



Thank You to Our Alumni and Friends

Honors would like to take this opportunity to say THANK YOU. Thank you for your ongoing interest in Honors. Thank you for staying engaged with current students as mentors, recruiters, career advisors, and parents. And thank you for your generous financial support. As you read through this newsletter, know that you have helped make the Honors Program a success by supporting student engagement, research grants, attendance at academic and professional conferences, and many more of the wonderful opportunities Honors students enjoy. We are grateful for your ongoing support.



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Make a difference today and save on taxes. It's possible when you support Honors through an IRA qualified charitable distribution (QCD). This is a special opportunity for our alumni who are 70½ years old and older. Give up to \$100,000 per year, pay no taxes on the money as income, potentially satisfy all or part of your required minimum distribution, and see your gift put to use today supporting Iowa State honors students. Contact your tax advisor to discuss this option, and visit <https://giftplanning.isugift.org/ira-charitable-rollover>.

New Seminar Prepares Honors Students for Disaster Response

This October a university apartment was turned into a simulated disaster area as honors students learned how to respond to and manage an emergency. It was part of a hands-on learning experience designed for the seminar “You Are Your Own First Responder” taught by Iowa State’s emergency manager, Clayton Oliver.

Oliver wanted to bring his knowledge and expertise to students, and an honors seminar seemed like the perfect fit. The seminar included academic elements like reading case studies and action reports from disasters like the 2011 tornado in Joplin, Missouri. It also included lessons presented by other campus units, including student health, student counseling, environmental health and safety, and the Ames Fire Department.

The seminar culminated with a simulated disaster at a vacant unit in Frederiksen Court. The scenario Oliver’s team created was that of a tornado that left the building with no power and — thanks to a handful of student volunteers and highly skilled make-up artists — a number of visibly injured victims throughout the building. Students were given 30 minutes to put what they’d learned into practice: assess the scene, triage and treat the wounded, extinguish fires, and stabilize the scene until first responders arrive.

“[It was] very overwhelming,” said Remy Braun, a senior in mechanical engineering. “The first patient I saw



totally caught me off guard. I froze . . . I expected that because we knew it’s fake and it’s simulated, we wouldn’t really have any emotions or it wouldn’t really feel like it was serious. But the acting and the makeup was so realistic that it got my adrenaline pumping.”

Oliver recognized that for the majority of students something like this would be their first exposure to traumatic scenes, even simulated. “Classroom training is one thing, but engaging with someone with a severe injury and in immediate danger is different. . . . Being able to take care of yourself and your neighbors makes a community more resilient.”



Canoes, Romance, and Horses

It was a pleasure to host three Honors alumni for a special event this fall cosponsored by the University Lectures Series. Denise Williams-Klotz ('04 psychology; '15 PhD education), Trent Preszler ('98 global science policy & bioethics), and Carrie Seim ('00 journalism and mass communication) are all former Honors students and new authors. They gathered on October 21 in the Memorial Union Sun Room to discuss their recently published books. The panel was moderated by former Honors Program director Liz Beck, who prompted them with questions about their writing process and the publishing experience, including media appearances, reviewer comments, and the challenges of promoting a new book during the pandemic. The three participants offered very different perspectives on authorship because of the uniqueness of their audiences and genres.

Denise Williams-Klotz's debut romance novel, *How to Fail at Flirting*, was released last December, and was recently selected for a Goodreads Best of The Year Choice Award in the romance category. Her latest romance, *The Fastest Way to Fall*, hit book stores last month. Denise is the assistant director of the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs at Iowa State and also teaches a popular Honors seminar on romance novels as tools for social justice.

Trent Preszler's memoir and first book, *Little and Often*, shares a very personal journey processing his father's death following their long estrangement. Trent is the CEO of Bedell Cellars, a 100-acre, certified sustainable vineyard and winery on Long Island. He is also the founder of Preszler Woodshop, where he builds handcrafted canoes, an artistic endeavor he undertook with the tools his father left him.

Carrie Seim drew on her background in comedy and journalism to write two books aimed at kids. *The Flying Flamingo Sisters* is an Audible Original and was a *New York Times* pick for Best Audiobooks for Road Trips with Kids. Her most recent book, *Horse Girl*, is a middle-grade novel described as "Mean Girls meets Black Beauty." Carrie is currently the executive editor of an online magazine and splits her time between LA and New York City.

Hear them in their own words! A recording of this event is available on the Lectures Series website: [Lectures.iastate.edu/](https://lectures.iastate.edu/) recordings or scan the QR code to the right.

