



University Honors Program

“Alumni Newsletter”



Spring 2019



University of Idaho
University Honors Program

Greeting from Vice Provost Cher Hendricks

Greetings Honors Program Alumni,



It's an exciting time on campus! Spring has arrived and students are enjoying the warm, sunny days after a long, snowy winter. Each day we can feel the excitement build as we get closer to the end of the semester. Students are burning the midnight oil to finish projects, write papers, complete capstone experiences, and—for several of our honors students—complete their honors thesis and prepare presentations. Just a few short weeks ago future students visited campus

for University of Idaho Bound, and several of our current honors students met with incoming students to talk about their experiences in the honors program. It was enlightening to hear their stories of living on the freshman honors floors at the Tower, learn about the research projects they've worked on with faculty, and get a tour of the honors living and learning community. It's evident that our honors students benefit from the deep connections they make with faculty as well as with each other. In the program, students find like-minded peers with varied interests. They support, encourage, and mentor one another and make lifelong friendships. I'm sure many of you had similar experiences as honors programs students, and I hope you'll take some time to remember those days. Reach out to a faculty member that made a difference in your life. Connect with a college friend you've lost touch with. And stay in touch with us through Instagram or Facebook to keep up with our remarkable Honors Vandal students.

Have a great summer!

Cher Hendricks
Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives



Greeting from the Director

This past December, the University Honors Program community celebrated the academic accomplishments of fifteen Honors students at winter Commencement, and as I am writing this note, we are already gearing up for spring Commencement. Next month, about fifty Honors Program students will be celebrating their degree completion and participation in the Honors Program across many academic majors and fields. As in years past, our program will be hosting its very own graduation ceremony the day before spring Commencement and I would like to cordially invite you to attend this event and to see and hear for yourself what our outstanding students have achieved. Please join our vibrant Honors Program community on **Friday, May 10, 2019 from 2-3:30pm in the Administration Auditorium on the Moscow campus** to celebrate with our students and their families and friends!

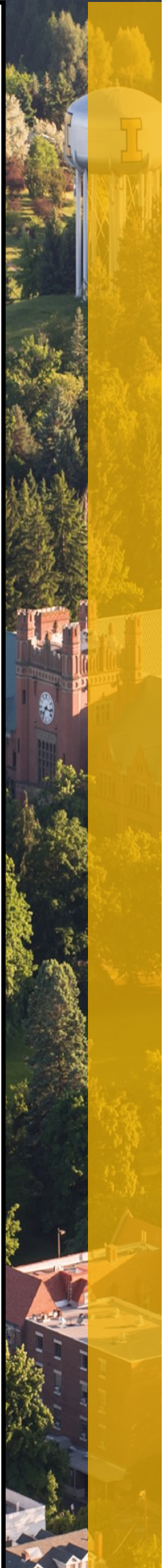
Why not also attend one of our students' Honors Thesis presentations scheduled for late April and early May? This semester, four students will complete their Honors Thesis work with a formal presentation of their findings in a public forum that marks the culmination of their independent research under the guidance of their faculty committees. I have no doubt that you will be amazed by the students' work. Please check our Instagram and Facebook page @uidahohonors for announcements about these academic events and other happenings in the Honors Program community!

With my best wishes for the summer and fall seasons!

Sincerely,



Sandra Reineke
Director, University Honors Program



Recent University Honors Program News

In Memoriam

Tom Bitterwolf, professor of chemistry in the College of Science, passed away on January 30, 2019. Tom's death is a great loss to the entire University of Idaho community and especially to the University Honors Program. Tom taught the Honors Chemistry 111 and Chemistry 112 courses as well as his Chemistry 400 "Energy Issues" course for many, many years for the Honors Program. He undertook research with many Honors students, mentored countless students in the program, and together with his wife Carrie supported the program very generously in many ways. Tom will be greatly and forever missed by the students, faculty, and staff of the program.



Tom "Doc" Bitterwolf
(1947-2019)

The Honors Program is creating a Memory Book for Tom's family. If you would like to contribute an entry in Tom's memory, please email it to honors@uidaho.edu and we will paste it into the book.

