



# UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

## Alumni Newsletter



**Spring 2020**



**University of Idaho**

University Honors Program

## Greeting from the Director

During these peculiar and difficult times, we at the University Honors Program are doing what we can to support our students, faculty, staff, the community, and each other. In this edition of the Alumni Newsletter, we are sharing our alumni and students' successes and stories in the hopes that it will provide you with a sense of community and pride that we all so desperately need as we adjust to life during the coronavirus pandemic.

As in each edition of our bi-annual newsletter, we are featuring two alumni and a current student from our program, whose experiences are spotlighted by the University Honors Program Coordinator Justin Smith. In our section entitled "Research and Creative Activities," we are highlighting students' participation in our bi-annual University Honors Program Research and Creative Activities Forum and recipients of our University Honors Program Grants for Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship. We are also highlighting student recipients of distinguished scholarships through the Distinguished Scholarships Program coordinated by Dr. Dilshani Sarathchandra. This section will also provide you with a preview of the upcoming student presentations of honors theses at the forum on May 6, 2020.



Sandra Reineke, Ph.D.

Unfortunately, some of our program's events planned for this spring, like the forum on May 6, and the University Honors Program Graduation Celebration scheduled for May 15, 2020, have had to be postponed or their format changed due to social distancing mandates in place in Idaho and at the University of Idaho. With the University of Idaho inviting current graduating students to participate in winter 2020 and spring 2021 commencements, we are hoping to offer a University Honors Program Graduation Celebration for our spring graduates around those events. We will communicate more information about those plans as soon as they have firmed up and we sincerely hope that you may be able to join us to celebrate our students' amazing accomplishments at those times.

Talking about amazing academic accomplishments, I am excited to share with you that for the first time since 2013, we have two honors students winning the prestigious **Barry Goldwater Scholarship** for 2020. **Elizabeth (Beth) Hoots** dual majoring in Ecology and Conservation Biology, College of Natural Resources, and Spanish, College of Letters Arts and Social Sciences, and **Isabell Strawn** majoring in Biological Engineering, College of Engineering, both won this very competitive scholarship for their future graduate studies.

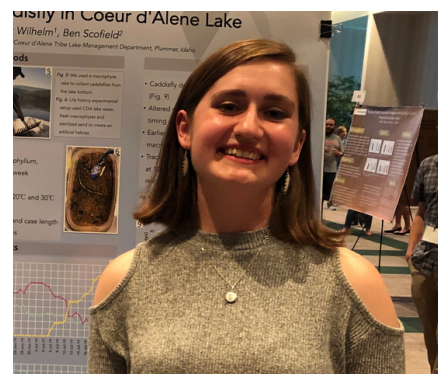
As you know, supporting our students in their academic endeavors and projects takes resources and mentorship from many individuals. Our students benefit from the outstanding mentorship they receive from faculty and staff. Please consider making a gift to the University Honors Program's **Henberg Honors Endowment** through which we fund undergraduate research, internships, and education abroad opportunities for students like Beth and Isabell. Thank you for your generous donation.

We send greetings to all of our alumni, friends, and supporters, and wish you good health at this stressful time. Be well.

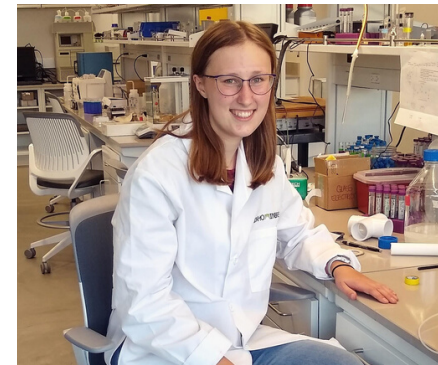
Sincerely,



Director, University Honors Program



Elizabeth (Beth) Hoots



Isabell Strawn

## Recent University Honors Program News

### We would like to welcome our new staff member

Hello University Honors Program Alumni,

I am Katie Bechtel, the new part-time administrative assistant for the University Honors Program. I joined the honors team in March 2020. The University of Idaho has been a huge part of my life. Most of my family are UI alums and/or currently work on the Moscow campus. In 2013, I received a B.A. in Clothing and Textiles, and a B.S. in Virtual Technology and Design from the University of Idaho. Since then, I have enjoyed working on campus in various roles and am very excited about future opportunities with the University Honors Program. In addition to serving our program and students, I am enjoying continuing my education and taking classes.



