a village in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I've been telling people it was the best experience of my life, and I mean it.

In short, Medjugorje is a pilgrimage site for Christians. There are visionaries who report seeing the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. The faith of the people there is so beautiful, and I have been inspired by them and reinvigorated in my own faith.

Our trip started with gathering together in New York to fly out of the international airport. From there we flew to Germany, then to Split in Croatia, and then we drove to Dubrovnik, Croatia, and eventually made our way to Medjugorje.

The scenery there is beautiful. The area is mountainous, and we got to climb up Cross Mountain (an important site in the village) and overlook the town. The whole experience was breathtaking. The weather was also perfect. We had anticipated rain, but most days had sunny skies and spring weather.

I experienced a lot of internal challenges and had a few realizations about myself while on this trip. Because the trip was a pilgrimage, I was in a mental capacity for growth and change, and I certainly underwent those things.



The people I was on pilgrimage with were incredible. We all came from different locations within the United States, so we all brought different perspectives and stories to share. Their witness and faith were constant inspirations and motivations to me. We grew so much in the 10 days we were together, so much so that I'm going to visit some of them in Texas this summer.

The food there was also really enjoyable. I get nervous to try new things sometimes, but I was pleasantly surprised with how the food was. We ate together as a group for every meal, so a lot of bonding and growth happened during our shared mealtimes.

It was easy for me to feel comfortable in the environment of the pilgrimage. I discovered that I can feel at home regardless of where I am, as long as I have people around me who have the same values and goals as me and care about my wellbeing.

I am extremely grateful to have had this opportunity, and it is an experience I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I am still unpacking so much from this trip, and I highly encourage anyone and everyone to take a pilgrimage, regardless of belief, and be open to how the environment changes you and challenges you.



