



The Aggregate

The UWM Honors College Newsletter

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We're Back



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After three semesters of uncertainty, the Honors College is finally starting to return to a sense of normalcy. There is an immense comfort in being able to interact as a community again, but it is also important to recognize the monumental adversities that students and staff have been dealing with.

“Being an educator now has been mostly about flexibility,” Professor Alan Singer comments. “My colleagues and I have had to be more open to using technology, and we have had to learn to be more responsive to the needs of our students.”

Online classes have been difficult to adjust to but being forced to pay more attention to the ways students learn has provided unexpected educational benefits.

“Everything I’ve experienced has taught me to be way more adaptable,” explains Logan Manz (Math Education). “These experiences have given me good educational skills and will help me become a better teacher after I graduate.” He is happy to be interacting with more people and finds he is learning better in his classes.

The return to campus this fall is something many have been anticipating. Despite things not being completely back to normal, Professor Singer enthusiastically awaited this semester.

“Without a doubt, I was looking forward to seeing students in person. Teaching online worked well but frankly, it is not a perfect substitution for face-to-face classes. There is a certain rhythm to an Honors seminar that cannot be duplicated online.”

Similarly, Professor Jill Budny is grateful for the opportunity to be able to connect with her students in person once again: “It is wonderful to feel the energy of being in the classroom together.”



Image courtesy of Jo Fox.

Mary Brown (Psychology) feels that way too and has “enjoyed being able to be back with people and [has] learned not to take meeting people for granted.”

Some experiences online continue to be positive. Professor Jacqueline Stuhmiller, for one, enjoys teaching remotely. “I find that my classes don’t lose any sense of camaraderie or community just because they are on Zoom,” she says.

Along with Honors College courses, many of the clubs and events are back in full force as well. Some are running in person, while others are offering online opportunities to participate.

The Honors College Alternative Spring Break and Study Abroad trips are scheduled for March and May respectively and students are thankful for the return of these cherished opportunities after feeling their absence for the past two years.

Honors College Director Peter Sands, one of the faculty leaders of the Spring Break trip, felt its absence significantly.

“Being unable to travel to New Orleans with students for our transformative spring break service trip during the pandemic was incredibly difficult,” he shares. “Knowing that there were needs we could not help to



We're Back (continued)

address and knowing that the very indeterminacy of the pandemic meant we could not predict when we would return felt disheartening. Now, I could not be more excited to see the strong show of student interest about returning this spring.”

Although this semester has come with many positive changes, this is still a difficult time for many students. Honors College advising and administrative staff are here to help support students as they readjust to in-person education. Advisors continue to meet with students online and now have added in-person meeting options.

Sarah Lunow (Architecture) has noticed the effects of being back in person in ways that she did not anticipate.

“Being able to bounce ideas and interact with people has helped with the creative process and with mental health,” she says.

Professor Benjamin Schneider adds that the increased awareness of the mental

health needs of students might be a bitter-sweet lesson from the pandemic.

“We know so much more now about the pressures on students and on the need for more sustained and significant mental health resources,” he says. “Campus knows that more students than ever are struggling, so we need to learn how to help in ways that extend beyond the classroom.”

“Students are working hard, and we appreciate all the effort they are putting in,” Professor Budny comments and Professor Singer concurs.

He reminds students that “we are all in this together, and we should help each other through these difficult times.”

The Honors College touts itself as a supportive community, and these last eighteen months have been a test of that strength. We are excited to be back and hopeful that the learning and attention that the pandemic necessitated will continue.

Director's Note



Dr. Peter Sands
Honors College Director

Welcome back to *The Aggregate's* fall 2021 edition! And welcome back again to Honors House, where, after the three weirdest and most discombobulated semesters any of us has experienced, we're finishing a fourth weird term, with some of us still remote some or all of the time, others in the building, everyone masking and doing their best.

Speaking for myself, I was both eager to come back to the Honors College in person, and a little terrified of teaching with a mask. Would I speak too softly? Too quickly? Would I be out of breath? Would I even be able to hear students speaking?

I started in the summer, coming in most days for a few hours to get used to the idea again. By October, though, the semester was rushing by so fast that I forgot I had ever had a concern.

I lucked out by having an in-person group that came together and cohered as well as any class I've ever seen, a class whose grace under the pressure of learning in masks and with the exhaustion and tension of almost two years under pandemic conditions, more than once brought me to moments of pure joy and admiration.

From talking with other Honors College instructors and with my colleagues around campus, as well as students in other classes, I've heard many similar stories, the good outweighing the bad of our return.

We have a long way to go, and we cannot know what the future holds for COVID. For now, though, enjoy the stories in this issue about our returns, and about the good work and good works that Honors is doing across campus and throughout the Milwaukee community.



South Side Experiential Learning



Liberty Ansonge
Biological Sciences



The CEEL team: Nico Molek (English/Creative Writing), Liberty Ansonge (Biological Sciences), Mary Brown (Psychology), Mia Cornale (Education). Not pictured: Maia Diedrich (Global Health) and Stephanie Aguilar (Political Science). Photo courtesy of Southside Organizing Center.

Throughout the pandemic, Professor Benjamin Schneider worked with [Ayuda Mutua MKE](#), a grass-roots food distribution organization focused on Milwaukee's near South Side neighborhoods.

Once or twice a week, he delivered groceries to near South Side homes, and it spurred an idea to connect similar organizations with Honors College students.

"We want to join the classroom with the community and our unique student base inspires us to think of ways to encourage their learning," he shares.

As a result, Professor Schneider organized the first iteration of the Community Embedded Experiential Learning (CEEL) program, a three-credit, non-seminar option, that included six students.

In September, those students joined [Centro Legal](#), a nonprofit law firm that offers free and low-cost legal services.

The organization serves clients regardless of income, ethnicity, or language and specializes in family law and non-violent criminal misdemeanor defense.

