



# The Honors Challenge

Why We Explore

*"It's a dangerous business...  
going out your door. You  
step onto the road, and if  
you don't keep your feet,  
there's no knowing where  
you might be swept off to."*

Bilbo Baggins,  
*The Lord of the Rings*

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**The Honors Challenge** is the  
alumni and friends newsletter of  
the L&S Honors Program

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excellence through diversity in all programs.



## *From the Director* Sissel Schroeder

### Experience Is The Best Teacher

Receiving the Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award this spring led me to reflect on how my teaching and learning styles have changed during my lifetime. I started preschool when I was four and I thought my teacher was the wisest person I had ever met. One of my favorite things to do was play teacher, with my siblings (and probably a stuffed animal or two) as my students. You might think I was destined for a fulfilling teaching career, but reality has another story to tell: my siblings dozed in front of the chalk board in the basement as I talked at them, and those stuffed animals rarely roused themselves to pay any attention at all. I tended to boss them around and tell them exactly how to color inside the lines.

When I got to college, I realized that the most memorable lessons were not the ones that required me to stay within the lines, but the ones in which I was given responsibility to find my own way to a solution or final product. I teach archaeology, which provides many opportunities for students to apply the skills they learn in my courses to their lives outside the classroom and beyond the university. These hands-on experiences set them up for success as citizens and for careers that are fueled by their passions. Some of our students' success stories appear in this issue of *The Honors Challenge*.

For me, the greatest rewards in teaching come from seeing intellectual and personal growth in my students during their time here, and watching them succeed in a thousand ways after they graduate. I cannot think of a higher honor than to be recognized for one's teaching, mentoring, and nurturing of students, for the true heart of this great university lies in this mission.

### *Stay Involved!*

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University Communications

## Charting a Path



Dylan Moriarty

Students in UW–Madison’s College of Letters & Science are bright, creative and hard-working. Each fall, they bring fresh perspectives and inquisitive minds to campus.

But they face challenges as they prepare for life after graduation — whether it is four months or four years away.

Competition for jobs is fierce and young Badgers need to articulate what they have learned, in and out of the classroom.

To help them learn how, Dean John Karl Scholz launched the Letters & Science Career Initiative (LSCI), which will engage students in personal and career development from the time they step on campus to graduation.

The LSCI is a new, coordinated approach to serving students across L&S departments and programs. The initiative will spark students’ imaginations about

career possibilities, help them find majors that align with their passions, connect them with strong alumni networks, and coach them to talk about the lessons and skills they learned at UW–Madison.

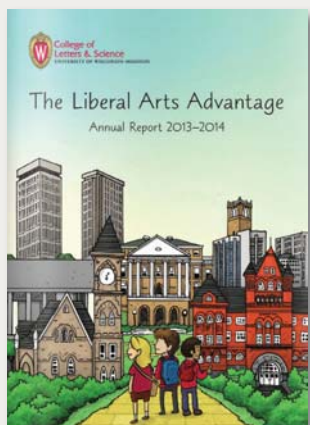
In addition, the LSCI will:

- recruit and hire more academic and career advisors
- launch a new sophomore-year academic- and career-planning course
- analyze alumni data to help students plan their own career trajectories
- open doors to alumni mentors who can share tips, strategies, and opportunities

You can help! Dean Scholz is looking for alumni, friends and parents who can share valuable insights about the job market, internships, career development and more.

To get involved, visit [go.wisc.edu/lsci](http://go.wisc.edu/lsci) or email the LSCI team at [careerinitiative@ls.wisc.edu](mailto:careerinitiative@ls.wisc.edu).

You can also read more about the LSCI in this year’s L&S Annual Report at [go.wisc.edu/annualreport](http://go.wisc.edu/annualreport).



Dylan Moriarty

# TOP 10 REASONS HONORS IS AWESOME!

- 10 Research Opportunities
- 9 Connections with Faculty and Staff
- 8 Community of Scholars
- 7 Smaller Classes
- 6 World-Class Professors
- 5 Engaged Students
- 4 An Academic Niche
- 3 The Challenge
- 2 Expert Advisors
- 1 The Liberal Arts Education

To see our students talk about their top 10, check out: <http://go.wisc.edu/YouTube>



# Keeping My Feet

*Jenna Mertz (B.A.'14, English, Spanish, and Environmental Studies)*

Forty-three thousand two hundred and seventy-five students attend the University of Wisconsin–Madison. That's equal to one Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, two Watertowns, three Menomonies, four Veronas, five Ashlands, and six of my hometown, Delafield.

In the words of Bilbo Baggins, the beloved uncle of ring bearer Frodo in J.R.R. Tolkien's classic trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, "It's a dangerous business... going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to."

Coming to a university six times the size of my hometown, it would have been easy to get swept away. To become

anonymous. But the Letters & Science Honors Program helped me keep my feet.

