



The Aggregate

The UWM Honors College Newsletter

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COVID-19 Impacts Academics



Samantha Brusky
Architecture



Kaitlyn Diskin
Film

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In November 2019, when the first news arrived about a virus called COVID-19, few in the U.S. understood its potential impact. We exist now, however, only months later, in a country almost entirely shut down.

UWM had to plan quickly in a situation that was evolving everyday. Before campus announced the official switch to online classes, for instance, Honors College Director Peter Sands was working diligently to figure out how the Honors College would transition.

"It was apparent to me early on that two weeks was not going to be a realistic time frame to come back," remembers Professor Sands.

Considering the Honors College courses revolve around small, face-to-face discussions, online classes would greatly impact how they function.

Yet after only a week into online instruction, Professor Sands had a more hopeful tone: "I've talked to our instructors about their students and heard from many students about classes and we've had mostly positive feedback."

Additionally, the Honors College community is working hard to maintain some normalcy, carrying out events online via Teams, like the popular Midweek.

To help students, staff, and faculty with the transition, Professor Sands suggests "letting go of any sense that you are going to get everything done that you thought you were going to get done."

Professor Sands knows the stay-at-home order can cause work/home boundaries to blur, leading to people working constantly. "People have to be kind to themselves," he shares, "and understand that this is a time to slow down and be reflective. Get your work done, but don't obsess over it."

Despite the uncertainty, Professor Sands is "proud of how the Honors College has handled this. Everybody basically just rolled up their sleeves and got to work. We've managed to come together as a community and a group to pull together in an astonishingly short time."

Similarly, Honors College Associate Director Laura Blaska "had a bad feeling that it would be more than two weeks" before UWM would return to in-person education.

"In January," she explains, "I didn't think that [COVID-19] would have such an incredible impact on our lives." However, by the time the virus started to spread globally, she found that she "was definitely not surprised, just incredibly disappointed" that school would be transferred online for the rest of the semester.

"I miss seeing students and colleagues every day, and I miss the Honors House and our campus community, but my central concern is the welfare of our students," Blaska says. Even though everything felt a bit sudden and rushed, she feels the Honors College responded impressively.

"In a way, the short time-line was an advantage," Blaska states; "there was no time to over-think the situation, we just had to do it." The result is a united Honors College that is doing its best.

Blaska wants "students to know we are here and eager to help." There's no doubt that in light of this unprecedented time the Honors College "continue[s] to keep students at the center of all we do."

Embodying this student-centered approach, Honors College faculty member Benjamin Schneider decided to combat mounting anxieties by initiating a discussion before any cases were reported in Milwaukee. As early as the first week of March,





COVID-19 Impact (continued)

Professor Schneider informed his students "that [Honors] was prepared for the possibility" of online education and encouraged students to ask any questions and voice any concerns upfront.

"I was trying to stay as informed as possible via NPR and *The New York Times* because I wanted to reduce stress levels," he explains. With a problematic spreading of misinformation, Professor Schneider wanted to help his students so they would be better equipped to navigate the news.

Although the transition was initially stressful and he'd rather be face-to-face with students, Professor Schneider sees some benefits in online classes.

"For me," he explains, "the best part of it is that everyone has a turn in an asynchronous discussion; students who may be less inclined to speak as often during seminar have more room in the online classroom."

Nevertheless, Professor Schneider, like many others, has struggled with the isolation that comes with the shutdown. He

shares, "the best part of every day of my professional life is interacting with students and I feel that loss profoundly."

Junior Ariana Strupp (JAMS) is feeling that loss too. She found out late one night in mid-March that she'd have to move out of her Kenilworth apartment. "I didn't go to bed until 2am that night and don't know if I slept much after that," she recalls.

For Ariana, the following days were filled with plans for when she could come back to clear out her apartment. While she felt lucky to have a place to go, she "didn't get to see any friends or say goodbye to anyone and, while [she] hates goodbyes, [she] does feel robbed of that experience."

Ariana is also one of the many campus employees who lost their jobs when UWM was closed. Beyond that, her summer internship has also been heavily impacted.

"I technically still have my internship at Milwaukee Radio Alliance," she shares, "but since events have halted, our schedule has been cleared until the end of April."

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Director's Note



Dr. Peter Sands
Honors College Director

I write this from my home office, where, like you, I've been sequestered for weeks.

One of the last dominoes to fall for me was the cancelation of our Alternative Spring Break, a service-oriented trip Honors College faculty member Benjamin Schneider directs, and that he and I have taken, with students, each spring since 2018.

Losing the trip was hard, but losing the opportunity to watch, learn about, and learn from a new group of students tackling a great city's great need was harder.

Reading through this issue devoted to service in the Honors College is a great salve on that loss for me. I see so many familiar faces - students who have been in my classes or whom I've talked with at Midweek, faculty and staff and graduates - all rolling up their sleeves and serving their communities and fellow human beings in need. I am proud beyond my capacity to express.

We have lost much this spring as a collective, from our study abroad plans to our

research colloquium to, perhaps worst of all, our graduation ceremony honoring students who are leaving us for the next chapter in their lives.

But we have also gained something from our gatherings on Zoom, Canvas, Teams or by telephone. We have demonstrated that our community and connection is more than just passing in the halls or gathering in classrooms. We've demonstrated that we are a College, which comes from the Latin collegium, a partnership.

I am proud to be partnered with every member of the Honors College. I hope that you will take a moment to read and savor the service, the research, the teaching, and the post-graduate lives presented in this issue, take another moment to grieve our temporary separation, and then roll up your sleeves and get ready to return, however and whenever we can.



COVID-19 Impact (continued)



Samantha Brusky
Architecture



Kaitlyn Diskin
Film

Physically, the transition from on campus to online classes hasn't been the hardest for Ariana, but the emotional toll is real.

"There are times when bad feelings wash over me," she describes. "I feel robbed of a lot of experiences, all my plans for becoming a real adult basically got thrown away. So that all hurts."

Still, Ariana tries to remain balanced about all that is happening. "I miss Milwaukee every day," she says, "but I'm glad for the fresh air and space of my hometown, and the ability to just kind of retreat when things get too heavy."