Molly Dobberke Riehle, Centro Legal's Executive Director, led the group through discussions and activities and helped them understand the specific challenges the community faces with the legal system.

"Finding a mix of experiential learning, group conversations, and independent exploration of the themes and mission behind our work was important," Molly shares.

Mia Cornale (Education) found that the experience allowed her to "contribute to the growth of the city and the sense of fellowship between residents." She enjoyed exploring Walker's Point too because she "[got] out on foot within the community."

Molly appreciated the experience, too. "Working with this group of UWM Honors College students was truly inspiring and helped us to take a step back to re-engage with the work we do," she points out.

"Most importantly, the partnership showed us that college students are extremely capable, engaged, and excited to make a difference in the world."

The students then joined [Southside Organizing Center](#) (SOC), a neighbor-



CEEL Conference. Photo courtesy of Benjamin Schneider.

hood-based organization dedicated to the development and sustainability of the near South Side.

Under the guidance of Executive Director Tammy Rivera, the students participated in neighborhood canvassing involving public health and overall community awareness.

Mia says this let her see deeper into "the inner workings of how nonprofits function," and, "Overall, this experience has helped me to expand my involvement from just the east side and the UWM community to the South Side."

The students also attended a speaker series in which members of near South Side service organizations presented on the issues they face in their community, including 8th District Alderwoman (and UWM alum) [JoCasta Zamarippa](#) and Vice-President of Community Health for [16th Street Clinic](#), Rosamaria Martinez.

"The speaker series enriched the CEEL experience by connecting the team with more members of the community," says Maia Diedrich (Global Health).

The experiential-learning semester will conclude with a conference at which the students will present as a cohort on their time in the program.

"The CEEL team highlights the very best of what the Honors College represents," says Professor Schneider. "In it, we see our outstanding students, challenging themselves by pushing the boundaries of their education beyond the classroom."

Professor Schneider will lead the CEEL program again next semester and hopes to institutionalize it so that the students and our partners at the organizations can learn and grow with each other into the future.



David Deshpande
Biological Sciences

Starting Out: Liz Willis

Liz Willis (Criminal Justice, Anthropology) moved with their family from Virginia Beach, Virginia to West Allis three years ago, and they toured UW-Milwaukee during their college search.

During the tour, Liz got the sense that students were happy and involved, and just months into their own undergraduate career, they exemplify the joyful engagement they observed.

While most students begin school in September, Liz got a head start in August, attending the 3-day [Honors College Summer Leadership Camp](#) for minority and first-generation college students.

One of the events they found most impactful was the poetry workshop with Professor David Southward.

At first, Liz and their peers were dreading the exercise; they had never written poetry and had no interest in doing so.

Recounting the experience, Liz notes that “as we got more and more into it, we actually realized we were having fun.”

By the end, they felt very proud of their work and more connected with the incoming Honors College class.

The connections with their peers and interest in poetry have persisted beyond the camp. Liz felt inspired to start their own student organization in the Honors College called “The Poetry Corner.”

At each group meeting, members analyze and juxtapose the styles and structures of two works of poetry before attempting their own poem in the styles of the models.

Liz hopes that through the organization they can help other students overcome the same reluctance towards poetry that they did, because “it’s not that you can’t write poetry, it’s whether or not you want to try.”

Besides “The Poetry Corner,” Liz is a member of the Honors Equity Club and Anti-Racism event series. These activities connect well with their Honors College class this semester, “Dirty Realism” with Professor Benjamin Schneider.

Liz says that the books and films provide a “snippet of someone’s life,” and that although the subject matter can be difficult,



Photo courtesy of Liz Willis.

they greatly appreciate the exposure to unfamiliar human experiences. These experiences, Liz feels, will be invaluable in their future career ambitions.

The attention to detail, variety of scenarios, and cultural intricacies of airport international customs and security captivates Liz, and their pursuit of a double major in criminal justice and anthropology represents their multidisciplinary pursuit towards a career in that field.

“I was just so interested by the process, what you could find, and all the skills you’d need. Plus, I heard there are bomb dogs, and I want a dog,” they exclaim.

Liz originally planned to major only in criminal justice but found that courses in anthropology offered an opportunity to further explore their love for language and forensics.

Their commitment to the customs and security field extends beyond the classroom. Liz works as a security guard in the UWM library and is already involved with the [Office of Undergraduate Research](#).

Supported by a SURF grant, Liz aids a graduate student researching the Supreme Court. “I knew nothing about legal documents,” they remark, “so it’s been a great learning experience.”

Liz is optimistic that their time in the Honors College will give them the tools to “keep a broad perspective and think outside the box,” and they are determined to engage in a reciprocal relationship with the students and faculty.

Through all their activities, Liz will continue to shape and be shaped by their growing network in the Honors College.



Foreign Correspondence



Kari Mrotek
Global Sustainability



Bamberg City Hall. Photo courtesy of Kari Mrotek.



Photo courtesy of Kari Mrotek.

On September 2nd, 2021, I did something that a year ago probably wouldn't have even been possible. I got on a plane to return to [Bamberg, Germany](#) for a year-long study abroad program.

After fourteen hours of travel in cars and planes, I was thankful to be back in my second home. In 2018-19, I was an exchange student in Germany with the Rotary Youth Exchange Program, and this is the first time I have been back.

Despite the pandemic, it was almost as if nothing had changed. The trains are still usually 2-5 minutes late, the Germans continue to be direct, and everything is still closed on Sunday.

For someone who hasn't lived in Germany, everything being closed on Sunday can be quite a culture shock. When I say everything, I mean almost everything.

Retail stores are closed, grocery stores are closed, and even most pharmacies are closed. After forgetting to go grocery shopping on Saturday once and having to live off the scraps of leftover food, I'll never forget again.

I was looking forward to being able to take the trains and buses here again. However, the first weekend I arrived happened to be the weekend one of the train unions went on strike.