As an honors student, I had the opportunity to take classes with less than 10 students. You know what that means? That means you not only know the names of your peers, but their hometowns, favorite colors, the names of their cats, and whether or not they have food allergies.

That means you discuss; you don't get talked at, and you can tailor your



istock

*The Honors Program gave me the opportunity to make my Wisconsin Experience small, but it also gave me the tools to navigate the overwhelming, the big. Which, in short, is the world. I think I'm ready to step out onto the road. I'm ready to get swept away because I've learned how to keep my feet.*

projects to what interests you. And, on the day of your final exam, your English professor brings in a brown bag of electric yellow lemon bars and sets one in front of each student as a thank you, as good luck, but also, knowingly, as breakfast.

The L&S Honors Program allowed me to pursue classes with small environments, where I could engage intellectually with my professors by directly asking them questions. I didn't suffer the embarrassment of having to wave my hand around as if I were swatting black flies, which is the tactic one must adopt in 300-person lecture halls. I gained skills and developed relationships in the small spaces that I could translate and carry over to the large settings.

Most importantly, the Honors Program has made me confident enough to let myself get swept away. Come this August, I will be in Norway, teaching English and working at a university writing center.

I've never been outside the United States. And, just for the record, Norway is many, many times the size of my hometown.

But I've known challenge. I conducted original research in my honors-level tutor training course.

I've known defeat. I had to restart said research project. I cried about said research project. I threw said research project, on many an occasion, against the wall.

I've known the beauty, though, of small victories: I finished and handed in said research project, and published it, too.

The Honors Program gave me the opportunity to make my Wisconsin Experience small, but it also gave me the tools to navigate the overwhelming, and the big. Which, in short, is the world.

I think I'm ready to step out onto the road. I'm ready to get swept away because I've learned how to keep my feet.



Jenna Mertz received the 2014 Dean's Prize, which is awarded to the most outstanding undergraduate scholars in the College of Letters & Science based on recommendations from faculty and community leaders. Students who are eligible for this award must have a minimum GPA of 3.90; be a comprehensive honors candidate; have completed a thesis or other major research or creative project; and have made significant contributions to the university or broader community. These are the remarks that she gave at the L&S Honors Commencement Reception in May.

## GIVING INFORMATION

Thanks to the generosity of many donors, the L&S Honors Program is able to provide a diverse range of research grants, awards, and assistance to help our outstanding students reach their full potential. We welcome contributions in any amount—every dollar makes a difference.

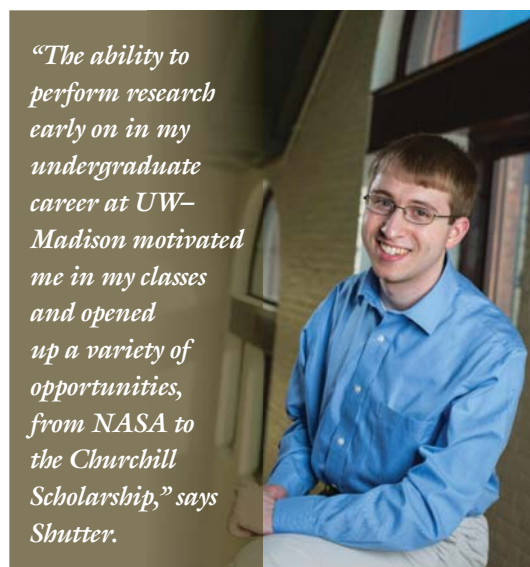
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For information on creating an endowment or other major gifts, please contact Ann Lippincott at the UW Foundation at [ann.lippincott@supportuw.org](mailto:ann.lippincott@supportuw.org) or 608-263-3604

# Honors Students Win Prestigious National Awards



**Drew Birrenkott** (B.S.'14, Biochemistry, Biomedical Engineering, and Political Science) of McFarland, Wis., was awarded a 2014 Rhodes Scholarship to study at Oxford University in England in preparation for a career in global health and international development. Rhodes Scholars are selected for their exceptional scholarly achievements, character, commitment to others and to the common good, and for their potential for leadership.



**Joshua Shutter** (B.S.'14, Chemistry) originally from Green Bay, Wis., was one of 14 young scholars selected as 2014 recipients of the Churchill Scholarship, given to American college graduates who have demonstrated extraordinary talent and outstanding achievement in the sciences, engineering or mathematics. Shutter will complete a one-year Master of Philosophy (MPhil) at the University of Cambridge while residing at Churchill College.



**Brontë Mansfield** was among 20 college juniors nationwide selected to receive a Beinecke Scholarship to pursue graduate study in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Mansfield, who grew up in Clinton, Wis., a small farming town, is majoring in English and art history. She hopes to study art history at either Yale University or the Courtauld Institute of Art, in London.



