



# The Honors Challenge



*Expanding  
Knowledge*

Sabine Gross

Tell us about your Honors experience! Visit our Facebook page ([go.wisc.edu/LSHonorsFacebook](https://go.wisc.edu/LSHonorsFacebook)) or email us at [honors@honors.ls.wisc.edu](mailto:honors@honors.ls.wisc.edu).

## CONTENTS

**2** From the Director

**4** Helping Honors  
Students Reach  
Their Goals

**6** Ancient Knowledge  
Provides a New  
Perspective on  
Medicine

## Staff

### Director

Sabine Gross

### Associate Director of Administrative Services

Matt Kohlstedt

### Associate Director of Academic Services

Jacqui Guthrie

### Academic Advisor

Maria Hartwig

### Program Administrator

Erin Warner

### Speech Team Coach

Ben Jedd

### Peer Advisors

Elizabeth Dahl

Ben Kinzer

Sarah Larson

### Office Assistants

Julia Lucey-Arneberg

McKenzie Maccaux

### Find us on Facebook

[go.wisc.edu/LSHonorsFacebook](http://go.wisc.edu/LSHonorsFacebook)

Washburn Observatory

1401 Observatory Drive

Madison, WI 53706-1209

608-262-2984

[honors@honors.ls.wisc.edu](mailto:honors@honors.ls.wisc.edu)

[www.honors.ls.wisc.edu](http://www.honors.ls.wisc.edu)

### Design

University Marketing

### Cover photo

Ralph Grunewald

*The Honors Challenge* is the alumni and friends newsletter of the L&S Honors Program, and is produced using gifts from alumni and friends.

© 2018 The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison is an equal-opportunity and affirmative-action educator and employer. We promote excellence through diversity in all programs.



Sarah Morton

## *From the Director* Sabine Gross

### Dear friends, alumni, and supporters:

As fall brings a new group of Honors freshmen to campus, I treasure the opportunity to meet as many of them as possible—at our Fall Kickoff Picnic, at the First-Year Dinner, as members of the Honors Student Organization or other groups, or in individual conversations. Learning about their interests and goals also helps me and the Honors team plan for next year's Honors course offerings with my faculty colleagues, who play such a crucial role in offering a rich and varied Honors curriculum.

As Honors Director, it is my privilege to interact with our marvelous students and with outstanding, enthusiastic faculty who care deeply about teaching. Reading Dean Scholz's message, I remember receiving a Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award many years ago, and how wonderful it felt to be appreciated for teaching. Like many of my colleagues, I cherish messages from current and former students telling me that my teaching has made a difference in their lives. And the Honors Program recognizes faculty who stand out each year—by nomination from students—as “Distinguished Honors Faculty.” This past May, we honored seven such faculty, selected from many deserving nominees. Their listing in this newsletter is not the only way in which we highlight teaching. You will also find a special Honors course for first-year students portrayed; our Senior Honors Thesis

topics and symposium showcase ambitious faculty-student projects; and you will read how Honors alumna Joyce Bromley and professor emeritus Dan Bromley, Honors supporters both, sum up the core of a university education in the liberal arts.

Keeping a university education affordable and increasing access is a continuing challenge. The Honors Program aims to contribute by offering students funding for extraordinary opportunities and welcoming students of every profile and background. You can help us increase our means of doing so, and we are very grateful for your support, which goes to students who are seeking to expand their own knowledge and ours. Their dedication and idealism inspire confidence about the future and the responsibilities they are eager to take on.

I hope that you will enjoy this newsletter as much as I like putting it together and sending you these introductory words. Please write and send me your stories of teaching and learning and of other successes!

*All best from Madison,*

L&S Honors Program Director and  
Professor of German  
[director@honors.ls.wisc.edu](mailto:director@honors.ls.wisc.edu)

## Fall 2018 Message from the Dean

Every year, I wait eagerly for the results of the Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Awards. The honor has been given out since 1953 to recognize the university's finest educators. The vast majority—at least nine out of twelve every year—go to L&S faculty.

