UNIVERSITY HONORS SCHOLARS PROGRAM
Academic Research Fellowships
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History of the University Honors Scholar Program

The Honors Scholars Program was created to help students transform their research, transfer its results into a format for presentation or performance, and produce a high quality Honors Capstone Project.

The University Honors Scholars began in the summer of 2012. The program was initially called the University Honors Summer Scholars Program due to the fact that the research for the senior Honors Capstone was conducted during the summer before the student’s senior year. During the summer students were known as ‘Honors Summer Scholars’ and, upon submission of a successful proposal, they were known as ‘University Honors Scholars’ for their senior year. After two successful cohorts, the program changed its name to become, simply, the University Honors Scholars Program, and the scholars are given the distinction of University Honors Scholars.

The program allows students to create an in-depth research project that exceeds the requirements of the capstone project, provides the student the opportunity to be a full-fledged researcher or artist on a project of their design, and gives each Scholar the opportunity to develop advanced research and production skills to make them competitive for admission into graduate programs or employment in their field. University Honors Scholars may present at the annual University Honors Program Recognition Ceremony for Graduating Honors Students on NIU’s Honors Day.

What is a University Honors Scholar? University Honors Scholars are a select number of academically distinguished students who are chosen by the University Honors Committee to receive this award so that they can conduct summer research or artistic preparation with the expectation that it will benefit them as they complete their University Honors Capstone during their senior year.
There is no definitive model for the research or artistry project. One student may spend his or her time completing field research in a distant location; another student may devote the bulk of his or her efforts to conducting archival research in a library, interviewing subjects, or translating foreign language materials; and yet another student may be in his or her home writing a play or designing and producing a piece of artwork in their workshop or studio.

The award provides University Honors students with the time, financial support, and faculty mentoring necessary to pursue in-depth, meaningful research and artistry related to their pursuit of a University Honors Capstone during the summer between their junior and senior years, and the research conducted as an Honors Scholar serves as the foundation for the Honors Capstone project during their final two semesters in residence.

Program Funding and Future

The University Honors Scholars Program was initially funded by the *Great Journeys Strategic Planning Initiative*. Due to the success of the program beyond the span of the *Great Journeys Strategic Planning Initiative*, the University Honors Scholars Program will be sustained long-term as a part of the University Honors-only research opportunities. The program supports a small number of students, and the University Honors Program intends to expand the program through donor support of individual student projects. The University Honors Program will be working with the NIU Foundation and Alumni Association to identify potential donor support for the future of this endeavor.

Program Guidelines and Expectations

**Purpose**

- To recognize, reward, and support the University Honors Program’s most outstanding students.
- To enable academically distinguished students to complete a University Honors Capstone project during their senior year of such quality and distinction as to make them eligible for gainful employment or admission into the nation’s most competitive graduate programs.
To highlight independent research and artistry undertaken by University Honors students at NIU.

Benefits

• Each scholar receives a $4,500 stipend for nine full-time weeks of summer pre-University Honors Capstone research or artistry.
• An additional $500 in salary, conference support, or commodities is given to the student’s faculty mentor in exchange for their extra work in supporting a University Honors student during the summer months.
• Student holds the prestigious title “University Honors Scholar” until graduation.

Eligibility

• Must be a current University Honors student at the time of application.
• Must be a full-time, degree-seeking undergraduate student (12 credit hours or more per semester) at the time of application.
• Must be a full-time, degree-seeking undergraduate student (12 credit hours or more per semester) during the academic year.
• Must have reached at least junior level status (60 credit hours earned) at the time of application and hold senior level status (90 credit hours earned) by fall.
• Must demonstrate high academic achievement through cumulative GPA. Applicants must have at least a 3.5 cumulative grade point average to be considered. Preference will be given to students with outstanding grade point averages. (Greatest attention will be placed on the GPA at NIU. However, a student’s full academic record will be considered.)
• Must submit a completed University Honors Scholar application by the specified deadline.

Student Responsibilities and Outcomes

• The student commits to engaging in nine weeks (at least 35 hours per week) of intensive, pre-Honors Capstone summer research or artistry. This endeavor should be considered equivalent to a significant summer job in which the student is essentially earning $500 per week. It is very important that students take this serious expectation into consideration. For instance, it is not likely a student studying abroad or completing a demanding paid internship will have the time to complete the amount of work expected of a University Honors Scholar.
• If the summer project involves human subjects in research, it will be necessary to secure Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval during the spring 2016 semester. For further information, consult NIU’s Research Compliance Coordinator (815-753-8588).
• Each Scholar must develop a work plan in consultation with the faculty mentor and based on sound standards from the student’s discipline area of study. The work...
plan must be realistic and yet based on a standard of excellence and high achievement.