Trying to visit my previous host families across the country was quite a struggle, with trains only running every 4-6 hours and with the possibility of them being canceled. I began to miss having a car.

I can't say that nothing has changed due to the pandemic. There are still quite a few precautions in place to control the spread of COVID-19. For instance, upon my arrival, there was a requirement to wear a medical grade mask in all indoor spaces.

Additionally, patrons at restaurants and clubs are required to check in using an app to aid in contact tracing. With rising case numbers in Germany, some places are currently requiring either proof of vaccination or recovery from COVID-19. Approxi-



Photo courtesy of Kari Mrotek.

mately two-thirds of Germans are fully vaccinated, and the number continues to rise.

Currently half of my classes are online. However, with case numbers on the rise in Europe it is possible that all my classes could become fully online.

There are still opportunities to get involved with Bamberg and the university here despite the effects of COVID-19. For example, I have signed up to be a part of a partner family program in Bamberg and we have the opportunity to meet and share our cultures with each other. I appreciate the experience of meeting a German family and learning more about them.

This semester, I am taking a combination of classes in German and English. My classes in German are C1 level classes aimed towards learning the language within the context of culture.

One of my favorite classes in German is about Bamberg. I was surprised to learn that the earliest reference to the city on a map is in the year 907.

With most of my year still ahead of me, I am looking forward to the real-world cultural education and experience that I can gain from studying abroad in Germany.

Although the pandemic has proven to be a challenge, I continue to grow in my ability to persevere by being open and flexible to new opportunities and experiences.

Study abroad is a great way not only to improve my language skills, but also to discover a place in the world. The unknown will only stay unknown until we choose to learn its name.



Sophia Keay
Music Performance and
Music Education



Photo courtesy of Nancy Martinez Ramirez.

Moving Forward: Nancy Martinez Ramirez

Nancy Martinez Ramirez ('20 Political Science, Pre-Law) currently works at Quarles & Brady LLP, one of the largest law firms in Milwaukee. She is the practice management assistant reporting directly to the COO and CFO.

At UWM, Nancy was a member of numerous on-campus clubs, which led her to take on many leadership opportunities that have benefited her in her occupation.

She was an advocate for Lawton Scholarship recipients following her own acceptance of the award.

“I was in charge of the other students that had the scholarship and made sure they met the requisites every year so they could keep it,” she shares.

Her graciousness was not limited to the Lawton awardees, as she was also a member of the [University Legal Clinic](#) (ULC), where she became the executive director during her junior year.

The ULC allowed her to be hands-on within the legal system before she even graduated. “I’m only 22 and I’ve been a paralegal for four years already because of the clinic,” she says.

Nancy believes the ULC and the Honors College are the two focal components of her undergraduate education.

“I loved being involved and being busy so that’s all I did, and I guess that goes along with UWM’s many opportunities to get you involved,” she says.

Professors Benjamin Schneider, Peter Sands, and Jill Budny were her primary confidants. While Professors Schneider and Sands served as personal mentors, Professor Budny played an important role in her undergraduate education.

“My major is political science with an emphasis in law and economics, and I wanted to sync my Honors classes with my major,” she details.

“In Dr. Budny’s class, ‘Speech, Faith, Freedom: Limits of the First Amendment’,



Photo courtesy of Nancy Martinez Ramirez.

we read Supreme Court Cases on the First Amendment. The course was very connected to my actual degree.”

The extra opportunities in the Honors College also inspired Nancy. She was part of the first group to go on the Alternative Spring Break trip to New Orleans in 2018. She cites creating the neighborhood garden as one of her fondest moments.

“Because of Hurricane Katrina, there are areas that had become food deserts. We completely raked a piece of land, made sure it was clean, took weeds out, and then we planted a bunch of seeds,” she recalls. “The amount of gratitude that the person we helped had was amazing. That’s what did it for me.”

“In New Orleans, I saw how much they were still trying to improve [from Katrina], and it meant a lot to me that we were able to help, at least a little bit, and that the Honors College was going to continue doing that in the future.”

She feels that the opportunity was grounding, both for her and the entire group: “During that trip we all became a family. You don’t often get that through regular UWM, which is why I love the Honors College.”

Nancy’s adoration for the Honors College and UWM as a whole is evident, and she wants Honors College students to get involved: “There are so many opportunities, and you just need to go out there and look for them and take advantage of them.”



Sydney Steinbach
Anthropology

If you'd like to contribute the Alternative Spring Break trip, [DONATE NOW](#) or scan the QR code below.



Service Trip Return Inspires Action at Home

After a two-year hiatus, the [Honors College Alternative Spring Break Club \(HCASBC\)](#) is now excitedly planning for their return to New Orleans for the annual service trip, currently scheduled for March 19th-26th, 2022.

The group works with [HandsOn New Orleans](#), a non-profit that connects volunteers with local organizations to place groups wherever they are needed.

Students will spend five of their seven days helping communities in need, totaling a combined 880 hours of service among the participants. When students are not volunteering, they will have the opportunity to explore the 300-year-old city.

The culture of New Orleans is what drew first-year student Kaitline Wright (Biology) to sign up for the trip.

“New Orleans is so different than it is here; it is almost like visiting another country,” she says. “I’m hoping to get out of my comfort zone, especially because I have not been exposed to a lot of different cultures.”

Professors Benjamin Schneider and Peter Sands understand the sociocultural uniqueness of New Orleans, which is part of the reason they choose to return. But New Orleans provides more than just food, jazz, and eclectic street sightings.

The trip helps students who are coming from Milwaukee, one of the most segregated cities in the US, understand their own environments through a different lens.

Mariah Schaller ('20 Occupational Studies) went on the trips in 2018 and 2019. The juxtaposition of Milwaukee and New Orleans illuminated issues and struggles that Mariah had not seen previously. “I think I began to see Milwaukee more for what it is, with its room for growth, after these trips,” she remembers.

At its core, the trip expands students’ perspectives in ways that inspire them to bring their passion, empathy, and work ethic back to their own communities.