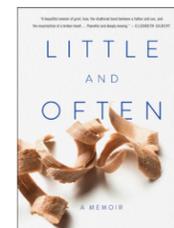


When asked how their Iowa State experience helped prepare them to write a book, they responded:

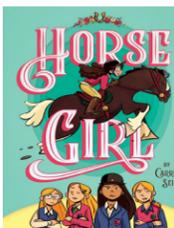
When I was a student at Iowa State I was a Cyclone Aide. I was an Honors leader, and those were places where I realized I could share my story, that I could share my voice and that it mattered. That is really what I harnessed to be a writer in academia – to write published articles – but also to write this book and have the audacity to say, here are my words, you should pay for them. . . . I do think that takes a certain amount of confidence, which I built on stages like this and in rooms like this. - Denise Williams-Klotz



Coming to Iowa State in 1995, it was like the metropolis. . . . It's the first time I had met anyone who had a different religion or belief about the world. I grew up with like the same 8 or 10 white cattle ranchers my entire childhood so it was mind-expanding, and I think it paid dividends later in life. I learned here [at ISU] not to count myself out first because no one was gonna throw you a parade. You have to do things yourself. - Trent Preszler



I came [to Iowa State] to study engineering, but I knew I didn't love engineering. I loved writing and being creative. . . . I discovered two powerhouse women when I got here to Iowa State: Liz Beck, who brought me into the Honors Program and made me feel like I had a family here, and Pat Miller, who ran the Lectures Committee and was my mentor. Those two women gave me the permission of audacity, the permission to give up the safe engineering career and try my passion." - Carrie Seim



Left to right: Emily Wilcox, Braden Westby, Paiton McDonald, Svitlana Zbarska, Andy Hammer, Drew Daly, and Karine Holmes

Undergraduate Research at the State Fair

Honors made an official appearance at the Iowa State Fair this August. Students and staff spent a morning in the ISU booth connecting with alumni and inspiring future Cyclones.

This year's ISU exhibit spotlighted the culture of innovation and entrepreneurship at the university. Honors was selected to showcase undergraduate research, an area in which it has long been a leader.

Student ambassadors attending included Braden Westby (mechanical engineering), Paiton McDonald (agricultural biochemistry), Andy Hammer (aerospace engineering), Drew Daly (industrial design), and Karine Holmes (geology). The research and creative expression they shared ranged from gender-neutral clothing design to how certain viruses affect cows' health to understanding ocean dynamics in the Eastern Equatorial Pacific.

Honors Students Named Goldwater Scholars

Two former honors undergraduate assistants have been named 2021 Goldwater Scholars. Ben Litterer and Paiton McDonald were among 410 students selected for this distinguished award from a field of more than 5,000 applicants nationwide. The Goldwater Scholarship is the premier undergraduate scholarship in mathematics, natural sciences and engineering in the United States.

Ben is a senior in data science and plans to pursue a PhD in statistics with an emphasis in bioinformatics. Paiton is a senior in agricultural biochemistry and plans to do a PhD in immunology and infectious diseases.

Alumna Wears Many Hats at ISU

Amanda Knief ('99 journalism and mass communication) has served as director of the Iowa State University Lectures Program since 2018, but her contributions on campus go well beyond arranging guest speakers. Since returning to Iowa State she has been active with the Honors Program, teaching several popular seminars. Her class offerings draw on her legal background and have covered political activism, an introduction to U.S. law, and the Constitution.

This summer Amanda expanded her service to ISU even further when she became Iowa State University's parliamentarian. In this new role she serves as an impartial advisor to the heads of both the Faculty Senate and the Professional and Scientific Council.

Amanda graduated from Iowa State with a degree in journalism and later earned a law degree from Drake University. She worked as legal counsel in the Iowa Legislature early in her career and then moved to Washington DC, where she held positions in the nonprofit and government sectors for nearly a decade. Most recently she was a legislative analyst for the Library of Congress.

Eager to return to the Midwest, Amanda was enthusiastic about the opportunity serve her alma mater as head of the Iowa State Lectures Program. She had fond memories of attending lectures while a student on campus. Under her leadership the Lectures Series has hosted such distinguished speakers as Elizabeth Smart, astronaut Scott Kelly, and Edward Snowden.

A life-long learner, Amanda is always out to challenge herself and serve others. We're excited to see where her next ISU adventure lies.

Staff Update

Leisha Estep is a new face in the Jischke Honors Building and brings a wealth of experience to the program from her previous positions in higher ed. Leisha joined Honors this fall as the coordinator of the upper-division program and staff advisor to the Honors Student Board.

Leisha moved to Iowa from Lawton, Oklahoma, where she was Coordinator of Student Success and director of the Student Enrichment Center at Cameron University. She has an undergraduate degree in history from University of the South: Sewanee and earned a master's in history at the University of Georgia. She has held positions as an advisor, director of tutoring labs, and adjunct instructor of college strategy courses and US history.

Outside of work Leisha enjoys playing board games, reading mysteries, eating at new places, and spending time with her adopted rescue dogs, Bentley and JoJo.

Keep in Touch!

There are many ways to keep in touch with Honors and your fellow alumni. Join the Iowa State University Honors Program Alumni Group on LinkedIn. Get involved with the Alumni Board. Send updates, stories, and photos to honors@iastate.edu. Check out our student blog: honorslife.wordpress.com. Find us on social media. We love to hear from you!

Stay in the Loop: News & Notes Alumni Edition

Keep in touch with what's happening with Honors alumni around the world as well as our current students, distinguished faculty, and outstanding staff here on campus. News and Notes Alumni Edition is an electronic newsletter distributed twice a semester. It includes updates, awards, opportunities, and features from our campus communication partners.

Use your phone's camera to scan this QR code to visit the archive.



With Honors



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