I'm always humbled and a bit surprised. After all, we have only 39% of the faculty at UW–Madison. But in Letters & Science we care about great teaching because we teach 64% of undergraduate credit hours (and 57% of all the credit hours taught on the UW–Madison campus). Moreover, knowledge creation and outstanding teaching often go hand in hand.

It is a myth that great research comes at the expense of great experiences in the classroom. Many of our internationally known scholars can be found working with undergraduates in labs and in archives, organizing first-year interest groups, and developing innovative teaching methods. We call these “high-impact practices,” and they happen across the college, in large lecture classes (where one professor implemented small but important changes in the way he called on students, ensuring that all had a voice), and smaller courses (like the Shakespeare course that visited the Chazen Museum to view relics from the bard's era).

Our faculty bring talent, passion, imagination, humor, and empathy into their classrooms every day. If you could see, as I do, the notes from our graduating L&S seniors recalling their favorite professors, you would understand that not only do our faculty create knowledge, but they also change lives. I couldn't be more proud of what they do.

Thank you for all you do to support the College of Letters & Science at UW–Madison.

*On, Wisconsin!*

Dean Karl Scholz

## Honors Welton Summer Research Apprentices



Honors Welton Summer Research Apprenticeship Program: participants at the Hilltop retreat after a day of discussion on July 18, 2018.

# Helping Honors Students Reach Their Goals

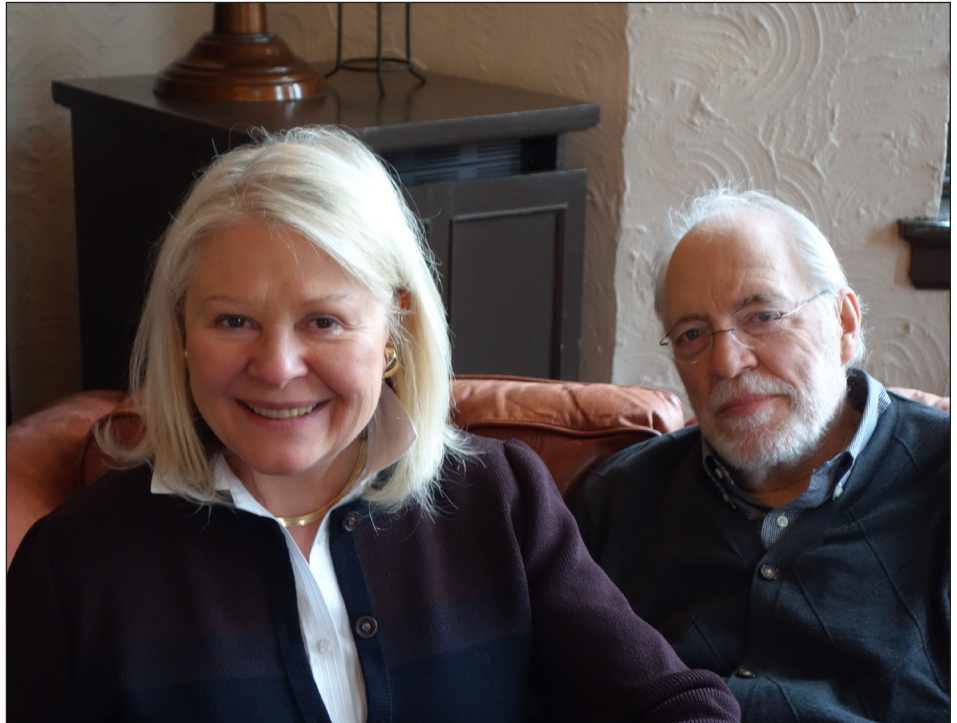
## *A Conversation with Joyce and Dan Bromley*

By Sabine Gross

On a chilly winter day, Joyce and Dan Bromley radiated warmth as we met in the University Club for lunch. I wanted to learn about their reasons for providing a generous annual gift of financial support for Honors students to present their research at national and international conferences. I discovered that as an Honors student, Joyce had received one of the coveted Hilldale Undergraduate Research awards and that the opportunity to conduct research had been a turning point in her own undergraduate career.