# Research and Creative Activity Fair

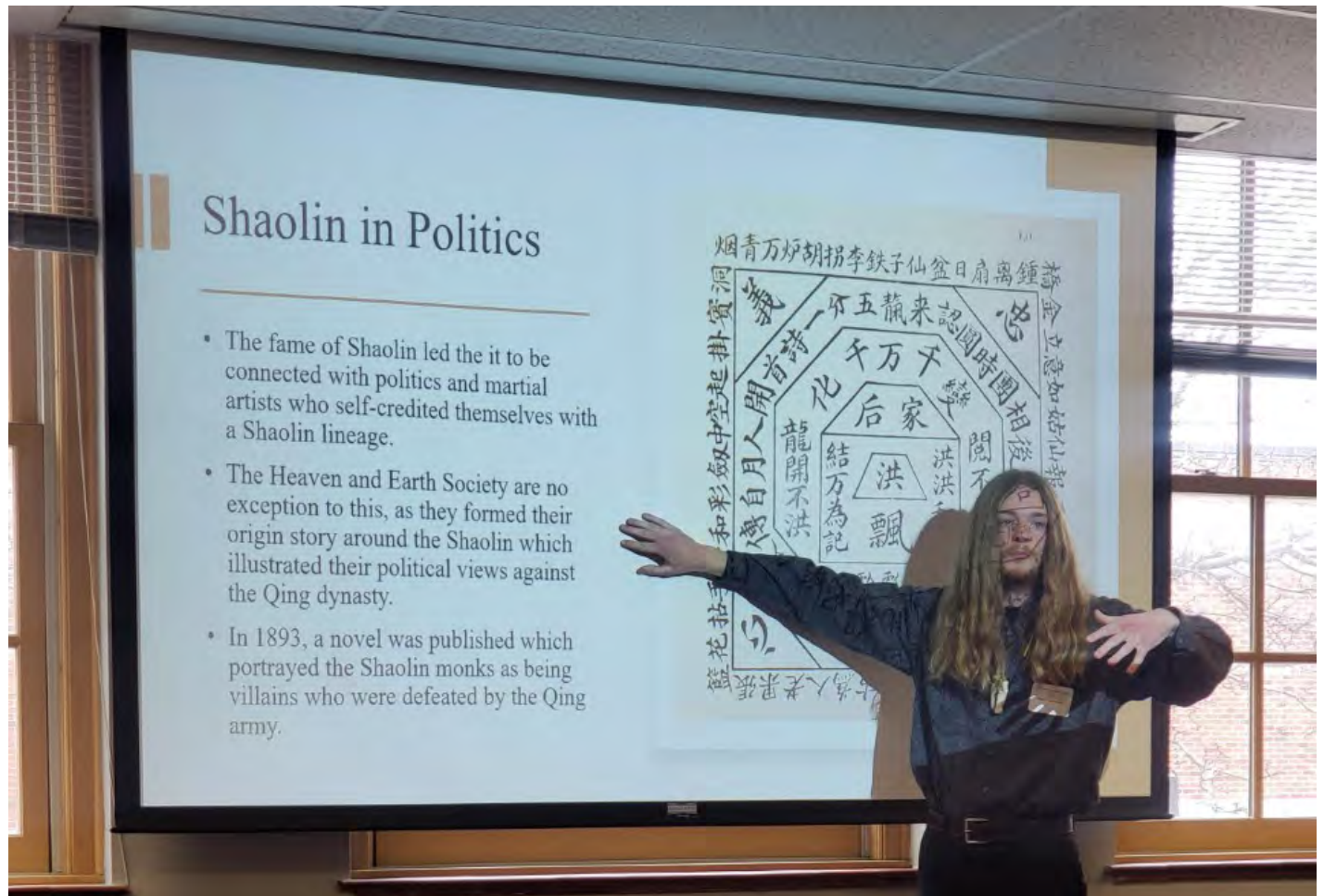
Micah Dunwoody

I was in Honors, speaking to

Dr. Morrison about a paper that I have been working on since Spring 2021 about the Jedi from Star Wars and Shaolin monks. She recommended that I could present it at the Research and Creative Activity Fair, which would look really good on my resume. I figured that was the best course of action since I am pursuing the publication of that paper and graduate studies. I had not worked on it for months, but I added research for the new direction I will be taking the paper in where I talk

about how the Jedi and Shaolin are kinds of archetypes that have been utilized in political beliefs and violent actions. I have never presented professionally, but it made my day when I got to present this project that I have been working on for over a year. There were people who arrived just to see me present. Afterwards, everybody at the fair was talking about my presentation, calling me the "Jedi guy." Those who found out that I was "the guy" were ecstatic to meet me. Dr. Morrison emailed me later saying, "I hope you consider doing something like this in the future." I told her that I most definitely will.

Honors student presents his research on Star Wars and Shaolin Monks.



# Muppets Take Minneapolis

## A Journey from an Honors Contract to an Eric Sevareid Award

Ben Goeser

Goeser describes how he came to receive the Eric Sevareid Award for Talk and Public Affairs in Student Market Radio.

“How did I get here?” It’s a question we ask ourselves whenever we find ourselves in surreal and inexplicable situations—moments that throw a wrench in the expected every day: a celebrity meet-and-greet at an airport, an opportunity to go on stage or on the field among the greats (whoever they may be), an unprompted goatee after the razor died mid-shave before a job interview.

In my case, I found myself sitting at an award banquet in Minnesota, wearing the suit I had only worn to prom my senior year of high school, and doing my best Kermit the Frog impression in front of a local North Dakotan news team. But while I asked myself, “How did I get here?”, I did in fact know the answer.

For my Fall 2021 semester, I decided to do an Honors contract with my ENGL 4860: Modern Familiar Essay course. This way I could get both an English credit for my major and an Honors credit for the program. The contract led to me completing a research project and an associated class discussion I led on David Sedaris, a prominent author and humorist whose works littered the coffee table and bookshelves of my home growing up. Therefore, I had access to a wide range of essays and stories I both analyzed for class and hoped to imitate in my writing.

During that same semester, I also took JMC 2370: Radio/Audio I. The final project for the course was an audio story, which could range from reading an old fairytale to telling a personal experience. With Sedaris on the brain, I knew exactly what I wanted to do: a Christmas story similar to Sedaris’s “SantaLand Diaries,” which he voiced famously on NPR. Instead of describing working as a Macy’s department store elf, I told the story of a midnight mass my family attended on Christmas Eve when I was younger where a deacon sounded exactly like the famous fleece frog. It’s the story my family always shares around the dinner table during the holiday season for laughs—laughs that I believe highlight the connections that time of year is about. Plus, I saw the opportunity to take a stab at voice acting (I apologize).

Fast forward to the Spring 2022 semester: I learned from my professor that she submitted my piece for competition and that it was nominated for the Eric Sevareid Award for talk and public affairs in student market radio. This led to me taking a road trip with fellow UNO journalist students to the Midwest Journalism Conference in Minneapolis. There, after two days of panels and advice on the field, I found myself sitting at a fancy banquet (multiple forks with different purposes) and waiting to hear how my piece placed among other works by college students from Minnesota, Wisconsin, the Dakotas, Iowa, and Nebraska.

Similar to the Oscars (the only time I will ever say that), they played clips from the winners of each category. So, when I heard my awkward voice echo throughout the ballroom, I was both incredibly self-conscious and thankful for the winding journey that brought me there. The North Dakotans were pretty cool, too.