Another student looking for positives is senior Gabrielle Schwartz (Marketing), whose final UWM Soccer season has been disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak. "You just never expect things like this to happen in general, but definitely not at your own school," she explains.

Like many student athletes, Gaby's sudden transition into quarantine was particularly jarring. "Normally, I go straight from class to lifting/conditioning, to practice, and then to another class with barely any time for a snack in between," she shares. "Now, I have a bit more time to relax, which is nice, but it is time that I would much rather be spending at soccer practice."

Gaby has found the transition to online classes nearly seamless, having had experience with them in prior semesters. Mentally, however, she says she is starting to feel the effects of isolation.

Gaby shares that "soccer has always been a kind of release. No matter what is going on or how stressed [she] is feeling, there is always soccer practice and those two hours to do the thing [she] loves the most. Without it, a lot of the stress and anxiety just builds up, so the time in quarantine has been extremely difficult."

Like Ariana, Gaby is trying to take the changes in stride, and is fighting against the "anxiety, fear, and sadness" of the moment with family, friends, and self.

"I am doing my best to take everything week by week. Not looking too far ahead

and catastrophizing what it could all mean for next semester and beyond," she shares.

Student athletes are not the only ones to be affected by COVID-19. Jack Hurbanis (Film) was in the middle of his senior project when classes were moved online. For many seniors trying to complete their final semesters in the Film Department, the closing of campus means many things: lack of access to equipment and shooting spaces and gaps in their portfolios.

COVID-19 impacted Jack's senior film more than the typical student. "I was supposed to leave in late May for Slovakia to shoot my film," Jack states. His film was meant to be a documentary surrounding what life is like in the town his family originated from.

As soon as travel restrictions were put into place, however, Jack knew he would have to re-think his project.

While Jack and Gaby are graduating in December 2020, and will hopefully be able to experience the in-person ceremony they have been anticipating for years, for senior Mariah Schaller (Occupational Therapy) and many others, this significant moment will be anything but traditional.

With the rest of her final semester of college taking place online, and the prohibition against large gatherings, it came as no surprise that UWM postponed the graduation ceremony.

Mariah relays that she is "definitely sad about graduation, but knows there will be something for us in the future." For now, her focus is on gratitude and volunteering with Feeding America, which lets her feel as though she is contributing.

As we work our way through the pandemic, we can be hopeful in seeing so many people doing their best during these challenging times.

Although it is important to recognize the emotional and mental toll of the pandemic, hearing the optimistic voices of just a handful of those who are affected gives us a window into the resiliency of our Honors College community.



Samantha Brusky
Architecture

Honors College Partners with MPS

The Honors College always encourages independent research and projects, inside and outside of UWM, especially collaborations that involve teaching and learning. In 2019, Honors College Director Peter Sands proposed one such project.

“Professor Sands asked me and [Honors College faculty member] Alan Singer last year if we could develop a partnership with MPS,” explains Honors College faculty member Jill Budny.

In response to UWM Chancellor Mark Mone’s commitment to community engagement and increased diversity, Professor Budny began searching for a “diverse group of high achieving students in the Milwaukee area” with which to begin the program.

Eventually, the team partnered with Casimir Pulaski High School on Milwaukee’s South Side, a diverse school with a rigorous International Baccalaureate (IB) program.

“It was clear that this school had the potential and the diverse, often bilingual, majority first-generation students we want to partner with,” shares Professor Budny.

The project participants began with a simple meet-and-greet, where Honors College students were coupled with Pulaski students and played the game Story Stitch.

Halie Gehling (Conservation and Environmental Science) recalls that “these students are amazing. Connecting with the Pulaski students reminded me of what a privilege it is to be able to go to college. Their academic drive and resilience were phenomenal, and I am grateful I had a chance to participate.”

“We are finding out that small group work builds trust and interpersonal relationships,” Professor Budny excitedly explains. “We want the students to feel empowered and safe, and that can be easier in a smaller group.”

Nancy Martinez Ramirez (Political Science) shares how the students she met “opened up like a flower blooming” in these small groups.

“I am from Mexico,” Nancy explains; “I know how hard it is to find motivation if



Photo courtesy of the Honors College.

everything you see around is not what you would like to see. All of th[eir] personal experiences and stories made me a little sad to the heart because I know their struggle.”

Professor Budny shares that “these students seem to hear a disproportionate amount of comments about their ‘deficits,’ but the kind of grit, perseverance, energy, and strength of character it takes to face the adversity many of these students have dealt with is something we want them to celebrate about themselves.”

Since that first meeting, two more events have taken place. At the first, Pulaski students came to campus to tour the school, sit in on classes, and ask questions in a supportive environment. At the other, the high school students met with one or two Honors College students to learn about the different majors UWM offers.

The Honors College has recently expanded the program to include a partnership with Riverside High School and it will grow to include faculty-to-faculty professional development to be led by Professor Singer.

Although these partnerships are just getting started, Professor Budny makes clear that “it has been very important not to impose our ideas on this program; it’s so important to respect the expertise of the many wonderful teachers in the Milwaukee Public Schools.”

The success of the program could change the way the Honors College recruits students, and it could even become a road map to bridging the structural gaps in access to higher education.



Foreign Correspondence



Michael Bartz
Geography



Mt. Fuji. Photo courtesy of Michael Bartz.



Inspecting a Metasequoia trunk, Mt. Tsukuba. Photo courtesy of Michael Bartz.

I have had an interest in Japan starting in high school, as many often do. However, it was never much more than a passing interest for animation and games until my junior year at UWM.

Then, when I started taking language courses, I found that I enjoyed the challenge and perspective they offered. Learning Japanese in the classroom alone wasn't going to help me improve to the level I desired, so I decided to work towards studying abroad in Japan.

After four semesters of language courses and a lot of hard work, I was accepted into a year-long exchange program with Chiba University and departed for Japan in September of 2019.

Unfortunately, my experience was cut short halfway due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but I am happy to say that I was able to make great friends and have some amazing experiences.

When I first arrived in Japan, I wasn't prepared for the availability of functioning public transportation in large quantities; thus, I often got on the wrong train. Also, my Japanese was rusty after two months of summer break and I was sleep deprived from jet lag, so I made many mistakes during the first few weeks.