Joyce Bromley's academic career was motivated by the idea that "you go to the university to learn *how* to learn, not for what you learn." It was put on hold by marriage and raising a family—and by a variety of administrative positions at UW–Madison. Finally, in 1987, while several of their own children were on campus, she returned to finish her Bachelor of Arts degree in the L&S Honors Program, majoring in History (with a Certificate in Medieval Studies). Upon graduating, she received one of the two awards for Outstanding Returning Adult Student and went on to earn an MA in the History of Science. Her reason for returning to school after two decades was her desire to "be exposed to different ideas."

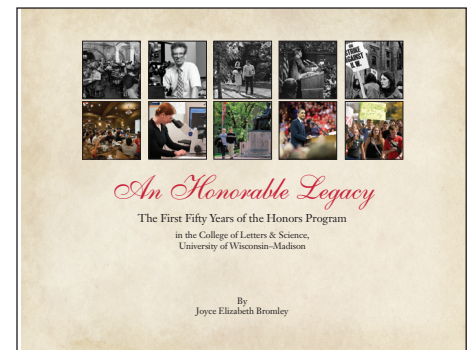
Dan was a faculty member at UW–Madison for more than forty years and is now the Anderson-Bascom Professor of Applied Economics emeritus. Dan has contributed to the educational journey of students in many ways. His passion as an educator and researcher sustained him while he served—for a remarkable forty-four years—as editor of the journal *Land Economics*, a major



Joyce and Dan Bromley at the UW–Madison University Club.

forum for scholarship on the economic aspects of natural and environmental resources. Dan has worked in more than twenty-five countries, and in 2012 received a major award from Germany's Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for outstanding contributions to the social sciences. While he was teaching at Humboldt University in Berlin (2009–2012), Joyce launched a multi-year oral-history project that resulted in a book on the impact of German reunification in the former East Germany (*German Reunification: Unfinished Business*, Routledge 2017). They share a passion for knowledge and a deep belief in the value of the liberal arts, as illustrated by a statement from B.F. Skinner that Dan likes to quote: "Education is what remains after what was learned has been forgotten."

The Bromleys have been generous supporters of Honors for many years. The Bromley Conference Grant enabling students to present their



### **Bromley's History of the Honors Program**

research at major conferences has a significant impact on grant recipients. One student proudly reports that "my poster presentation was one of three that won the Undergraduate Poster Competition" at a national conference, and that she "was able to personally speak with leading scientists in the field and learn more about their extraordinary work that I had only previously read about." She sums up: "Attending the conference has cemented my passion for research." Another

conference grant recipient emphasizes the value of “seeing collaborative work from all across the country” and appreciates having “gained a strong understanding of how the research that I’m interested in translates into cool real-world applications.” Joyce notes that she and Dan are deeply gratified by the letters they receive from recipients of the Bromley Grant. Those testimonies herald the passion and excellence of an undergraduate degree from UW–Madison.

There is yet another bond between Joyce Bromley and the Honors Program, one that showcases Joyce’s strength as a historian—as she puts it, “establishing relationships and telling the personal histories of people.” When previous Honors Director Chuck Snowdon assembled a committee to prepare the 50th anniversary celebration of Honors in 2010, Joyce agreed to join. At one of the meetings, she suggested: “We need a history of this program!” Chuck Snowdon looked at her and said: “Yes—and we’re hoping you will write it.” Joyce stepped up to the challenge. Based on hundreds of hours of archival research and personal interviews (I remember Joyce writing to me at the time, since I was an Honors faculty instructor and student mentor), her history of the Honors Program was published in 2010. *An Honorable Legacy: The First Fifty Years of the Honors Program* is essential reading for anyone interested in the first fifty years of the L&S Honors Program. I consider it my “director’s handbook.” Thank you, Joyce, for creating that wonderful book. And thank you, Joyce and Dan, for your unfailing generosity and commitment to Honors and your conviction that supporting Honors students helps shape a bright and better future—for them and for others.

