



# The Aggregate

The UWM Honors College Newsletter

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## A Quest for Knowledge



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Mechanical Engineering



Sophia Keay  
Music Performance  
and Music Education

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At the heart of the Honors College is an ethos of intellectual curiosity and critical inquiry, a perfect match with [UWM's Research 1 \(R1\)](#) status.

As part of its holistic educational model, the Honors College encourages students to earn credits through completing a research project in addition to offering seminar-based courses.

The three paths for its students to complete research include Senior Honors Thesis, Senior Honors Project, and Research in Honors. Each is unique in its ability to serve a student's academic journey.

The thesis option involves the writing of an extensive and argumentative research essay. The project option supports a creative research experience, which can range from performances to technical projects. The research option requires students to assist faculty with research as well as to design their own project on which to work.

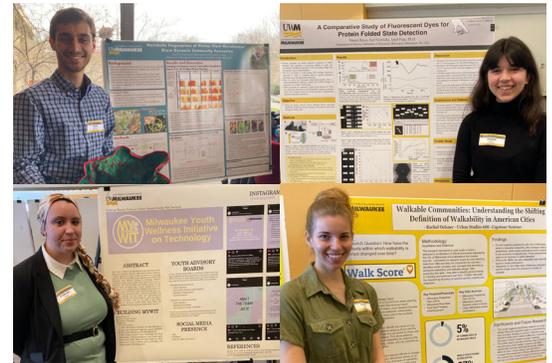
The Honors College curriculum makes it easy to link the Senior Project with all academic programs on campus, including PSOA, Engineering, and Architecture whose programs require capstone projects.

The Honors College supports all student-based research projects, and this freedom enables students to work in a wide range of academic disciplines.

Honors College Director Peter Sands says that "originality is key, driven when students need to answer a question rather than study a particular topic."

Likewise, Professor Southward invites students with just "a glimmer of an idea" for a Senior Thesis to talk with him, even before their senior year.

Jessica Van Dyck (Architecture) began doing research in the summer of 2020 with School of Architecture & Urban Planning



The Undergraduate Research Symposium. Images courtesy of Professor Schneider.

Assistant Professor Dr. Trudy Watt. Because Jessica enjoyed the experience, she felt the urge to continue doing research.

The Research in Honors program allowed Jessica to continue to work with Professor Watt and to "take more ownership" over her research. Specifically, Jessica says, it focused on her writing an essay that was published in a scholarly journal.

Jessica's research is a part of the Living Well Initiative, which aims to explore what it means to have a good life. She focuses on the education of architecture and whether it prepares students to serve the wellbeing of others.

Laurence Blyrne (International Studies and Political Science) decided to challenge himself by taking on the senior thesis, which for him focuses on the impact Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan had on the first three presidents of the 21st century and the creation and rolling back of the welfare state.

"I had to lead a discussion on FDR in Professor Jill Budny's, 'Left, Right, and Center: Bridging Divide in Politics,'" Laurence explains, and he cites that as the inspiration for the thesis topic.

Honors College courses like Professor Budny's have helped Laurence prepare for

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## Research in Honors (continued)

this process and the thesis has given him the opportunity to reflect upon his experience. “I feel like I’m ending college the right way,” Laurence says.

Zoë Brown’s (English) Senior Honors Thesis focuses on leisure and social class in the works of Jane Austen and Sally Rooney

After deciding to pursue the thesis option, she asked Honors College Professor Benjamin Schneider to be her advisor.

“Honors College classes have always been my favorite, and I thought it would be a nice way to round out my degree and provide a challenge,” she says.

Zoë credits the Honors College for allowing her the room to take on such a venture and she appreciates the “opportunity to go in-depth into topics and connect more deeply with professors.”

Anna Emerson’s (Digital Studio Practice) Senior Project is not her first encounter with research. Her major involves research work on immersive environments,

which she began before her first year as part of the [UR@UWM](#) Summer Research Program in 2018.

However, Anna finds the Senior Project distinctive from her other lab-based research. “I don’t think of this project so much as research in the traditional sense, because it’s like lived research,” she shares.

Her project, “Notes on Habitat: Art and Writings from Milwaukee’s Built Environment,” focuses on immersive environments and virtual reality.

“If it wasn’t for the Honors College, I would not have been able to spend a year on the same project which is amazing because it’s been nice to take my time and think bigger than one class.”

“Take advantage of the spaciousness that research affords,” Anna concludes. “This is a great opportunity to do something that you’re interested in. You can be strategic about it for your post-grad plans, but it can also just be for its own sake.”

## Director’s Note

I sometimes say that college is not for getting a job. Well, what’s it for, then?

In addition to socialization and developing lifelong friendships and networks, the university’s heart is in the curiosity, inquiry, application, the looking, wondering, and building questions, the investigating the world, telling others about those investigations, and the listening to our inquiring peers that we call research.

We are at our best as a higher education institution not when we relay the underlying information and understanding of our disciplines, and not when we build and deliver degrees, but when we convey to our students the importance of research and think deeply about what we have learned.

This issue of *The Aggregate* showcases the many forms of research in the Honors College. I’ve watched many of these projects from their beginnings and seen others through the proposals students make for thesis or project credits.

Each year, one of the great joys of my academic life is to meet with students and hear their ideas, listen to them discuss the professors they are working with, the questions they want to pursue, the ways they imagine those questions shaping their interests and post-college plans. Kudos to all our student researchers!

Also in this issue is a report on the successful return of the Alternative Spring Break trip to New Orleans, an idea imagined into being by Dr. Benjamin Schneider. I’m grateful to participate in this trip and continue to be amazed and heartened by the selflessness and hard work every student on the trip demonstrates.

*The Aggregate* kept publishing during the long semesters of COVID, but this issue feels like another step toward a new normal. Please join me in reading and celebrating the students featured here and be sure to mention the stories when you see the writers and the subjects in Honors House.



Dr. Peter Sands  
Honors College Director



Alex Sitze  
Film Studies and English

## Splashes of Visibility: The Equity Team at Work

As many organizations around UWM's campus re-coalesce this spring, student involvement and interest in extra-curricular opportunities are once again increasing.

In the Honors College, the Equity Team is back in full swing, reaffirming their commitment to radical inclusivity and anti-racism efforts.

Any student in the Honors College is welcome to join, and all may attend the bi-weekly [Antiracism Event Series](#) (AES) to learn other ways to be actively involved.

One of the goals of the Equity Team is to create an accommodating space in the Honors College for students who identify as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color (BIPOC).