Because of the difficulty of the language and my tendency to stay at home to study during my free time, I found it very tough to motivate myself to go out to eat or do other things on my own.

Eventually, I overcame my trepidation by attending Chiba's Japanese Language Study Room every day during open class

periods, where I made friends with the volunteer tutors. There were many other exchange students at Chiba who were also always happy to help me out.

From December to March of this year, I was able to open up to a lot of people and enjoy myself for the first time in quite a while. Nearly all of my friends were interested in mountain climbing, so we formed an unofficial mountain climbing club.

In December, we went to Mt. Nokogiri and then to Mt. Tsukuba in February. I visited Mt. Takao three times, twice by myself, and then on March 18th, with two friends, as a visit to say goodbye to the mountain before I returned to the U.S. the next day.

My memories of the time I spent in and around the mountains are some of the very best from my time abroad. Writing New Year's greeting cards to my professors and receiving theirs in return, and spending four days walking all over Nagasaki with a friend from Brazil are some of the many others. I still look at the cards to cheer myself up a little, especially now; they are precious memories to me.

To be suddenly pulled away from people and places I had come to care very much about, in what was only the middle of my time with them, is an indescribable disappointment and sadness.

However, I am currently planning on returning to Japan and will be pursuing a postgraduate degree as soon as possible. I can't wait to see those familiar faces again.

本当にお世話になりました。

もう一度、必ず会うよ。



Tengu statues, Mt. Takao Yakuo-in. Photo courtesy of Michael Bartz.



Kotajiri Temple, Nagasaki. Photo courtesy of Michael Bartz.



Starting Out: Xavier Idarraga



Olivia Wilson
Criminal Justice

Most first-year Honors College students can be described as a bundle of nerves, but Xavier Idarraga (Philosophy) is far from anxious. Cool, calm, and collected, he is ready for whatever comes his way.

While this is only the beginning of his Honors College experience, Xavier has not been disappointed by all the opportunities he's been given. He looks forward to taking courses on a variety of subjects and he especially loves to see how much the students and faculty care about learning.

Zavier entered the Honors College assuming it would be stressful, but is pleasantly surprised to find that is not the case. His impressions have been largely positive.

"It's been a lot more relaxed than I expected," he explains, "but still very intellectually engaging. There isn't necessarily pressure to get a lot of work done, but rather pressure to challenge yourself."

In his first semester at UWM, Zavier took Honors 199, a class focused around connecting students in the English prerequisite classes with the Honors College.

Zavier found this course to be a great way to interact with the Honors College, without adding too much to his workload. Honors 199 requires students to go to a few events during the semester, which Zavier felt helped further his sense of community.

An event that sticks out to him in particular is a Philosophy Conference that was sponsored by the Honors College. Hearing one of his Philosophy professors speak at the conference helped reinforce the connection between his major and the Honors College, proving to Zavier even further that he is in the right place.

Zavier is currently taking Honors College faculty member Lydia Equitz's "Is



Photo courtesy of Xavier Idarraga.

God Dead?: Modern Challenges to Religious Belief." Relating closely to his interest in philosophy, this class objectively discusses critiques about organized religion in relation to personal experience. Zavier looks forward to each class meeting because "there is never a day [he doesn't] want to be there."

Without a doubt, Zavier is ready to see where the Honors College takes him academically. He looks forward to strengthening his writing skills, hoping to synchronize his thoughts with the words that he puts on the page.

He truly cares about doing his best work and hopes to better himself with every course he takes. As he continues his journey, Zavier knows he will make these connections and many more.

Regardless of his calm exterior, Zavier knows how challenging it is when first entering the Honors College. Joining such a close-knit community can be intimidating, but he encourages new students to push through those first few weeks.

He hopes to encourage other students to stick with it: "Don't sell yourself short and feel like you don't belong. Everyone that gets into the Honors College is truly meant to be here."



Honors College Students in the Service



Seth Duellman
Architecture



Amanda Niebauer
English



Photo courtesy of Garvin Volquardsen.

Honors College students have diverse backgrounds and those who have served in the United States Armed Forces are no exception.

While he didn't originally plan on being in the military, Garvin Volquardsen (Biochemistry) says it changed his life.

After talking with a friend who was in the Army ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps), which provides scholarships for some participants, the decision was clear.

"It sounded like the only solid option I had available to pay for college, so I enlisted in August 2018," he says.

Many experiences during his first year in the Wisconsin Army National Guard and ROTC have contributed to Garvin's success. "The leadership, time management, accountability, and endurance skills I learned in the military have positively impacted my college experience," he says.

Honors College faculty member Benjamin Schneider's "On the Road" is often Garvin's "favorite class of the day/week because of the chance to think critically and dive deeper into the subject matter than most of [his] other courses."

Garvin plans on being active in ROTC throughout his time at UWM. After graduation, he wants to attend medical school and become a doctor, while also serving part time in the National Guard.

Cassidy Welch (International Politics) dreamed about being in the armed forces since middle school, so when she could she signed up to be a part of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), an Air Force auxiliary.

"I love the military environment and learning important skills," she says, like self-discipline and focus. And Cassie sees how Honors fits with that ethos: "the classes entail a lot of discussion, critical thinking, and communication, which will be useful as an officer because I will need to have strong leadership skills."

These skills have already paid off for Cassie: she was able to study abroad in South Korea during her sophomore year



Photo courtesy of Cassidy Welch.

and will still graduate in three years, with all Honors College requirements fulfilled.

After graduating this spring, Cassie plans to study for an M.A. in Political Science at UWM. Following graduate school, she plans to attend the Air Force Officer Training School. "I am most interested in becoming a pilot or an intelligence officer," she says, "but there are so many interesting positions I think I would enjoy."

The time Manuel Garmendez (Mechanical Engineering) has spent in military service has made a huge impact on his life. He was drawn to serving in the Navy because, while he was in college studying chemical and electrical engineering, he hoped to gain more structure in his life.

In 2008, he joined the Navy and completed his training as a Nuclear Machinist Mate two years later. First, Manny worked aboard the USS-Alabama, an Ohio-class nuclear-powered submarine. Then, for four years, he was stationed at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, where he repaired and maintained subs at port.