Katie Bechtel, '13

### Welcome to our new University Honors Program Student Ambassadors

The University Honors Program Student Ambassadors are a diverse group of current honors students representing various colleges on campus and a wide range of experiences and interests within the University of Idaho. Student Ambassadors assist the program by answering questions from prospective honors students and their families at events such as UI Idaho Bound, Sneak Peek and individual campus visits. Our Student Ambassadors work to develop leadership skills, practice effective communication, and recruit the next generations of University Honors Program students. Our current University Honors Program Student Ambassadors are: Dakota Brown, a sophomore majoring in English; Dom Zepeda, a first-year student majoring in Architecture; Kate Hall, a senior majoring in Sociology.



Dakota Brown



Dom Zepeda



Kate Hall

## Welcome to our current Honors Student Advisory Board members

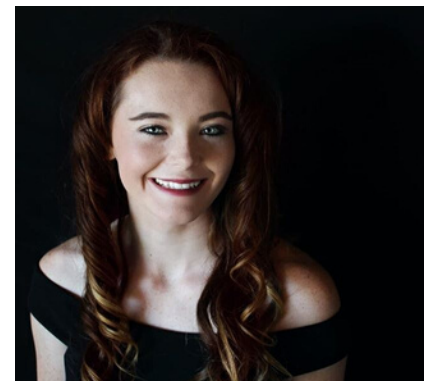
The Honors Student Advisory Board (HSAB) student club is an ASUI recognized organization that exist to enrich the academic and social experience of University Honors Program students, and contribute to a sense of community by organizing co-curricular events. The student club meets regularly to create an enjoyable experience through service and leadership. All University Honors Program students are members of the club and encouraged to participate.



Lydia Druin, president



Beth Hoots, vice president



Dakota Brown, secretary



Dom Zepeda, treasurer



Megan Lolley, member-at-large

# Research & Creative Activities

## University Honors Program Research and Creative Activities Forum

In December 2019, **Ren Dimico**, a senior in Biology and Microbiology, College of Science, presented her honors thesis titled, “Enhancing Learning, Understanding and Retention in an iCure Laboratory.” Likewise, **Alice Cassel**, a senior dual majoring in Microbiology and Biology, College of Science, presented her honors thesis titled, “Linking Micro and Macro: Exploring Patterns of Soil Microbiol Diversity in the Disjunctmesic Forest of the Pacific Northwest,” in front of a live audience at the Integrated Research and Innovation Center (IRIC) on the Moscow campus.



Ren Dimico



Alice Cassel

On May 6, 2020, seven University Honors Program students will present their honors theses at this semester's virtual **University Honors Program Research and Creative Activities Forum**.

**BreAnne Servoss Cook**, a senior in Theatre Arts, College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences, will present her thesis, "Consumer Perception of Garment Value Relative to Garment Construction Knowledge."

**Caitlin C. Klaeui**, a senior in Animal and Veterinary Science, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, will present her thesis titled, "Effect of Feeding Supplemental Zeolite on Measures of Nitrogen Utilization in Backgrounding Cattle."



BreAnne Servoss Cook



Caitlin C. Klaeui

**Matthew Young**, a senior in Physics, College of Science, will present his thesis titled, "Wakes in Saturn's E Ring from Enceladus."

**Natasha Herbenson**, a senior in Microbiology, College of Science, will present her thesis titled, "Identification of Proteins that Interact with Down Syndrome Cell Adhesion Molecules."

**Ren Dimico**, a senior in Biology and Microbiology, College of Science, will present her honors thesis titled, "Unraveling Genetic Determinants of Synaptic Formation in the Mammalian Visual System."



Matthew Young



Natasha Herbenson



Ren Dimico

**Romana Hyde**, a senior in Biochemistry, College of Science, will present her thesis titled, "Analysis of SHANK3 Expression in Cerebellar Granule Cells."

**Samuel A. Myers**, a senior in Physics, College of Science, will present his thesis titled, "Mini-Neptune Orbiting Delta-Scuti KOI-972."