Club officer Brianna Schubert (Journalism) says that her trip to New Orleans continues to inspire her to be more involved in her own community.



2019 ASB team. Photo courtesy of Honors College.

“Being in New Orleans made me want to meet more people in Milwaukee because I realized that I had barely left the one area that I knew and frequented,” she says.

“Now, the club makes it a point to volunteer in Milwaukee in addition to the trip, and it’s been great to see the same energy applied in our local communities.”

In October, the club joined a neighborhood cleanup on Milwaukee’s north side. While this community is only miles from campus, it is mostly invisible to many.

The club’s goal is to contradict this conditioning. “We shouldn’t be afraid of poverty. We shouldn’t be afraid of struggle. People are just living their lives, and we shouldn’t be afraid to engage and listen and partner with the people with whom we share the world,” remarks Professor Schneider.

The students pay for nearly half of the trip with their own money and the rest comes from a combination of fund-raising, grants, and generous donors.

“Our airfare and housing costs are going up every year, but I don’t want the students to have to pay any more than they do already,” says Professor Schneider.

“Certain students will be priced out [if the trip costs more], which is why it is vitally important to attract more donors. Ideally, we would like to have half of the trip covered by recurring donations” he says. “We are not there yet, but we are trying.”

As this year’s ASB trip approaches, the students’ anticipation is growing as well. For some, the opportunity to engage with the diverse community in New Orleans will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience.



Rachel Oelsner
Geography

Looking Back: Dr. Gary Hoover

As Professor of Economics at Tulane University and the Executive Director of the Murphy Institute for Political Economy, Honors College graduate [Dr. Gary Hoover](#) ('93, Economics) has a full schedule helping students explore the world of economics as well as conducting his own research.

After UWM and the Honors College, Professor Hoover went on to complete graduate school and earned a Ph.D. from Washington University in St. Louis. Then, Professor Hoover taught at the University of Alabama and the University of Oklahoma before joining the faculty at Tulane University.

Professor Hoover's current research is focused on the effectiveness of government policies across income brackets and racial groups. After a policy is passed, it is his job to ask, "Who benefited from this new policy?"

The goal of his work is to identify the pros and cons of new and existing systems and procedures. "You just tell me a policy that the government is going to implement, and then I'm going to look at the winners and losers," he says.

Professor Hoover hopes that by analyzing how equitable government policies are, he can help to eliminate those that are ineffective and to inform the creation of more successful strategies in the future.

Although it has been 28 years since he graduated from UWM, Dr. Hoover still remembers the Honors College fondly.

"When I showed up at UWM, I didn't even know about the Honors College," he says. However, Professor Hoover fully embraced the opportunity after being recommended for the Honors College by his first English professor.

He remembers particularly appreciating the relationships that he formed with his professors and fellow students during



Photo courtesy of Tulane University.

his time at UWM. "That's the type of stuff that you only get in the Honors College," he says, recalling a friend he still keeps in contact with, even years after graduation.

Professor Hoover also remembers the Honors College courses themselves as being something unique.

"Being in the Honors College allowed me to dig into subjects that other students just were not being exposed to," he recalls.

Among other courses, he remembers particularly enjoying Honors Math. "You could study a subject and never really get that deep into it, but that's what the Honors College will allow you to do," he says.

Professor Hoover encourages students to "take all of the courses that you can," even beyond what is needed for graduation. "I still look back fondly on all of my UWM time," he says, "don't take this for granted."

Professor Hoover wants current UWM students to realize just how special the Honors College is.

"The thing about the Honors College is that it will prepare you to compete with anybody," he says. "Don't at all think 'Oh, I'm just some kid from Milwaukee, I can't go up against the Harvards and the Yales of this world.' Yeah, you can. Yeah, you can. I've seen it."



500 Words on Our New Writing Specialist



Alex Sitze
Film Studies/English



Photo courtesy of the Honors College.

A river is a fine sight to behold. Ask anyone who lives near the Milwaukee River. Even more admirable is what takes place over time below its scintillating surface: rolling rocks delivering sediment and minerals downriver as they settle into new deposits. Not unlike the stable stones stirred from their foundation, recent events during the last two years have displaced many from long-lasting positions.

As part of these changes, we thank Professor Lydia Equitz for her seventeen years of service to the Honors College, while we welcome Professor Lindsay Daigle as our newest Writing Specialist.

The Honors College webpage describe the Writing Specialist's role as helping "students plan, write, and revise essays, as well as prepare personal statements for graduate, law, and medical school applications."

Whether students are imagining wonderful worlds, griping over a hefty essay, or polishing a professional document, Professor Daigle is eager to lend her advice and support.

As many students know, writing can be a challenging process. Between rephrasing, overthinking, and second-guessing, it is no wonder why getting an essay assignment can elicit groans across the board.

"Maybe a student's goal is simply to do well on an assignment," shares Professor Daigle, "but my role in that process is to help them grow as writers alongside meeting an assignment's objectives."

The good news is that any of these challenges can be overcome with the right methods, tools, and habits. For instance, Professor Daigle suggests not dismissing the external tools available to us.

"Many of us communicate clearly through speech. Why not use our phone's speech-to-text to get some ideas down," she suggests.

But what about more common issues with the written word such as writer's



Photo courtesy of the Internet.

block? "There is a surplus of reading material out there to borrow from, authors sharing new words and phrasings that we can learn from," Professor Daigle says.

"As the Writing Specialist, I understand my role to be supportive – to offer new perspectives and guidance on students' various writing projects according to their individual goals," she says.

Professor Daigle also teaches courses in the Honors College. Her topics range from the history of melancholia to invisibility as it relates to culture and politics.

She finds her role as a professor very rewarding, because she can encourage students to question "our relationship to the human condition in depth."

In her approach to helping students, Professor Daigle focuses "on the individual, letting them set their own goals and then reflecting on the best methods for achieving them. So, I ask questions, I listen. With each student, I love learning about their writing pasts and presents."

