



# THE DISTINCTION

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Spring 2024



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# Celebrating 2024 Honors Graduates

## Nia Acharya

**Molecular and Biomedical Biology**

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Cerebral Venous Sinus Thrombosis (CVST): A Retrospective Study"*

Advisor: Krishna Gundabolu

## Hailee Baker

**Elementary Education**

College of Education, Health, and

Human Sciences

*"Comparing Fractions"*

Advisor: Justin Andersson

## Morgan Baker

**Mathematics**

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Mathematics Majors in Medical School*

*Admissions: A Comparative Evaluation of MCAT and GPA Performance"*

Advisor: Katie Shirazi

## Cami Bisson

**Molecular and Biomedical Biology**

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Analysis of toll-like receptor 9 agonism on human natural killer cell cytotoxic functions via single-cell RNA sequencing"*

Advisor: Paul Denton

## Brooke Bluhm

**Biology**

College of Arts and Sciences

*"A Comparative Analysis of the effects Distilled Water Brands have on the health of Chlorophytum comosum"*

Advisor: Roxi Kellar

## Amaya Brodine

**Elementary Education**

College of Education, Health, and

Human Sciences

*"Reading Fluency Intervention"*

Advisor: Saundra L. Shillingstad

## Eryn Busenbark

**Public Health**

College of Education, Health, and

Human Sciences

*"The Impact of Policy and Perception on Women's Health from 2004-2024"*

Advisor: Marcia Adler

## Kyle Borchers

**Business Administration and Studio Art**

College of Business Administration /

College of Communication, Fine Arts, and Media

*"Strategic Planning for Design Freelancers and Firms Amongst the Emergence of Web 3.0 and New Technology"*

Advisor: Leif Lundmark

## Kennedy Bradburn

**Elementary Education**

College of Education, Health, and

Human Sciences

*"Cooperative Learning in 3rd grade math"*

Advisor: Saundra L. Shillingstad

## Jacob Braddy

**Cybersecurity**

College of Information Science &

Technology

*"Monero: Powering Anonymous Digital Currency Transactions"*

Advisor: George Grispos

## Kaitlyn Brandl

**Elementary Education**

College of Education, Health, and

Human Sciences

*"Exploring Student Growth Through Cooperative Learning and Nonlinguistic Representations"*

Advisor: Saundra L. Shillingstad

## Emily Brasfield

**Elementary Education**

College of Education, Health, and

Human Sciences

*"Math Intervention with Addition/Subtraction Recap"*

Advisor: Saundra L. Shillingstad

## Colton Bredenkamp

**Neuroscience**

College of Arts and Sciences

*"The Effects of Methamphetamine on microglia activation--implications for chemokine production and neuroinflammation"*

Advisor: Ernest Chivero

## Courtney Brink

**Early Childhood Inclusive Education**

College of Education, Health, and

Human Sciences

*"Phonics in Kindergarten"*

Advisor: Saundra L. Shillingstad

## Timerra Chisham

**Biology**

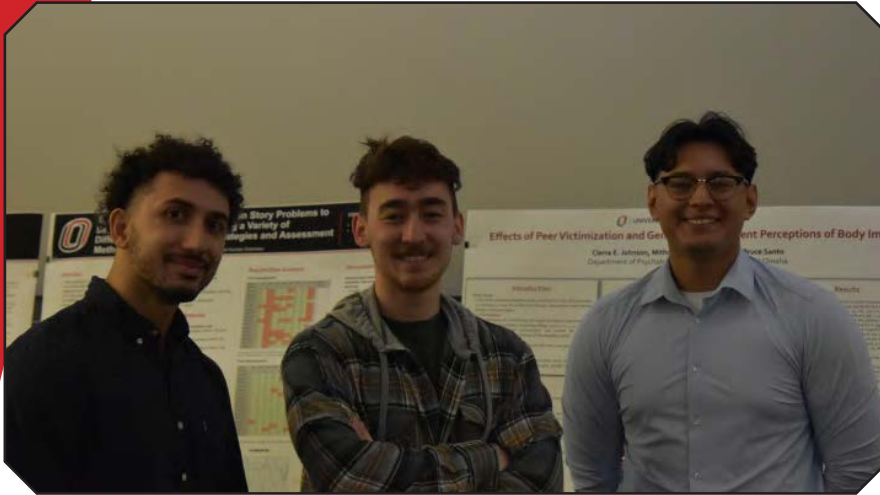
College of Arts and Sciences

*"Students' Perceptions Regarding Difficulty of Organic Chemistry Concepts"*

Advisor: Sachin Nedungadi



# Celebrating Honors 2024 Graduates



## Jared Dingman

### Psychology

College of Arts and Sciences

*"To Tip or Not To Tip"*

Advisor: Eduardo Cenci

## Emma Ehmke

### Criminology and Criminal Justice

College of Public Affairs and

Community Service

*"Seeking Sanctuary: An Analysis on U Visa Policies in Omaha, Nebraska and Their Impact on Immigrant Communities"*

Advisor: Kim Retzlaff

## Hossam Elaraky

### Chemistry

College of Arts and Sciences

*"An Anthology of the Palestine-Israel Conflict"*

Advisor: Ramazan Kilinc

## Sierra Fox

### Psychology

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Beyond Rehabilitation: Exploring the Field of Occupational Therapy and the Transformative Impact of Care"*