Romana Hyde



Samuel A. Myers

## University Honors Program Grants for Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship

Also this academic year, two Honors Program students successfully applied for and received a **University Honors Program Grant for Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship**. These outstanding students and scholars are Romana Hyde, a senior majoring in Biochemistry, College of Science, and Laura Nutter, a senior majoring in Microbiology, College of Science. We are so proud of our students, and look forward to seeing the fruits of their labor.



Romana Hyde



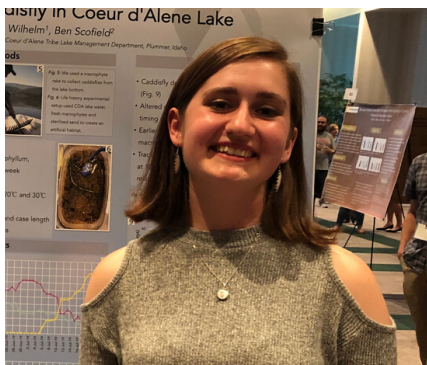
Laura Nutter

## Distinguished Scholarships Program

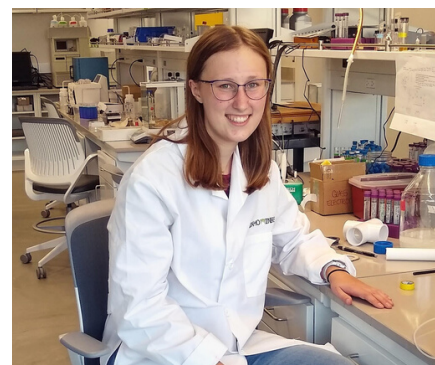
Since November 2019, three University Honors Program students have been recognized through the Distinguished Scholarships Program coordinated by Dr. Dilshani Sarathchandra.

### Berry Goldwater Scholarship:

We are excited to announce that Elizabeth (Beth) Hoots (Ecology and Conservation Biology, College of Natural Resources) and Isabell Strawn (Biological Engineering, College of Engineering), have been selected as 2020 Goldwater Scholars! Goldwater Scholars are selected for their impressive academic and research credentials, and they often garner the attention of prestigious post-graduate fellowship programs.



Elizabeth (Beth) Hoots



Isabell Strawn

## DAAD RISE Awardee:

An outstanding accomplishment by Madi Thurston (Environmental Science, College of Nature Resources) who was selected for the 2020 DAAD RISE Internship. The summer internship is awarded to undergraduate students allowing them to travel and work on research in Germany while being mentored by doctoral students in their field of study (due to COVID-19 travel restrictions the program was suspended, but her achievement remains).



Madi Thurston

## The Looking Glass

*The Looking Glass* is a creative and academic publication produced by University Honors Program students under the guidance of a staff member. The publication consists entirely of student work, and is managed and produced by a team of students as part of our program's service-learning opportunities. *The Looking Glass* entries include fiction, non-fiction, and research, as well as poetry, short stories, essays, photography, and art. The magazine supports student learning as they engage with the publication process, and provides all our students a unique forum to express their scholarly and creative works.

Volume 15 of the magazine is in the final stages of the printing process and will be available for purchase by the public in the near future.



*The Looking Glass*

student editors pose with  
volume 14 of the magazine

# GET ENGAGED

Although commencement has been postponed for spring 2020, we hope you will be able to attend our winter 2020 and spring 2021 University Honors Program Graduation Celebration for this semester's graduates. We will communicate more information about those plans as soon as we are able. We sincerely hope that you will be able to join us to celebrate our students' accomplishments as they join the ranks of University Honors Program alumni.

# STAY CONNECTED

## Like and follow the University Honors Program on social media

On our social media platforms you will find weekly updates that demonstrate our students in action, invitations, and flyers for University Honors Program events. See the results of our community building and celebration of our successes @uidahohonors.



## Update your contact information

If you have a new email, physical address, or phone number please contact the University Honors Program and let us know by emailing [honors@uidaho.edu](mailto:honors@uidaho.edu). We desire to stay in contact with all of our amazing alumni. Stay engaged. Stay connected. Continue our story together!

# Student Spotlight

Our feature "Student Spotlight" highlights our students' engagement in undergraduate research, scholarship, creative activities, education abroad, internships, post-graduate, and leadership opportunities.