Choosing to be open and individual-oriented is not a revolutionary tack; rather, Professor Daigle considers it more a realistic and effective method of coaching writing than other conventional methods, like striving to understand and meet rubric expectations.

As we look at the transitions we have had and have yet to face, at least we know that embracing our newest Honors College Writing Specialist will be a positive one.



Isabel Castro Translates Mission into Murals



Brianna Schubert
Journalism



Photo courtesy Brianna Schubert.



Tejiendo Raíces. Photo courtesy Carolina Romo.

Isabel Castro (Architecture, Art) is a senior in the Honors College and an award-winning community artist.

Over the summer she designed, painted, and installed a mural at the [16th Street Clinic](#) at 16th and National on Milwaukee's South Side, and through most of this process she had a broken foot.

The Clinic's new location focuses on mental health as well as physical health, and Isa incorporated these aspects into her design. She also integrated the Clinic's mission, which is being the "heart of the healthy community."

In her mural, she strove to display the intergenerational aspect of patients by painting young and old figures. She sought to emulate the care and affection of the clinic through a doctor providing care and others hugging. She illustrated actual community members in the mural, including employees at the clinic.

"I want to have some sort of humanistic factor where it shows some sense of display of affection, of embrace, and a display of love, a display of care," Isa says.

"I want human emotion to project out of the mural and how that is representing these experiences that happen within the space. I want to display what happens inside the building, outside."

Isa also incorporated her own artistic style into the mural, using bright colors and patterns inspired by Mexican culture and folk art, like Ojos de Dios, and she was intentional about what feelings the mural would evoke in those who encountered it.

"I tend to go with a lot of colors. I really love different color plays and also pattern work," Isa says.

"On the mural, I wanted there to be different tones of turquoise and blue because it gives a sense of peace and calmness. And that's what I wanted the person who was either walking into the clinic or walking or driving by to feel."

For the work on the mural, which consisted of 43 panels, some of which were



Mural at the Sixteenth Street Community Health Center on National Ave. Photo courtesy Adam Carr.

four by eight feet, Isa had to lean on others to paint and get it ready in time for its installation. Working on the mural and creating a new routine for the project around her broken foot was no easy task.

"Although that was a challenge, it was also a blessing, because I got to work with more people on the mural. I had a lot of different volunteers coming in, either volunteers that I knew through my own network or through the community and the 16th Street Clinic," she says.

Professor Benjamin Schneider has been a supporter of Isa and her art since they met in his Honors 200 seminar.

"I am so proud to know Isa. Her work is moving and powerful, and she is so smart about how she connects her artistic decisions to the community activism that is at their heart. She inspires," he shares.

Currently, Isa is working with the [John Michael Kohler Center](#) on workshops and brainstorm sessions with youth and seniors from Sheboygan to develop and create another mural that will be installed somewhere in Summer of 2022.

"It takes a whole village to encourage a person, nurture someone, and to uplift them. But it really does work because that support is what I have had every step of my journey," she says.

"I've had different mentors, different nonprofit organizations that have invested so much time and energy into me, into my life. So, now as an artist I give that back. I try to do that through my work."



Sophia Keay
Music Performance and
Music Education



Royals and Rebels. Photo courtesy of the
Honors College.

London's Calling: "Royals and Rebels" Returns

Professors Alan Singer and David Southward are excited to bring back “Royals and Rebels,” as the Honors College is restarting the biennial London Study Abroad Trip for Summer 2022.

The jam-packed schedule includes immersive readings that directly connect with what students observe on their travels to Stonehenge, Salisbury Cathedral, Windsor Castle, and many other essential sites throughout England.

“We’re on the road the whole time and we have about an hour of class each day to discuss the things we’ve seen,” says Professor Southward. “Students keep journals and that turns into a final essay assignment.”

Students come away from the trip with an expertise and understanding of England that they apply sometimes directly to what they are learning in other courses.

Professor Singer recalls students from the trip who “constantly bring up things in

class that they saw there as examples, and it’s always relevant to the course.”

“This is an opportunity to experience what you’re learning, on the spot where events happened,” says Professor Singer.

Students also comprehend how their own environments have been shaped by this otherwise unfamiliar setting. “London is the birthplace of the modern [Western] world. It’s like you’re going to the source of who you are and how you came to be that way,” relates Professor Singer.

While the educational components of the trip are abundant and enriching, Southward shares what he considers to be its true calling-card.

“There are so many things, but I think the friendships the students make will be long-lasting, if not life-long. There’s just something about being in this special environment, being on the road, in a foreign landscape...you just bond.”



Tiff Polzin
Psychology and Musical Theater



Photo courtesy of The Flood.

Flooded with New Members

One of the struggles many student organizations across campus have faced is how to recruit new members when so many students spent all or part of the eighteen months off-campus.

An environmental and social justice organization, The Flood seeks to create actionable goals for the betterment of the Milwaukee community and has worked to increase recruitment and community throughout the Honors College.

David Deshpande (Biological Sciences) leads the organization and explains that “the officers put in a lot of effort over the summer and early fall to recruit new people at the Honors College Commencement and Student Involvement Fair.”

Thankfully their hard work has paid off, as David proudly reports that “at our first meeting, we had a ton of new faces!”

Fueled by the influx of new members, The Flood has spent the semester planning and leading various activities including trash clean ups and discussions of current environmental issues in Milwaukee.

David finds their focus on taking action the most valuable part of leading The Flood. “We all help each other critically evaluate what is happening in the city around us and see things that we might not have previously noticed. We then work together to do something about it,” he says.

The Flood plans to continue its commitment by hosting composting events, bringing in guest speakers, and doing more trash clean ups.

The Flood meets every other week in Honors House and if you are lucky, you might even come on a day when there are homemade cookies.