Advisor: Andrew Riquier

## Lucas Gappa

### Secondary Special Education

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

*"Demonstrating Knowledge of Job Application with supports of Different Instructional Strategies"*

Advisor: Justin Andersson

## Cassandra Gardner

### Psychology & Criminology and Criminal Justice

College of Arts and Sciences

*"The Impact of Sense of Belonging and Parental Closeness On Agreeableness in Korean Adolescents"*

Advisor: Joo Young Yang

## Lauren Gearhart

### Elementary Education

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

*"Math Minds"*

Advisor: Sandra L. Shillingstad

## Rene Gold

### Elementary Education

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

*"Addition and Subtraction"*

Advisor: Sandra L. Shillingstad

## MaKayla Gordon

### Neuroscience

College of Arts and Sciences

*"What MCAT Study Techniques are Supported by Undergrad and Current Medical Students at UNMC"*

Advisor: Andrew Riquier

## Aidan Hatfield

### Biology

College of Arts and Sciences

*"The Effect of an Oak Savanna Habitat Restoration on Foraging Activity of Big Brown Bats (Eptesicus fuscus)"*

Advisor: Jeremy White

## Allyson Havenridge

### Communication Studies

College of Communication, Fine Arts, and Media

*"Ideographic Analyses of 2024 Republican Presidential Candidates' Rhetoric"*

Advisor: Whitney Gent

## Cierra Johnson

### Psychology

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Effects of Peer Victimization and Gender on Adolescent Perceptions of Body Image"*

Advisor: Mithra Pirooz

## Kortney Johnson

### General Science

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Conditioned Place Aversion Learning Paradigm in Zebrafish"*

Advisor: Ryan Wong

## Keegan Kenney

### Business Administration

College of Business Administration

*"Modern Technology's Effect on the Control Panel Industry"*

Advisor: Brent Clark

# Celebrating Honors 2024 Graduates

## Destiny Klanecky

### Psychology

College of Arts and Sciences

*"The Age of Adolescence: Examining the Relationship Between Body Image and Mood in Early Adolescents"*

Advisor: Mithra Pirooz

## Jane Knudsen

### Art History

College of Communication, Fine Arts, and Media

*"That Way: An Examination of Male Relationships in American Film During the Hays Code"*

Advisor: Kay Siebler

## Kaylee Lahti

### Foreign Language and Literature (Spanish) and Business Administration

College of Arts and Sciences /  
College of Business Administration  
*"Predatory Social Networks and the Fight for Children's Privacy"*

Advisor: Destinie Sewell

## Alastair Leon

### English and Art History

College of Arts and Sciences  
*"The Unspoken Words of Fashion: Movements Behind Harajuku's Avant-Garde Fashion Trends"*  
Advisor: Adrian Duran

## Emily Mangano

### Elementary Education

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences  
*"Data Collection Through Cooperative Learning"*  
Advisor: Saundra L. Shillingstad

## Desmond Marshall

### Biology

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Contaminants in Omaha's Water Supply"*

Advisor: David Pantos

## Seh Na Mellick

### Molecular and Biomedical Biology

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Characterization of the Role of PA5189 of Pseudomonas aeruginosa in Antimicrobial Resistance and Pathogenicity"*

Advisor: Donald Rowen

## Kaitlyn Nyffeler

### Psychology and Criminology and Criminal Justice

College of Arts and Sciences

*"The Rules of Lawyers, and the Effects on Mental Health: An Interview Study"*

Advisor: Kimberly Dellapaolera

## Nicholas Peterson

### Biology

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Investigation of Population Dynamics within a Colony of the Lactating Cockroach, diptera punctata"*

Advisor: Paul Ayayee

## Kelsie Premer

### Secondary Special Education

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

*"Effective Organization to Decrease Missing Assignments"*

Advisor: Justin Andersson

## Andrea Reyes

### Secondary Education

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

*"Poetry Unit"*

Advisor: Justin Andersson

## Dante Rossini

### Business Administration

College of Business Administration

*"What makes us good leaders"*

Advisor: Kelsey Medeiros

## Abigail Russman

### Communication Studies

College of Communication, Fine Arts, and Media

*"Problems in Power: How the U.S. and Russia Have Battled Throughout the Decades"*

Advisor: Sally Bonsall





# Celebrating Honors 2024 Graduates



## Luke Schawang

**Business Administration**

College of Business Administration

*"Finance and Artificial Intelligence"*

Advisor: Brent Clark

## Ian Schmidt

**Elementary Education**

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

*"This is Your Life Cycle"*

Advisor: Justin Andersson

## K'lana Schnack

**Multidisciplinary Studies**

College of Public Affairs and Community Service

*"The Representation of Women in Leadership in Omaha's Nonprofit Sector"*

Advisor: Sojin Jang

## Claire Schweikert

**Computer Science**

College of Information Science & Technology

*"Exploring Asynchronous Pronunciation Improvement through Application Software Development"*

Advisor: Harvey Siy

## Joshua Sutton

**Kinesiology**

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

*"Addressing Athletes' Coexisting Conditions of Autism and Depression: Participants' Self-Report Decreased Feelings of Depression Post Exercise"*