Among a white majority population, BIPOC students with different cultural backgrounds are suppressed; in response, the Equity Team aims to foreground cultural histories and bring them into the racial justice conversations on campus.

For Ronan Carpenter (French and Psychology), Team a member who identifies as trans, autistic, disabled, and queer, tackling systemic discrimination individually can feel overwhelming.

"As part of a larger effort like the Equity Team," Ronan says, "things just feel more achievable, and we're all there to lift each other up when we feel discouraged."

The Equity Team works as one, with everyone's hands in the mix, sharing various responsibilities. Roles are distributed based on individuals' skills and time-based needs.

"When one person cannot take on a task, other members will volunteer and offer to step in," Ronan says.

There is also space to highlight Team talents: "if one of us is good with visual design and another with writing, we work collaboratively, so that the artsy person can focus on the visual presentation and the writer can focus on the wording."



Members of the Equity Team. Photo courtesy of Jo Fox.

The Equity Team often partners with larger efforts in the Honors College to dismantle systemic racism, including the Antiracism Event Series.

While the Equity Team is united in the same vision, its tack is a little less overt; they work at a more micro level.

Juan Garcia (Biochemistry) describes how being part of the group has influenced how he sees himself. "The Equity Team's impact on me has been one of acceptance," he says, "as I can see a community I am proud to belong in; it is important for me to notice its own internal issues and attempt to improve for the good of the students."

"The Honors College feels the changes the Equity Team has made, and it motivates not just students, but faculty and staff to reflect on their actions."

The Equity Team also partners with the Milwaukee Public School system, including Pulaski, Riverside, and Carmen High Schools, as well as the Milwaukee High School of the Arts, to build bridges in education and hopefully get high schoolers involved in more antiracism activities.

Incoming high school seniors are eligible for the summer camp lead by the Equity Team, where first-generation and BIPOC students learn about campus resources and make peer connections to feel prepared and welcome in the Honors College.

If you share a deference for difference, come support the Honors Equity Team!



## Foreign Correspondence



Maia Diedrich  
Global Sustainability



Photo courtesy of Maia Diedrich.



Photo courtesy of Maia Diedrich.

“Studying abroad has changed my life.” We have all heard this platitude from a study abroad student. We may all be tired of the cliché, but it would be untrue to claim that my experience has been any different.

I write this as I sit in my favorite café in Lisbon, one I frequent so often the owner begins preparing my order as I walk through the door.

I remember that when I first came into the café during the week that I arrived, I had no idea where this journey would take me. The unknown was both thrilling and dreadfully uncomfortable.

I had been saving money for study abroad since I started my first job and had been dreaming of it for years before that. Now that I was here, would it be everything that I expected?

I consider myself to be quite introspective, so I knew before I boarded the plane to Portugal what my biggest struggle would be. Not the language barrier, culture shock, or homesickness, for me, the challenge would be the social scene.

I have never found socializing to be easy and have found making friends to be even more difficult. And just because I was in a new place didn’t mean my previous struggles would disappear.

Classes at Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE) were the most intimidating at first. It is an international school, so there were students from all over the world.

However, most of them knew one another already through Erasmus, the European student exchange program. It was intimidating having to break into these pre-established groups.

To me, talking with the groups was more daunting an idea than flying across the world to a foreign country. But I decided to throw myself in headfirst, and I’m so glad that I did.



Photo courtesy of Maia Diedrich.

In class, I would intentionally sit next to people to make small talk. Some were disinterested but others were very responsive. I ended up meeting so many diverse and interesting people who I now hope will be lifelong friends.

My closest friends and I have begun to travel together throughout Portugal and the rest of Europe. We have snowboarded in the Swiss Alps, bar-hopped in Barcelona, and cruised down the Danube River.

I often think to myself that if I hadn’t had the courage to extend myself and get out of my comfort zone, I wouldn’t be thriving like I am.

Recently, I have begun to reach out beyond the students in my classes. About a month ago, in the same café where I am sitting now, I met a lovely couple by doing just that.

We bonded over our shared interest in education, and they told me how they met teaching English in Hanoi, Vietnam. I was so inspired by our conversation that I decided that my next step after graduating this spring will be to teach in Hanoi.

So yes, it is cliché to say that studying abroad changed my life, but it is true. It is how I fulfilled the dream I had wanted most growing up, how I’ve pushed myself in the present to become more courageous, and how I’ve found clarity in my future steps as I move on from UWM.



## Service Trip Gives Students Tools for Change



Liberty Ansoorge  
Biological Sciences

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



In March of 2022, the [Alternative Spring Break](#) team returned to New Orleans for the first time since 2019.

Working with [HandsOn New Orleans](#) again, the students completed nearly 700 service hours, “made an impact valued at more than \$23,000 and spearhead a new project with us,” shares HandsOn Executive Director Chris Cameron.

Honors College Professor Benjamin Schneider and Honors College Director Peter Sands lead the 20-student group as they explore the city, learn some of its history, and get their hands dirty on projects that impact the team as much as the community.

“The beauty of the trip is watching the students get inspired to do this kind of work at home,” says Professor Schneider. “We have fun and do some good in New Orleans, but the lasting point is to learn how easy it is to get out into our own communities and contribute.”

Many students echo Professor Schneider’s sentiments, including Aubrie Gorski (Psychology), who shares that after the trip she “returned to Milwaukee feeling motivated, educated, and more aware of how to make a local impact.”

Zach Baynham (Finance) feels similarly: “Sometimes when living everyday life, you forget there are people and communities facing their own challenges,” he says.

“The trip opened me up to the struggles of other folks, but also the strong sense of community and joy found there.”

The students completed service projects that included constructing an outdoor performance space, building and painting picnic tables, installing a fence, and bundling recycled Christmas trees.

Rachel Oelsner (Urban Studies, Geography) is inspired by the work in which they participated.

“The reason that the ASB trip is so impactful,” she says, “is not just the work that was accomplished during Spring Break week itself, but the tools that we were given which will allow us to create change in Milwaukee.”



Photo courtesy of Honors College.

The trip isn’t all service, however as the group took several tours to enrich their understanding of New Orleans, including at [Studio BE](#) where the students learned about the role of community art in social justice.

The social aspect of the trip is important too. After the COVID isolation, the students felt the nervousness of traveling with peers who they might not have met before.

However, Marshall Hoff (Philosophy) enjoyed the camaraderie that the trip engenders. “A group of twenty strangers turned out to be some of the most wonderful, supportive, kind people I’ve met,” he says.

“This trip was so much more than a service trip; it was an unforgettable experience that I’ll be forever grateful for having had the opportunity to be a part of.”

The trip was a huge success, says Professor Schneider and he looks forward to returning in 2023.