In Manny's time in the service, the capstone event in which he earned his Submarine Warfare Qualification stands out. "It was four or five hours of running fire drills, but I was the one in charge," he explains.

After graduation, he plans to apply for a position at NASA. Manny says his interest in outer space is one of the reasons he was drawn to the Navy in the first place.

The Honors College is richer for having students like Garvin, Cassie, and Manny in our ranks.



Olivia Wilson
Criminal Justice

Moving Forward: Alyssa Molinski

Since graduating from UWM, Alyssa Molinski ('19, Early Childhood Education) has found her passion as a preschool teacher at Starms Early Childhood, part of the Milwaukee Public School system.

Even though MPS is facing challenges regarding funding and class sizes, there is no doubt that Alyssa loves her students. She is hopeful for change in MPS schools: "Everyday I'm just so excited to go to school, but I know my students deserve more and I do too."

Alyssa plans to stay at MPS, but aspires to earn her M.S. in Administrative Leadership. Her goal is to run for public office in Wisconsin, with the hope that she can make a significant difference in our community schools.

At UWM, as Student Association President for the 2018-19 school year, Alyssa was given a platform to make an impact on campus. She met monthly with the Chancellor and other faculty members to discuss issues on campus and how to find solutions. Alyssa is particularly proud of being part of the opening of [UWM's Food Center & Pantry](#).

In part, Alyssa attributes her ability to handle challenging situations to her experience in the Honors College. Being a part of a rigorous educational environment helped her learn how to think analytically and pushed her to go beyond what is expected.

As Alyssa looks back on her experience, Honors College faculty member Da-



Photo courtesy of Alyssa Molinski.

vid Southward's "Capitalism and its Critics" stands out as influential.

In that course, she learned how to look critically at the capitalist system in America in comparison to the rest of the world, a skill she finds helpful for understanding today's world events.

Alyssa's favorite part about the Honors College was the vast number of opportunities given to the students. She recalls that the many educational and social events helped enhance her experience and increased her sense of belonging.

In the Honors College, Alyssa filled her time with courses about poetry, historical burials, and economics. She loved being able to take unique classes every semester that consistently pushed her outside of her comfort zone, allowing her to look beyond her major and into a different world of learning.

While she enjoyed being a part of the Honors College, Alyssa acknowledges that it was not always easy. She encourages current and future students not only to stick with it, but to take courses that are unlike anything they have taken before, especially if the courses have nothing to do with their majors. That challenge, she says, is worth the effort.

Alyssa will never forget all the Honors College has done for her. She is so grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of it and would like to thank everyone who helped her get where she is today.



UWM Chancellor Mark Mone and Alyssa Molinski. Photo courtesy of Alyssa Molinski.



COVID-19 Interrupts Alternative Spring Break



Liberty Ansoorge
Biomedical Science

Packed and ready for a 5:00 am flight to New Orleans, Honors College students prepared to embark on their annual Alternative Spring Break (ASB) in March.

Unfortunately, their travel plans quickly came to a halt just a few days before the ASB group was scheduled to leave, as the COVID-19 pandemic edged its way into the country, making travel risky. For the safety of the student and faculty participants, the trip was canceled.

First offered in 2018, the now annual trip provides an opportunity for students to participate in community service activities, while still being able to travel and explore the city of New Orleans.

While a typical college spring break might be a fun getaway from the cold of the North, this trip has an itinerary packed with volunteer projects, such as assisting at a Boys and Girls Club and at a New Orleans transition facility.

Life for those at UWM took a turn, and it also changed in an instant in New Orleans. Bracing itself for the arrival of COVID-19 on the heels of the Mardi Gras celebration, New Orleans was forced to prepare to shut-down the entire city to handle the devastation that would soon come.

I spoke with Peyton Juneau regarding the situation in the city soon after ASB was canceled. Peyton is Operations Director for [HandsOn New Orleans](#), an organization that plans and works side by side with the students on their service projects.

“In the coming days,” he says, “HandsOn will be launching a city-wide Senior meal delivery program in partnership with the Mayor’s Office and working to address child care issues for our medical professionals and ‘frontline’ providers during this outbreak. Louisiana is rapidly growing to have one of the highest rates of infection per-capita in the country.”

Peyton is just one of the many people in New Orleans that the ASB group has learned from and will continue to work with on subsequent trips.



The Alternative Spring Break Krewe. Photo courtesy of Kimberly Mayer.

Like Peyton, the city of New Orleans remains in the thoughts of the Honors College students because of the many social and health disparities that make the city in need of service support trips like the Honors College experience.

Mia Cornale (Education), who is part of the trip team, is not discouraged, and plans to go next year. In recognition of these trying times, she adds, “I think that service work now, and in the coming months, will be more important than ever. I hope that young, healthy people will step up and do all that we can to make things better, even if that means helping out a single person, or just staying home.”

Honors College faculty member Benjamin Schneider, the trip’s director, is “disappointed that we weren’t able to have this experience, because the mix of service and mindful tourism, integrating ourselves into communities that are new to us, can be eye-opening and impactful.”

“We are not deterred,” he says with a smile. “We’ll be back next year with renewed energy and purpose.”

The pandemic has cast a shadow of uncertainty over our nation and has amplified the fact that health disparities are an epidemic too.

Students in experiential learning programs like Alternative Spring Break serve vulnerable populations, helping students to empathize and better understand the culture’s inequities, and though the trip was canceled the work towards recovery and growth will continue.



Looking Back: Phil Sklar



Halie Gehling
Conservation and Environmental Science



Photo courtesy of Phil Sklar.

Milwaukee is home to including beautiful beaches, historical venues, and -- the world's largest bobblehead collection.

Located in the Historic Third Ward, the [National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum](#) boasts one-of-a-kind bobbleheads and a co-founder who is also an Honors College alumnus, Phil Sklar ('06 Finance).

Phil thinks back on his time as an Honors College student fondly, remembering that "the class topics and learning that took place were very engaging and interactive," and that "the faculty were clearly among the best, and they always went above and beyond in their interaction with students."

Phil recalls a class he took with Honors College faculty member Lydia Equitz and how he not only learned writing skills, but also important life lessons.