Advisor: Jessica Baldwin

## Abigail Swoboda

**Molecular and Biomedical Biology**

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Characterization of the Transcription Elongation Factor, GreA, in Chlamydia trachomatis"*

Advisor: Scot Ouellette

## Jewelita Taylor

**Biology**

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Investigating relationships between experiences with fiction reading and empathy across the adult lifespan"*

Advisor: Janelle Beadle

## Hayden Thomaier

**Secondary Education**

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

*"Personal Spaces Unit"*

Advisor: Justin Andersson

## Grace Tetschner

**Chemistry and Secondary Education**

College of Arts and Science/College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

*"Development of a Solutions Concept Inventory"*

Advisor: Sachin Nedungadi

## Anne Thomas

**Business Administration**

College of Business Administration

*"Spiking Engagement Analyzing Social Media Tactics and Fan Interaction in the Omaha Supernovas"*

Advisor: Zhihao Yu

## Madison Thurber

**Molecular and Biomedical Biology**

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Optimization of tyrosine hydroxylase antibody for immunohistochemistry fluorescence detection in zebrafish (Danio rerio)"*

Advisor: Ryan Wong

## Colin Tomcak

**Computer Science**

College of Information Science & Technology

*"Text-to-Speech Animation"*

Advisor: Harvey Siy

## Haylee Umble

**Elementary Education**

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

*"Adding Tens and Ones in First Grade"*

Advisor: Justin Andersson

## Trinity Weers

**Secondary Education**

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

*"Verbs in Context Posters"*

Advisor: Justin Andersson

# Celebrating Honors 2024 Graduates

## Alexandria Vandenberg

Psychology and Medical Humanities

College of Arts and Sciences

*"The Roles of Political Orientation and Diversity Frame in Mental Representations of Diversity"*

Advisor: Abby Folberg

## Brandon Villanueva Sanchez

Neuroscience

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Selectivity studies of CBDs against CB1 and CB2 using a docking approach"*

Advisor: Andy Zhong

## Abigail Williamson

English and Philosophy

College of Arts and Sciences

*"Anti-thesis: When Your Worst Moments Become Your Best Work"*

Advisor: Jody Keisner

## Mya Winjum

Molecular and Biomedical Biology

College of Arts and Sciences

*"The Intersection of Healthcare and Interprofessional Teams"*

Advisor: Timi Barone

## Kaitlyn Wusk

Kinesiology

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

*"Assessing Feeling States and Enjoyment of Various Exercise Activities"*

Advisor: Jessica Baldwin

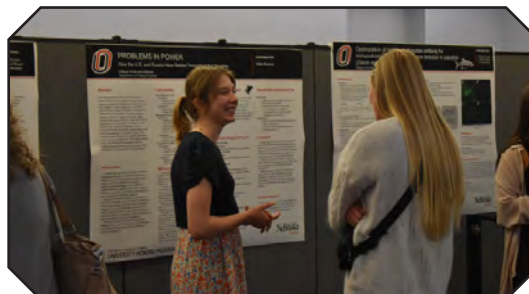
## Parker Zbylut

Computer Science

College of Information Science & Technology

*"Gamifying Speech with Pronunciation Pal"*

Advisor: Harvey Siy



# Student Honors Convocation

## Undergraduate Major Honorees

Honorees selected by departments in which they are majoring must have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.33. They are chosen on the basis of academic achievement in addition to their contributions to the university and the community.

Abby Swoboda	Molecular and Biomedical Biology
Rachel Hartgerink	Biology
Grace Tetchner	Chemistry
Alex Vandenberg	Medical Humanities
Brandon Villanueva Sanchez	Neuroscience
Dante Rossini	Banking and Financial Markets
Josh Sutton	Kinesiology
Kennedy Bradburn	Special Education and Elementary Education
Haylee Umble	Elementary Education
Jacob Braddy	Cybersecurity

## Goldwater Scholarship Winners

Honors students Tai Prauner (molecular and biomedical biology and Spanish majors) and Isabelle Weber (neuroscience and molecular and biomedical biology majors) are now part of history, etching their names alongside the illustrious roster of the Goldwater Foundation's list of 10,720 awardees since 1989 and the 438 awards announced for 2024.

Biology Department Chair Jill Blankenship, Ph.D., remarks "Our department is so proud of Tai and Izzy's accomplishments. We have been incredibly fortunate in our confluence of spectacular students and excellent faculty research mentors and educators, who give students the opportunity to reach their potential. Tai and Izzy's accomplishments at the bench and in the classroom are impressive and we are pleased that the Goldwater Scholarship Committee has recognized their excellence."



Tai Prauner and Isabelle Weber, Honors Goldwater Scholarship Recipients



# 2023-24 Honors Student Association Executive Board

**Navya Khandavalli**  
President

**MaKayla Gordon**  
Vice President

**Eryn Busenbark**  
Secretary

**Jiya Chaudhari**  
Co-treasurer & 2nd year  
representative

**Delaney Ham**  
Social Media Manager

**Austin Shiner**  
Co-treasurer & 2nd year  
representative

**Mya Winjum**  
4th year Representative

**Ishani Adidam**  
2nd year Representative

**Htoo Say**  
2nd year Representative

**Sierra de Koning**  
2nd year representative

**Chloe Hansel**  
2nd year representative

**Julia Scheopner**  
2nd year representative

**Johnny Do**  
1st year representative

**Isabella Murray**  
1st year representative

**Sydney Ryan**  
1st year representative

## HSA Events

This semester the Honors Student Association made valentines for nursing home residents, planned two fundraisers to raise money for Project Harmony, provided supplies to students to build May Day baskets, and hosted their annual formal.