“I am so proud to be part of this experience. The students are so impressive; they are kind and supportive, flexible in their attitudes, and curious learners,” he relates.

Professor Schneider also appreciates the financial investment the students make to participate, as well as the donors who support the trip.

“The trip isn’t cheap for students, but we believe there is exponential value in it and our significant and generous donor support makes the trip accessible,” he says.

“Without that support the trip would be out of reach for many students. We are grateful for our donors, and we are confident that we’re making them proud.”



Clara Broecker  
Mechanical Engineering

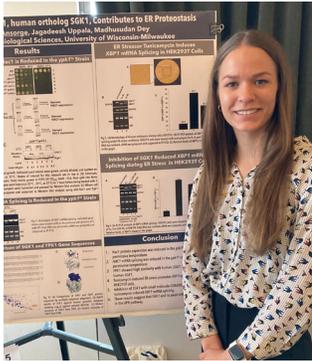


Photo courtesy of Professor Schneider.

## Research Snapshots

### Liberty Ansoorge

For Liberty Ansoorge (Biological Sciences), her time doing lab research at UWM has been a “huge learning experience.”

She began doing research through the [Support for Undergraduate Research Fellows](#) (SURF) program. They awarded Liberty a grant and a lab position with UWM Professor of Aquatic Biogeochemistry Dr. Laodong Guo in the School of Freshwater Sciences. The project focused on the water in the Veteran’s Park Lagoon.

Currently, she does research in a different area of study in the lab of her Biology advisor and Associate Professor in the Biological Sciences Dr. Madhusudan Dey.

“I’m doing research on ovarian cancer and the pathways of how the disease shows up in peoples’ bodies,” Liberty explains.

She participates in a lab that works with live ovarian cancer cells obtained through Professor Dey’s partnership with the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Her team experiments on the cells with the intent of learning how they react to outside stressors to gain a better understanding of the behavior of the disease.

Liberty says that through this experience, she has gained a “sense of independence and confidence,” while learning to adjust to a professional lab setting.

“It feels good to walk into the lab, have a plan, and know how what I’m doing fits in to that plan,” she explains.

Liberty also says that assisting with Professor Dey has been an invaluable experience. Working hands-on alongside an expert in her field provides learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

“The opportunities I’ve been given in the lab are something that I never thought I would get to experience as an undergraduate. I knew UWM had research opportunities, but I didn’t know that I’d be doing it like this,” Liberty concludes.



Sydney Steinbach  
Anthropology



Photo courtesy of Avery DeBoer.

### Avery DeBoer

Although most people know what it means to be monogamous, stigma casts a large shadow, obscuring the details of non-monogamy.

Knowing this, Avery DeBoer (Human Resources Management, Women and Gender Studies) focused her research project on promoting non-monogamy into academic discourse.

After taking Honors College Professor Jacqueline Stuhmiller’s seminar, “The Anatomy of Love,” Avery felt like there was more for her to unpack.

Avery combined the inspiration she found in the course with her own interests in polyamory to focus on informing people about non-monogamy.

Before developing the educational resource, Avery created a survey to gauge people’s thoughts, feelings, and assumptions about non-monogamy. She distributed the survey across campus and more than nearly 100 people completed it, including students and faculty.

“I spent a good amount of time trying to connect different demographics to how they responded to the questions about non-monogamy,” Avery explains. The next step was to create an effective vehicle to educate.

Under the guidance of Professor Stuhmiller, Avery produced a series of TikTok videos featuring Avery as Mistress Polly, who shares the screen with rolling text that unpacks various stigmas concerning polyamory and explains relevant terms.

To date, the Mistress Polly account has gained many followers on TikTok and each video has accumulated hundreds of views. The user comments show that people are interested and excited about the lessons.

“It feels like I have come so far in my degree that all of my skills and the things that I learned allowed me to create something that made me feel passionate and fulfilled,” she shares.

Avery feels amazing to have the support of the Honors College in work that satisfies both academic and personal interests.



## Research Snapshots

### David Deshpande



Rachel Oelsner  
Geography and  
Urban Studies



Photo courtesy of David Deshpande.

Beginning in the summer of 2021, David Deshpande (Biological Sciences) has had the opportunity to work with UWM Professor of Biological Sciences Dr. Erica Young on a project researching the metabolism of carnivorous plants.

“The course of the experiment was about a month,” David says. “During that month, we went out to the Cedarburg bog five different times.”

After collecting samples from pitcher plants at the bog, David and Professor Young analyzed their data.

David says that they were hoping to answer a difficult question: “How does the metabolic capacity - the ability of the organism to degrade different substrates - change over time?”

“Unlike humans who produce their own digestive enzymes to break down their food,” he says, “the plants have a microbiome in the water of the pitcher that digests the food, and then it absorbs those nutrients from the water.”

David has particularly enjoyed the interdisciplinary nature of his research. From botany and ecology to biochemistry, he has had to draw on his knowledge from a variety of fields.

“It’s been cool to apply the things that I’ve learned in all those individual classes into one project - all of the lab techniques, all of the textbook knowledge - into a practical setting,” David says.

David is attending the Pritzker School of Medicine at the University of Chicago in the fall, and he is grateful for the skills he has been able to develop at UWM.

He has noticed that while doing research that “there’s a lot more freedom and a lot more responsibility” than in a typical classroom setting.

David’s research concluded during the spring semester, and he presented his findings at the Undergraduate Research Symposium, the Biological Sciences Research Symposium, and the Honors Senior Projects Colloquium.



Tiff Polzin  
Psychology and  
Musical Theater



Photo courtesy of Alexis Madson.

### Alexis Madson

When she came to UWM, Alexis Madson (Communication) had no idea that undergraduate research was even an option.

“When I thought of research,” she says, “I thought of graduate school and professors who want to be tenured.”

Soon after, however, she began her research journey by proposing a project under the guidance of UWM Professor of Communication Dr. Sarah Riforgiate, who initially approached Alexis because of her strong writing.

Professor Riforgiate suggested that Alexis consider Communication topics she was passionate about, and she settled on barriers to mental health and how students overcome them.

Alexis uses communication privacy management theory as her theoretical framework to answer the questions posed through her research.

Alexis recently presented her research concerning mental health barriers for students at the Central States Communication Association’s President’s Undergraduate Honors Research Conference.

Her paper, “Help Seeking Behaviors Among Students: Barriers that Prevent Undergraduates from Getting Mental Health Support,” was accepted and recognized as one of the top five papers submitted to the conference.