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Elizabeth (Beth) Hoots, a senior from West Linn, OR, is dual majoring in Ecology and Conservation Biology, College of Science, and Spanish, College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences. Beth is deeply involved in the University Honors Program and undergraduate research. She just returned from a semester long education abroad experience in Lima, Peru, in Fall 2019. She anticipates graduation in Spring 2021.



Elizabeth (Beth) Hoots

Recently, our University Honors Program staff member Justin Smith conducted this email interview with Beth to find out more about her research and studies.

**Honors:** *Why did you choose UI?*

**Beth:** I chose the UI because I fell in love with the campus and the program for Ecology and Conservation Biology. The university came to my attention when I was a senior in high school, and I was awarded a National Merit Scholarship. I decided to visit because of the proximity to my hometown, the competitive scholarship I had received, the powerhouse College of Natural Resources, and the opportunity to pursue an honors education.

**Honors:** *What is your favorite thing about the University Honors Program?*

**Beth:** The best part of the University Honors Program for me has been the community. From my first day of freshman year, I have felt that I have a support group and friends in the program. Honors housing, classes, activities, and clubs have introduced me to some of my best friends in college and kept me engaged with the university beyond the routine of going to classes and doing homework.

**Honors:** *What interest or research are you doing in your field?*

**Beth:** At the UI I have been involved with aquatic ecology research since my first year. As a first-year student, I was chosen for an interdisciplinary research team to investigate biodiversity in the southern Andes region of Ecuador during the summer. There, I combined zooplankton biodiversity estimates with water chemistry testing to study the health of a series of Andean ponds located across an urban to rural gradient.

As a sophomore, I was awarded a SURF (Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship) grant to begin work on my undergraduate thesis, investigating the effects of climate change and rising water temperatures on a case-building caddisfly in Coeur d'Alene Lake. While I was working on my thesis during the summer of 2019, I was also working for my thesis supervisor, Dr. Frank Wilhelm, as a limnological technician on a water quality monitoring project at Willow Creek Reservoir.

During my third year, I had the opportunity to study abroad in Lima, Peru, and take courses in marine science — the field I hope to pursue in graduate school. Through all of my classes being taught in Spanish, I was able to grow as a scholar in both of my degree fields. Returning to Moscow in the spring, I also became involved as a volunteer with a conservation genetics lab on campus and learned some basic lab techniques in DNA analysis.

**Honors:** *What opportunities have you had due to the University Honors Program?*

**Beth:** The Honors Program has given me leadership opportunities, a community of motivated students, and the chance to

take classes taught by tenured faculty members beginning in my first semester. I think that being an honors student has given me more credibility with some of my professors as well, because they know I belong to a program that emphasizes academic excellence, self-motivation, and a passion for learning. The Honors Program has also helped me connect with research opportunities around campus and around the world, and motivated me to pursue scientific investigations as an undergraduate by offering support for my undergraduate thesis. During my service as a University Honors Program Student Ambassador, I often told prospective students that you get out of the program what you put into it; it's never extra work, but rather opportunities to try new things and pursue opportunities that interest you.

**Honors:** *Tell us about a favorite honors class or experience with an honors professor?*

**Beth:** My favorite honors class by far was my freshman integrated seminar on the musical cultures of the world, taught by Dr. Barry Bilderback. It had nothing to do with my field of study, but it gave me the chance to bond with my fellow honors students in a discussion-based class and challenged me to apply my 'science brain' to a more cultural and artistic subject. I still listen to the music we were introduced to in that class, and I am hard-pressed to think of a class where I felt more creatively challenged.

Another favorite experience with the University Honors Program was the 2018 Honors Service Break in McCall, Idaho, at the McCall Outdoor Science School (MOSS). Staying at the MOSS campus in the beautiful fall weather with a small group of nature-loving honors students was delightful, and it was rewarding to be able to give back to a branch of the UI that serves so many students in the Idaho public schools.

**Honors:** *What level of distinction are you going for? Thesis?*

**Beth:** I am working on my honors thesis, and taking as many honors classes as I can fit into my schedule. I have also had a lot of fun with the Academic and Experiential Points Contracts. I consider experiences like studying abroad, and participating in the honors service weekend, and presenting at conferences to be the best parts of my time as an undergraduate.