HSA Social Media Manager, Delaney Ham, said about the formal: "It was a great night! I thought it was fun to hang out with the other HSA members outside of our meetings".



May Day Baskets



The HSA Executive Board at  
Formal

# Grace Ziegler named SCCJ February Student of the Month



My name is Grace Ziegler! I'm a double major in Criminology and Criminal Justice and Psychology with a concentration in Forensic Psychology and a minor in Victimology and Victim Services. I'm a member of the UNO Honors Program, UNO Pre-Law Society, Salt Company Omaha, and I'm an RA on Scott Campus. I like to read, play the drums for worship band, and spend time with my friends and family.

I'm interested in criminal behavior and victimology. I like to learn about the impacts that childhood trauma has on development and growth, what causes an individual to commit a crime, and what can be done to prevent individuals from delinquency. I also enjoy studying risk factors and vulnerability for victimization and how to best serve the needs of victims of crime.

After completing my undergraduate degree, I plan to either go to graduate school or to law school with the goal of becoming a victim advocate, specifically for juveniles that have been abused, neglected, or trafficked. I want to be a safe place and presence and discover the best ways to love, support, and care for juveniles that have been victimized.

“ She excels in all of her Criminal Justice classes, conducted a research paper with Matthew Kafafian, and she is just all around a great person!

”

- Stated Ziegler's nominator

# Scholar of the Championship

## Morgan Baker

Graduating Honors student Morgan Baker was named the 2024 recipient of the Summit League Women's Swimming & Diving Scholar of the Championship award presented by JLG Architects.

This award is presented to the student-athlete with the highest cumulative undergraduate grade-point average participating at each of the Summit League's 19 championships. Each institution that is participating in a Summit League championship is eligible to submit one nominee for the Scholar of the Championship award.

Baker will graduate with a degree in Math with a concentration in Data Science and a minor in Chemistry. The Hastings, NE native has maintained a 4.0 career GPA at UNO. She is a three-time Summit League finalist, a former school record-holder in the 400 free relay, and made the Summit League Commissioner's List of Academic Excellence as a junior.

In the fall, Baker plans to attend medical school as she hopes to pursue a career as a physician in women's health.



## Solar Eclipse



UNO students, including Honors student Garrett Connely (pictured), flocked to the pep bowl for the chance to view the solar eclipse on April 8th



# Maverick Maniac: Garrett Heaney

During the beginning of the academic year, Garrett Heaney showed his school spirit in the way he knew best: by attending as many volleyball games as he could. Growing up with two sisters who played the sport, he grew familiar with being at volleyball games and found a passion for watching the sport.

Along with friends he met through his civil engineering major, Garrett consistently sat in the Bullpen. The group became familiar with other students in the Bullpen, including the Maverick Maniacs. Soon, the Maniacs recruited Garrett and his friends to join the organization. The Maverick Maniacs are the Official School Spirit & Student Section Leaders whose mission, according to their website, is to “create a game day environment that is so engaging and exciting that even those who don’t have an interest in sports enjoy their experience at UNO Sporting events and are motivated to stand up and cheer for the Mavs!”

Garrett is now part of the executive board for the Maverick Maniacs and was given the title of Game Day Operations Manager. Through these roles, he works with others in the organization to manage the group’s policies, events, and members, and he hands out signs, hockey sticks, etc., to students during games. He works for the Director of Spirit, Tradition, and Signature Events, Bill Pickett. Attending and working sporting events is part of Garrett’s role, which creates an established balance of work and play.



Sponsored spirit trips by the Office of Student Spirit and Tradition are hands-down Garrett’s favorite part of being involved with the student section. Just in his first year at UNO, Garrett has attended spirit trips to Kansas and the University of South Dakota for volleyball in the fall and Saint Paul, Minnesota, for hockey in March. While being a part of the Maverick Maniacs gives a person priority registration for spirit trips, they are open to all students and even alumni. Garrett notes the affordability of such trips, as the attendee splits the cost of the trip 50/50 with the Office of Student Spirit and Tradition.

To students who are interested in showing their school spirit in new ways, Garrett recommends the low commitment role of joining the Maverick Maniacs. For a one-time fee of \$20, you earn priority on spirit trips, a UNO cowbell, and a Maverick Maniac t-shirt. You also have the opportunity to be recognized for your dedication to school spirit by earning the iconic red-and-black bibs. Garrett earned his own set of bibs fairly early in the volleyball season.

# Exploring A Peer Mentor Role

By Hanna Herian

As a very indecisive person (I have been known to overthink even the smallest of decisions, such as what I want for supper), it was no surprise to me that I ended up coming to college undeclared. At UNO, we don't call it "undeclared" or "undecided," though. We have a program for people who haven't yet chosen a major called Exploratory Studies. It is a department filled with wonderful faculty and peer mentors who help guide unsure students toward a major.