## 2018 Distinguished Honors Faculty

This year, an unprecedented 23 faculty members were nominated by 39 students deeply appreciative of their enthusiasm in the classroom and lab, their support and encouragement, and their willingness to engage beyond regular instruction. Making the final selection among many very strong nominations was a difficult task. Our seven 2018 Distinguished Honors Faculty represent the full scope of Letters & Science:

1. Allyson Bennett, Associate Professor of Psychology
2. Kathryn Ciancia, Assistant Professor of History
3. Chad Goldberg, Professor of Sociology
4. Katherine Hustad, Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders
5. Seth McGee, Biocore Lab Manager
6. Judith Mitchell, Professor of English in the Program in Creative Writing
7. Elliott Sober, Hans Reichenbach Professor of Philosophy

Here’s what students have to say:

*There is not a thing I do not feel I could turn to ask Dr. Bennett for help with.*

*The knowledge and mentorship I have gained from Professor Ciancia will shape my future post-undergraduate plans.*

*I learned more in Professor Goldberg’s class than I ever have before, and he made me want to work harder and perform my very best.*

*Dr. Hustad’s unconditional love for what she does and willingness to mentor students inspires me.*

*Seth has transformed the way I think about my education and has given me a completely new appreciation for the environment.*

*Judy writes more detailed and comprehensive critiques for students’ stories than any other professor I’ve had.*

*Professor Sober is an awesome philosopher, mentor, and life friend.*



Allyson Bennett (right)



Katherine Hustad (right)



Seth McGee (center)



Elliott Sober (left)

# Ancient Knowledge Provides a New Perspective on M

Many Honors students have an interest in the medical sciences. First-year students looking for a humanities course with relevance for medical knowledge now have a special opportunity to satisfy that interest while gaining knowledge of classical Greek and Roman authors. For the past two fall semesters, James McKeown, Professor of Classics, has offered a small Honors seminar for freshmen on “Ancient Medicine” as the core course of a FIG, or “First-Year Interest Group,” a cluster of three courses (see the UW–Madison FIG website for details: [www.figs.wisc.edu](http://www.figs.wisc.edu)).

McKeown’s seminar is the “anchor” of an Honors FIG: paired with a Chemistry course and a Religious Studies course for a FIG named “Perspectives on Medicine and Healing,” it provides a unique perspective on classical traditions of medical thinking that will often surprise students. This is how student Rachel Sina sums up her experience in this



Professor McKeown with Honors student Rachel Sina in his Van Hise office on campus.

Honors class: “Not only did I relish exploring my curiosities and developing a unique knowledge base in this course, but I was able to expand my intellectual horizons and draw connections with many of my other courses.” Rachel says that she “will certainly miss the days our class spent musing together about everything from ancient medical pioneers to the hilarious treatments

used in antiquity.” Among such treatments: patients who had a fish bone stuck in their throat might be encouraged to swallow a small sponge on a thread intended to catch the bone; for intestinal blockages, one recommendation was to swallow a lead pill. Eating a fledgling swallow was supposed to ward off angina for a whole year, and eating boiled viper meat was said to improve



McKeown with some of the animals he and his wife keep at their rural home.

eyesight and the nervous system in general.

McKeown's friendly and approachable demeanor belies his stature as a major Classics scholar whose scope of knowledge seems inexhaustible. His interests are similarly wide-ranging: outside the boundaries of the campus, he makes his home in rural southern Wisconsin, where he raises pigs and alpacas. As the author of *A Cabinet of Ancient Medical Curiosities. Strange Tales and Surprising Facts from the Healing Arts of Greece and Rome* (Oxford University Press, 2017), McKeown is one of the international experts on Classical medicine.