"The Honors College experience turned me from somewhat of an introverted person into someone who was eager to participate and engage," he says. "I was armed with the skill set, confidence, and desire to achieve and make a difference."

After graduating from UWM, Phil went on to accept a position with Ernst & Young as part of their "Your Master Plan" program to give finance students an accounting background. He then attended the University of Notre Dame and earned a M.A. in accountancy.

After becoming a C.P.A., Phil worked in corporate finance and he earned an M.B.A. from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, with a concentration in marketing, entrepreneurship and innovation, and management and strategy.

Phil admits he eventually became a "bit bored" with finance and "realized that the only way to put all of the skills that [he] had to work immediately was to do something entrepreneurial."

With an "out of control" bobblehead collection of his own and a realization of a "need in the market for a company to pro-



Photo courtesy of Phil Sklar.

duce and market unique bobbleheads," Phil and co-founder Brad Novak set out to produce unique, high-quality bobbleheads.

Phil considers UWM athletics manager and superfan Michael Poll's bobblehead his favorite. Its production led directly to Phil and Brad establishing their bobblehead empire, which now has over 6,500 unique bobbleheads.

Since 2019, the Museum has brought in people from all 50 states and at least 25 countries, and has been featured in hundreds of publications for both the Museum and bobbleheads that they have produced.

Many of the bobbleheads involve a "charity component," which allows Phil and Brad to donate to local and national causes.

Recently, a bobblehead of Dr. Anthony Fauci became their all-time best-seller, raising over \$150,000 for the 100 Million Mask Challenge to assist front line workers helping to fight against COVID-19.

Phil is gracious in remembering UWM: "The Honors College is a tremendous asset and has positively impacted countless students' lives. The faculty and staff deserve a lot of credit and thanks for their efforts."

Phil has some wisdom for current students: "your potential is limited only by limits that you place on yourself. With hard work and perseverance, you can do anything you put your mind to. It likely won't be easy, but it will be worth it." And that's nothing to bobble your head at.



3rd Annual Honors College Open Mic Night



Amanda Niebauer
English

The Alternative Spring Break trip to New Orleans has become a favorite experience offered by the Honors College. The annual Open Mic Night that raises funds for the trip might be even more popular as this year's crowd was the biggest yet.

UWM community members joined Honors College students, faculty, and staff on Mardi Gras night for a evening of music, food, and fun.

Twelve acts and a house band made up of students and faculty members entertained an audience of about 80 people. Performances included musical acts, short skits, and a poetry reading by Honors College faculty member David Southward from his new poetry collection, *Bachelor's Buttons*.

Guests lined the walls of the room, perched on windowsills, and lounged on chairs to listen to the entertainment. Some even danced along to the house band that played in between performers.

Isaac Repinski (Biomedical Engineering) has been heavily involved in the Alternative Spring Break trip and the Open Mic Night in his time in the Honors College. So, it was no surprise when he showed his support by not only playing bass guitar in the house band, but also accompanying several other acts throughout the night on drums, guitar, and vocals.

"Performing is something I've always enjoyed doing," he says. "I wanted to give other people in my bands an opportunity to play with a bigger group because I've always found that to be more fun."

Isaac's Fourth Band, which inspired some laughs from those in the crowd who



Isaac's Fourth Band. Photo courtesy of Kimberly Mayer.

know his affinity for music, includes Aaron Arendt (Nursing), Hayley Jasinski (Urban Studies), and Sal Gauthier (Mathematics).

Before that night's performance, Aaron had never played before a large group of people. "My favorite part was pushing myself out of my comfort zone to do something I had never done before. Ultimately, performing at the Open Mic night led the four of us to be able to perform at a local house show too, which was a lot of fun," he shares.

This was Ashley Rudser's (Flute Performance) first time performing at Open Mic Night, too. "I thought it'd be fun and a good way to shake off some performance anxiety. Performing more often in front of people really helps," Ashley says.

And the audience was eager to show their support. From making an impromptu dance floor to laughing along with the Drama Club's improv performance, the crowd made the atmosphere easy-going and fun.

"My favorite part of a show," Isaac remembers, "is whenever we get the audience involved in the performance, whether that be singing along to 'Li'l Liza Jane' or people swing dancing to our music."

Honors College faculty member Benjamin Schneider knows "the energy in the room is special and we are grateful to be able to stage this event every year. Even though the Spring Break trip was canceled, we were still able to celebrate the variety of student talents. Thanks to everyone involved and see you next year."



Professor David Southward. Photo courtesy of Kimberly Mayer.



The Punk Singer, Ariana Strupp (JAMS). Photo courtesy of Kimberly Mayer.



The Flood Buds with New Activism Plans



Avery Dedjoe
Engineering

Among college students, there is no shortage of opinions on political and environmental issues. The Flood seeks to assist students in turning their visions for the future into actionable plans.

In Spring 2019, The Flood was revived as a student organization by a handful of dedicated members and officers.

At the intersection between environmental and social justice, The Flood uses activism in these arenas as a frame for developing its members' capacity for enacting positive social change in the world.

Club President Halie Gehling (Conservation and Environmental Science) explains: "Our main goal as a student org is to help prepare our members to be activists, to take what they learn from The Flood and implement it in their lives."

Last year, The Flood worked on the problem of food scarcity by raising awareness of the [UWM Food Center & Pantry](#) through a plant potting event and an organic coffee sale fund-raiser.



Photo courtesy of The Flood.

This year, prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, The Flood made extensive plans for an "Earth Day Eco Jamboree," to be held in the Wisconsin Room. There were also plans for a composting project and a Milwaukee River clean up initiative, all of which have been canceled or placed on hold.

During this time of hibernation, The Flood meets online, making plans for the future, and is adding members. Check them out if you have a passion for political or environmental issues, need help registering to vote, or just want to buy some coffee.

Honors College Club Volunteers Locally



Haley Kress
Biomedical Science

Last November, a group of Honors College students worked diligently in the neighborhoods surrounding UWM, clearing yards of accumulated snow and leaves. Their mission? To uphold the goals of the Honors College Alternative Spring Break Club (HCASBC) and volunteer locally.