- The student must write five blog posts about the research or artistry experience. The first blog post at the start of the summer will be an overview or abstract of the summer research or artistry project. The next two posts will be made during the course of the summer. The fourth post will come at the end of the University Honors Scholar experience (before the start of fall classes) and summarize the results of the summer work. A final blog post will be entered upon completion and presentation of the Honors Capstone at the end of the senior year. Information for submitting blog postings will be provided. The student must follow the specified guidelines of the blog and allow his or her written entries to be posted on the University Honors Program website or a related website.

- The student agrees to have his or her name, photograph, project title, and project blogs appear on the websites, social media, and videos of the University Honors Program and Northern Illinois University. Similarly, the student agrees to have such information included in printed university materials.

- By the first day of classes in the fall semester, the student must submit two completed items in hard copy form to the Associate Director of Scholarships, Programming, and Assessment of University Honors.

  1. A fully completed, faculty-approved Honors Capstone proposal that contains the elements and meets the requirements as set forth by the University Honors Program for all students pursuing the Capstone. This proposal is to be approved by the faculty mentor before it is submitted.

  2. A five-page, double-spaced, one-inch margin report that reflects thoughtfully on the summer research and artistry experience, clearly details what was accomplished during the nine-week period, and explains how the summer work has advanced the Honors Capstone to be completed during the academic year. This report is to be approved by the faculty mentor before it is submitted. The approval of the submitted proposal and report by the Director for University Honors activates the title “University Honors Scholar” for the academic year.

- It is expected that the student will complete an Honors Capstone related to the focus of the University Honors Scholar research and artistry project. The Capstone is to be completed by the end of the student’s senior year. The student must follow the deadlines and procedures established by the University Honors Program for the Capstone.

- It is expected that the student will maintain the criteria for the award (3.5 GPA) and be in good academic standing at NIU and in the University Honors Program during the year of the award.

**Presentation**

- The students selected as University Honors Scholars will be called upon to deliver public presentations and/or have video and photography of their work disseminated during their senior year. These venues will be open to the public and the students’ Capstone advisors, department chairs, directors of undergraduate
studies, upperclassmen in the discipline, family, and friends will be especially encouraged to attend.

• Students agree to have their presentations photographed and/or video recorded with the understanding that such material may be posted on university websites or used in university video or printed materials.
• Students are strongly encouraged to present their Honors Capstone research or artistry at NIU’s annual Undergraduate Research & Artistry Day and at regional or national honors association conferences.

Faculty Mentor Expectations and Responsibilities

The faculty mentor is the student’s primary source of expertise, advice, guidance, inspiration, and moral support during the summer experience. It is expected that the faculty mentor will become the student’s University Honors Capstone advisor in the forthcoming academic year. Therefore, the faculty mentor should work in the discipline in which the student intends to complete the Capstone.

• The faculty mentor helps ensure the student selects and completes a summer research and artistry project or activity that will lay fruitful groundwork for an outstanding University Honors Capstone in the senior year. The advisor also ensures the summer research and artistry work and the resulting Capstone reflects the standards of the academic discipline. Providing advice on whether the project can be feasibly completed is another important contribution of the faculty mentor.
• The faculty member should seek to cultivate a personalized mentoring experience as well as help provide academic focus and direction. At minimum, the faculty member should meet with the student at least three times during summer to discuss the project’s progress.
• If the summer project involves the use of human subjects, the faculty member should ensure the student secures the necessary institutional review board (IRB) approval in the spring.
• The faculty mentor reviews and approves the student’s final summer research and artistry report.
• The faculty mentor agrees to complete a required Honors Capstone assessment.
A Student’s Guide to Faculty Mentors

How to Select a Faculty Mentor

The mentor/mentee relationship is a key factor of your success in this program. The end product will depend on the strength of the relationship that you have with your faculty mentor. Once you decide what you are interested in researching, you must identify a mentor. We recommend that you make your request in a face-to-face meeting where you can share your ideas, receive feedback, and gauge how well you and he or she may work together.

Working with Your Mentor

1. Remember, when you have identified a potential mentor, it is necessary to provide a brief rationale of why they should invest the additional time and resources to mentor you. Be sure to share your research interests, past research projects, résumé / CV, or any other relevant information they may need.

2. Provide your mentor with a copy of the expectations of an Honors Scholar mentor from this manual.

3. Choose a mentor that you are comfortable working with and speaking with on a regular basis.

4. Know the professor’s expectations for quality of work, meeting times, preferred method of communication, work style, and workload. Awareness of prior time commitments will help you assess the amount of time your mentor may have available to guide you.