Tom's obituary can be found here <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/spokesman/obituary.aspx?n=thomas-e-bitterwolf&pid=191429725>. In the obituary, you may see that Tom's family asked that memorials are send to the University of Idaho Foundation for the Tom & Carrie Renaissance Endowment Fund to support the activities of the University Honors Program. You may find the fund here on the drop-down list <https://www.uidaho.edu/academic-affairs/university-honors-program/>

Welcome to our new Faculty Fellow Distinguished Scholarships Program

In other program news, we are welcoming our first Faculty Fellow Distinguished Scholarships Program Dr. Dilshani Sarathchandra to the University Honors Program. Dr. Sarathchandra is an assistant professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and has been a faculty member at the University of Idaho since fall 2014. Dr. Sarathchandra received a Ph.D. and an M.A. in Sociology from Michigan State University and a B.Sc. in Biotechnology from the University of Colombo in Sri Lanka. Dr. Sarathchandra has taught in the Honors Program prior to accepting this new assignment in January 2019. She advises students at the University of Idaho about nationally competitive scholarship, such as Fulbright, Goldwater, and Udall scholarships (<https://www.uidaho.edu/academic-affairs/distinguished-scholarships>).



Dilshani Sarathchandra, Ph.D.,
Faculty Fellow
Distinguished Scholarships Program

Research and Creative Activities

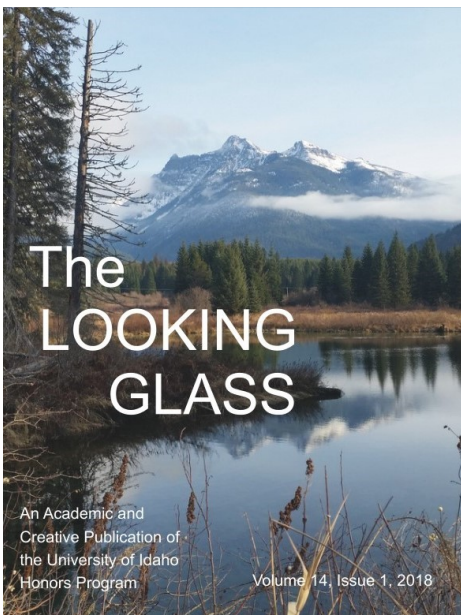
This spring, eight University Honors Program students presented their research at this year's Western Regional Honors Council (WRHC) conference at Montana State University in Bozeman, MT, on March 28-31, 2019 (<http://www.montana.edu/honors/wrhc2019/>). Together with Dr. Diane Carter, senior instructor in the Department of Psychology and Communication, Alice Cassel, Ren Dimico, Abigail Dunn, Abigail Hale, Elizabeth Hoots, Samuel Myers, Brenna Peever, and Natalya Usachenko, travelled to Montana to receive feedback on their research projects and to network with honors students from Alaska to California. Sam Myers and Ren Dimico received a University Honors Program Grant for Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship for their research project.

The conference also included a day trip to Yellowstone Park to learn about this amazing national park.



The Looking Glass

Order a copy of the newest edition of our student-led scholarly and creative publication *The Looking Glass*. Volume 14, Issue 1 of 2018 is available for purchase now: https://marketplace.uidaho.edu/C20272_ustores/web/store_main.jsp?STOREID=137&SINGLESTORE=true



Get Engaged

Consider attending one of our upcoming Honors Thesis presentations on the Moscow campus!

- Abigail Dunn (English): “Formal and Content-Based Critiques of Authority: A Postcolonial Narratological Reading of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*”, April 23, 2019, 2-3pm IRIC Room 207
- Abigail Hale (Ecology & Conservation Biology): “In the Wake: Sediments, Phosphorus, and Recreational Boating”, May 1, 2019, 10-11am IRIC Room 207
- Dustin Cheney (Economics & Accounting): “Soviet Struggles: The Politics of Growth”, May 6, 2019, 11:00-12:00pm IRIC Room 231
- Brenna Peever (Mathematics & Physics): “Connecting the Dots: A Problem in Combinatorial Geometry”, May 7, 2019, 11:30-12:30pm IRIC Room 231

Come and celebrate our graduating seniors at the 2019 University Honors Program Graduation Celebration on May 10, 2019 from 2-3:30pm in the Administration Auditorium on the Moscow campus.

University Honors Program 2019 Graduation Celebration

Friday, May 10, 2019

2-3:30pm

Administration Auditorium

Come and celebrate our graduating University Honors Program students! Friends and family welcome! Refreshments will be served immediately following the celebration.

Stay Connected

- ◆ Follow us on Facebook and Instagram @uidahohonors
- ◆ We would like to stay in touch with you and invite you to our events and keep you updated. Please send us your updated contact information at honors@uidaho.edu.