Alexis explains the other rewards of doing research. “It is humbling to hear about other people’s mental health struggles,” she says, “because everyone is different; it is rewarding to be able to listen to them.”

Alexis’ research earned her an Honors College degree with distinction in December, and she was recently accepted into a Master’s Degree program for Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



## Research Snapshots

### Estela Rangel



Olivia Wilson  
Criminal Justice



Photo courtesy of Estela Rangel.

Estela Rangel (Occupational Science and Technology) has dedicated most of her college experience to researching student knowledge and attitudes toward health disparities and medical racism, and she is set to finish her research this semester.

“The goal of my research is to see to what extent healthcare students are able to meet the needs of the diverse populations they will be serving,” Estela explains. “These are things that are not talked about as often as they should be.”

Her research began in 2018 as a project about infant mortality rates in Wisconsin.

This topic was important to Estela because “the welfare of mothers and children is a significant predictor of a country’s development. By most estimates, the U.S. has the worst maternal and infant mortality rates of all developing countries.”

Estela narrowed her focus to assessing how health disparities are approached in medical curricula and to what extent students are prepared to interact with and treat marginalized communities.

Estela sent out surveys to students in client diversity courses to see if they were familiar with the terms related to diverse populations and where they were at in understanding health disparities.

“Being a first-generation college student, I had never heard of the term healthcare disparities,” she says.

“I never realized that my family and I are textbook examples taught in Client Diversity courses to show how impactful the disparities can be for marginalized communities.”

Though the research process has been challenging and rewarding, Estela is excited to see her research come to a close and she encourages other students to pursue research projects.

“I have learned so much from both a career and personal standpoint about the healthcare system, and it’s only the beginning. I never thought I would be someone who does research at this level,” she says.

“Try it out because you never know what may happen.”



Alex Sitze  
Film Studies and English



Photo courtesy of the Honors College.

### Callie Shaw

Callie Shaw (Psychology, Criminal Justice) began her research as a first-year student at UWM, working alongside multiple department advisors on her topic, “PTSD & Attention Bias to Threat as Moderated by Neighborhood Disadvantage.”

Completing the Honors College research option during her final year, Callie says, has dramatically extended the scope of her project, providing the “flexibility to explore the issues that have arisen that are more engaging to me.”

As the project has progressed, Callie sees the relationship between research and community health more clearly.

“So far,” she says, “the research indicates a correlation between disadvantaged neighborhood areas in Milwaukee and higher risk of PTSD for those populations.”

Callie’s research is helping to discover how promising results in intervention therapies can support programs that consult Callie’s and related research to establish aid

for those with PTSD in Milwaukee’s disadvantaged areas.

“The data we collect is helpful to impacted communities,” she says. “It has far-reaching implications on public health and on criminal justice strategies.”

Callie’s research advisors include Professor Christine Larson, Director of Clinical Training in the Psychology Department, and leader of the [Affective Neuroscience Lab](#), and Professor Han Joo Lee, Director of Graduate Studies in Psychology, who runs the [Anxiety Disorders Lab](#).

Both Professors have been indispensable in supervising and guiding Callie during the research process, directing her to necessary resources and into important channels within her fields, and helping her to decide what comes next.

“I love the idea of continuing my research into grad school,” she says. “There is so much ground to cover and the conclusions keep leading to more questions.”



Tiff Polzin  
Psychology and  
Musical Theater

## Summer Research Stimulates Student Success

[UR@UWM](#) began in 2008 when Dr. Nigel Rothfels, Director of [Office of Undergraduate Research](#) (OUR) and Professor of History at UWM, proposed the idea for a summer program for incoming students.

Nearly fifteen years on, the program continues to attract many Honors College students who start their college careers in the UR@UWM summer program.

Morgan Klug (Psychology) came to college thinking that research was all about lab coats and experiments, but quickly learned that it is much more.

“Thanks to OUR and UR@UWM, I see research now as more than one thing,” she says. “The program gave me the opportunity to meet students and faculty who are passionate about their topics and that inspired me.”

Similarly, Professor Rothfels believes in the importance of OUR and UR@UWM in uniting students with research faculty.

“Together, the Honors College and the UR@UWM Summer Research program offers high-achieving incoming students a powerful combination of small, seminar-style and discussion based-courses along with access to top-tier research experiences,” Professor Rothfels says. “For many, it can be a winning combination that helps students achieve and surpass their academic goals.”

Honors College Director Peter Sands appreciates the Honors College relationship with OUR and looks forward to meeting each summer’s cohort of students.

“We’ve seen students doing undergraduate summer research form lasting relationships with professors,” he shares.

“Each summer, the majority of the students in the UR@UWM program are part of the Honors College, and we often recruit the others. They are all well-prepared to do significant undergraduate research in Honors or as part of their senior requirements across UWM.”

OUR Deputy Director Kyla Esguerra also supports the strong connection between UR@UWM program and the Honors College.



Photo courtesy of Office of Undergraduate Research.

“If you picture a Venn Diagram, I see our top tier research status as one of the circles and the Honors College as another,” she says. Where those circles overlap drives the UR@UWM program.

“I enjoy combining a number of high-impact practices that are shown to be helpful in higher education,” Kyla explains. “I want students to be able to see themselves as researchers, scholars, and collaborators and value their own abilities to contribute.”

Bescent Ebeid (Architecture) participated in the program in the summer of 2018 and found the program’s impact to be long-lasting.

“UR@UWM impacted my college career essentially,” she shares, “by pushing it forward and helping narrow down my interests within architecture.”

Kevin Monahan (Computer Engineering) also sees how the linkages between UR@UWM and the Honors College consciously support students.

“The UR@UWM and the Honors College are similar in that they encourage their participants to consider in-depth subjects thus gaining a greater respect and understanding for the material,” he says.

“In many ways the UR@UWM prepares first-year students for the demands and expectations of the Honors College.”

The UR@UWM is excited about the direction the program is headed and its greater focus on student diversity.

“I am feeling optimistic about the future,” Kyla says, “and excited about seeing a more diverse pool of applicants coming in this summer.”



Rachel Oelsner  
Geography and  
Urban Studies

## Starting Out: Fridarose Hamad

Fridarose Hamad (Political Science, English) is determined to get the most out of her college experience. Although she is just finishing her second semester, she has already found her place on campus and within the Honors College.

Her interest in research was a major influence in her decision to attend UWM. “During the summer before my first semester, I participated in the [UR@UWM](#) program doing research in the Sociology Department,” Frida says.

The program is designed to give incoming students a chance to practice critical research skills, such as writing abstracts and reading academic articles, and an opportunity to connect with each other.