**Tong Wang** from New Berlin, Wis., won a Goldwater Scholarship, established by Congress in 1986 in honor of former U.S. Senator and 1964 presidential candidate Barry Goldwater of Arizona. Its goal is to provide a continuing source of highly qualified scientists, mathematicians, and engineers. Wang is majoring in chemistry and hopes to receive a dual doctorate and medical degree in chemical biology.





**Colin Higgins** of Middleton, Wis., was selected as a 2014 Udall Scholar, one of just 50 students nationwide to win the scholarship. The Udall recognizes rising college juniors and seniors who have demonstrated a commitment to careers related to the environment, Native American health care, or tribal public policy. Higgins, who is majoring in geography, history, and environmental studies, plans to pursue an academic career studying the intersection of ecology, public policy, and economic justice.



Thank you to the faculty mentors and the Welton Family Foundation, the Brittingham Fund, and the Kemper Knapp Bequest for support of the 2014 Welton Honors Summer Sophomore Apprentices.

## Staff Milestones


- Jennifer Kaufmann-Buhler, long-time associate director of academic services, completed her Ph.D. and departed for a tenure-track faculty position at the Columbus College of Art and Design in Ohio.
- Welcome to our new associate director: In July, Jacqui Guthrie joined the Honors Program as associate director for academic services. Jacqui received her B.A. from UW–Madison with majors in political science and international studies and a certificate in African studies. She also holds an M.S. from Concordia University Wisconsin. Jacqui brings nearly seven years of experience advising undergraduates at UW–Madison to the Honors Program.
- Mary Czynszak-Lyne celebrated her tenth year as the office administrator for the Honors Program.

# YOU SHARE

## A Tradition of Academic Excellence

Now share the wonderful by making a gift to UW–Madison's Annual Campaign. Your support is crucial to nurturing the kind of life-changing experiences that foster creativity, scholarly excellence and leadership among L&S Honors students.

Give today at [www.honors.ls.wisc.edu/giving](http://www.honors.ls.wisc.edu/giving) or contact Ann Lippincott at the UW Foundation: 608-263-3604 or [ann.lippincott@supportuw.org](mailto:ann.lippincott@supportuw.org) or 608-265-9954.



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# Collecting Experience

## *Career Preparation in the Classroom and Beyond*

*“Every time I have a small breakthrough on my project, Danielle Benden shares in my delight, and when I hit a dead end, she helps me reshape my project,”*  
*Tasia Williams says.*



Tasia Williams and Danielle Benden

What do you do when you are confronted with room after room of dust-covered materials collected by UW–Madison anthropologists who have been trekking around the globe for more than a century? While others might have been daunted, **Danielle Benden**, senior academic curator in the Department of Anthropology and recipient of a 2014 Distinguished Honors Faculty and Staff Award, saw an exciting educational opportunity for undergraduates.

Every semester, Benden teaches a small course on Museum Methods in which her students work directly with one or more of the many materials that are part of the anthropology department collections. They learn

how to conduct research, stay current on topics in the museum world, and rehabilitate the items so that they will be accessible to future generations of Badgers and researchers.

Benden's students apply their liberal arts skills—writing, research, scientific inquiry and close reading—in a museum-like setting, gaining valuable hands-on experience they can apply in the real world. Students also cultivate their professional development through course activities that include crafting a resume and taking behind-the-scenes tours at museums beyond campus. One message museum professionals consistently share with the students is the importance of having their degree



and hands-on-experience—like the sort they gain through Benden’s course.

Ferretting out the history of an object is part of the job, whether it be the specific dance for which a Thai costume in the collections was made or discovering the story behind a collection of old black and white photographs. Other typical museum tasks include developing databases that give scientific order to materials and information; and writing, preparing, and installing museum displays. Benden demands the highest standards, and her students comment on how she treats each of them as a collaborator in the business of museums and collections management.

“Every time I have a small breakthrough on my project, Danielle Benden shares in my delight, and when I hit a dead end, she helps me to reshape my project,” says Tasia Williams. “She has exposed me to the world of museums and a variety of

occupations. Field trips gave me the chance to talk with professionals in curation.”



**Danielle Zwang** (B.A.’14, Anthropology and Art History) worked with Benden every year she was on campus. “The skills and knowledge I gained helped me successfully compete for summer internship experiences at the American Museum of Natural History in New York and the Wisconsin Historical Society Museum in Madison and obtain a paid position at the Chazen Museum of Art on campus.”

## Director Schroeder Receives 2014 Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award

The Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award recognizes the university’s finest educators and their distinctive contributions to teaching excellence at UW–Madison.

“Professor Schroeder continually challenges herself to improve the experiences of students in her courses and innovate new approaches toward teaching. She is one of the Department of Anthropology’s most extraordinary scholar-teachers,” says Maria Lepowsky, chair of the anthropology department.