McKeown's seminar ranges from the mundane to the eccentric. Students are intrigued to learn that ancient doctors would diagnose a patient's pulse as—for instance—“ant-like,” “mouse-tailed,” or “running backwards.” Participants discuss attitudes toward doctors and illness and discover the role of religion and magic in ancient medicine, including magic amulets and the influence of the sun, the moon, and the planets then known (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury) on specific organs and senses. They explore modes of diagnosis as well as pre-modern anatomical knowledge. McKeown points out that there was little consensus among philosophers, physicians, and other scientists about where the key part of the body that controls all the other parts was located: the heart and the brain were contenders, but so were the chest, the space between the eyebrows, or the stomach.

In the classroom, McKeown presents his encyclopedic knowledge accessibly and based on a model of student engagement that one student approvingly characterizes as “workshop style”: students

do the class readings and for each class, in preparation for discussion, send him comments detailing what they've learned, what they found surprising, and what questions they have. McKeown does not assign set topics for class projects, but makes suggestions and meets with every student individually to help them find a research topic tailored to their interests. Students have investigated such topics as mental illness in antiquity, military medicine, childbirth and women's medical issues in antiquity, or food and medicine. In their projects, McKeown wants students to do two things in particular: to engage

with primary texts, and to develop and present their own thoughts on the material. The extent to which he succeeds in fostering this spirit of discovery and exploration is borne out by students' enthusiasm. Talking to students in the class, it is clear that they find it deeply engaging, rewarding, and eye-opening. As Lauren Bluhm sums up: “Coming into the course, I expected interesting content, but not nearly to the degree that I have experienced throughout the semester. Ancient medicine continues to surprise and fascinate me, from the concept of wandering wombs to using spider webs to close wounds.”

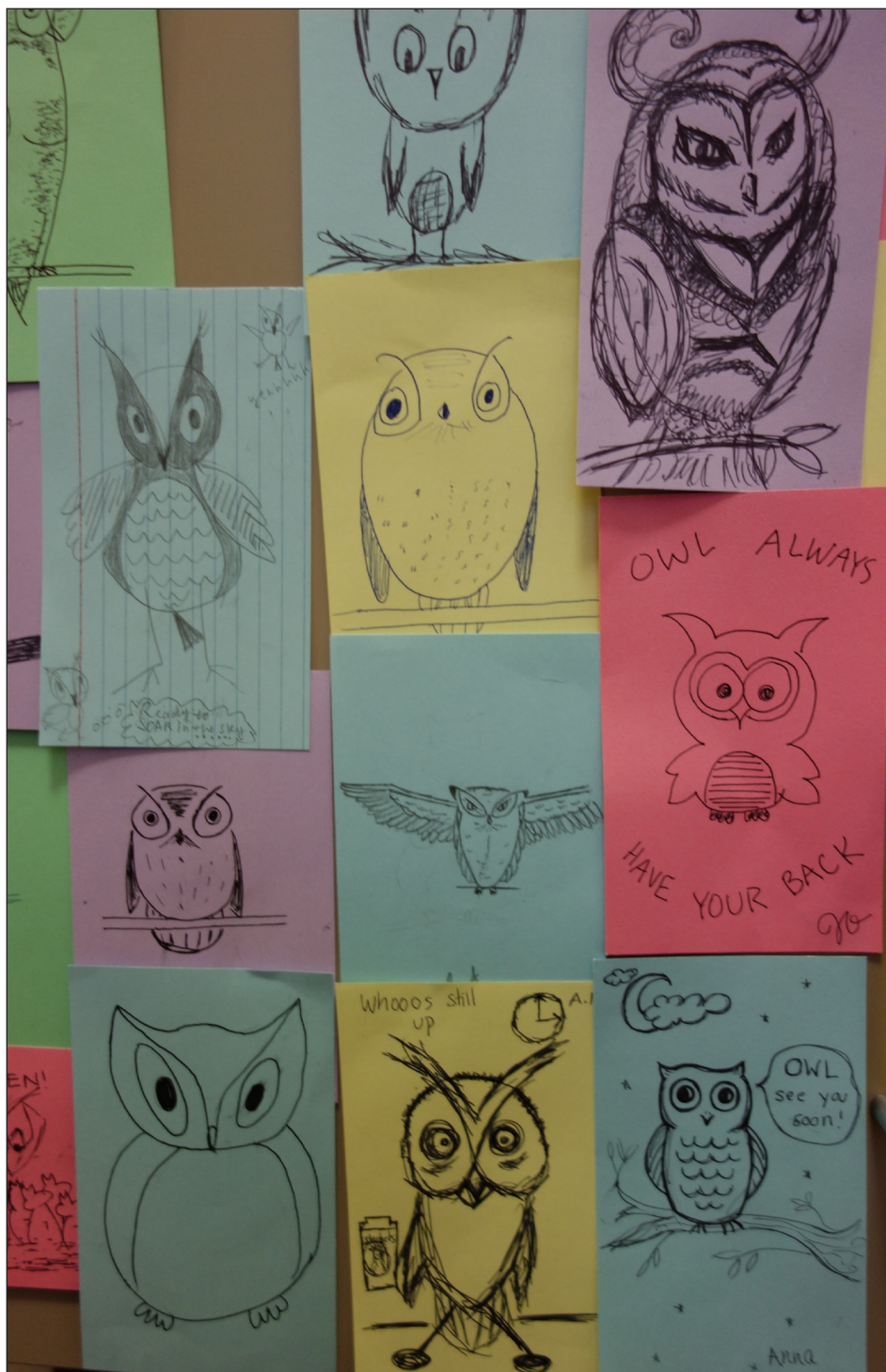
Every April, the annual Posters in the Rotunda showcases undergraduate research from all UW System campuses in the State Capitol. The event, open to all, gives students the opportunity to discuss their work with lawmakers, the public, and representatives from all campuses. It is a spectacular setting for an awe-inspiring display of the degree to which all UW schools help expand knowledge. Among the half dozen UW–Madison undergraduate projects selected, L&S Honors is usually well represented. On April 11, Honors students Evan Hernandez, Lucas Oxtoby, and Negassi Tesfamichael displayed their projects.