Frida enjoyed her summer experience so much that she continued working for UWM’s Sociology Department during the school year.

Her current research initiative is “creating a youth advisory board to get teen input on social media mental health resources.”

Frida explains that there was no doubt in her mind that she wanted to be a part of the Honors College, and her experiences in Honors have so far been positive. “Right now, I am taking ‘Poetry and Empathy’ with Honors College Professor David Southward,” she says.

She appreciates the type of learning that the class provides and describes how students are encouraged to do more than just analyze poetry. Rather, they are asked how they feel about the poems.

“Nobody ever asks you those questions,” she says. “I just think that’s cool about the Honors College.”

Frida describes the Honors College courses as being “like a microcosm of larger university classes,” and she enjoys the in-depth approach that they offer.

“In my political theory class, I’m covering a bunch of theory. If I just focus on



Photo courtesy of Fridarose Hamad.

19th century theory, then that’s a different story,” she says, reflecting on the depth of the content covered in Honors College Professor Alan Singer’s “19th Century European Social and Political Thought.”

Aside from her involvement in undergraduate research and her busy academic schedule, Frida is also involved in two on-campus organizations: the Muslim Student Association and Students for Justice in Palestine.

“UWM has so many opportunities that it’s hard to find ones that you don’t want to be a part of,” she says.

Although she is already a very accomplished student, Frida is looking forward to the rest of her time in Honors and at UWM. She is particularly excited about trying out some natural science courses.

“I haven’t taken any science classes through the Honors College, so I’m excited to see what that looks like,” she says.

“I also plan on studying abroad. I don’t quite know where, but I know I want that experience.”

Frida’s Honors College experience has reflected her enthusiasm for engagement with her peers. She encourages her classmates to “constantly put yourself out there and try new things.”

For students who are considering joining the Honors College, she also has some advice. “At least give it a shot,” she says. “You might love it. I love it.”



## Open Mic Night Lets the Good Times Roll



Liberty Ansoerge  
Biological Sciences

After two years of patiently waiting, the annual Alternative Spring Break Open Mic Night returned as an in-person event at the Honors College. Ready to enjoy the festivities, students, faculty, and others trickled into room 196 on March 1st, the night of Mardi Gras.

Now in its fifth year, the event usually supports the [ASB trip to New Orleans](#), but because of generous support from community donors, Open Mic Night has become more of an opportunity for students and faculty members to gather in celebration.

Honors College Professor Lindsay Daigle was excited to return to an in-person event after the fully online version last year.

“While the ‘21 Open Mic was extremely fun and well-produced,” she says, “there’s nothing like filling the room with collaborative music and applause.”

The applause was immediate after Professor Daigle read some of her own poetic works which she enjoys being able to share with a new audience.

“Most Honors community members only know me as a teacher of writing and less as a writer,” she explains. “My students are so generous and vulnerable with one another in their work; this event is an opportunity for me to do the same.”

She has participated in previous years’ Open Mic Nights and claims it’s one of her favorite annual events.

“I’m energized by the creativity shared and the support and love exchanged by everyone in attendance,” she explains. “It’s a communal space for everyone to be who they are in that exact moment.”

Ronan Carpenter (French, Psychology) feels similarly about his experience reciting his poetry. At first, Ronan said he felt “nervous to perform, but it was a lot less scary once [he] was actually up there, and the audience was so welcoming.”

“It reminded me of all the reasons I do like to perform,” Ronan remembers, “to have other human beings give me that kind of positive feedback is a major self-esteem booster.”



The Honors College Open Mic House Band. Photo courtesy Jo Fox.

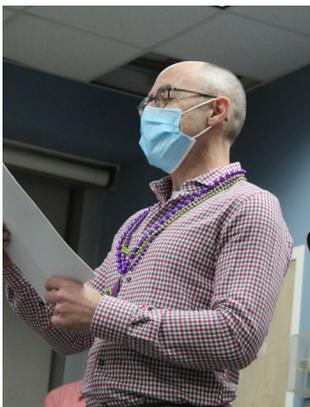
During the event, the support and encouragement could be felt in the air as performers received praise and standing ovations. Ashley Hale (Film Studies, English), lead singer of the Open Mic Night house band and member of the ‘22 ASB trip to New Orleans “felt a great sense of community throughout the whole night.”

“It was so great to see all these people and friends I met through the Honors College come out to support everyone performing,” she adds. Just a few weeks later, Ashley headed to the airport to travel to New Orleans with nineteen other students for a week of community service.

COVID inspired Ashley to seek out opportunities like ASB. “Growing up, I never had a strong itch to travel,” she says, “but after spending my first college year cooped up at home as a virtual student, I developed a desire to get out and see as much of the world as I could.”

Honors College Professor Benjamin Schneider, who accompanies the students on the trip, acknowledges the importance of Open Mic Night. It not only acts as an opportunity “to see how much hidden talent there is in the Honors College,” he says, but also as a chance for students, faculty, and friends to share an “experience of being together with music and laughter.”

The Open Mic Night is a display of our talented individuals, which we’re not short of in the Honors College, and the wonderful community we have created. We look forward to next year.



Professor David Southward. Photo courtesy Jo Fox.



The Crowd. Photo courtesy Jo Fox.



Sophia Keay. Photo courtesy Jo Fox.



Olivia Wilson  
Criminal Justice

## Moving Forward: Isaac Repinski

Multi-instrumentalist Isaac Repinski ('20 Biomedical Engineering) is currently pursuing his life-long dream to be a full-time musician.

At present, he performs with the band [Moonglow](#), teaches music at the Academy of Performing Arts and Guitar Center, and gives freelance lessons in his spare time.

Though he graduated with a degree in Engineering, Isaac realized the importance of pursuing a career about which he was passionate.

“Right after I graduated, I reevaluated what I wanted to do and music is what I settled on,” Isaac explains, “Performing and teaching music is my long-term goal.”

Music has always been a central part of Isaac’s life. During his time in the Honors College, Isaac was well known by his peers for his musical talent.

He helped organize various events in the Honors College and performed with his band at different fundraisers.

He even went on the Alternative Spring Break Trip to New Orleans and realizes now how impactful it was.

“Being able to have that opportunity got me thinking about music differently, specifically about jazz,” he relates. “It changed my music trajectory and now jazz is my primary focus.”

Isaac feels that being a part of the Honors College changed his whole college experience. “The Honors College is what got me through college. It gave me the break I needed from my Engineering classes to make it through to graduation,” he says.

“From the people in my Honors College classes to the content we learned about in those classes and how to approach that content, I had something to look forward to every week.”