5. Show up for any and all meetings on time and prepared.

6. Follow the advice your mentor gives even if it makes you explain findings that are contrary to your study.
Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Can I get academic credit for the summer experience? Yes. If the major department and faculty mentor approve, the student may receive academic credit for the University Honors Scholars research and artistry project through an independent study course. This decision would be made by the student’s academic department or school. The student is responsible for the cost of tuition associated with any such course.

2. Is it acceptable to pursue a collaborative research and artistry project involving a team of people, which might include students who are not members of the University Honors Program? Yes, it is possible. The only caveat is that an individual student’s Honors Capstone must meet the requirements and standards set forth by the University Honors Program. In other words, it is recognized that in some disciplines, such as the sciences, engineering and some performing arts, students work in teams. In a team setting, the University Honors Scholars award remains $4,500 and belongs exclusively to the one designated recipient. The student will have to clearly demonstrate their significant contributions to the project.

3. Must I submit a budget for my summer project? No. Students are not required to submit a project budget with their application or offer a subsequent accounting of expenditures. The $4,500 award is considered a nine-week salary to allow the student to engage in full-time research or artistry.

4. Must my nine weeks coincide with summer school? No. In terms of meeting the nine-week work obligation, the student may select any nine weeks between the end of spring classes and the start of fall classes.
Application Process

Upon submission of your application, it will be checked to ensure you have included all of the required components. Late or incomplete submissions will not be accepted or considered.

A completed application consists of a separate word processed document that encompasses the information requested in Part I and the two written statements requested in Part II. Part I information must be presented in the same order and format as it appears on this application form. Part II responses must be word processed and double-spaced. Part I and Part II must use Times New Roman 12 pt. font and be properly labeled. A faculty statement of support must be submitted. Further details are provided in Part III. The signature page in Part IV must be printed and signed by the student in ink. The final document should be stapled in the upper left hand corner.

Questions regarding this application may be directed to Jason Goode, Associate Director of Scholarships, Programming and Assessment, at 815-753-9509 or jason@niu.edu.

The Honors Committee, comprised of faculty, students, and staff, will evaluate all applications for quality and rank applicants. The committee will select the scholars based on the criteria in the application packet/manual, the quality of the submission, attainability, and if the project is contributing something to their field of study.

Recipients will be notified electronically and must schedule an appointment with the Associate Director of Scholarships, Programming and Assessment to discuss the logistics of the Honors Scholars Program.

Selected scholars are expected to have read the University Honors Scholars manual and application thoroughly so that they are familiar with the expectations for the program that are required of both the student and mentor.
Previous University Honors Scholars

2012: Wayne Duerkes and Anastasia Kocher

Wayne Duerkes
Project Title: The Development of the Market in the Lower Fox River Valley, 1833-1852
Faculty Mentor: Dr. James Schmidt
Abstract: This University Honors Capstone research project will examine the creation and development of the market in southern DeKalb and northern LaSalle County region from 1833 to 1852. It will also utilize the results of the research to describe how this specific region places within the broader historiographical debate on community and capitalistic intentions of emigrants.
Program of Study: History
Semester/Year of Graduation: Spring 2013
Hometown: Somonauk, IL

Anastasia Kocher
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Kikue Hamayotsu
Abstract: My summer research project examines the status of women’s rights in five Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirgizstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. I seek to understand the changes that have taken place since the political independence of the Central Asian region in the early 1990’s, including national leaders’ encouragement of traditional roles for women and the resulting gender gaps in almost all spheres of life. I also wish to evaluate the institutional, social, and cultural factors that have led to the regression of women’s rights. The University Honors Summer Scholar Award provides me with the resources and time to perform my research.
Program of Study: Political Science (International Politics)
Semester/Year of Graduation: Spring 2013
Hometown: Sycamore, IL
2013: Octavio Escalante, Elliott Ihm, and Lauren Nale

Octavio Escalante
Project Title: The Muon G-2 Experiment
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Michael Eads
Abstract: This Summer Scholars Capstone will contribute to the ongoing Muon g-2 Experiment at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory by having me create and analyze a straw-tube test module. The project will demand the testing of various straw-tube layouts, working with advanced computer simulation programs, as well as attending informational seminars. Once the straw-tube detector is optimized, the module will be used to re-measure the g-factor (gyromagnetic factor or spin) of a Muon (subatomic particle) to a high level of precision.
Program of Study: Physics (Minor Mathematics)
Semester/Year of Graduation: Spring 2015
Hometown: Monterrey, Mexico and Aurora, Illinois.