Jazz Trio (and more) Wows Farmer's Market



Clara Broecker
Mechanical Engineering



Honors College Jazz Trio. Photo courtesy of Jo Fox.

On September 10th, the [Shorewood Farmer's Market](#) welcomed the Honors College in order to raise funds for the annual Alternative Spring Break trip.

The Honors College Jazz Trio, David Deshpande (Biological Sciences), Jack Koshin (Music Composition), and Cameron Spann anchored the event, playing multiple sets that consisted of standards and improvisations.

Professor Lindsay Daigle joined the group to share poems with connections to New Orleans, including Jehrico Brown's "[Meditations at the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park](#)." Vocalist James Norris, who also books acts for the Farmer's Market, sat in for a set as well.

Reading with a musical accompaniment was new for Professor Daigle and she found the experience "smooth and natural."

"The musicians are really incredible. We hadn't rehearsed or anything, but just listening to each other seemed to work just fine," she recalls.

Professor Benjamin Schneider attended the performance and promoted the Spring Break trip in between the musicians' sets.

"The day was a huge success," he says. "We thank the Shorewood Farmer's Market for inviting us to play and thanks too to the many people who stopped by to listen, say hi, and support the service trip. The energy of our local community inspires us to do more events like this."

The performance raised several hundred dollars for the Alternative Spring Break trip which began in 2018, when the Honors College first traveled to New Orleans for a service trip.

The trip has since become a yearly occurrence, with a group of around twenty Honors College students as well as two faculty members traveling to New Orleans in order to both volunteer and tour the city.

Since its establishment, the trip offers an exciting experience for numerous Honors College students to participate in meaningful service.

University Innovation Fellows Enables Change



Bissan Abubaker
Psychology



Photo courtesy of the UWM UIF.

Students are often said to be promises of change for the future. Some, however, wish to bring about that change right now.

The [University Innovation Fellows](#) (UIF) is a program that allows for student innovators on campus to become "agents of change" in their college communities.

Started by [Stanford Design School](#) in 2012, this widespread program is in over 270 schools and has trained over 2000 students. In 2014, [UIF at UWM](#) started its first cohort, and it has been growing ever since.

Manny Garmendez (Mechanical Engineering) is a member of the seventh UIF cohort at UWM, and he highly recommends participating.

"Being a UIF member means gathering ideas and input from the student body and finding ways to implement their recommendations in real life," he states.

Manny started with UIF in the summer of 2021 and has since introduced concepts he thinks will greatly benefit UWM's student body.

One of the ideas he is working on is for an interactive mural in the Student Union "to allow students to express themselves, offer solutions, or gain inspiration through art and writing."

Manny is partnering with Fellow Allyn Lottouzee (Conservation Science) to grow micro greens at UWM to increase awareness on sustainability, perhaps even starting an agriculture club in the process.

Ultimately, Manny would like to explore partnership opportunities between UWM Graduate programs and the Honors College, because it was an important aspect of his experience at UWM.

The UIF has immense potential, yet it needs more recognition and Manny understands that: "UIF is great for networking and resume-building, but don't expect any fame or recognition. [Right now] it is mainly behind-the-scenes work."

Regardless, Manny and the other members of UIF continue to push for change to become a driving force of impact at UWM.



Antiracism Summer Camp



Liberty Ansoorge
Biological Sciences



Photo courtesy of Jo Fox.

In August, the Honors College Antiracism Committee hosted a three-day Summer Leadership Camp for students to build connect with their classmates, while practicing equity and inclusivity.

Participants explored UWM's campus, prepared family recipes for a potluck, listened to speakers from across campus, and had a poetry workshop led by Professor Lindsay Daigle.

Professor Jill Budny and graduate student Mia Heredia, advisors of the antiracism initiative, made sure students were centered, enabling members of the Honors Equity Team to pilot the event.

Jo Fox (English) and other team members did most of the organizing and scheduling for the camp. When they weren't "coming up with ideas for the program, figuring out how to execute said ideas, and coming up with back-up plans," they were taking photos to commemorate the event.

Jo enjoyed getting close to their fellow Equity Team members and was glad to finally do an in-person event after meeting online during the previous semesters.

"When it finally reached August and we realized this thing we had been planning for

months was finally happening," Jo explains, "we were able to get to know one another, enjoy each other's company, and finally be in the Honors House with one another."

Jo feels that the camp "[showed] us what work still needs to be done to create a more inclusive campus."

"With a diverse student body, we will be able to understand more deeply how the Honors College perpetuates discrimination in academia, and how it can address those issues," they elaborate.

Ranjak Joshi (Biological Sciences) agrees that being in person has helped communication. "We were able to have many conversations about how everyone has been affected by racism with a diverse group of people that were advocating for the same issue," he explains.

"I would without a doubt attend the camp again," RJ shares. His favorite part was meeting other students, especially during the Story Stitch activity because "it connected all of us together."

The Equity Team will continue the Summer Leadership Camp biannually and has many more plans to engage current and incoming students

Convocation Welcomes Students to UWM



Sydney Steinbach
Anthropology



Photo courtesy of Jo Fox.

The 2021 Honors College Convocation invited incoming and second-year students to a long-awaited welcome. For most of UWM's community, face-to-face campus events have been absent for the last year and a half, making this year's Convocation special for everyone involved.

With the intention of building connections between students, Convocation includes a series of activities centered on breaking the ice that also emphasize themes of the Honors College, like cooperation and collaboration.

Although Convocation is traditionally exclusive to incoming first-year students, Advisors Lauren Fleck and Aaron Dierks included members of the Honors College who missed the opportunity to attend Convocation in 2020.

"Because second-year students didn't get a Convocation during fall of 2020," Fleck shares, "and many didn't live on campus, we didn't want them to lose out on the opportunity to acclimate themselves and begin to create some community as part of the Honors College."

The importance of Convocation cannot be understated, and it was an inspiring way to return to campus. Jack Koshkin (Music Composition) says that he left Convocation with new friends and a sense of belonging within the Honors College community.