**Honors:** *Are you involved in any clubs?*

**Beth:** Since 2018, I have been the president of the University of Idaho chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology. I am currently serving as the vice president of the Honors Student Advisory Board. I am also actively involved in Planned Parenthood Generation Action, and the Women in Science Society.

**Honors:** *Have you been to any conferences or presented at any events?*

**Beth:** I have! In 2018, I presented my research on pond ecology in southern Ecuador at the joint meeting of the Oregon Lakes Association and the Washington State Lake Protection Association. In 2019, I presented at the University of Idaho Undergraduate Research Symposium and the Western Regional Honors Conference. Also in 2019, I shared some preliminary findings for my honors thesis at the Idaho Conference on Undergraduate Research.

## Alumni Profiles

Our feature "Alumni Profiles" introduce program alumni to our larger community.

**Russel Lodge, P.E. Hydraulics Engineer, Army Corps of Engineers in Boise, ID, '03.**

Recently, University Honors Program staff member Justin conducted this email interview with Russel Lodge.

**Honors:** *Why did you choose to join the University Honors Program, and why was it important to you?*

**Russel:** The Honors Program offered more interesting and challenging courses, along



Russel Lodge, '03



with a greater sense of community and student engagement. I particularly remember taking honors CHEM 111 with Thomas Bitterwolf. One of the more exciting classroom experiences was him handing out the “bulletproof A” during the final exam, and finding out if you had to actually take the exam. There was more trust in the Honors Program and the professors taught and communicated with their students more as peers than the typical student/teacher relationship.

**Honors:** *Can you tell us about your academic program, where you lived and what kinds of organizations or activities in which you were involved?*

**Russel:** I studied Mechanical Engineering and went on to get a Master of Science in Civil Engineering with an emphasis in water resources. My decision to change majors was highly influenced by my summer job as a river-guide on the Main and Middle Fork of the Salmon River. I lived at the Delta Tau Delta fraternity during my undergraduate years. I was also involved in the Rugby Club team and did a few trips with the Outdoor Program (as well as other self-determined and sometimes ill-fated outdoor adventures). I had a great time at the University of Idaho with a mix of traditional education, social engagements and outdoor adventures.

**Honors:** *What are your favorite memories from your time as an honors student?*

**Russel:** My favorite memory from the Honors Program is easily the aforementioned “bulletproof A.” As a freshman, some friends and I stayed up most of the night studying for the exam and then none of us had to actually take the final. Along these lines, the other students I met in the program were a benefit both personally and professionally. There was a community there, outside of your major, and it was nice to meet and engage with students from other colleges and mindsets.

**Honors:** *What did you do after graduating from the University of Idaho, and what are you doing now?*

**Russel:** After completing my undergraduate degree, I went straight to graduate school, and finished my master’s degree while working as a civil engineer in Boise. I took online courses and worked through the Idaho Water Center, which is a great resource at U of I’s southern campus. After working as a consultant for over a decade, I decided to pursue employment with the largest water resource project in the Treasure Valley at Lucky Peak Dam with the Corps of Engineers. I now work on large-scale hydrology and hydraulics projects, and facilitate modeling to mitigate flood damage throughout the Snake River Drainage.

**Honors:** *What advice would you give an honors student today?*

**Russel:** Take as many honors courses as you can, even if they don’t fit neatly into your schedule. Also, expand your comfort zone by taking advantage of all the opportunities college life affords you. Your education is more than what gets put on your transcript; it includes relationships, endeavors and adventures.

**Honors:** *Are there any fun facts about you that you would like to share?*

**Russell:** During graduate school, some buddies and I formed a band and won the highly coveted Moscow Battle of the Bands, as well as playing at a variety of local fraternities and bars. After college, we kept the band going and recorded a couple of albums under the moniker Smooth Old-Fashioned High. It was a fun hobby, which ended as bandmembers got married and started families. I am currently a husband and father of two little kids and a puppy, and looking directly at my 40th trip around the sun. As friends and Vandals the band and I stay in touch and there is some discussion of ‘getting the band back together.’ We’ll keep you posted.

## Alumni Profiles

**Amy Taylor, Director, Center for Disability Access and Resources, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID, ’06.**

Recently, University Honors Program staff member Justin conducted this email interview with Amy Taylor.