As a freshman without a major, I often felt like I didn't belong anywhere at UNO or even in college, in general. This community helped me to see that not belonging was, in itself, something I belonged to. It helped me learn that it's okay to not have everything figured out (most people don't). And most importantly, it helped me realize that your life is your journey; don't let anyone else make your decisions for you!

When I learned that I could apply to be one of the peer mentors for this amazing program, I didn't hesitate.

I wanted to be able to help people in the way others helped me. I wanted to go back to that supportive, kind, welcoming community (as I did, eventually, have to pick a major and leave it). I wanted to be an Explorer again. I was fortunate enough to be offered the job, and I became a mentor for the Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 semesters. In my role, I got to provide students with campus resources, conduct one-on-one meetings, and practice my public speaking skills. I have made so many wonderful connections in this program and learned so much.

And while I unfortunately won't have the time to continue in this role next year, I am forever grateful for the connections, the lessons, and the confidence this experience gave me. I would encourage anyone who is interested to try being a mentor in whatever capacity they choose! There are many different programs on campus that offer these positions. But, in my totally unbiased opinion, Exploratory Studies is the best!



# Policing Through Music

By Allison Munderloh

Rage Against the Machine is an alternative punk band that consists of four members. The main two members, and most politically outspoken, are the singer, Zack de la Rocha, and the bass player, Tom Morello; both men are part of ethnic and racial minority groups. They are notorious for anti-government and anti-police sentiments and do not hide their politics in their music. The name of the band is even political; the “machine” that they are “raging” against is capitalism and wealthy America. One of their most popular, and first, songs is titled “Killing in the Name.” This song carries strong anti-police messaging and serves as a criticism of racism and police brutality within police organizations, as well as the judicial system. “Killing in the Name” was released in 1992 following the police beating of Rodney King by the LAPD in 1991 (Radio X, 2022).

The song is explicit in nature. When the song is played, it is clearly a rallying cry of anger in response to the lack of action taken by the LAPD to discipline their officers and prevent them from targeting racial and ethnic minorities. The police officers were also acquitted by an all-white jury, which only adds fuel to the band's enraged tune (Equal Justice Initiative, 1992). The song goes so far as to include a line from the white officer's perspective, exclaiming how murder is justified because they wear a badge, “You justify those that died – By wearing the badge, they're the chosen whites” (Rage Against the Machine, 1992). Front man De La Rocha makes it clear that he views police brutality in the same lens as any violence, and that being a police officer should not protect someone from legal punishment. Our class textbook for our “Police and Society” colloquium course brings attention to the LAPD's policing style with police chief William Parker. Although he improved the professionalism of the LAPD, he also pushed an “aggressive anti-crime

approach to policing” (Walker & Katz, 2022, p. 51). This style had the negative effect of targeting minorities and their communities, inciting violence, and worsening relations with the black community. One can assume that this policing practice contributed to the treatment of Rodney King.

Throughout the song, they do not let you forget the racist roots of America and even compare the LAPD of the 90s and their tolerance of minority violence to the Ku Klux Klan. They accuse the police force of being supported by and involved with the KKK, “Some of those that work forces – Are the same that burn crosses” (Rage Against the Machine, 1992). With this blunt verse they bring attention to the all too real history of the intertwining of white supremacy and the police force, with the KKK being the cross burners. As recently as 2020, the United States' congress had a committee hearing titled “Confronting Violent White Supremacy (Part IV): White Supremacy in Blue: The Infiltration of Local Police Departments” (Library of Congress, 2020).



The album cover for “Killing in the Name” above depicts the self-immolation of Thích Quảng Đức, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, in Saigon in 1963; he was protesting the oppression of Buddhist religion.



This committee hearing was held before the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties to bring attention to the issue of white supremacy in America and its Police departments. Whether one agrees that this is an issue or not, it shows that there are still concerns held by some related to white supremacy in the United States, as recently as 2020. These concerns about racism are even addressed by Pillar 5, training and Education of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. Page 56 of the 2015 report details how implicit bias, fair and impartial policing, social intelligence, and historical trauma should be focused on by police trainings.

Rage Against the Machine's concerns in 1992 are still somewhat relevant today, even if they are not expressed as extremely as they were then. It is undeniable, though, that our modern police departments were rooted in racism. The book recalls major cross-country violent conflicts in 1919 where White Americans were attacking Black Americans. The police stood firmly

with white America: "In all the riots, police officers stood by, not arresting marauding whites. In some cases, police officers joined in the racist violence themselves" (Walker & Katz, 2022, p. 42). In class, we have had discussions about police training. In my notes, under "Changing Police Training," ethical policing and implicit bias trainings are listed with the new concepts and policies. We have come to a pretty unanimous agreement that police need more racial bias and implicit bias training, and that minorities are often targeted by police, whether on purpose or subconsciously.

The outro of the song is clear and blunt, a repetition that denies authority, "F\*ck you, I won't do what you tell me" (Rage Against the Machine, 1992). This verse is repeated sixteen times and reinforces the band's negative feelings toward the control and reduced autonomy that they believe is caused by the police and the government. It is definitive to say that the rock and roll hall of fame inductees do not have a good view of the police.

