

WITH HONORS

SUMMER 2016 • VOL. 9

Save the Date!

Honors alumni and friends in the Seattle area are invited to meet with other alums and with current Honors students and staff during the National Collegiate Honors Council conference in October. Plan on catching up with old friends and new students as you enjoy complimentary hors d'oeuvres. We're not sure of the locale yet, but the date is Friday, October 14, 5:30-7:30 p.m. If you live in the Pacific Northwest, look for your (snail-mailed) invitation soon!

Join the Alumni Board

The Honors Alumni Board is expanding, and would like you to consider joining! Current Board members are especially interested in increasing representation from those who graduated in the 1990s, but all are invited. Up to six Board spots are open. If you are passionate about your and others' experiences in Honors, and can attend one meeting per year in Ames, please contact Honors Administrative Director Laurie Smith Law at lfiegel@iastate.edu or 515-294-4371.

In this Issue:

- External review commends Honors (2)
- Welcome Svitlana Zbarska (2)
- What's new in seminars (2)
- Catch up with alumni (3)
- News from around Jischke (4)
- Tell us *your* news (4)

Research Takes Center Stage

It's sometimes said that the Honors Program is ISU in miniature; these days, it seems ISU aspires to be Honors writ large. A draft of the university's strategic plan for 2017-22 certainly echoes Honors' ethos in saying that the university's "best invention is its students."

The plan states, "Half of [ISU] undergraduates major in science, technology, engineering and math fields"; in Honors, it's close to two-thirds, though Honors students are found in all colleges. The strategic plan also mentions ISU's research labs and outstanding academic programs in agriculture, technology, and life science, where Honors students are very active. In fact, membership in Honors is even included among "high-impact educational activities" that will help the university reach its goal of giving students an "exceptional education."

Honors students distinguished themselves in research this year. More than 200 first-year students participated in the Research Mentor Program, which is increasingly popular with faculty. Three of ISU's four nominees for the Goldwater Scholarship, a prestigious honors for undergraduates seeking careers in research, were Honors students: Charles Labuzzetta (Mathematics), Catherine Le Denmat (Chemical Engineering), and Sam Schulte (Biochemistry). Sam won a Goldwater and Charlie received honorable mention.

In addition Curtis Ullerich ('12, Computer Engineering) was a finalist for a Gates-Cambridge scholarship for study in the U.K., and Goren Micevic ('10, Biochemistry), received a Soros Fellowship, established in 1997 for immigrants or children of immigrants.

Current Honors students and recent alumni have also won several National Science Foundation (NSF) awards for graduate study. Britteny Ross (senior, Chemistry) received an NSF this year, and seniors Jacob Sporrer (Materials Engineering), Rochelle Starrett (Civil Engineering), and Anna Rogers (Genetics) received honorable mention.

Also, Rachel Philip Creighton ('15, Materials Engineering), at Washington, Garrett Smith ('14, Microbiology and Genetics), at Ohio State, and Stephanie DeGraaf ('15, Mathematics and Statistics), at Berkeley, have received NSF fellowships, while Rachel Kirpes ('14, Chemistry and Environmental Science) received honorable mention.

Let's not think that such accolades accrue only to STEM students, Krista Klocke (senior, Speech Communication and Communication Studies) will remain at Iowa State next year, in the doctoral program in Rhetoric and Professional Communication. She'll have a souvenir to take with her to grad school – the Wallace E. Barron Award for outstanding senior.

Endowment Reaches Threshold

Launched last spring, the Honors Student Enrichment Fund has passed the \$25,000 threshold for endowment status. This means that interest from the account will be available to support student work in research, professional development such as conference travel, and completion of Honors projects.

Cont. on p.3

Svitlana Zbarska Takes on Research



Dr. Svitlana Zbarska is a new face in the Jischke Honors Building, but an old hand at working at Iowa State. Svitlana has taken on the position of Iowa State's Undergraduate Research Coordinator, replacing Michael Lyons. Svitlana earned B.S. degrees in Physics and Finance and an M.S. in Biophysics, all at Shevchenko National University in Kiev, Ukraine, before coming to Iowa State for a Ph.D. in Neuroscience.

Since earning her doctorate in 2007 Svitlana has worked as a postdoc in the Department of Genetics, Development and Cell Biology and as an Assistant Scientist in the Department of Biomedical Sciences. While in those positions, she worked with dozens of undergraduates who were engaged in research, including Honors students, participants in Research Experiences for Undergraduates, and interns with Science Undergraduate Laboratory Internships at the Ames Lab. Over the last several years Svitlana served as the Midwest

representative of the ISU Postdoctoral Association and the chair of the organization's committee for the Postdoctoral Research Symposium, which brought together post-doctoral researchers from several states. Taking on such complex tasks makes Svitlana's new job, coordinating and increasing undergraduate research not just in Honors but across the university, just a bit less daunting.