While he never took an Honors College course he didn’t enjoy, the one that sticks



Photo courtesy of Isaac Repinski.

out to him was his very first, now retired Honors College Professor Lydia Equitz’s “Is God Dead?”

In the midst of taking his other math and physics-based classes, this course offered ideas Isaac didn’t get to explore in Engineering, and it gave him the practice and the skills to improve his writing.

“Being part of the Honors College was an opportunity to be creative. Interacting with people from different majors and backgrounds offered unique perspectives I didn’t see very often in Engineering,” Isaac comments.

“A big part of music is the ability to network with other musicians. Getting used to meeting new people in different classes helped me gain that skill, which is crucial to the professional music world. A lot of the opportunities I have been given have come from the connections I made in the Honors College,” he shares.

Isaac is very grateful that he was a part of the Honors College and encourages students to take full advantage of everything it provides.

“Make use of the resources and opportunities that are there for you. College isn’t just about getting grades, it’s also about getting to be in a space with people of all different disciplines. Make sure you take the time to take part in the community the Honors College provides.”



Jake Clements  
Architecture and Film

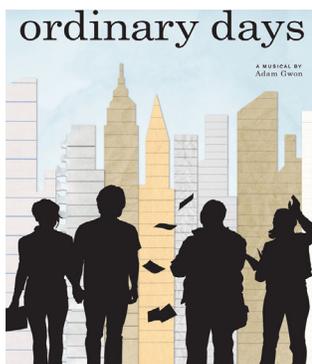


Photo courtesy of the Internet.

## Drama Club Presents... *Ordinary Days*

Tiff Polzin (Music Theatre, Psychology, Dance) never imagined she would be directing the first musical put on by the Honors College Drama Club.

“I’ve always thought that we would do a play because we have never done a musical,” Tiff says. “When spring rolled around, I didn’t have a play in my head, but I did have a musical.”

That musical is Adam Gwon’s *Ordinary Days*, a one-act show that she believes serves as a timely reminder of what we are no longer experiencing.

“Recently, there’s been a facade of normalcy that society has been trying to portray,” Tiff explains. “There’s an appreciation for the ordinary that we’ve never had before because we never knew what it was like to lose that ordinary.”

The show tells the story of four ordinary people whose lives connect in different yet extraordinary ways.

Faith Wrycha (Film) is excited about the production. “I knew a musical would present unique challenges that previous plays I’ve worked on didn’t have,” she says.

“There are so many pieces to put together like the accompanist, costume changes, and props, but all the hard work is rewarding.”

Chris Johnston (Information Science and Technology) finds doing a musical to be a wonderful experience and is happy to have auditioned.

“This is my first Honors College show,” he says. “However, it is plain to see how the Honors College fruitfully brings people together. It has been fulfilling to work towards a tangible goal alongside a group of talented artists.”

Aliana Bechard (JAMS, Music), Lauren Ramsdell (Linguistics), Ash Friedenberg (Theater) and Jack Koshkin (Music Composition) are also production members.

## Wisconsin Stories Spark Empathy

“The first thought we have about a person is what people have conditioned us to believe, while the second thought we have is what we want to believe,” says Lindsay Van Der Wegen (Accounting). “Making that second thought empathetic is something anyone can do.”

Along with Alex Nelson (Biological Sciences and Neuroscience), Tiff Polzin (Psychology and Music Theatre), and Sydney Steinbach (Anthropology) Lindsay enrolled in the Honors College’s “Wisconsin Empathy Project,” which challenged the students to engage, inspect, and empathize with often unfamiliar human experiences.

Under Honors College Professor Jacqueline Stuhmiller’s guidance, they then formed Artifacts of Us (AoU).

“Our goal is a publication which will contain all the stories we’ve written,” Lindsay explains, “in an attempt to build empathy in Wisconsin across perceived boundaries of race, sexual orientation, geographic identity, class, and more.”

The publication will include interviews with Wisconsinites, including a small-town coroner, a queer student disconnected from their family, and a Navy enlistee, which distill a narrative arc.

AoU’s mission, she says, centers on sharing these stories to “inspire readers to have empathy for someone they might not have had empathy for before.”

Ethical interviewing and storytelling are top of mind, and AoU works to “incorporate our voice cautiously, but with authenticity,” says Alex.

AoU hosted UWM Professor of Medical Anthropology Dr. Paul Brodwin for a lecture on interview techniques and hopes to engage local filmmakers and journalists in the project as well.

As a student organization, “we’re trying to grow where we can and grow as people, too,” Lindsay says. “It’s about building empathy throughout the process.”

The AoU publication will be available in the Honors House in May.



David Deshpande  
Biological Sciences



Photo courtesy of AoU.



## Looking Back: Dr. Jamie DuMont



David Deshpande  
Biological Sciences

While many people pioneer new techniques in glass, sound, paint, or electronics, UWM Honors College alum Dr. Jamie DuMont ('11, Biochemistry) has a different medium of choice: atoms.

Unlike many chemists who focus on groups of atoms, Jamie works on reactions with individual atoms, an interest catalyzed during her time at UWM.

“My best friend growing up was in the Honors College,” says Jamie. “I remember looking over her shoulder and she was writing an essay, probably for Honors College Professor David Southward’s course, and I thought, ‘oh, that sounds interesting!’”

She joined and found a balance between challenging coursework in Chemistry, working as a TA in the Chemistry Department and as a Supplemental Instructor for [Panther Academic Support Services](#) (PASS).

“The Honors College was always like an escape,” says Jamie, “where I could dive deep into the minds of William Shakespeare or Jane Austen.”

“There was one course, [Professor Southward’s] ‘The Hidden Order in Literature and Film,’ and it just blew my mind,” Jamie recalls.

She also took UWM Professor Emeritus Corrliss Philabaum’s “Shakespeare and Opera,” where the class attended a private rehearsal of *Madame Butterfly* downtown.

“I am just such a Shakespeare lover now,” Jamie says. “I go to the Shakespeare festival at CU Boulder every year and I have Corliss Philabaum and David Southward to thank for that.”

After writing an Honors Thesis in the Chemistry Department, Jamie joined the [Steven M. George Research Group](#) at the University of Colorado Boulder to pursue a Ph.D., where she continued to work on atomic layer deposition (ALD).

After a chance encounter with another researcher, she took a job as a postdoctoral researcher at an international lab in Spain for three years.

“While I was there, I applied for the Marie Curie Fellowship,” she says, “but the first time, I didn’t get it.” She picked herself



Photo courtesy of Jamie DuMont.

back up, applied again to study thermoelectric materials, and got the fellowship.