HCASBC co-founder and current Treasurer Brianna Schubert (JAMS, Communication) lead the group as it participated in UWM's Make A Difference Day, during which UWM students help older adults in the Milwaukee-area with outdoor tasks.

The Honors College club intends to provide service to communities in need everywhere, and Brianna saw an opportunity to bring the service focus to our neighbors. She recruited fellow students, some of whom were Alternative Spring Break attendees, and they formed an Honors College volunteer team for the event.

The day was sunny with an early snow on the ground, a surprise that Brianna notes enhanced the "lighthearted and unpredictable" nature of their efforts. UWM provided some very motivating coffee and bagels to start the day, and the volunteers were off.

Working in two groups, the students removed layers of snow and wet leaves from several community members' yards. They even got to talk with some of the local homeowners, who were pleased with the help they received.

Brianna points out that it is those interactions that make the service most real. "It's so cool to meet the person that you were just helping," she shares.

Overall, the event went splendidly, and Brianna definitely knows the HCASBC will show up for local change at the next UWM Make a Difference Day.



Natalie Kuehl (Architecture) and Abdallah Shaikh (Ind. Engineering). Photo courtesy of Brianna Schubert.



Honors Drama Club Presents: *Suicide, Incorporated*



Halie Gehling
Conservation and Environmental Science



Photo courtesy of The Honors Drama Club.

The Honors College Drama Club gave a stunning performance last fall with their production of Andrew Hindraker's *Suicide, Incorporated*, directed by Jack Vento (Film).

With a thought-provoking plot, thick with dark humor, Jack was immediately drawn to the play about an writer who works as an editor for suicide notes.

He appreciates that the script highlights the fact that more men commit suicide than women. He believes "this is a discussion that is important to have, but it's also a scary one. The script made it less scary, and I thought that was absolutely fantastic."

Actor Luc Marchessault (Global Studies) agrees that "while the play approaches the topic as a comedy, it addresses the importance of reaching out when necessary."

Reflecting on his first experience directing a play, Jack expresses his appreciation for his cast members: "I asked my actors a lot of questions, they asked me a lot, and I learned a great deal that first day. A film professor once told me that if, as the direc-

tor, you're the smartest person on your crew, then you've assembled the wrong crew."

This experience has not only brought Jack closer with his Honors College peers, but also with the faculty.

He knows "the Honors College fosters strong relationships between teachers and students, stronger than anywhere else on campus," and he appreciates growing "closer to certain faculty members who worked alongside [him] throughout the duration of the semester."

Actor Mason Worklan (Film) enjoyed getting into character with his fellow actors: "We all started knowing [the characters] at a surface level, but as we continued to work and rehearse together, we got to know our characters and each other on a new and much deeper level."

After the play, Jack shares, many students, faculty, and community members approached him to let him know that they "appreciate the approach of the play and our group's courage to tackle the topic."

Honors College Faculty Reads *No Exit*



Amanda Niebauer
English

At the end of the Fall 2019 semester, members of the Honors College faculty presented a rehearsed table-read of Jean-Paul Sartre's 1944 play *No Exit* in the Honors House library.

With scripts in hand and minimal props, Honors College faculty members Lindsay Daigle, Peter Sands, David Southward and Jacqueline Stuhmiller acted out the heavy, but darkly comedic, tale of three people (and one valet) stuck tormenting one another in a hellish afterlife.

Professor Stuhmiller shares that she "looks forward to the rehearsals: we all get to sit around in our weekend clothes and read a script together, asking each other what the emotion is behind a particular line and figuring out the technical details of how to move."

This unique engagement with his peers is also Professor Sands' favorite part of his first faculty reading: "It's so far outside the



Cast of *No Exit*. Photo courtesy of Lindsay Daigle.

usual faculty activity and interaction that it shifts my perception of the people I see every day in wonderful ways."

And the play is not fun just for the faculty. Professor Daigle believes that the goal they have "is to give some sort of light entertainment for students toward the end of the semester."

"And if we mess up, which we have," Professor Daigle adds, "it's funny, and we just show how human we are."



Honors College Alum Adapts Classic Novel



Kaitlyn Diskin
Film



Photo courtesy of Orange Hat Publishing.

William Bott ('15 Sociology, JAMS) “loved everything about UWM,” he says, and adds that “it was because of the Honors College that [he] became so interested in sociology and wanted to broaden [his] world view.”

Fast forward to 2019, when William releases his first book *The Adventures of Jane Sawyer*, an adaptation of Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* that switches the genders of many of the characters.

The idea for this gender swap came to William while he was teaching in the Milwaukee Public Schools. “I ran a book study using *Tom Sawyer* while I was there,” William explains, “pretty early on I had the boys on the edge of their seats but the girls weren’t engaged in the story.”

While reworking the source book for his adaptation, William became increasingly aware of the lack of well-developed female characters in the story. “They were all there to move Tom’s plot along,” he describes. “I had to tweak a lot of their behavior to

make it less stereotypical and reflect a different time.”

He spent the next year adapting the classic for a new audience. “There were some days where I would work all day on the book; it was so exciting and fun,” William recalls.

Everything about *The Adventures of Jane Sawyer* is designed to mirror the source, from the cover to the dedication inside. “I went online and found an actual scanned version of every page of the original *Tom Sawyer*,” explains William, “we followed that as much as possible, from the font to even the type of paper.”

For William, creating this book wasn’t about changing the story Mark Twain created, but rather adapting it for a new audience and a new generation to fall in love with as he did. “If I have a daughter, she needs to read Mark Twain because he’s the best,” says William. “But she doesn’t need to read about all of these guys changing the world while the girl is simply the love interest.”

WUWM Advertises Honors College



Zoë Brown
Film



WUWM Today host Tom Luljak and Honors College faculty and students. Photo courtesy of WUWM.

For a program that aired in February 2020, Honors College Director Peter Sands, students Sal Gauthier (Mathematics) and Brianna Schubert (JAMS), and Honors College faculty member Benjamin Schneider joined WUWM host Tom Luljak on *WUWM Today* to discuss the Honors College and its Alternative Spring Break trip.

With just under 700 enrollees, Honors College students are presented with many unique opportunities. On air, Professor Sands and the host discussed several of them, including the core curriculum, small class sizes, and student perks like dedicated advising and priority registration.