"I could see how easy it would be to sign up for class, and then leave because you don't know anybody," says Jack, "but having Convocation, where I could at least make a few friends, makes the transition a lot easier."



Bissan Abubaker
Psychology

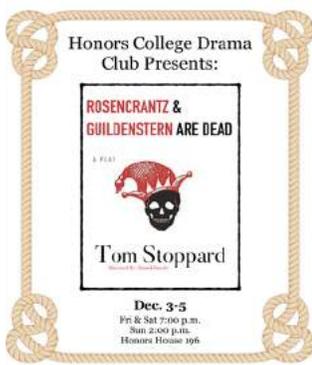


Image courtesy of Daniel Rusch.

Drama Club Presents...

There are plays and then there is *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, a fun, witty, absurdist, existentialist, tragicomic twist on a classic Shakespearean tale.

Directed by Daniel Rusch (Theatre), this production of the Honors College Drama Club aims to alleviate both staff and students of the stresses from this past semester as well as the miseries of the previous year.

After the seemingly endless quarantine that left everyone feeling desolate and depressed, Daniel believed that a light-hearted comedic show, which also happens to be his personal favorite, would be just the mood-booster people need.

Daniel likes how “the show pokes fun at the art of story-telling, as Rosencrantz (Jake Clements (Architecture, Film)) and Guildenstern (Nick Quaney (History)) become increasingly more self-aware throughout the play.”

“We’re performing right in the Honors House; we get to be on our stage every time we meet, which has been a huge bonus in terms of spacing and blocking,” Jake says. “It feels great to be able to do what we love once again.”

With the support of a team of students, especially co-director and stage manager Alena Ekornaas (Theatre), Daniel has worked tirelessly to put on the first performance of the UWM Honors College Drama Club since 2019.

The Drama Club is also planning on producing Adam Gwon’s *Ordinary Days*, the first Honors College musical. Although Daniel will not be directing the show, he still wants to be involved with its set design, another of his areas of expertise.

But for now, Daniel is excited to successfully complete directing *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*.

Break a leg, theater folks!

Cold Read Crew



Tiff Polzin
Psychology and Musical
Theater



Image courtesy of Faith Wrycha.

The Honors College Cold Read Crew is in the midst of hosting another successful semester of theater on Zoom. Each month, the student group reads a new play without prior knowledge of its contents.

This unique opportunity to take part in theater without any expectations of perfection has allowed many students to experience the joy of theater without the nerves that might traditionally accompany performing.

Alayna Perry’s (Theater) favorite thing about Cold Read is being able to play and do theater with zero inhibitions.

“I commit 100% and don’t care what anyone else thinks because I don’t have to. I’m in a safe and supportive environment. It’s some of the most fun I’ve ever had doing theater,” she says.

Faith Wrycha (Film) an officer in the Honors Drama Club, echoes this sentiment.

“I was in drama club in high school, and it’s nice to have a similar creative outlet in college,” she says.

Faith also emphasizes the uniqueness of the Cold Read Crew’s casual nature: “there is usually a twist at the end that sends us into a laughing fit, which wouldn’t be acceptable during a typical live play performance. The spontaneity and low stakes are what make cold reads so fun for me.”

The community fostered through Cold Read Crew keeps audience members and performers gathering each month.

During the Fall semester, the Cold Read Crew has read plays from various genres, including Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* and Stephen Brockelman’s *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, which won the Tony award for Best Play in 2013.

The group plans to conclude the semester with Catherine Trotter’s *Love at a Loss*.



Course Highlights



David Deshpande
Biological Sciences

“Dirty Realism and the Other America”

Literature often follows a clear arc: introduction, conflict, resolution. Real life, however, does not. Professor Benjamin Schneider’s class, “Dirty Realism,” focuses on the intricacies, struggles, and stories that human beings face.

“The subject matter is what people would describe as rough or sad,” Professor Schneider says. Even the writing and filmmaking is figuratively dirty, he explains. These narratives often “start somewhere in the middle and end before it’s over.”

Kevin Monahan (Computer Engineering) says that many characters commit “deplorable” acts. Yet, he says, “we’re exploring why people are doing these things, and that’s what makes it interesting.”

Kevin sees “Dirty Realism” as an empathy-building experience which has further opened his eyes to the complexities in the human condition.

“It’s not all good characters or bad characters,” he says. “There are many shades of grey in people’s lives.”

Lauren Wilcox (Social Work) also emphasized the applicability of the subject matter. “We’re learning in the classroom but also learning about the world around us,” she says.

Instead of reading sequentially, the class moves between several authors’ stories. As a result, Lauren says “we pick up pieces as we read, but they’re all cohesive,” and illustrate varying perspectives on similar issues.

Both students are grateful for the opportunity to discuss difficult subjects because, while challenging, these stories are “genuine” and speak to their lives.

“As hard as they are, I like to read these stories because in their open-endedness we see there is time in our lives for the next thing,” Professor Schneider says.

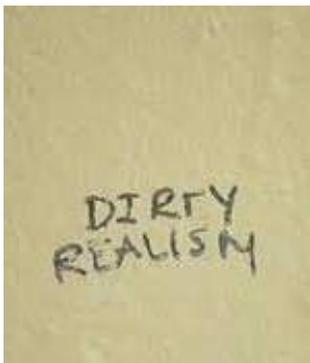


Photo courtesy of the Internet.

“Plagues”

Professor Charles Wimpee’s seminar “Plagues, Past and Present” could not be timelier, focusing on the history and science of plagues that have affected humanity, starting with the black plague, and concluding with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The class is “as much of a history course as it is a biology course” notes Professor Wimpee. While the class is listed as a natural science course, it also contains historical and cultural aspects of diseases, because “every disease has its own story,” he says.

Professor Wimpee is a molecular and microbiologist, with a special interest in bacteria, viruses, and history. He has offered this course before but thought it would be especially beneficial to teach a class pertaining to the ins and outs of disease now.