Elliott Ihm
Project Title: Cognitive Moderators of Cumulative Effects of Childhood Stress
Faculty Co-Mentors: Dr. David Bridgett and Dr. Angela Grippo
Abstract: It is widely accepted that childhood trauma is associated with poor health outcomes through an accumulation of stress known as allostatic load. Executive function, the neurocognitive processes which facilitate goal-directed behavior, is known to play a role in a variety of processes which buffer against this harmful accumulation of stress, including the cognitive regulation of emotion and the avoidance of stressful situations. The hypotheses are that high childhood trauma will predict high allostatic load, and that three subcomponents of executive function (working memory, cognitive inhibition, and set shifting) will each reduce this effect. Participants will self-report childhood trauma using the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, and executive function will be assessed using portions of the Delis-Kaplan Executive Function System and the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – Fourth Edition, as well as a computerized version of the Wisconsin Card Sorting Task. Allostatic load will be assessed with a six-item index, including body mass index, self-reported sleep quality, and resting and stress-induced levels of heart rate variability and blood pressure.
Program of Study: Psychology (Biology Minor)
Semester/Year of Graduation: Spring 2014
Hometown: DeKalb, IL.
Lauren Nale  
**Project Title:** "Mixed Methods Study on Treatments/Services for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder"  
**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Lucy Bilaver  
**Abstract:** Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that is associated with affecting three main areas of an individual’s functioning: social impairment, communication difficulties, and repetitive and stereotyped behaviors. Research strongly suggests that children with ASD should receive early intervention services in order to maximize their potential effectiveness. This research will focus on evidence based practices such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, behavioral therapy/applied behavioral analysis, and special education that are used to treat children with ASD. Two broad research questions will be answered through qualitative and quantitative methods: What are the characteristics of children and families receiving different treatments for ASD? What are the facilitators of and barriers to effective treatment from the perspective of therapists serving young children with ASD?  
**Program of Study:** Rehabilitation Services, Pre-Occupational Therapy  
**Semester/Year of Graduation:** Spring 2014  
**Hometown:** New Lenox, IL
Natalie Cincotta
Title of Project: A Study of German Photographs from World War II in relation to pre-war European Visual Culture
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Emma Kuby
Abstract: Of the 1.5 million German troops that invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, it is estimated that 100,000 brought cameras with them to the front. Some of these men were members of specialized propaganda units; others were unofficial, many times amateur photographers who took pictures for their own personal use. Many scholars charge that these images embody Nazi ideology and are therefore tainted by it. This project will challenge this idea by investigating the extent to which German wartime photographs shared characteristics with wider European visual culture in the pre-war period, and how this might be reflected during wartime. Drawing on the collections of the German Federal Archives, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin State Library, Leo Baeck Institute, and USHMM (to name a few), I seek to situate these images in terms of their continuities (and discontinuities) with pre-1933 German and broader European photographic trends, some of which were already highly ideological and troubling in nature. Contemplating German photographs from this period within this broader context will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of visual culture in the mid-twentieth century.
Program of Study: History (Minor German)
Year of Graduation: Spring 2015
Future Plans: I aspire to earn a Ph.D. in history to become a faculty member and historian. I also hope to research and publish on modern German visual culture, particularly the uses of photography and film in conflict.
Hometown: Sydney, Australia
Fun Fact: Contrary to popular belief, I cannot surf and do not own a kangaroo. I can, however, play the piano and I have been to six European countries.

Joel Dennison
Title of Project: The Influence of Glutamine Uptake in Human Liver Cancer
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Barrie Bode
Abstract: My work in Dr. Bode’s lab will focus on understanding liver cancer and its possible treatments. Cancerous transformation of cells involves changes in
nutrient consumption and metabolism. Among nutrients, changes in glucose and glutamine uptake and use are particularly profound and collectively drive the metabolic engine of tumor growth and progression. To date, human cells have been used as a model to study these nutrient transporters, but mouse models of human cancer are needed to assess therapies. The goal of this project is to examine glutamine transporter expression in mouse liver cells and tissue, both normal and cancerous, and catalog the changes in glutamine transporter expression for comparison to cognate changes in human liver.

**Program of Study:** Biology/Pre-med (Minor Chemistry)

**Year of Graduation:** Fall 2014

**Future Plans:** After I complete my undergraduate degree, I plan to attend medical school with the goal of specializing in surgical oncology, which is the removal of tumors through surgery. Cancer treatment is a passion of mine, and I hope to integrate the knowledge from my cancer research into my work with patients. I am also interested in practicing medicine in a rural, underserved community in the future.