Honors Director Sabine Gross with Negassi Tesfamichael (Comprehensive Honors '18) in front of his poster. Negassi presented his work on “The Invisible Primary Versus Real Elections: Advance Politicking in Presidential Politics, 1980–2016,” conducted with faculty mentor and Political Science Professor Byron Shafer.

# The Honors Owls

*The Honors owls are intended to help new students set and achieve goals. As Associate Director Jacqui Guthrie, head of Honors Advising, explains: “The Honors Program Advising Team is here to help students choose classes, of course. But beyond that, advisors aspire to prompt students to reflect on their innate skills, core values and interests, and to see the opportunities at UW–Madison, curricular and otherwise, as a platform to spring toward fulfilling their purpose in life.”*



**By Sarah Larson, Peer Advisor and Honors student**

Every summer at SOAR (Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration) we have our incoming L&S Honors Program students draw a picture of an owl. We explain to them that, in many cultures, the owl is seen as a symbol of wisdom; we believe our extraordinary students exhibit this wisdom, and thus deem this project appropriate.

On the back of their owl drawings, we ask students to write down a goal that they have for themselves during their first semester at UW–Madison. Beyond personal and academic goals, we encourage students to think of goals they can develop in pursuit of exemplifying a liberally educated person (harkening back to Professor William Cronon’s landmark essay entitled “*Only Connect...*”: *The Goals of a Liberal Education*). By suggesting they will develop skills at UW that will accompany them for the rest of their lives, we hope to enable our students to be more mindful of the benefits of a liberal education beyond just academic coursework.

We believe that there are other benefits to this task as well. After a morning of enrolling in college courses for the first time (for some students, this process might take longer and be more stressful than for others), taking the time to draw an owl can provide a chance to give their brain a rest and focus on something different. For other students, the opportunity to laugh at the artistic ability displayed by themselves and their peers can serve as a bonding experience. While contemplating a first-semester goal that they might have for themselves, our incoming freshmen are inquisitive and eager to make the most of their time here.