## Phi Kappa Phi



Honors students Matthew Heywood, Alex Becker, Juliana Schoepner, Sierra Fox, Ishani Adidam, and Kaylee Lahti were all inducted into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi. Students have to be invited to join Phi Kappa Phi based on their demonstration of academic excellence.

# My Pathway to Presenting at Nebraska Academy of Sciences

## By Isabelle Weber

My work preparing to present at Nebraska Academy of Sciences (NAS) started back in September 2024. I knew that I wanted to give a presentation in April about data analysis and the different strategies that can be employed to look at the same data set in a completely different light. Prior to September, I had developed a proficiency analyzing data in a program called FlowJo, which was the standard analysis program that Dr. Paul Denton's lab was using; however, the undergraduate that I had worked with the previous couple of years had exposed me to a new type of analysis that was more bioinformatics driven. I decided that this strategy coupled with an online cloud-based software would be a project that I could tackle over the coming year. So, in September I started looking around and getting familiar with Cytobank, this new analysis software and learning the basics so I could start to unlock its full potential.

**“Undergraduate research can be just as rigorous and rewarding as doctoral work”**

From September to late January, I spent time reading and understanding the basics of Cytobank so I could work to ensure that the data I would present in April would be top notch. During this time, I was also preparing to apply for a Goldwater scholarship and, with some help from Dr. Denton and Dr. Morrison, I realized the potential that this specific project held for this award, so I started writing about it, a process that would later on help me to formulate my talk for NAS.

When February came around, the theoretical portion of my project made way for the in the lab portion of my work. Several experiments were run over the course of the month and, by the third week, I had data that I was willing to stand by and say that it came from a successful experiment with no known technical failure present to lead to doubt of my data. After that week, the real work began for me. I spent a couple of hours analyzing the data and picking the analysis apart to understand exactly what I was looking at and what I could use from it to present. With the data that had been generated over the course of the month, I also spent a good amount of time analyzing and reanalyzing the data to get it ready to send back to a journal as supplemental material for a paper that I am a part of; this extra work really gave me an understanding of what the data was showing and where I needed to use Cytobank to further expand. By the end of February, I felt as though I had an understanding of what I was looking at and where I could go in a presentation.

March rolled around, and with it so did my dedicated time off from the lab to study for the MCAT. Despite this, I spent the first few weeks and all of spring break putting together my presentation. I spent hours looking through all the data I had generated and decided on what would be shown for my practice presentation later that month. The week after spring break brought the Research and Creative Activity Fair (RCAF) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, which I presented at as a first run for NAS. Because of this upcoming presentation, I had times scheduled with Dr. Denton to go over my presentation and work through the story that I was looking to share.

After making all of the edits that he recommended, I felt ready to give my talk at RCAF. On March 22nd, 2024, I gave my first public rendition of my talk, I presented after two PhD candidates, which freaked me out, but I handled it well and worked extra hard to show that undergraduate research can be just as rigorous and rewarding as doctoral work.

After presenting at RCAF, I set my sights on both my MCAT, but also my NAS presentation. I spent a lot of time thinking back to my presentation at RCAF and considering what I wanted to do differently or what I thought should be kept the same. There was a slightly different audience, since RCAF had more of the general public and people who specialties were not necessarily science or immunology. A majority of the people that would attend my talk at NAS would have a science background; however, I could not guarantee what their immunology understanding would be. With this in mind, I chose to not change much of my talk or make it any more scientific than

it was at RCAF but go into some more detail and depth if I thought it would be helpful. I added a couple of slides that I thought would enhance the understanding of my topic. By the week of NAS, I was ready, my MCAT was out of the way and April 19th was going to be great. I woke up that morning not feeling great, but I was not going to let that affect my talk. Despite not feeling great, I stood up and delivered a talk that I know was not my best, but it is still something that I am proud of. Talking with people from both UNO and other institutions, they said that my presentation was good, and I should be proud.

Overall, this has been quite the adventure, and I am so happy that I was able to see it from start to finish. It was a very enlightening experience and over the course of the past eight or so months, I have thought about a bunch of different ways that I can take this analysis in a new way and look at more data and hopefully bring the same data to a new light through a variety of analysis strategies.

## Shadow Day



In late March, Honors hosted our annual Shadow Day event. Current Honors students volunteered their time to show incoming students around the UNO campus.





# Internship Reflection at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska

By Eryn Busenbark



I remember standing in a crowded Starbucks with fellow HSA Board Members Jack Cosgrove and Navya Khandavalli, when I got a call informing me that I had been chosen to be the first-ever Community Engagement Intern at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska. I had been through a few rounds of interviews at this point, and felt that this position aligned well with what I was looking for in an internship: hybrid-work, friendly managers, and a cohort of fellow interns.

The night before my first day at BCBSNE, I was restless with nerves. I remember watching YouTube videos and TikToks on “how to make a great impression during your internship,” trying to cram every etiquette tip into my mind. This was my first “real” job within my career field and I did not want to bring anything less than perfection to the table.

It has almost been one year since I joined BCBSNE, and I can confidently say there were many times where I was less than perfect. I have forgotten meetings, parked in the wrong spots, missed alarms, and made minor mistakes that any young adult stumbling through their first

internship would make. It would be easy to keep these mistakes at the forefront of my mind, but with these learning opportunities came successes, and it is vital to remember that I am capable of both.