Svitlana's new role involves meeting with students, faculty, and staff who may be interested in undergraduate research, developing mentored relationships between faculty and students, and showcasing the results of undergraduates' research efforts. She just completed her first experience with Research in the Capitol, bringing 20 ISU students to meet legislators in the Iowa capitol in Des Moines, and the university's annual Symposium on Undergraduate Research & Creative Expression.

When not engaging students and faculty on research, Svitlana is a devoted mother. Svitlana and her husband, Sergiy Markutsya, Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Kentucky, have two daughters. Alina, 11, is a promising competitive gymnast, and, Uliana, 5, looks to be following in her footsteps. Svitlana speaks to them in Russian, although they switch languages with the ease of tumbling across a mat.

There's No Honors Seminar on the Kitchen Sink - Yet!

Peer into a Jischke classroom almost any day in the spring semester and you'll find students engaged in Honors Seminars. This term's topics ranged from "Improvisational Comedy" and "Buffy the Wonder Woman" to "Studies in Global Warming" and "Epigenetics: Why What Your Grandpa Ate May Affect Your Health." In "Unplugged," a seminar on getting away from technology, Gary Guthrie ('79, Agronomy) spoke about Growing Harmony Farm near Nevada, IA, one of the state's first

community-supported agriculture (CSA) farms. He also related how he and his wife Nancy, currently director of Study Abroad for the LAS College, lived a very "unplugged" life in their younger days in South America.

The fall '16 seminars include some that are intriguingly mysterious (for example, "+Design") while others are blunt ("Is Science Perfect? Nope. Do We Understand Why? Yup"). New seminars this fall will be offered on the national park system, number theory, and whether today's generation will be better off than their parents. Especially popular on sign-up day was "The Science of Stress," in which students will use saliva samples to measure stress hormones. Talk about a "wet lab"!

Reviewers Commend Program

In a recent external review, two deans of Honors colleges praised the Honors program as "vibrant." François Amar of the University of Maine, and Jim Ruebel at Ball State (and former Professor of Classics at Iowa State) singled out the "distinctive and high quality" of First-Year Honors and opportunities for first-year students in the Research Mentor Program.

The reviewers suggested improvements in communication (already underway with a revamped website) and funding, especially for student support and faculty development. They also encouraged the program to offer sophomores distinctive experiences that will improve the program's retention and graduation rates. In that regard, the program is developing sophomore-specific workshops as well as a "buddy program" that links new Honors students, including transfer students, with upperclassmen. Both reviewers mentioned successful aspects of Honors' "mature and successful program" that they would like to adapt at their own institutions.



Gary Guthrie chats about being "Unplugged."

From Hogwarts to Law Prof



Like many Honors alums, Sarah Fackrell Burstein ('04, Art & Design, Journalism and Mass Communication) left her mark on campus. In her case, one mark—a poster created for an

Honors seminar on Harry Potter—has been prominently on display in another iteration of that perennially popular class. Sarah's poster, featuring heraldic crests for each of the four houses of Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry, combined her interests in the novels and design. Both interests still play a role in her career.

Sarah attended law school at the University of Chicago after graduation, then took a job at a large Chicago firm, working in the

area of intellectual property. A few of her cases involved design patents, "a topic no one talked about in law school," she said. At the same time, Sarah "started flirting with the idea" of becoming a law professor. "There was a case that got patent lawyers paying attention to design patents, but the law was underdeveloped and, as far as I could tell, no one writing in that area had any education or experience in design. So it seemed like an opportunity for me." Since private practice and scholarly articles don't often mix, Sarah "went back home" to clerk for (then-Chief) Judge Pratt, in the U.S. District Court for Iowa's Southern District, and wrote an article on design patents. She was soon taken on by the University of Oklahoma College of Law, where she is now an associate professor.

Sarah thinks her Honors seminars have proved most useful in her career. "I took

Honors seminars just for fun—I wanted to explore areas outside of my majors. And now I work in a field where the scholarship is increasingly interdisciplinary. So being able to converse with people in a variety of fields is particularly helpful." Sometimes, the subject of a seminar pops up in unexpected ways: "For example, the things I learned in the Harry Potter seminar have come in particularly handy when I teach Harry Potter cases in Copyright."