# A Welcome Visitor

Many of our students don't realize that we return their owls to them during the next group advising session once classes begin; they enjoy the opportunity to be reminded of the goals they set for themselves earlier in the summer, and to brainstorm action items they can do to accomplish them.

Here are some goals set by members of the x'22 class:

- Create a song using rap vocals and cello.
- Focus on getting everything that I can out of my classes. I want to gain deeper understanding of the content instead of focusing on the grade I get.
- Find a healthy balance between academics, social life, and personal health and fitness.
- Find a rhythm to life in college and to kick Chem's ass! You got this!! Also to just get really into learning. Make the most out of your classes, dude. Good luck!
- To nurture and empower the people around me. Motivate myself and use my time wisely. It's time to take responsibility and do my best consistently.
- Be able to talk with anyone—I struggle to connect with others and make close friends, but hope to change that at UW!
- Have fun! Learn things out of my comfort zone and work hard but find balance.
- Even though I am a science major, I really hope to improve my skills as a writer (to write more clearly and persuasively).
- Not to be afraid to ask for help when I need it.

## By Sabine Gross

Pat Fessenden likes Washburn Library—so she told me on her first visit, this summer, to the lovingly restored Observatory that has served Honors as a home for some years now. Many Honors alums will remember Pat, who was the Letters & Science Assistant Dean for Honors from the late 1980s into the 1990s, working with Faculty Directors Marion Meyer and Gail Geiger. Pat has been an active and happy retiree for a decade now, after a long career on campus that also included such activities as serving on student award and scholarship committees and more than two decades of mentoring Chancellor's and Dean's students.

While much about the Honors Program has changed, the memories that Pat shared with me also highlight continuities. She recalls the intensity of the summer advising period (SOAR) for incoming students and the ongoing dialogue with faculty members who want to learn more about Honors and are happy to work with Honors students. "Our faculty was so good at mentoring students and responding to special requests for research help," she tells me. I was glad to be able to confirm for Pat that this is just as true today as it was twenty and thirty years ago.



---

## Alumni News

**James Taylor Ranney '66** published *World Peace Through Law: Replacing War with the Global Rule of Law* with Routledge in 2017. An early graduate of the L&S Honors Program, Ranney has most recently taught International Law at Widener Law School in Delaware after a career that included the practice of criminal law, positions as University Legal Counsel and Research Professor of Law, as Assistant District Attorney, and as Legal Consultant to a United Nations Criminal Tribunal.

**Phoenix Rice-Johnson '16** (Comprehensive Honors, Dean's Prize) received a prestigious 2018 Marshall Scholarship that will take her to the United Kingdom to study best practices for running elections, engaging marginalized voters, and combating voter ID laws. She intends to bring that knowledge back to the US to increase voter turnout, especially among people of color and low-income people.

# Expanding Knowledge through Senior Honors Thesis

The Senior Honors Thesis Symposium, funded by generous donors Todd Franks and Nancy Bodinet, is a new Honors tradition that has already had a lasting impact on the program and its students. Each April for the past six years, thirty to forty Honors students have assembled in Memorial Union or Union South for a day-long celebration of academic achievement. One April Saturday it snowed, and on others it has rained. One beautiful April day, the music from the Memorial Union Terrace beckoned so strongly that attendees could barely resist its gravitational pull.

The range and originality of work and lively discussions made the April 2018 Symposium eminently worth attending. Did you know it was possible to combine Astronomy and Biology for a Senior Honors Thesis? Maria Kalam-bokidis did just that in “Examining Habitability of Exoplanets: Directed Evolution in Extraterrestrial Environments.” Kyle Watter (Botany) started with a deceptively simple question and discovered that it had no simple answer: “Why does a tree grow where it grows?” To find out, he crisscrossed Wisconsin, staying in campgrounds to conduct an ambitious study on “How Canopy Tree Species Gradients Affect Tree Seedling Recruitment in Northern Wisconsin Forests.”