**Hometown:** South Elgin, IL

**Fun Fact:** I am a welder, and I also enjoy woodcarving 3-dimensional fish sculptures.

**Juliana Leprich**

**Title of Project:** Spotlight on DeKalb: The creation of a College TV Program in Principle and Practice

**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Randy Caspersen

**Abstract:** While television programs are often perceived solely as entertainment, there are educational and promotional benefits to a television show, especially one that is produced in a university-centered community like DeKalb and nearby Northern Illinois University (NIU). The final product of this research and artistry experience will be to create a fundamental structure for a recurring NIU-focused television show, Spotlight on DeKalb (title subject to change), and a pilot episode of the program. This research project will do two things: provide an opportunity for interested NIU Communications students to get real world, hands-on experience in a professional studio television environment and to showcase the rich, diverse resources and opportunities that NIU’s programs, faculty and community offer. The research component of this project will look at talk shows or other sustainable, community-centric media programming from other universities, as well as identify media content that attracts a college-age demographic and audience. This research will ultimately become a model for Spotlight on DeKalb, a television program giving local audiences insight into the rich culture of the NIU community and providing university media students with a curricular professional production experience.

**Program of Study:** Communications and Political Science

**Year of Graduation:** Spring 2015

**Future Plans:** I plan to pursue graduate studies in a field that incorporates my two majors; likely intercultural communication, political communication, or advocacy media. While I am currently undecided on which area I will pursue, it is important
for me to have a career where I can work in a role that promotes the betterment of a community/society.

Hometown: Antioch, IL

Fun Fact: I served as an Election Judge for DeKalb County in the 2012 Election.

Luke Martin
Title of Project: Volumetric and Support Structure Optimization for the Beam Stop in the Muons-to-Electrons Experiment
Faculty Mentors: Dr. Nicholas Pohlman

Abstract: The purpose of this project is to complete the development and structural analysis of the rail system to be used in the experiment Muons-to-Electrons (mu2e) planned at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory. Various components in the particle physics experiment (i.e. tracker, calorimeter, beam stop and proton absorber) are to be transported, aligned, and installed inside a vacuum chamber called the Detector Solenoid Cryostat. To accomplish these tasks simultaneously, a rail system will be utilized. While the final geometric location of these different components has been specified, the detailed rail system design is to be completed. Developing a successful design requires consideration for manufacturability as well as the cost of production. To satisfy the design, the project is broken into four phases. The first phase is to define all known constraints and parameters of the components at their current conceptual design. The second phase is to develop a preliminary design that designates rail sizes and support stand locations. Once this is completed, the rail system and its components are simulated to ensure adequate structural support and safety factor. Additionally, member deflection is also analyzed to ensure it is within the required experimental accuracy. The third phase is to present the design to my faculty mentor, Fermilab management, and project engineers for technical review. The final phase is to make the required modifications and document the design for fabrication. The detailed design documents are uploaded to the project database for other project members to review and reference. These documents are also utilized for determining the feasibility, risk factors, and financial cost of the mu2e experiment during Department of Energy Technical Design Reviews.

Program of Study: Mechanical Engineering
Year of Graduation: Summer 2015

Future Plans: I plan to attend graduate school and attain a Master’s Degree in Mechanical Engineering. Upon graduation I would like to work industry designing engines.

Hometown: Chicago, IL

Fun Fact: While my primary focus is academics, I also enjoy pursuing numerous music, athletic, and entrepreneurial endeavors.
2015: Marissa DeVlieger, Ashley Kyle, and Charles Moore

Marissa DeVlieger

Title of Project: Exploring Performance on Morphological Awareness Tasks by Children With and Without Language Learning Disabilities

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Patricia Tattersall

Abstract: The five components of language include phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Morphology, the focus of this project, is the study of base words and their affixes, collectively known as morphemes (Reed, 2012). Morphological knowledge is rooted in an individual’s morphological awareness, the conscious recognition, consideration, interpretation, and manipulation of morphemes (Apel & Werfel, 2014). Morphological awareness has often been overlooked as the root of spelling and reading deficits (Wolter, Wood, D’zatko, 2009); however, in recent years, it’s been given more attention. This study will compare the scores of 75 elementary school children on an oral dynamic assessment of morphological awareness and a written spelling probe targeting morphological knowledge. As scores are considered, two broad research questions will be answered: Is there a difference in performance on the tasks between children with and without language-learning deficits? Is there a correlation in performance on the oral dynamic assessment task and the written spelling task?


Program of Study: Communicative Disorders (Minor: Family and Child Studies)

Year of Graduation: Spring 2016

Future Plans: After I complete my undergraduate degree, I plan to attend graduate school to receive a Master’s Degree in Speech-Language Pathology.