# Terrorism in Media

Eva Burklund

When I walked into my first honors colloquium class (and night class) on a Tuesday night in a building I knew very little about, I wasn't sure what to expect. The class wasn't my first pick for my honors requirement despite being at the intersection of my political science, journalism and mass communication studies, and I had little idea of what would be covered by the "Terrorism in Media" class.

What I came to expect was that even though I was learning so much about terrorism, in every lecture I realized that I knew even less about terrorism than I thought I did before. Each week, we covered a different medium through which terrorism could be discussed or described, including video games, news, art, social media, TV, music, and movies. Learning about these topics was supplemented by an infographic we had to create for our final, which could be about

any topic, and a group project presented during the last week of class.

Like the infographic, the group project could be about any topic; however, the project could be in any format we wanted. The freedom of such choice was a blessing and a curse, as we could talk about what we were interested in but there were so many interesting topics to choose from. The same went for different ways to present the information.

After examining many options for our topic, my group decided on talking about confirmation bias affecting perceptions of terrorism. Using some of what we had learned about public perceptions of terrorism, we were able to define confirmation bias and talk about the different methods by which confirmation bias, or people's tendency to seek out knowledge that supports their beliefs

or hold beliefs despite evidence disproving it, has been measured in different studies. We also described what the results showed about how people reacted when faced with information that they didn't know, and what can be done about it.

Some of the topics in other group projects included cyberterrorism, using humor to cope with terrorist acts, stereotypes of people of Arab descent in movies, and analyzing scenes in "Criminal Minds" for terrorism misconceptions, among others. These often came in the form of presentations and podcasts, with a group even doing a game show format for their presentation.

Just like I didn't expect to learn about all of the topics we discussed in this class, I didn't expect to enjoy the class so much or be so interested in terrorism moving forward, but I am grateful nonetheless.

Honors colloquium courses change every semester! This spring, Honors offered "Beyond the One Ring," a class about the major works of J. R. R. Tolkien. Professor Matthew Marx and honors students got together to have pizza and watch *The Fellowship of the Ring*—Extended Edition, of course!





# UNMC Internship

Abby Swoboda

As a sophomore, I have been given an incredible opportunity to work on my own project in Dr. Scot Ouellette's research lab at UNMC. Here, I am investigating a chlamydial protease, named Ct441, and its role in chlamydial differentiation, which is an integral aspect of *Chlamydia trachomatis* development.

Surprisingly, Omaha is a hotspot for infections of *Chlamydia trachomatis*. Oftentimes, *Chlamydia* is treated with broad spectrum antibiotics, which fosters antibiotic resistance. In addition to the necessity of finding more targeted therapeutics, little is known about *Chlamydia* and how it differentiates between its two developmental forms. So, characterizing chlamydial proteins is a crucial aspect to finding more specific antibiotics. I find *Chlamydia* to be an intriguing organism because, despite its extremely reduced genome, it has a unique and highly effective mechanism of action.

Before I started working in the lab, I possessed many misconceptions about research. I thought, "I am not smart enough to do research," "Research will be boring and lonely," and "I will only do this for the semester and then I can leave." However, all

these illusions melted away when I started working in the lab. After a few months, I felt that my passion for science was growing in ways that I did not think was possible. For instance, I thought that I was only interested in the patient care side of healthcare, but I quickly learned that research was meant for me. I became obsessed with the hands-on tasks that go into experimentation, acquiring data, and thinking critically about conclusions.

One of the most exciting experiments that I performed this semester was using immunofluorescence imaging to look at peptidoglycan within *Chlamydia*. Peptidoglycan is a polysaccharide that is found throughout the periplasm, the space between the inner and outer membranes, of gram-negative organisms where it forms a sacculus. Characterizations of *tsp* (a general name for Ct441) in other bacteria has denoted *tsp* to function in the proper homeostasis of peptidoglycan. However, *Chlamydia* is interesting in that it does not contain a sacculus of peptidoglycan; rather, peptidoglycan is only observed at the plane of division. This made us wonder if Ct441 was functioning the same in *Chlamydia* as it does in other bacteria.

We directly observed peptidoglycan morphology in *Chlamydia* with overexpression (too much) and knockdown (not enough) of Ct441 using immunofluorescence microscopy. When observing the uninduced sample we saw structured peptidoglycan rings in red. We saw that with overexpression of Ct441, peptidoglycan morphology was severely disrupted with very disorganized peptidoglycan that was not forming in ring structures. We also noticed that when Ct441 was knocked down, peptidoglycan was unaffected and remained organized in ring like structures as seen in the uninduced sample (Figure 1). These data suggest that Ct441 may be playing a role in peptidoglycan homeostasis in *Chlamydia*. Additional investigation is needed, but these data further my excitement for piecing apart Ct441 function.