**Honors:** *Why did you choose to join the University Honors Program, and why was it important to you?*

**Amy:** I was invited to join the program after completing my first semester with a 4.0. I was excited by the additional challenges, the community, and the specialty classes.

**Honors:** *Can you tell us about your academic program, where you lived and what kinds of organizations or activities in which you were involved?*

**Amy:** I was working towards a bachelors degree in Sociology with minors in both Psychology and Communication Studies. I lived just off campus in an old fourplex apartment complex, with no dishwasher and an on-site laundry room with frequently broken machines. I lived just close enough to walk to all my classes, which was by design, and the place had character. Funnily, I lived on Taylor Avenue and the side street was Linda Lane—my mother’s name is Linda Taylor. I literally lived on the corner of Linda and Taylor, she enjoyed that quite a bit.



Amy Taylor, '06

I was involved in the Department of Sociology quite a bit, with the help of my advisor, Debbie Storrs. I obtained a Certificate of Diversity and Stratification as well as an emphasis in human services by taking classes beyond what was required for my degree. I truly enjoyed my field of study. I was a peer mentor, a research assistant, and completed two internships—one with the UI Women’s Center and one with Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

I held several jobs while attending UI, my first was with Sodexo in the Hub, which was called “Bob’s Place” at that time. I remember the hard work I put into this job and the necessity of the work. At many times, my job was my only guaranteed meal since they allowed employees to eat one meal after the dinning room stopped serving dinner. I also worked for the Tutoring and Academic Assistance Programs as a tutor and notetaker. I even taught a couple college success strategies courses and worked with Disability Support Services in varies roles directly assisting students for many years.

I played intramural softball and was an active member of UI’s Psi Chi International Honors Society for Psychology.

**Honors:** *What are your favorite memories from your time as an honors student?*

**Amy:** I really enjoyed the honors classes due to their smaller class sizes, the depth of material covered, and the conversational teaching style. The ones that really stand out now are the History of Civilization course with Dr. Sean Quinlan and the Introduction to Psychology with Dr. Allan Whitlock.

I have a fun memory of an ice cream social scavenger hunt hosted by the Honors Program where we had to find several things around campus, one of them being a certain room number in Brink Hall. I was so proud of my team by the time we navigated our way to the spot!

**Honors:** *What did you do after graduating from the University of Idaho, and what are you doing now?*

**Amy:** After I graduated from the University of Idaho, I went on to pursue my Master of Science in Social Work at Eastern Washington University. I worked in a domestic violence shelter and in K-12 schools for their Special Education department. I went on to work with a non-profit as a case manager, I then went on to be a regional manager there, linking people with disabilities to services, health care, and employment opportunities.

In fall 2017, I accepted the role as director for the Center for Disability Access and Resources (CDAR) office, after spending an accumulated 14 years of serving individuals with disabilities in educational and community settings. As director of CDAR, I have the privilege of continuing to work with individuals with disabilities and to work at my alma mater. It brings me so much joy to give back to a university that gave me a path to live out my passion in life.

**Honors:** *What advice would you give an honors student today?*

**Amy:** The best advice I received was to explore. Whatever that looks like to you, trying new things, expanding your comfort zone, learning something new—just for the sake of it. I didn’t know what I wanted to do in life when I was in

college, but I kept trying things that fit the general category of helping people. It was my first work study job which placed me in Disability Support Services and exposed me to the disability field. By trying this new job, it ended up shaping my career. I also recommend developing your hobbies and to not lose sight of non-career driven goals. Keep up your creative and self-care goals, as no matter your path, these skills can be life-saving.

**Honors:** *Are there any fun facts about you that you would like to share?*

**Amy:** When I see something disturbing (icky bugs for example) I cover my ears instead of my eyes. I come from a large family, I am the seventh of eight children. Three of my siblings are also Vandals! In 2019, I got to be an advisor for two Alternative Service Break (ASB) trips—which were fantastic. I will always treasure those adventures with such amazing students.

## CONTACT US

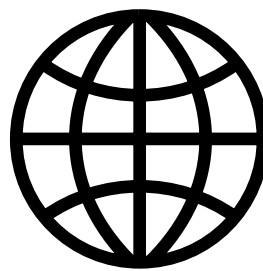
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