Hometown: Pecatonica, IL

Fun Fact: I first expressed that I wanted to work as a Speech-Language Pathologist when I was only five years old.
Ashley Kyle
Title of Project: A Systematic Review of the History and Prevalence of Eating Disorders: A Comparison Between Western and Nonwestern Countries
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Sheila Barrett
Abstract: College students are one of the more vulnerable population groups when it comes to mental health issues, and approximately one in four students have a diagnosable mental health concern; eating disorders. Students, especially females, have an increase focus on their body image and are willing to go to extreme measures to change their bodies’ shapes and sizes through unhealthy diet, purging, binging, or similar actions. In the past, eating disorders have been primarily a Western disease, but research has shown an increasing prevalence among Nonwestern countries with rates as high as some Western countries. The objectives of this study are to compare the prevalence rates of eating disorders among college students in Western and Nonwestern countries. Secondly, to examine the history of eating disorders to determine trends that might be influencing the prevalence rates in both Western and Nonwestern countries. Eating disorders that will be examined are anorexia nervosa (AN), bulimia nervosa (BN), binge eating disorder (BED), and other specified feeding and eating disorders (OSFED). This research is important to determine 1) whether or not Nonwestern college students are being affected by eating disorders, 2) if the prevalence rates of eating disorders in college students in Western and Nonwestern countries are increasing, and 3) what trends in the past have been occurring that might have influenced the prevalence of eating disorders. It is predicted that the prevalence rates have been rising in both Western and Nonwestern countries for all eating disorders previously listed.
Program of Study: Nutrition/Dietetics (Minor: Psychology)
Year of Graduation: Spring 2016
Future Plans: I aspire to obtain my Master’s degree in Nutrition and Dietetics and pursue a career as a Registered Dietitian that specializes in treating eating disorders and obesity.
Hometown: Lacon, IL
Fun Fact: Upon graduating, I am planning on spending the summer backpacking through Europe with my best friend, Rachel.
Charles Moore  
**Title of Project:** Montesquieu: The Influence of Liberty and Commerce on War  
**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Andrea Radasanu  

**Abstract:** Montesquieu argues that commerce leads to gentle, peaceful mores while quelling the destructive ones. Political thinkers look to Montesquieu and his views on commerce as reasoning for international peace theory, a theory that commerce will create mutual dependency and thus eliminate war. However, commerce does not eliminate warfare; rather it mediates the relationship between countries while exemplifying the advantage of trade in order to avoid bloodshed. Furthermore, Montesquieu presents commerce both idealistically and realistically, for commerce is flawed. This project analyzes the various advantages and disadvantages of commerce between different states, based on their size, power, tradeable goods, etc., in order to evaluate the true value that commerce has for international peace and individual state success.

**Program of Study:** Political Science  
**Year of Graduation:** Spring 2016  
**Future Plans:** After completing my bachelor’s degree, I plan on attending law school either at NIU as part of the accelerated law degree program or at another university.

**Hometown:** Bartlett, IL  
**Fun Fact:** I am constantly called (and answer) to Jeff (my identical twin).
Rebekah Ernat

Title of Project: New Miocene sea cow from the island of Nosy Makamby, northwestern Madagascar

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Karen Samonds

Abstract: In 1927, a team of French paleontologists conducted a dig on the island of Nosy Makamby, off the northwest coast of Madagascar. Their research primarily concerned invertebrates, but they also found a fragmentary and undiagnostic portion of a sea cow braincase. However, following this initial discovery and report, there was little interest in the specimen until Dr. Karen Samonds and her team found a sea cow jaw and other skeletal remains at the same site between 2005 and 2014. These remains, believed to belong to the same species as those discovered by the French, are notable for being some of the only mammal fossils described from within the 65-million year gap in Madagascar’s fossil record. As this time period represents a critical and largely obscure interval in Madagascar’s past, this specimen is potentially highly significant for reconstructing sirenian [sea cow] evolutionary and biogeographic history. This project will enable me to contribute to this gap in knowledge, leading to a greater understanding of not only the history of sirenian species, but also of Malagasy fauna during the Miocene epoch. By comparing the specimens in France with those in Dr. Samonds lab at NIU, as well as other specimens in the collections at the University of Antananarivo in Madagascar, I hope to determine whether or not these fossils represent a new species.

Program of Study: Biology and Anthropology with a minor in French

Year of Graduation: Spring 2017

Future Plans: I would love to eventually work in a natural history museum such as the Field Museum, a national or state park, or somewhere where I could teach people about what I love, while continuing to learn.

Hometown: Lombard, IL

Fun Fact: When I studied abroad in Madagascar last summer, my research project was actually about an extant lemur called the aye-aye. Although I really enjoyed the project, my passion for paleontology was rekindled (I used to "dig for dinosaurs" when I was little) towards the end of the trip, and I’ve been hooked on bones ever since.
Megan Haduch  
**Title of Project:** PAINT Expressions: Effects of an Art Program on Cognition, Communication, and Quality of Life for Individuals With Dementia  
**Faculty Mentor:** Jamie Mayer, Ph.D.  
**Graduate Assistant:** Tertia (Abby) Jeppson  

**Abstract:** Dementia is an umbrella term for a number of neurodegenerative processes affecting multiple aspects of an individual’s life and significantly impacting cognitive skills, including memory, attention, and executive function (Howland, 2014). Alzheimer’s disease is the most common type of neurodegenerative dementia, affecting more than 35 million people worldwide (Bayles & Tomoeda, 2014). Although pharmacological treatments (for example, acetylcholinesterase inhibitors) exist, these are able to manage symptoms only, with nominal effects on the degenerative processes. Therefore, behavioral management and enhancing quality of life are paramount (Emre & Hanagasi, 1999).