The second half of the show focused on one of the flashier opportunities for students: the annual Alternative Spring Break service trip to New Orleans.

Although the trip has been canceled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Professor Schneider shared with Luljak that

the trip originated from his love New Orleans that dates to his own college days.

Professor Schneider joined the Honors College in 2017 and immediately proposed the trip. He explains that “the experience gives students the opportunity to practice community service, something they’ve likely been doing their whole lives, in a new and exciting environment.”

Sal and Brianna had the chance to discuss the rewards of helping a community in need as well. Sal shared that he was shocked at the extent to which hurricane Katrina still impacts the city a decade and a half later and Brianna agreed, explaining that “the city is beautiful and it felt good to provide some help.”

Experiential learning opportunities like the ASB trip impact students both immediately and as life-long learners, while accentuating the holistic education model upon which the Honors College prides itself.



2019-20 Honors College Graduates



* Honors With Distinction

Marlee Barnes	Jamie Gregory	Kimberly Mayer	Anna Sage
Sean Barry	Sana Hamdan	Kaileigh McManus	Alyssa Sarenac
Michael Bartz	Danielle Hawi	Jana Meari	Brianna Sayeg
Cali Beere	Delaney Hughes	Hannah Menzel	Mariah Schaller
Gabriella Bergeron	Margaret Jacoby	Alyssa Molinski	Marie Schimborski
Matthew Beyer	Lena Jensen	Samuel Murray	Sam Schrader
Saint Alea Bilyeu	Clarissa Johnson	Emily Narel	Lilly Schwartzberg
Olivia Birch	Alyssa Josephs	Ryan Nelsen*	Margaret Selkey
Bella Biwer	Lintaro Kajiwara	Claire Neville	Zakary Sharp
Julian Blecking	Naomi Kight	Josephine Newcomb	Elizabeth Stolow
Julia Bruns	Samantha King	Emma Oldehoeft*	Alex Swanson*
Amanda Check	Andrew Klug	Mayya Pechenova	Cory Thompson*
Allison Densmore	Nathan Kohls	Chloe Pergolski	Samantha Turner
Alexandra Dewey	Sean Kramer	Valerie Perkins	Erin VandenBosch
Cassandra Diehl	Mariah Kretz	Lexie Peterson	Emily Wallander
Jennifer Dore	Teresa Kulick	Mia Pillar	Cassidy Welch
Taylor Douglas	Mara Lapp*	Courtney Raatz	Eleanor Wenker
Wesley Edens*	Trent Lechleitner	Rachel Radomski*	Erin Wetzal
Sydney Ewert	Mai Chong Lee	Gena Regan	Reanna Wicker
Kyle Favorite*	Kristen Leer*	Isaac Repinski	RoseMarie Winger
Nathan Feast	Sage LeGault	Jessica Reyes	Grace Winter
Bailey Flannery*	Hugo Ljungbäck*	Emily Roberts	McKenna Wucherpfenig
Halie Gehling*	William Mai	Olivia Rockwell*	Danielle Zube
Sawyer Gilding	Katherine Malek	Gregory Rowan	

Scholarships and Writing Awards



Scholarship Awardees

Liberty Ansoerge	Kimberly Laberge
Isabel Castro	Jensen Mollet
Juan Garcia	Kim Phan
Elizabeth Julius	Lily Pickart
Teresa Klopp	Chloe Wasson
Alexandra Knudtson	Sydney Sampson-Webb

Ruback Prize for Distinguished Writing (tie)

Natalie Meyers "The International Jew"

Emily Vanhandel "The Role of International Adjudication in LGBT Rights"

First Place, 200-level

Emily Fedewa "Fight Man to Man, and Do All You Can: The Story of Bonnie and Clyde"

Second Place, 200-level

Emily Vanhandel "Repairing Democracy: Public Testimonials in Congress"

Honorable Mentions, 200-level

Jessica Gatzow "Morphological Echo: Observing the Psyche and Experiencing the Surreal"

Beatrice Mohler "The Value of Vulnerability"



Course Highlights



Seth Duellman
Architecture

“The Idea of Progress”

Honors College faculty member Alan Singer’s “The Idea of Progress” is one of his favorite classes to teach and also one of his longest-running. After fifteen years of exploring the topic, he says it’s only gotten more interesting.

Professor Singer explains that the central concept of the course sprung up while he was studying history. He noticed that, as the world transitioned into the Modernism period, there arose a growing obsession with the notion of progress. This idea is marked by what we would consider improvements to life that make it decidedly more enjoyable.

The course examines the growth of and infatuation with the idea of progress from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment period and into Modernism. Additionally, students study how the many calamities of the 1900’s, like both World Wars, affect our understanding of progress.

From world events to the current political climate, contemporary issues also regularly play into class discussion. For example, the influence the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis is having on the economy and politics is already impacting how Professor Singer manages the course.

He has students read Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and excerpts from philosophers like Voltaire, Karl Marx, and Mary Wollstonecraft to make up the contextual backbone for class discussions.

Emily Fedewa (English) likes “Professor Singer’s teaching style and the discussion element that is common in Honors College classes.”

Like the many other students that have completed Professor Singer’s “The Idea of Progress” over the years, she hopes to gain the context to mark the culture’s progress, to know where we’ve been so we can know where we’re going.



Photo courtesy of The Library of Congress.

“Speech, Faith, Freedom: The First Amendment”



Avery Dedjoe
Engineering

Honors College faculty member Jill Budny’s course “Speech, Faith, Freedom: The First Amendment” focuses on developing a greater understanding of the philosophical foundations upon which the First Amendment is predicated.

The First Amendment is a text replete with territory for investigation, from the limitations placed on the freedoms it provides to the areas in which its values conflict with those of other highly regarded legal structures.

In the course, Professor Budny seeks to provide students with the ability to interpret and evaluate the decisions made by the Supreme Court and the impacts those decisions have on people’s lives.

These student investigations are one of Professor Budny’s favorite parts of the course because “it brings together theory and practice.” To that end, students assess the writings of prominent political scholars

and the role their philosophies play in actual court cases.

Connecting the philosophy to real examples establishes a basis for deeper, more nuanced discussions of the Supreme Court’s decisions.