A few years later, “right around the time where I was missing home, a colleague of mine texted me that they were starting a company in Colorado and incorporating ALD. They said they’d love to have me on the team,” Jamie recalls.

Jamie moved back to Colorado and has been working at [Forge Nano](#) for two years, applying her skills in ALD to lithium battery technology as a Senior Research Scientist.

Jamie still has every syllabus, course reading, and essay from her time in the Honors College packed into an aging purple folder, but instead of just feeling nostalgic for the past experiences, she’s used the lessons to create new experiences that include other people.

“After leaving, I’ve hosted so many book clubs, and I try to emulate the same passion that Professor Southward brought to his classes, the way he organized, and the way the Honors College professors say just enough to let an idea grow,” she shares.

She’s even started a book club in Spanish to keep up her skills. Jamie emphasizes that as a student, “it’s so important to feel special. When someone you look up to writes a little note on your essay, it gives you this confidence that you can’t get from a professor who only sees your name on a multiple-choice test.”

Jamie deeply missed the people and opportunities after graduation. “I hope that everybody in the Honors College realizes just how special it is.”



## Course Highlights



Sophia Keay  
Music Performance and  
Music Education

### “What is Art”

Honors College Professor Hilary Snow’s “What is Art?” asks a question few of us truly take time to consider.

The class expands the idea of art history by focusing on “not a survey of art history, but a survey of ways of thinking about art,” Professor Snow shares.

The course serves to work for any student, regardless of prior knowledge.

“Sometimes students who don’t have a background in art feel like they are at a disadvantage but that’s a misperception, because the material that we’re covering is not something that someone who knows a lot of paintings has had exposure to,” Professor Snow says.

Carly Vogelsang (Nursing) says the class is very different than her own work in her major. “Going from a very strict ‘everything is a fact’ point-of-view to ‘everything is from a new perspective’ is eye-opening and challenging,” she relates.

As an Honors 200 course, “What is Art?” offers an introduction into the Honors College by enveloping students in a more holistic focus that encourages critical thinking about how art is presented and engaged with.

This foundation allows students to carry these skills throughout the rest of their college careers.

“I think this is an important course because it teaches the students how to write for the Honors College among other high-achieving students,” Carly says.

Carly has especially enjoyed stepping beyond the more traditional writing restrictions she learned in high school and had grown accustomed to.

“Just throw those preconceptions out the window,” she warns, “the course allows us to further our writing and makes students dive deeper into writing. Rather than just writing to write, now I write to think.”



Photo courtesy of the National Museum of Asian Art.

### “The Story of Bharat, India: Origins, Philosophies, Cultures”

The Indian Subcontinent, in all its varied terrain, rich culture, dynamic religion, and long history, is largely unknown to many people from the western world.

As a multilingual researcher from India, UWM Geography Professor Dr. Rina Ghose harnessed her myriad passions in her seminar, “The Story of Bharat/India: Origins, Philosophies, Cultures.”

Using a historic-geographic lens, Professor Ghose guides her students through ancient India to show how the Indian melting pot came to be.

This exploration traces the origins of Indian cultures through touching on the histories, philosophies, cultural practices, and landscapes of pre-1300 A.D. India.

The course content is new for many of the students. For Gianna Hamden Rupnik (History), it is her unfamiliarity with ancient India that makes the class interesting.

“I don’t have to worry about having notions from beforehand that may skew how

I view things because I’ve never been exposed to anything like this,” she explains.

Diving into a context that is so historically deep and culturally divergent from the United States inevitably challenges students to step into unexplored perspectives, a challenge that Professor Ghose says her students have embraced.

The ability to “think outside of the box” is a skill Professor Ghose hopes to impart to her students. Additionally, through modeling her own research, she tries to “pass on the passion that knowledge production is a very exciting endeavor.”

“It’s a wide, diverse, and extremely interesting world out there; we can all learn so many things,” she says with a smile.

As an enthusiast for horizontal education, Professor Ghose appreciates the learning opportunities that seminars foster.

“I think the Honors College is the right place for this class. I truly hope I get the chance to teach it again.”



Sydney Steinbach  
Anthropology

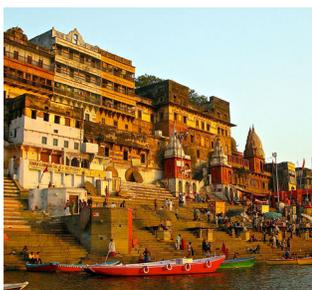


Photo courtesy of the Professor Ghose.



Liberty Ansoorge  
Biological Sciences



Photo courtesy of Professor Schneider.

## Familiar Faces

### Dr. Benjamin Schneider

If you've ever stepped foot in Honors House, you're sure to have been met by the face of Honors College Professor Benjamin Schneider.

Perhaps he has given you a smile and a wave or told you about the Alternative Spring Break Trip to New Orleans (ASB). Whatever it may be, any encounter with Ben is bound to be a good one.

With degrees in literature from DePaul University and a Ph.D. in Modern Studies from UWM, Ben brims with knowledge.

His fifteen years of teaching and administration at UWM add to his repertoire of being a valuable professor in the Honors College, where he joined in 2017.

Ben says his "first time in a college classroom was amazing and thrilling," and it was where he realized he loved to "share literature with young people."

This experience has evolved to where he is now, in the student-centered classrooms of the Honors College, where he teaches Humanities courses like "Nostalgia" and

"Growing Up," where students explore underlying themes of the human condition, among other things.

Ben loves the Honors College, and he has "a lot of respect for the students." He believes they appreciate their education and view it as earned rather than assumed.

"That makes me want to give," he says, "it makes it easy to create programs and work for students because I know how badly they want to learn and grow."

Ben's generous character manifests in aspects of the Honors College, like the ASB, *The Aggregate*, the food shelf, and the newly created CEEL program.

These opportunities, he explains, "give students chances to showcase their talents, to pull us together and help us feel part of a special intellectual and social community."

After all, the Honors College does feel like a little family inside UWM. We recognize Ben as a contributor to the kinship we experience in the Honors College and are grateful for his presence.

### Laura Blaska



Jake Clements  
Architecture and Film



Photo courtesy of the Honors College.

Associate Director Laura Blaska will be celebrating a decade in the Honors College this coming June.

Laura's education includes an undergraduate degree from the University of Minnesota and a graduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. She worked at UMN and as a high school counselor before joining the Honors College.

Her current position allows her to tie her "high school experience and college experience together in an interesting way."

The Associate Director job includes "a little bit of everything," Laura says. "There is not a dull moment, and no two days are ever the same." She is involved in both the academic and the administrative sides of the Honors College.