Among many cognitive interventions, cognitive stimulation is an approach that speech-language pathologists use to treat patients with dementia. Cognitive stimulation can be described as individuals who participate in group activities to improve their cognitive function while encouraging socialization (ASHA, 2005; Bahar-Fuchs, Clare, & Woods, 2013; Clare, 2003). Art therapy is a method of cognitive stimulation that has been found to produce positive health outcomes in individuals with dementia. The process of creating art capitalizes on areas of the brain that tend to be spared until very late in the disease process. Art therapy additionally encourages independence, self-control, and self-worth (Miallides et al., 2010).

Participants in PAINT Expressions will reside at Lincolnshire Place in Sycamore, IL. Our research team is going to observe the impact of participation in a structured weekly art program on indicators of cognition, communication, and quality of life for individuals with mild to moderate dementia living in this care facility. Our team will be providing the art program to a local nursing home as a method of engagement with three to six residents. Researchers will observe and collect data using an observation tool while residents are painting. During painting sessions, researchers and volunteers will engage with the participants. All sessions will be both video- and audio-recorded for off-line analysis. Offline data will be recorded on an observational tool designed to examine indicators of communication, cognition, and affect including positive/negative words used, attention, interest, self-esteem, and reminiscence. My portion of this project will focus heavily on language transcription analyses using Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT) software. After transcribing the participants’ language samples, SALT will aid in the analyses of the mean length of utterance, number of different words, speaking rate, verbal fluencies, omissions, and errors. It will show the targeted speakers strengths and weaknesses. The software will allow us to hone in on areas of concern, which will allow better interpretation of how participant language use has, if at all, changed (Salt Software, 2016).

**Program of Study:** Communicative Disorders (Minor: Family and Child Studies)  
**Year of Graduation:** Spring 2017
Future Plans: After I earn my undergraduate degree in Communicative Disorders, I want to apply and gain entrance into a competitive master's program in Speech-Language Pathology. As a University Honors Scholar, I plan to dedicate my summer to hands-on research. This will mark the start to the research I intend to continue at a master’s level. Participation in this project will allow me a significant amount of hands-on experience working with individuals with dementia, which will benefit my future work as a graduate clinician and as a professional. The language transcription analyses I will be performing this summer will also allow me to master SALT software, which will benefit my future work as a speech-language pathologist.

Hometown: Park Ridge, IL

Fun Fact: I was NIU’s Homecoming Queen in 2015.
University Honors Scholars Program

Hard copies of all application materials must be submitted to Jason Goode at the University Honors Program office in Campus Life Building 110 by Friday, March 31, 2017 at 12:00 p.m.

Please carefully read the program guidelines (including eligibility) before applying.

Instructions: A completed application consists of a separate word processed document that encompasses the information requested in Part I and the two written statements requested in Part II.

Part I information must be presented in the same order and format as it appears on this application form.

Part II responses must be word processed and double-spaced. Both Part I and Part II must use Times New Roman 12 pt. font and be properly labeled.

A faculty statement of support must be submitted. Further details are provided in Part III.

The signature page in Part IV must be printed and signed by the student in ink.

All students must also sign an official release form.

The final and complete collection of documents should be stapled in the upper left hand corner.

Questions regarding this application may be directed to Jason Goode, Associate Director of Scholarships, Programming and Assessment, at 815-753-9509 or jason@niu.edu.
University Honors Scholars Program

Application Form

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Date of Application:

Full Name:

Z-ID#:

Major(s):

Minor(s) if applicable:

Local Mailing Address:

Permanent Mailing Address:

Preferred Telephone Number:

E-mail Address:

Current Number of Earned Credit Hours:

Current NIU GPA (out of 4.00):

Note: If the applicant has transfer credits, the entire academic record will be considered.

Expected Number of Earned Credit Hours by June 1st:

Start Date at Northern Illinois University (Semester/Year):

Anticipated Graduation Date (Semester/Year):

Full Name of Faculty Mentor:

Faculty Mentor’s Department:

Faculty Mentor’s Campus Phone:

Faculty Mentor’s E-mail Address:
PART II: WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Please provide two written statements. This information will be helpful to the University Honors Committee in making an informed decision. As in Part I, these responses should be word processed and double-spaced using Times New Roman 12 pt. font.