As a result of this work, I have developed pure curiosity and love for science. Not only has this experience given me the chance to develop my career goals and has shown me areas for further growth, but it has also opened several other opportunities to me! There are still questions yet to answer and I am excited to see Ct441's function unfold in my upcoming years of research.



# From a UNO Honors Alum

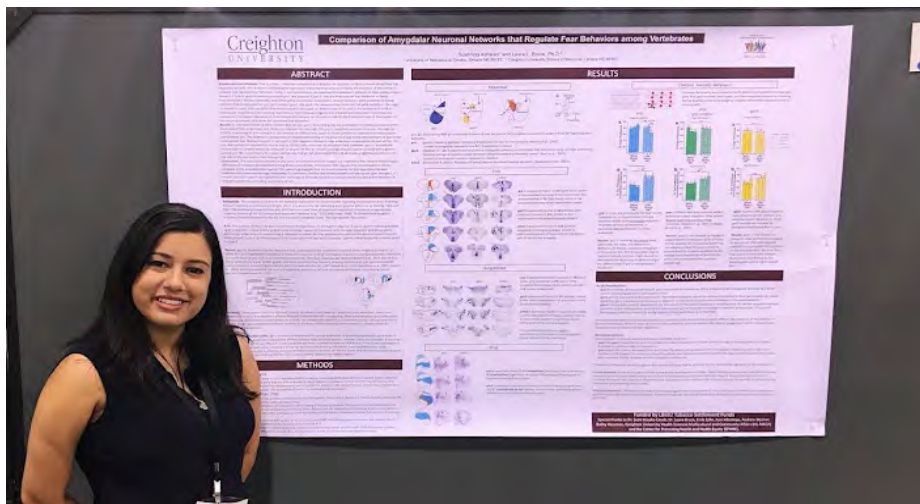
Sushmita Adhikari

All throughout my undergraduate career, I was adamant I wanted to pursue medical school. I worked on various research projects with some amazing mentors, so I was considering a MD/PhD, but there was no doubt in my mind that I was applying for medical school after graduation. To get inpatient and outpatient clinical experience, I worked as a phlebotomist at Methodist and Nebraska Medicine. Through this experience, I discovered I did not enjoy patient interaction, and could not see myself working with patients in a clinical setting in my future. I was anxious about my future, how I was going to explain to my family and friends I was no longer applying, and how to defend abandoning my ambition of medical school after working towards that goal for over four years.

I decided to explore my options, so I applied for a research coordinating position at UNMC with the Department of Dermatology. I was lucky enough to be given an opportunity and have really flourished in the position. Although it does include some administrative work and patient recruitment, I have solidified my interests in doing benchwork research and mentoring students and expanded my skills in data analysis, manuscript writing, and grant applications. With a lot of support from my mentors, I applied for the Immunology, Pathology and Infectious Disease PhD program at UNMC and have been accepted for Fall 2022. This journey certainly hasn't gone the way I had planned out, but I'm very thankful for the opportunities I have been granted and for being in the spot I am today. I didn't have the traditional experience of graduating in May and starting graduate school

Sushmita Adhikari is a Research Project Associate in the Dept. of Dermatology at UNMC—starting her PhD in the Immunology, Pathology, and Infectious Disease program

in the fall, but I encourage everyone to take time and really reflect on your goals. More than anything, I am grateful that I will be doing what I love every day.



# HSA Executive Board



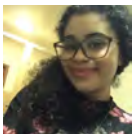
## President

Sarah Alsuleiman



## Vice President

Jared Dingman



## Secretary

Miriam Marcus



## Treasurer

Alecia Keller



## Public Relations

Abigail Williamson



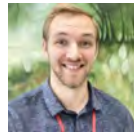
## Graphic Designer

Brandon Villanueva  
Sanchez



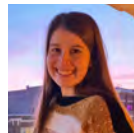
## 4th Year Representatives

Lavanya Uppala



## 3rd Year Representatives

Matthias Walters



Alaina Mann



Jack Cosgrove



Meena Rahmanzai



## 2nd Year Representatives

Mya Winjum



Eryn Busenbark



Makayla Gordon



## 1st Year Representatives

Katy Koch



Liv Rickert



Navya Khandavalli



Serenity Harper



HSA sold care packages to families as a fundraiser. About 70 packages were sold, put together, and delivered to students before finals!



# HSA Activities



HSA activities highlights this semester included care packages, formal night, and trivia night!





**Dr. Lucy Morrison**  
Director  
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