One of my main responsibilities as the Community Engagement Intern included coordinating volunteer efforts for both BCBSNE employees and the health agencies that we sponsor. I have had the privilege of being in contact with some of the kindest people I know from various organizations: American Lung Association, BFF Omaha, Keep Omaha Beautiful, Foodbank for the Heartland, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and Intercultural Senior Center, to name a few. Working with these organizations doing such important work has been a highlight of my internship, and has helped me build a network of familiar faces across Nebraska.

An additional highlight of my time at BCBSNE was meeting and building friendships with my fellow interns. The summer portion of the internship included weekly seminars on career-readiness topics, informal hangouts, and a long-term group project with two other interns, tackling the topic of recruiting and retaining Gen Z in the workforce. My team members, Vasavi, Grant, and I met weekly to brainstorm and create our presentation, which would be presented on “Intern Day” at the end of the summer. In our presentation, we ended up covering three main things that Gen Z values in a workplace: personable and flexible managers, functioning technology, and a shared coworking space. After presenting to a panel of leadership team members, we were awarded Best Presentation and were able to feel our hard work pay off.

As I reflect on the past year at BCBSNE, I am proud of who I have become as an employee, student, and person. I gained invaluable skills from my colleagues and supervisors and formed connections with organizations throughout Nebraska, all of which will take me far in my career. A huge part of my success at BCBSNE can be accredited to my involvement at UNO. The option to receive honors credit for my internship allowed me to devote more time and effort into my work, and the weekly reflections helped put meaning behind the tasks I was completing. My classes in public health and public administration

at UNO prepared me with the knowledge needed to succeed in my internship, and the student organizations I participated in built the communication and leadership skills that helped me thrive at BCBSNE.



## CBA Capstone



Kaylee Lahti and Keegan Kenney both competed in April's College of Business Administration Capstone Cup. They presented their team's ideas for how Omaha's new professional volleyball team, the Supernovas, can becoming an established professional sports team.

## Study Skills Event



Honors GA, Emily Fuller, hosted an event in April to help students develop better study skills.

# LGBTQ+ Health Colloquium

## By Wilhelmina Dodenhof



As I reflect on my semester in the Honors colloquium class 'LGBTQ+ Health,' I want to express just how much gratitude I feel for the exposure to the real world that this class provided. When I initially chose to enroll in this course, it was driven by a deep belief of mine that LGBTQ+ health needs need to be better integrated into research and education efforts. Despite what has already been done, there remains a significant gap in addressing healthcare disparities and the unique needs of the LGBTQ+ community. I believe that understanding these needs is not just academic curiosity but also a moral imperative. After all, healthcare is a fundamental human right, and every individual deserves equitable access to healthcare regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. With this in mind, I picked HONR 3030 for my colloquium this semester.

What I experienced in our LGBTQ+

class exceeded all expectations. The culture created within the classroom was truly unmatched, creating an environment where intellectual conversations could flourish, and our authentic selves could be embraced. We brought our diverse perspectives and opinions to the table without fear of judgment or rejection. It was a space where differences were not only tolerated but appreciated, ultimately deepening our understanding of LGBTQ+ health issues.

This class went beyond traditional lectures and readings — it offered unique opportunities for hands-on learning experiences. One standout moment of the semester was our field trip to the only LGBTQ+ center in Nebraska. We were able to immerse ourselves in the environment and gain firsthand insights into the challenges of providing healthcare to the LGBTQ+ community. This experience emphasized the importance of our studies and the value of this class.

Additionally, professionals from the field as guest speakers in our class added another layer of richness to our learning experience. Each week, we were privileged to hear about real and raw experiences and vulnerabilities in the field, offering us a glimpse into their world beyond the theoretical realm.

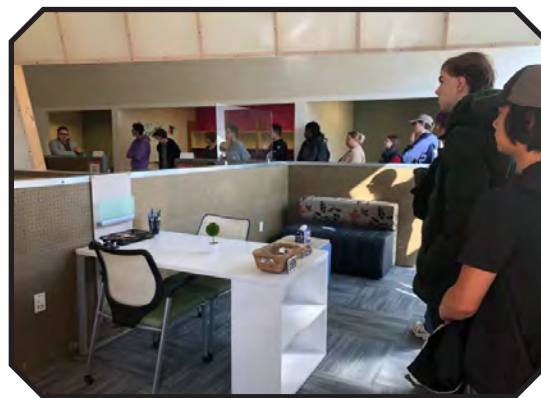


My semester in this class truly has been a journey of learning and growth. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of such a dynamic and impactful learn-

ing cohort. And to Dr. Morrison, thank you for making this experience truly unforgettable, this wouldn't have been possible without you!

## LGBTQ+ Health Colloquium Field Trip

The LGBTQ+ Health Colloquium took a field trip to Omaha for Us.



# Course Launch



## Mural Project



The Modern and Contemporary Art Colloquium students brightened the walls of their classroom in Kayser by painting a mural. The students worked together to design the mural, which depicts the four seasons.