Student Spotlight

Our feature “Student Spotlight” highlights our students’ engagement in undergraduate research, scholarship, creative activities, study abroad, internships, post-graduate and leadership opportunities.

Dustin Cheney, a senior from Weiser, ID, is engaged in undergraduate research that focuses on the relationship between politics and economics. Dustin is double-majoring in Economics and Accounting in the College of Business and Economics. Dustin embodies academic excellency as a University Honors Program



student who received many awards and recognitions, including coming to the University of Idaho as a National Merit Scholar (<https://www.nationalmerit.org>), being named a Graue Scholar in the College of Business and Economics, and being awarded an Honors Program Grant for Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship to complete an Honors Thesis. This January, Dustin presented his research on the role of government in shaping economic growth of countries, which is also the subject of his Honors Thesis, at the prestigious Harvard National Collegiate Research Conference (<https://www.ncrc.hcura.org>) at Harvard College in Cambridge, MA. Dustin travelled to the conference on his way to Southern Denmark University in Odense in Denmark, where he is currently a guest graduate student for the spring semester.

Recently, our Honors Program staff member Emily Hill conducted this long-distance interview with Dustin via email to find out more about Dustin’s research and studies:

UHP: What is your intended graduation date?

DC: For a graduation date, my semester ends in Odense, Denmark, on June 30th. I intend to graduate in Summer of 2019 after my final grades are posted.

UHP: What is the title of your poster presentation for the Harvard National Collegiate Research Conference? Can you give me a brief synopsis of your research?

DC: I called the piece “Soviet Struggles - The Politics of Growth.” (...) I use statistical tools to determine how important, if at all, the underlying rules of Western society are to economic development in Europe and some former Soviet states.

UHP: How did you become aware of this conference? What made you apply? What made you interested in your subject matter? Why are you interested in conducting research?

DC: I started researching the relationship between politics and economics a few years ago. When I took International Development Economics with Dr. Stuen, I realized I had a passion for this very specific niche of economics. (...) I chose to study development economics, because I am really interested in why certain countries grow and why others languish. In his class, Dr. Stuen explored several theories as to why some nations are more productive; more importantly, we had to do some research into a specific country to see what underlying factors help or hinder growth. I eventually focused on Eastern Europe because of how volatile the political system was and is. The Soviet Union left a gaping hole in the region, but Eastern Europe seems glossed over in other research. I often say that Eastern Europe isn't poor enough to be of interest and too rich to warrant intervention.

My prior works focused on Serbia and Kosovo, a pair of states in constant political conflict. My research has since expanded to include the region, but we all start somewhere.

When I started taking classes with my primary mentor, Dr. Akira Sasahara (who goes by his first name), I was able to do some quantitative research into measuring how politics and economics are intertwined. In one piece, I look at how productive the Serbian economy was before and after the United Nations implemented democratic policies in the country. This was my first time using data to test a hypothesis. From that moment, I worked with Akira to push this research one step further. (...) Akira helped me to get a piece to finalist status for *The Developing Economist* undergraduate journal. He also reviewed a piece that [was] published in *The Looking Glass* [the student-led scholarly and creative publication by the University Honors Program] later on.

Student Spotlight Continued

I mentioned that I wanted to think about graduate school, so I began work on completing an undergraduate thesis. (...) I went into the process trying to make my research one step closer to being published; I wanted a portfolio that showcased my work. As I began expanding on the topic, Akira shared some award-winning papers from accomplished undergraduates who were also studying development economics. Akira provided countless examples of prior works, whether professionally published or from students, that showcased what my research could accomplish. As I worked through the project, Akira suggested that I apply to the Harvard Conference. I was honestly a little daunted, but I agreed to apply. (...) I expected results within a week of the submission, so when 7 days passed, I just assumed I didn't get in. To my surprise, I got an e-mail about a week later telling me that my work was accepted. I saw the pride and excitement in Akira's face when I shared the news. I think he said congratulations and shook my hand three times in our brief meeting.

UHP: What will you be studying/researching in Denmark?

DC: In Odense, I will be starting some graduate level coursework. I will be taking financial accounting coursework to round out the degree, and I will be studying Growth Economics and a course on policy analysis.

UHP: What are your future plans after graduation?