Sarah Morton

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## The L&S Honors Program Recognizes Six with the 2014 Distinguished Honors Faculty Award

**Danielle Benden**  
Senior Academic Curator  
Department of Anthropology  
*Nominated by Tasia Williams and Danielle Zwang*

**David Danaher**  
Professor  
Department of Slavic Languages and Literature  
*Nominated by Brian Ferrer*

**Raymond Deneckere**  
Professor  
Department of Economics  
*Nominated by Yaoyuan Liu*

**Ralph Grunewald**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Comparative Literature and Folklore and Legal Studies Program  
*Nominated by Alexandra Sabatini*

**Maryellen MacDonald**  
Professor  
Department of Psychology  
*Nominated by Qihong Lu*

**Tiziana Serafini**  
Professor  
Department of French and Italian  
*Nominated by Thomas Gierok*

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# Swept Away: One Alum's Story



After studying abroad in Nepal, Emma Condon returned to the South Asian country for an internship with the U.S. State Department. Now she's headed to Saudi Arabia to work in the U.S. Embassy.

The transition from campus to career is exciting, yet scary. Hannah Somers (B.A.'14, Political Science and Scandinavian Studies), an L&S Honors Program office assistant, was curious about what lay ahead, so she caught up with a former L&S Honors Program peer advisor whose career path she found intriguing: Emma Condon (B.A.'08, International Studies; MIPA'09), now a diplomat with the State Department. Her Q&A with Condon appears below:

## What were your plans as you neared the end of your time at UW–Madison?

I enjoyed my study abroad experiences in Nepal and Guatemala and wanted to go abroad again. I did an internship with the State Department during the summer after my senior year, and I absolutely loved it.

## We heard you were doing some amazing work with the State Department.

I did a tour in Nepal, where I worked as a consular officer, and am currently in Washington, D.C. studying Arabic—in other words, I'm getting paid to learn a language—pretty cool! I'll be heading to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in October to work in the U.S. Embassy.

## How did the Honors Program help you get to where you are today?

In so many ways! I had a number of Honors professors who pushed me to develop my writing skills. Being able to convey your message persuasively is essential, especially in public policy. Also, my Honors courses taught me to be interested in the world around me—to look at different disciplines and issues with a sense of curiosity. That kind of “liberal arts” approach is really helpful in the job I do, where to really understand the issue you must think about it from multiple perspectives.

# What's New With You?

**Kimberly (Dachel) Aime** (B.A.'02, English and Theater and Drama) received a Master of Arts degree in theatre from Ohio State University and returned to Madison in 2008. Her first book, *Homemade Snacks and Staples*, was published in 2013.

**Jacquelyn Bonavia** (B.A.'13, Anthropology and Classics) is working on her Master of Science degree in museum and field studies at the University of Colorado-Boulder.

**Douglas Haynes** (B.A.'96, English and Environmental Studies) received an MFA in creative writing from Southern Illinois University Carbondale in 2002 and is now an associate professor of English at UW-Oshkosh. His essays and poetry have appeared in *Boston Review*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Terrain.org*, and elsewhere.

**Joanne Farb Hernández** (B.A.'74, French and Political Science), a professor of art and art history at San José State University, received its most prestigious faculty award, the President's Scholar Award, in recognition of her scholarship and creative activities. Her latest book is *Singular Spaces: From the Eccentric to the Extraordinary in Spanish Art*.

**Aaron Olver** (B.A.'97, Economics) is the managing director of University Research Park at UW-Madison.

**Fred Plotkin** (B.A.'78, History) is one of the country's foremost experts on opera, a blogger for WQXR's *Opera-vore* in New York, and an author of books on opera, classical music, and Italian cuisine. The fifth edition of his book, *Italy for the Gourmet Traveler*, was released this year.

**Mara Taft** (B.A.'13, Anthropology) is currently pursuing a Master of Arts degree in the Cultural Heritage Program at the University of Minnesota.



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 SYMPOSIUM**

**April 18  
 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Memorial Union**

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*Travel Awards Enable Students to Study Abroad*

**IN 2013-2014**  
**159** Honors Students  
 Studied Abroad  
 in  
**90** UW Study Abroad  
 Programs  
 in  
**36** Countries



■ **Burack and Kurz Study Abroad Travel Grants** to Ethan Mark (China), Yuxiao Zhuang (B.A.'14, Philosophy and Sociology; South Africa), Jacob Turner (Spain), Calla Buttke (Germany), and Savanna Rutas (Russia)  
 ● **Directors' Study Abroad Travel Grants** to Joseph Evica (South Africa) and Joseph L'Huillier (Ecuador)  
 ◆ Places in the world where other UW-Madison Honors Students are studying abroad.