1. Please devote no more than 600 words to detailing your general qualifications for this award. You may wish to explain the nature and extent of your academic and extracurricular activities beyond the classroom, highlight honors or special academic recognitions you have received, discuss future education and professional plans, or provide other relevant information.

2. Please devote 600 - 1200 words to discussing your anticipated research and artistry experience in summer 2017. Your response should address personal strengths and any previous experiences that will aid you as a University Honors Scholar. In addition, this statement should address how you will accommodate the nine-week, average 35-hours per week, time commitment of the University Honors Scholars Program. Lastly, explain the focus, goals, and activities of your University Honors Scholars experience and how your summer work will lay the foundation for an outstanding University Honors Capstone in the academic year.
PART III: FACULTY STATEMENT OF SUPPORT
Please secure one detailed letter of support from the faculty member who will serve as your mentor for the University Honors Scholars Program and your future Honors Capstone advisor during the academic year. Be sure to share the program guidelines and expectations document with the faculty member.

The signed faculty letter of support should speak to the following issues.

(1) Confirmation that the faculty member has reviewed the program guidelines and expectations document and agrees to work with and support the student as described.

(2) An evaluation of the student’s academic progress to date and potential for future educational and professional success.

(3) An evaluation of the student’s proposed focus, goals, and activities for the University Honors Scholars experience with special attention to how the student’s summer work plan (response to Part II, question 2) meets good standards in the discipline and will provide a solid foundation for an outstanding University Honors Capstone during the academic year.

The completed letter may be submitted in one of the following ways: placed in a sealed envelope and returned to the student who will include it with the application; e-mailed directly to Jason Goode at jason@niu.edu; or sent through campus mail to Jason Goode at the University Honors Program, Campus Life Building 110. In the case of e-mail, scanned letters with electronic signatures will be accepted if they are placed on NIU letterhead.
PART IV: STUDENT SIGNATURE PAGE

By signing and submitting this page, I hereby certify that I understand and fully agree to the following statements.

● The information provided in this application is to the best of my knowledge, true, and correct. I have not knowingly withheld or created any information that could otherwise jeopardize consideration of my application.

● I have read, understand, and agree to the terms and conditions of the University Honors Scholars Program as outlined in the Honors Scholars program guide.

● I have shared the program guidelines document with my faculty mentor.

● I understand that excerpts from my application materials may be used in various publications regarding the University Honors Program and Northern Illinois University.

● I understand the selection committee composed of faculty members and administrators on the University Honors Committee will have access to and review my academic transcript.

● I understand that parts of my academic record may be discussed with my mentor and/or with other offices/educational officials on campus.

● I understand that my academic, judicial, financial, and any other pertinent records will be verified by the appropriate school and university offices.

● I understand that the University Honors Scholars Program is a serious, high-visibility commitment and honor, and I agree to take part in any and all related activities (unless prohibited by a class), photographs, publications, and so forth.

● I agree to have my name, photograph, project title, and project blogs appear on the websites, social media, and all other forms of media used by the University Honors Program and Northern Illinois University. I also agree to have such information included in printed university materials.

● I agree to give a presentation(s) and/or video recording of my project with the understanding that such material may be posted on university websites or used in university video or printed materials. I also agree to the terms of the educational release form that is attached to this application and accessible online through the NIU Media Services website via the link provided in the electronic version of the application (http://niu.edu/marcomm/_pdf/talent-release-form.pdf).

____________________________________________________
Student’s Original Signature

____________________________________________________
Date of Signature
RELEASE FORM

Production Title: __________________________________________________________

I __________________________________________, the undersigned, authorize the staff of Northern Illinois University (NIU), NIU Creative Services and affiliate departments and organizations to record, film and videotape my voice and image and to photograph my person.

I further authorize Northern Illinois University to use, televise, and publish (in print or on the Internet) such voice and image recordings and photographs for any purpose which Northern Illinois University deems suitable and which is consistent with the educational purpose of Northern Illinois University. I agree that no representations have been made regarding the purpose or use of my voice or image except for those set forth in this release.

In consideration of participating in the media production described herein, I do for myself, my heirs, executor, administrators, legal representatives and assigns release and forever discharge the Board of Trustees, NIU, NIU Creative Services, and their officers, agents, and employees and all other persons connected with the named production from any and every claim, demand, action, in law or equity that may arise as a result of my participation in the production named in this release.

I further state that I have carefully read the terms of this release. I understand that I am signing a complete release and bar to any claim resulting from my participation in the production named in this release.

____________________________ ______________________________
Signature of Participant Witness

______________ ______________________________
Date Signature of authorized person when participant is a minor or otherwise unable to sign in his or her own behalf

Educational Form