As one might expect for a career in legal academia, Sarah has found writing to be "the most useful skill," and her writing has been praised as clarifying what can be a murky area, patent law. Another of Sarah's useful traits? "Stubbornness has been my most useful attitude—holding my own course even when it didn't always make sense to other people." Members of the Wizengamot would, no doubt, agree.

Expert on Migration... Often Migrates

Susan Fratzke Brucker ('09, Political Science and International Studies) recently surfaced in Malmo, Sweden, as part of her work as a policy analyst with the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) in Washington, D.C. There, she focuses on how to assess and improve policies regarding international immigration and refugees. Much of Susan's time in the last two years has been devoted to the European refugee and migration crisis.

Susan has long been interested in European affairs, where immigration is a significant topic, and spent a post-college year with AmeriCorps, working alongside volunteers helping immigrant and refugee adults

in Minnesota. Those experiences helped her appreciate the real-world impact of policy on individuals and communities. Georgetown University offered what she calls a "somewhat miraculous opportunity" to merge her interests through a master's program in German and European Studies, after which she interned with the migration and humanitarian affairs office at the State Department's Mission to the European Union in Brussels. "After completing my master's degree, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to join the International Program at MPI," she says.

About her current job, Susan says that having "an open and critical mind" has been crucial to her work. Policies are often based on underlying assumptions, and it's necessary to question these as well as consider the tradeoffs and consequences of decisions that can affect families and economies. Nothing, she adds, about international migrations "is ever as simple or clear cut as it seems."

The ability to question assumptions and think critically was honed in Honors, which Susan says gave her exposure to

"different viewpoints and ways of thinking about critical issues. I still remember my Honors seminar, 'Understanding War' with Jean-Pierre Taoutel, which helped me appreciate the individual consequences of conflict and violence." Susan also remembers how discussions with friends and classmates from multiple academic backgrounds taught her "to question my own thinking and assumptions."



When Susan isn't trekking to world capitals, she lives in Alexandria, VA with her husband Shane Brucker, a 2010 ISU grad in Aerospace Engineering whom she met when they both lived in Harwood. Quite apart from meeting Shane, Susan has fond memories of Harwood: "Some of my closest friendships were formed during late-night conversations in Lyon or over dinners at Oak-Elm," she says. "The chance to connect in such a deep way, and the support friends provided, was invaluable."

Endowment

Cont. from p.1

The Honors Student Enrichment Fund remains a point of emphasis for members of the Honors Alumni Board and for the ISU Foundation. Laurie Smith-Law, Administrative Director of Honors, is working with the Foundation to increase the fund. To contribute, go to www.foundation.iastate.edu/honors.

NEWS AND NOTES ABOUT HONORS

❁ Crack journalists

Not all research or leadership happens in labs – that’s clear from the accomplishments of many Honors students who focus on journalism. Recent high-fliers in this area include Emily Barske (junior, Journalism and Marketing), who will take the reins at the ISU Daily in Fall 2016. Nicole Friesema (junior, Advertising and Psychology) will chair the Iowa State Daily Publication Board in the fall. Traer Schon (senior, Journalism and Mass Communication), edited the campus magazine *Ethos* this year, and Lissandra Villa (senior, Journalism and Mass Communication), co-founded and edited another campus magazine, *Veritas*. In fact, Lissa’s second issue of *Veritas* was the foundation of her senior Honors project.

❁ First Honors week a success

The Honors Student Board organized an “Honors Week” this spring which, it is hoped, will become an annual event. The week kicked off with a pizza party after a general cleanup of Jischke. Other events included a reunion of First-Year Honors Program sections, a game night, fundraiser (which included temporarily “jailing” several members of the staff), stress relief day, an Honors Salon with Alex Stoytchev, Associate Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, and a campus version of “The Amazing Race.” HSB raised more than \$200 for Kiva, a micro-loan organization.

❁ Revamped website shows way to Honors graduation

Honors has rolled out a new website, organized by Assistant Director Dana Schumacher with technical support from Sumeet Panchal (first-year, Computer Science), and Jon Thielen (junior, Meteorology). In addition to being more intuitive, the newly designed site helps students measure their progress in a semester-by-semester countdown to graduation. You can check out the site at www.honors.iastate.edu.

Please let us know what you’re up to!

The Honors Program staff would like to update the Family Book this summer, but it can’t be done without your help! Please fill out and mail us the insert sheet in this newsletter, or use an electronic form at honors.iastate.edu/alumni/familybook.php, to let us know of your news, achievements, and milestones. Then check our web page later this summer for updates! Questions? Contact Diane Maxwell at dmaxwell@iastate.edu.

WITH HONORS

Iowa State University
Honors Program
2130 Jischke Honors Building
Ames, IA 50011