One of the main goals in the course is to promote the kind of rigorous thinking that leads to productive discourse. Professor Budny hopes that her students “learn how to question their own assumptions about concepts like freedom, how to view political conflicts from a variety of perspectives, and how to handle differences of opinion in ways that are fruitful and constructive.”

The liberties protected under the First Amendment are famous, but are frequently misunderstood or recklessly cited without context. Professor Budny’s course helps clarify and find the depths in this famous Constitutional document.

The First Amendment

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Photo courtesy of freedom.



Familiar Faces

Dr. Lindsay Daigle



Kaitlyn Diskin
Film



Photo courtesy of Lindsay Daigle.

Honors College faculty member Lindsay Daigle has been a part of the Honors College family since 2016, teaching humanities and arts courses.

Lindsay received her B.A. in Philosophy and English with a focus on creative writing from UWM, before earning an M.F.A in Creative Writing at the New School in New York City.

She returned to UWM for her Ph.D. in English, again with a focus on creative writing and poetry and with a certificate in rhetoric and composition.

Her love of literature and creative writing is apparent in all of the courses she teaches, but especially in one entitled “The Truth of Art/The Art of Truth.” Lindsay describes the upper-level arts course as “a multimedia/multi-genre creative writing course that investigates the blurred lines between fiction and nonfiction.”

Lindsay hopes her students feel that “what they experience, think, and say truly matters – but they should also be able to listen effectively to others, whether that’s through research, critical reading, or active discussion.”

In 2016, Lindsay released *The Small Distasters LP*, a collection of poetry in which each poem acts as a conversation with a different musical album.

Beyond her time teaching and writing, Lindsay says she does “nothing too out of the ordinary: [she] enjoys working out and running, patronizing restaurants, and watching good TV.”

Lindsay’s favorite part of the Honors College is the students. “They take my breath away every day with their compassion and their expanding ideas,” she states. “I feel privileged to play a role in their lives, to even be a witness.”

Lauren Fleck



Kimberly Mayer
Biology



Photo courtesy of the Honors College.

The familiar face of Lauren Fleck is often seen around the halls of the Honors College and in individual advising meetings.

Lauren is a Senior Advisor and has been helping UWM Honors Students since February 2018.

Her work history includes law school admissions at Notre Dame University, as well as advising and career counseling. This background gives her incredible insight into guiding students to find the right classes and career choices for all majors.

Lauren “loves the long-lasting relationships [she] is able to build with her students” and the opportunity to “work with a student from their first-year through graduation.”

One of her favorite parts of advising is working with high-achieving students and learning about the backgrounds and motivations of their goals.

Because she is relatively new to the Milwaukee area, Lauren enjoys spending her free time exploring the city with her husband and 3-year-old son Liam.

Lauren values her family time greatly, so she looks for events or activities to get her family active and involved in the community. When she can’t find a weekend outing to attend, Lauren enjoys baking with her son.

She aims to help her students have a clear plan to achieve their goals and gain a greater understanding of who they are and where they are going. Lauren wants students to “think about the quality of their experience in college rather than quantity” when it comes to their classwork.

Lauren also likes to help students develop their resumés and law and graduate school applications. She wants students to know that she is always available for professional development assistance and advising.



The Aggregate:

Liberty Ansorge
Michael Bartz
Zoë Brown
Samantha Brusky
Avery Dedjoe
Kaitlyn Diskin
Seth Duellman
Halie Gehling
Haley Kress
Kimberly Mayer
Amanda Niebauer
Olivia Wilson

The Aggregate's Voice

The Aggregate team created this issue in isolation, following social distancing guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic. Though working alone, the twelve of us strove to produce an issue that highlights the amazing students and faculty that make up the Honors College in the midst of unprecedented circumstances.

In our January meeting, we envisioned an issue that would be devoted to how our peers invest their time and energies in community service. The theme is present in this issue, but it has evolved to map how our life in the Honors College has been interrupted by the pandemic.

We have seen faculty, staff, and students rise to meet challenges that were unimaginable several months ago and we have inspired each other in our dedication to teaching, learning, and service throughout the Honors College and beyond.

We also recognize the intense effort from faculty and staff to help with the transition, with office hours, advising, classes, and meetings of all kinds occurring virtually. Thank you for your many, many hours of care and support.

We are proud to be the chroniclers of the Honors College community, just as we are proud of our peers and everyone associated with the Honors College.

Though we are separated, our passion for academic rigor and engagement unites us more than ever. We miss what we had and we are committed to recalibrating and reconnecting and coming back together as soon as it is safely possible.

The Aggregate wishes everyone a safe and productive end to the semester. We will see you all when the pandemic abates. Stay home and stay safe. Peace.



From left to right, top row: Avery Dedjoe, Halie Gehling, Michael Bartz, Zoë Brown. Middle row: Haley Kress, Liberty Ansorge, Kaitlyn Diskin, Amanda Niebauer. Bottom row: Kimberly Mayer, Samantha Brusky, Seth Duellman, Olivia Wilson.

Breaking News

After a semester of investigation, *The Aggregate* team was unable to relocate the diary we reported on in the previous issue, that told of three students who stayed overnight in the Honors House to investigate rumors of the building being haunted.

However, our team did follow up on a clue in the diary. The unnamed author claimed that the hauntings might be tied to a nursing student's 1963 disappearance.

According to campus records, two students did not graduate with their class that year, though both were enrolled at the beginning of the term. No reasons were given for their absence and their names appear to have been manually redacted.

On one faded page of a class roster, we made out a set of initials: "C.H." We located a graduate from the class of '63 who agreed

to talk with us anonymously and who asked to be called "J."

J. said she knew a peer with the initials C.H., but "it was too many years ago now and [they] were not close." Still, she said, she would tell us what she knew.

The day of the interview, J. left a voice-mail for our team saying she no longer felt comfortable talking. The message said that "some things are better left alone and that we should stop stirring up things that are in the past." J. will no longer return our calls, but we will persist.

The night before we went to press, the photos on the left were sent to our offices, also anonymously. They are not dated.

We will not rest until this mystery is solved. Stay tuned, as we continue to search for answers.



The Aggregate



Images courtesy of anonymous.