DC: My plans after graduation aren't yet finalized. I am currently planning to attend graduate school, but my experience at Southern Denmark University in Odense will change how and where I choose to start the process. My absolute dream school would be the University of Chicago, but my trip to Harvard may change that. I am treating my study abroad experience and this conference as a way to see what the future has in store. I know that I want to pursue this work, I am simply choosing where and when to start the final degree.

UHP: Is there anything else you would like us to know?

DC: I would like to thank my thesis committee for supporting me. My mentor, Assistant Professor Akira Sasahara helped me to find my passion and to hone my skills. I want to thank Assistant Professor Dan Hickman and Professor Ray Dacey for their help with the project and for their support during the school year. The economics department at the CBE prepared me to compete with the best of the best across the country.

As a note, a large share of my prior research was done with my co-author and friend, Patrick McElligatt. I completed this piece by myself, but Patrick helped me to start this journey.

Thank you, Dustin, for taking the time to chat with us about your experiences as a student in the University Honors Program!

Alumni Profiles

Our feature “Alumni Profiles” introduces program alumni to our larger community.



Christopher Taylor, owner and CEO of Fisher's Technology in Boise, ID , '97

Recently, University Honors Program staff member Emily Hill conducted this email interview with Christopher Taylor.

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

CT: I chose the Honors Program for two reasons: 1 - The courses were different than anything else offered on campus. They were unique, interesting, and challenging courses that really caught my interest. 2 - The people in the Honors Program were intelligent, driven, and interesting. I have always believed that you cannot surround yourself with too many great people, and the Honors Program was an opportunity to do just that.

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

CT: I studied Chemical Engineering and Computer Science. I lived in the Fiji fraternity (amazing opportunity for leadership development). I did two foreign exchanges, one through the University to Sweden and one through the U.S. government to Germany (life-changing experiences).

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

CT: Many of the classes are still memorable, but perhaps the most prominent memory is a trip we took to Vancouver, Canada. We had a fantastic educational experience and also had a ton of fun.

UHP: What did you do after graduating from the University of Idaho? What are you doing now?

CT: I worked in systems consulting for Andersen Consulting (now Accenture) and KPMG Consulting (now BearingPoint). I then went back to school for an MBA from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Sloan School of Management). I now own and am CEO for Fisher's Technology, an office technology company serving Idaho, Montana, and Spokane.

UHP: What advice would you give an honors student today?

CT: Take advantage of the diversity of courses and break away from the norm (that was easy for me as an engineering student). My post-graduate advice is always: Never say no to an opportunity to speak in public. Public speaking skills are a massive accelerator for almost any career.

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

My foreign exchanges in college sparked a life-long interest in international travel. I have been able to live in, work in, and visit over 50 countries since college. And despite playing a lot, I'm terrible at golf.

Thank you, Christopher, for sharing your experiences with our larger Honors Program community!

Alumni Profiles



Joseph Nelson, partner, Van Ness Feldman LLP, Washington, D.C., '88

Recently, University Honors Program staff member Emily Hill conducted this email interview with Joseph Nelson.

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

JN: The Honors Program offered a unique approach of small class size, motivated students, and engaging professors. I always looked at it as an incubator setting where the class dynamics raised the level of engagement and overall learning experience. Plus, the courses were more advanced and demanding...which challenged me to be a better student.

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

JN: I graduated with a B.A. in English (Pre-Law) and an Honors Certificate. I lived on campus and was a member of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity. In addition to the Honors Program, I was involved in a number of social service organizations, worked as an intern at the School of Business and was a member of St. Augustine's Catholic Church.

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

JN: My favorite courses were an entomology class my sophomore year and the graduate level courses on Forest Policy and Family Law as a senior. The other vivid memory is dropping by the Honors Center to chat with Marv Henberg (Program Director) on any number of matters.

UHP: What did you do after graduating from the University of Idaho? What are you doing now?

JN: The day after graduation, I flew out to Washington DC to start work for Senator James McClure. I'm still in DC 31 years later. I practice energy and environmental law—mostly representing electric utilities and renewable energy projects.

UHP: What advice would you give an honors student today?

JN: Take classes and pursue activities that put you outside of your comfort zone. Yes, grades matter now, but the experience of learning is what will help you most in your career.

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

JN: I've lived in Washington DC for 30+ years and I still tell folks I'm from Idaho. It will always be my home.

Thank you, Joseph, for sharing your experiences with our larger Honors Program community!

Contact us

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