Emma Hunt (Psychology) conducted a study with 100 UW–Madison undergraduates that asked: “Do Emotions Matter More? An analysis of whether hot and cold versions of cognitive control differentially predict life outcomes.” Evan Hernandez (Computer Sciences) focused on computer-science education and discussed ways of enhancing educational programming environments. Ross Dahlke (Journalism and Political Science) investigated the motivations of political donors. Jorgo Lika (Genetics)

designed “a *Drosophila* model to investigate the long-term effects of blunt trauma early in development.” Priyanka Panjwani (Economics) offered insights into the educational attainment of second-generation immigrants. Emma Sayner (History) followed the traces of Holocaust tourism. Lillie Levin (Communication Arts) explored the multi-directional relationship between humans, technologies, and democratic discourse in a thesis on the “Rhetoric of Threaded Interface and Counterpublics in Online Spaces.” Projects focused on Wisconsin, Poland, Bosnia, and Chile, on the 18th century through the present and future, on medical progress, and human interaction. Trust us: the presentations were as illuminating as the titles and topics imply.



Evan Hernandez



Ross Dahlke



Maria Kalam-bokidis and her faculty mentor, Professor of Astronomy Eric Wilcots

The 2019 Senior Honors Thesis Symposium is scheduled for April 13 in Memorial Union. If you are in Madison, feel free to stop by for a session.

Two of our Senior Honors Thesis presenters also spoke at the Honors Graduation Reception in May. Maria Kalam-bokidis highlighted the human element in scientific discovery: “As a scientist, I am driven to explore the world around me, and while scientific inquiry is important for understanding the context in which we live, we will only find meaning through ourselves, for *meaning* is something that is innately human and uniquely created by humans.” Kyle Watter took up the topic of trees once more as he addressed his fellow graduates: “Our accomplishment today plants us in the ancient but well-watered garden of liberal arts education, that classical school of learning where practicing how to think yet holds the greatest importance. As newly minted scholars in this tradition, we grow in the shadows of giant, gnarled trees whose deep roots have prepared the rich soil for our flourishing.”

# Research

We celebrate Honors students' achievements and thank our supporters! During the 2017–18 academic year, the Honors Program was able to award the following grants:

- 30 Welton Sophomore Summer Research Awards
- 26 Honors Senior Thesis Grants
- 1 Mark Mensink Honors Research Grant (includes one year's in-state tuition)
- 13 Study Abroad and Conference Travel Grants



Priyanka Panjwani



Alina Tylinski



Jorgo Lika



Emma Sayner



Kyle Watter

## Your support enriches our students' Wisconsin Honors Experience!

We rely on you, our alumni and supporters, to help our students explore their goals and turn dreams into reality. Your gift matters! Your generosity allows us to provide research, Senior Honors Thesis, and Leadership awards and offer more Honors events for students that help build the Honors community.

### By Mail

Send a check made payable to the UW Foundation to:  
University of Wisconsin Foundation  
US Bank Lockbox  
P.O. Box 78807  
Milwaukee, WI 53278-0807

**Indicate "L&S Honors Program"** for donations to our General Fund; please note if you prefer your donation to go to a specific fund such as the Spector Excellence Fund or the Director's Fund. You can find a gift form to download and send with your check at the "Make a Gift" link below.

### Online

Please use the "Make a Gift" link on the L&S Honors website to make an online gift directly: <https://honors.ls.wisc.edu/makeagift>

### Contact me anytime with your questions and suggestions!

Sabine Gross, L&S Honors Faculty Director,  
[director@honors.ls.wisc.edu](mailto:director@honors.ls.wisc.edu), phone  
608-262-2984

For planned giving information, please contact Russ Austin at the UW Foundation: 608-308-5326, [russ.austin@supportuw.org](mailto:russ.austin@supportuw.org)



L&S Honors Program  
Washburn Observatory  
1401 Observatory Drive  
Madison, WI 53706-1209

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Madison, WI  
Permit No. 658



What's up with these owls? See page 8 to find out.