Initially, the Honors College felt like a small corner of the campus that seemed "too good to be true" to Laura, but as she soon found out, "there's actually not a catch. It is a special place, a true community

where students and faculty come together and learn and grow," she says.

Laura likes how the Honors College "gives students the opportunity to take advantage of a small liberal arts college experience, while still getting to be a part of a bigger research university."

Laura is not all work, however. During the pandemic, she bought a house and has been learning about gardening, a prospect that is exciting to her.

She also likes spending time with her family, as well as traveling and being outside. She encourages students to explore Milwaukee while they are here: "go hiking, go biking, go out for walks," she says.

"Above all, students should know that the Honors College faculty and staff are all here to help them get what want out of their experience," Laura says.

"We encourage you all to take advantage of the many opportunities UWM and the Honors College offers you."



**The Aggregate:**

Liberty Ansorge  
Clara Broecker  
Jake Clements  
David Deshpande  
Maia Diedrich  
Sophia Keay  
Jo Fox  
Rachel Oelsner  
Tiff Polzin  
Alex Sitze  
Sydney Steinbach  
Olivia Wilson

## The Aggregate's Voice

In this issue of *The Aggregate*, we focus on how the Honors College expresses itself through research and social justice.

We share the stories of young people striving for excellence, driven by their curiosity and their passion for learning, summed up by the lead story's title: a quest for knowledge.

UWM's R1 status provides young researchers with opportunities and support to expand their knowledge beyond the classroom through relationships with highly trained faculty on campus.

We feature a few of these students in the "Research Snapshots" section of this issue. Those six students are just a sample however and we acknowledge and respect the many other Honors College researchers doing substantial work in their fields.

This issue reports too on the Honors College's ongoing commitment to social justice. COVID may have forced some projects to the sideline, but it has not lessened the desire for engagement.

The Alternative Spring Break trip returned to New Orleans and energized and inspired students to give their talents locally upon returning.

The Equity Team and Empathy Project group are finding spaces and modes of expression to join with The Honors College's antiracism efforts.

Overall, the issue underscores a common idea in the Honors College that inquiry and growth are partners. When we are humble enough to know we don't know and we take that as a challenge instead of a threat, we are capable of greatness.

And the challenges of the last two years have been severe. But we here in the Honors College have not stopped looking for opportunities for achievement and growth.

The next page lists a record number of '21-'22 graduates, and we could not be prouder of our peers. The Honors College is special because of the students, and we hope this issue shines a light on some of their experiences and accomplishments.



From left to right: Tiff Polzin, Jake Clements, Alex Sitze, Rachel Oelsner, Clara Broecker, Liberty Ansorge. Not Pictured: David Deshpande, Jo Fox, Sophia Keay, Sydney Steinbach, and Olivia Wilson.



\* Honors With Distinction

## Congratulations 2021-22 Graduates

Bissan Abubaker	Abbie Esterline*	Corinne Kronschnabel	Ian Schmitt-Ernst
Nina Amidei	Zoe Farrell*	Natalie Kuehl	Brianna Schubert
Peter Ankerberg	Haydn Flores	Rafferty Kugler	Hailey Schwengel
Valiantsin Auchynnikau	Joshua Freitag	Kimberly Laberge	Sana Shakir
Payton Bachochin	Jessica Gatzow	Grace Larkin	Callen Shaw*
Mason Batman	Sal Gauthier	Brandon Lauber	Natalie Sinclair
Meghan Berger	Sophia Gerhards	Sofia Lopez	Alex Sitze
Andrew Beszhak*	Allison Gleesing	Connor Lynch*	Shae Smetana
Lauren Bonofiglio	Annika Gogan	Alexis Madson*	Maximilian Sommerfeld
Emily Briscoe	Paolo Gratton	Jessica Majcan	Kendra Staniszewski
Mary Brown	Sydney Herman	Alexandra Mitchler	Sydney Steinbach
Maria Burke	Raymie Hockman	Sarah Moore	Garrett Strother
Sabrina Burrie	Elen Hovhannisyan	Morgan Orcholski	Nicole Taloff
Laurence Byrne*	Chase Howerton	Morganne Ortlieb	Carter Tomkins
Isabel Castro	Tylor Huber	Lillian Pachner	Jessica Van Dyck*
Amberly Chernoff*	Andrew Hughes	Allison Pahios	Autumn Vang
Luca Clesceri	Grace Ingham	Jonathan Paul	Cattleia Walsh
Isabel Cole	Matthew Jackson	Kathryn Pecha	Peyton Wells
Amanda Connolly	Wyatt Johnson	Derek Pennycuff	Zachary Wendt
Onisha Dale	Casey Jordi	Alayna Perry	Nicole Wicker
Austin Danielewicz	Joel Joyce	Ethan Pinkham	Mary Widener
Marissa Davies	Elizabeth Julius	Jessica Plotkin*	Veronica Williams
Mia Davoodi	Ava Kanthack	Tiff Polzin	Kara Williams
Avery DeBoer	Kloe Kashian	Brian Puczylowski	Calleigh Wondra
David Deshpande*	Margaret Kelnhofer	Estela Rangel*	Faith Woodman*
Maia Diedrich	Samuel Kirby	Millicent Reyes	Jacqueline Wright
Katherine Ducheny	Teresa Klopp	Elia Rodriguez	Bryce Zacharias
Bescent Ebeid	Garrett Kocourek	Jamie Rose	
Anna Emerson*	Samantha Kranz	Autumn Routson	

## Scholarships and Writing Awards



### 2021-22 Honors College Scholarship Awardees

Elizabeth Adams	Mia Cornale	Sarah Lunow	Madison Parola
Amaya Barker	Andrew Gaeta	Elizabeth King	Naomi Raicu
Kaylee Bertrand	Alejandra Gonzalez	Morgan Klug	Ashley Rudser
Emily Braun	Christina Guirau	Ava Ladky	Florin Saitis
Ronan Carpenter	Ssanyu Grayson	Liam Martinez	Vai Triggiano
Jacob Clements	Isabelle Jardas	Butoyi Odetta	Henry Wehrs

### Ruback Prize for Distinguished Writing

Grand Prize: Ava Ladky, "Origin"

Honorable Mentions: Kimberly Laberge, "For my grieving hometown"

Alexis Madson, "Robert Stam's Theory on Translation within Adaptation"

### First Place, 200-level

Isabella Burkard, "Legacy of a Meatball"

### Second Place, 200-level

Kate Jakubowski, "What is a Refugee? How Language Shapes Asylum Law in the U.S. and Around the World"