# Class Analysis of Global Poverty and Social Justice

By Carter Richardson

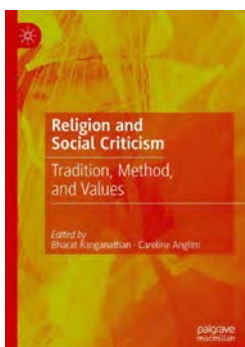
"Global Poverty and Social Justice" examines the arguments for and against our obligations as people with the privilege to live in wealthy countries like the United States from multiple different perspectives. We took time to get a framework on moral philosophy to understand the fundamental questions of global social justice. "What is a human right?", "What responsibilities do human rights entail?", "How should we determine when something is or is not a right?" were all questions that we read and discussed. We learned how our obligations to social justice and the global poor could be viewed from an institutional or interpersonal standpoint, a religious or secular standpoint, and a broad and narrow standpoint. This class doesn't tell us what we should do for these causes. Instead, this class gives you the tools to understand why we should be concerned with them.

Dr. Ranganathan's class discussions are very open-ended, inviting students to not just repeat the reading material, but take the material and critically engage with it. One of the central challenges of the class asks us, "if we aren't sacrificing anything morally equivalent, why should we not use our wealth as citizens of rich

countries to prevent deaths caused by global poverty". I saw myself and the other students in my class wrestle with this question, changing their minds and their arguments as we read further into the topic of moral philosophy.

This class has taught us to critically think about how we make conclusions about what's right and wrong. After strengthening this skill, we shifted to understanding the extent of global poverty by reading accounts of its effect on people. These records were psychologically impactful, and now, as the class concludes, inform our final paper. This paper has students create their own argument justifying their own thoughts and beliefs in a formal argument about what they believe the extent of their obligations to the globally impoverished and underserved would be.

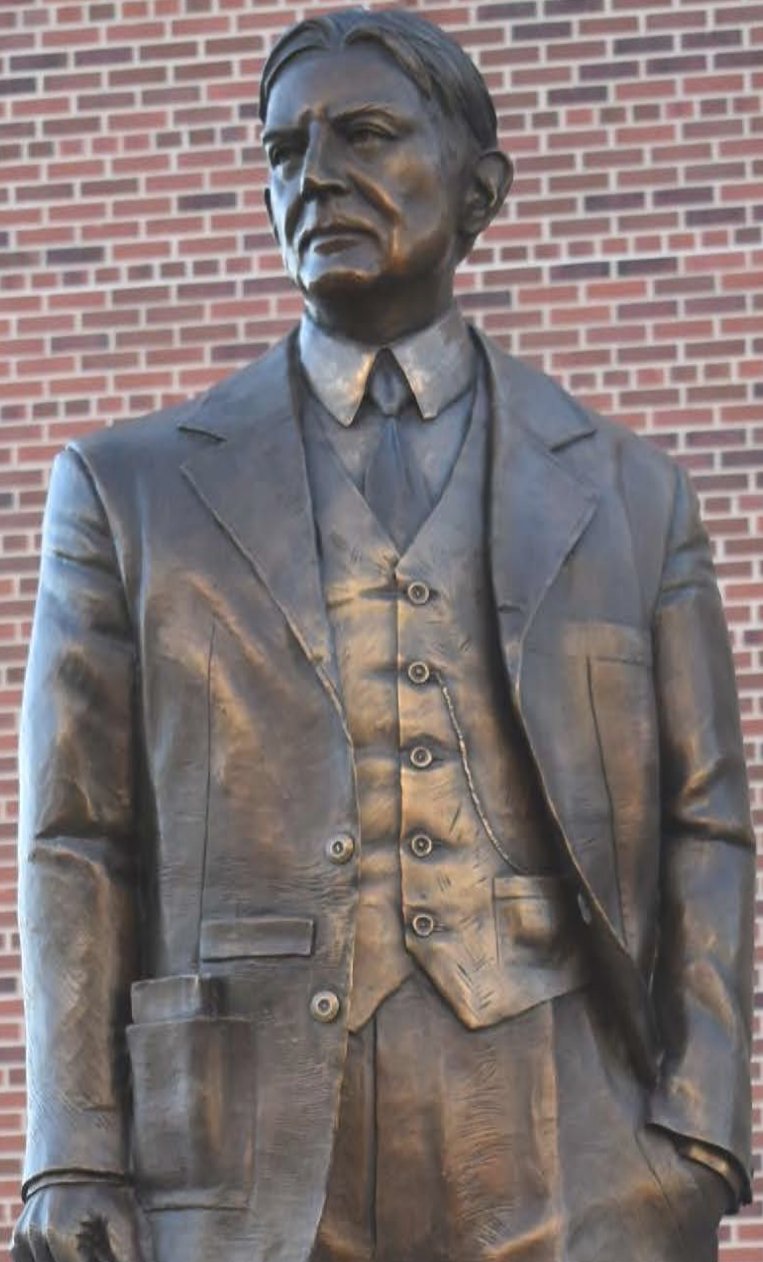
For me personally, this class has allowed me think academically about my actions. I think anyone who takes this class would agree with me: we shouldn't just philosophize about human rights, but take that thinking to help not just the people in our immediate community, but satisfying some of the rights of which the globally impoverished are deprived.



Congratulations to Dr. Ranganathan on publishing two books this year.



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