The class educates students on major plagues throughout history and Professor Wimpee then uses the historical context of these plagues to weave in information sur-

rounding the science and historical development of germ theory and vaccines.

Students also analyze how people reacted to mass diseases and vaccines in the past, and they find the same levels of apprehension and worry towards them as we do now.

Though this class focuses largely on the science of disease, Professor Wimpee’s goals for his students’ learning stretches past mere scientific understanding.

“I want to teach them what to trust and what to be skeptical of,” he says. “I want to give them an exquisite awareness of infectious diseases; I want them to be informed.”

Professor Wimpee has been teaching this class remotely since he retired. He is thrilled to be teaching for the Honors College once more, especially since the subject he is covering is so topical and holds such a personal interest to him.

“The Honors College was the best part about teaching at UWM. I’m so glad to be back at it again.”



Ashley Hale
Film Studies/English



Photo courtesy of the Internet.



Familiar Faces



Olivia Wilson
Criminal Justice

Brian Marks

As an instructor for the Honors College since 2016, Professor Brian Marks brings a unique sense of adventure into every classroom he enters.

After graduating from the University of Notre Dame with a degree in Business, Brian took a few years to find himself before receiving a graduate degree in English from North Carolina State University.

Because Brian has always been drawn to intellectual curiosity, he decided to try his hand at teaching after finishing school.

“I don’t know if I chose teaching as much as it chose me,” he explains. “The profession has given me a lot of self-worth, and I’ve been doing it for about twenty years now.”

Being a part of the Honors College feels like a great privilege for Brian. The community fostered within it has allowed him to grow in productive and positive ways.

“In the Honors College we don’t feel like we’re competing with each other. We’re trying to collaborate with one another and trying to pull the best out of each other,” Brian comments. “Everyone comes with interesting perspectives and life experiences, and we all want to be in that classroom.”

Brian’s most popular courses, “Secret Societies to Snapchat, Concealment, and the Modern Era” and “Narrative Prose: How to Make Your Stories Memorable” challenge students to rethink the way they view the world.

Outside of teaching, Brian finds joy in many aspects of life including soccer, skiing, and travel. “I also obsess about all things related to Iceland; I have two pictures I took of Iceland in my office,” he notes.

Brian encourages students to “chase the things you’re passionate about, doors open that you never knew were there.”



Photo courtesy of the Honors College.

Aaron Dierks

Honors College advisor Aaron Dierks is committed to helping students succeed. Aaron came to the Honors College after completing a B.S. in Communication Studies at Marquette University and a M.S. in Counseling and Student Personnel at Minnesota State University-Mankato.

He says that the small size of the Honors College within a larger university was part of the draw for him accepting a job at UWM. Although after grad school he “applied to probably over a dozen positions right away,” Aaron says that “this was just the one that felt right.”

As an advisor, Aaron tries to build personal connections with students, and he wants students to feel comfortable talking to him about challenges they are facing at school or in their personal lives.

“I want to be able to help get people to graduation,” he says, “but my goal, more often, is to end meetings with that person knowing they have somebody who they can come talk to.”

After months of online meetings with students, Aaron is excited to finally be able to conduct them in person this semester.

While he says that he is grateful that technology allowed him to continue seeing students remotely, Aaron also thinks that “when you’re in the same place, those conversations can be much richer.”

Aaron strives to ensure that students “feel a sense of welcome” during advising meetings, and his door is always open to anyone who needs scheduling advice or just wants to chat.

In addition to meeting with students, Aaron also runs the Honors College social media accounts and helps to plan the annual Convocation, another Honors College event that has returned in-person.

Outside of work, he and his wife have their hands full with three young children. He was the coach for his son’s tee-ball team this summer, and he says that during free time, “most of what we do is just hanging out as a family.”



Rachel Oelsner
Geography



Photo courtesy of the Honors College.



The Aggregate:

Bissan Abubaker
 Liberty Ansoorge
 Clara Broecker
 David Deshpande
 Sophia Keay
 Jo Fox
 Ashley Hale
 Rachel Oelsner
 Tiff Polzin
 Brianna Schubert
 Alex Sitze
 Sydney Steinbach
 Olivia Wilson

The Aggregate's Voice

Over the past year and a half, we have learned a lot about ourselves, each other, the world, and now, we're back together.

As we come back to our meetings, our events, and our classes at the Honors College, we have a new, deeper appreciation for being in community with one another and we are grateful that UWM students are 93% vaccinated, a feat that allowed our return to be possible.

The Aggregate is proud to see Honors College students in action after a year that mostly consisted of reflection and waiting, of understanding the world in different ways. Now that we're back in person, we're ready to go!

We see that understanding in our continued commitment to the principles of antiracism, and we acknowledge that to maintain that commitment, we must continue the hard, day-to-day work of change.

We note how the Honors Equity team, along with the Alternative Spring Break

Club and the Flood, facilitate intentional events, workshops, and volunteer opportunities that work toward creating a more conscious Honors College community.

These three organizations, for example, participated in a neighborhood cleanup in the 53206 zip code, hoping to partner with our neighbors while deepening our understanding of how systemic racism affects the daily lives of Milwaukee residents.

Our passion for engagement is clear in the high turnout for Honors College events, the increased participation in clubs, and the two trips planned next year, which would have been unimaginable six months ago.

Alternative Spring Break and our summer study abroad trip to London are sterling examples of the unique opportunities within the Honors College.

We thank everyone for persevering and for rediscovering the energy that makes the Honors College community such a thriving and exciting environment.



From left to right: Sophia Keay, Sydney Steinbach, Rachel Oelsner, David Deshpande, Tiff Polzin, Alex Sitze, Brianna Schubert, Ashley Hale. Not pictured: Bissan Abubaker, Liberty Ansoorge, Clara Broecker, Jo Fox, and Olivia Wilson.