



HONORS PROGRAM
ANNUAL REPORT
2022- 2023

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND



Dear friends of Honors,

A crossroads in my academic career led me to discover a new academic world — one that great minds at URI had built and championed; one rooted in the pursuit of breadth, depth and complexity; one that profoundly influenced the lives of students who engaged in it; and one in which educators and staff passionate about innovative student learning taught, advised and administered. As someone motivated by ideas, impactful teaching, and making a positive difference, I jumped at the opportunity to become part of this exciting ecosystem — the URI Honors Program.

Tasked with bringing new direction to the program, though, I had a lot to learn. Thankfully, I was warmly welcomed by a capable, knowledgeable, amazing team, and in one year we accomplished a lot. We conducted a thorough self-study, guided by national norms in Honors education. We requested and underwent our first external review, conducted by two renowned evaluators affiliated with the national body governing honors education, the National Collegiate Honors Council. And, thanks to the external review and to multiple conversations with stakeholders across campus, we sketched the path for a new direction in Honors education at URI, which we will share later in this report.


Over the course of this same year, I had the opportunity to experience the full cycle of Honors, from an incredible Honors Colloquium, entitled “Just Good Food,” to the Honors Poster Conference where 48 students presented their original Honors capstone projects — details of which readers will also find in this report.

And finally, this year I witnessed the hard work and amazing results of both students in our Pre-health Professions program, directed by Andrew Simmons, as well as in our National Fellowships and Academic Opportunities program, directed by URI Excellence Award winner, Kathleen Maher.

Suffice it to conclude that I learned a lot this year about our amazing Honors students, faculty, staff, alumni, friends and donors, and that I am thrilled to have embarked on this new journey in Honors! I look forward to keeping readers updated on our changes as we move to make Honors a force for good at URI, in our local community and for our state.

Sincerely,
Karen de Bruin,
Director of the URI Honors Program

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PROGRAM GOALS

The URI Honors Program is comprised of three overlapping units that support student growth: the Honors Program, which includes the Honors Colloquium; the Office of National Fellowships and Academic Opportunities; and the Pre-Health Professions Advising Program.

During the 2022-2023 academic year, our primary goals were to:

1

Take steps to re-imagine the purpose of the Honors Program by completing a formal self-study, undergoing an external review, and developing a new strategic direction that would serve as the foundation for a new strategic plan.

2

Continue the tradition of hosting our crown-jewel Honors Colloquium, which entered its 59th year.

3

Support student outcomes academically and socially through course offerings and experiences that are unique to the Honors Program, and that prepare our students to be critical thinkers and problem solvers.

4

Offer guidance and support to students and recent alumni, both Honors and non-Honors, applying for prestigious external fellowships and scholarships.

5

Support students, both Honors and non-Honors, and recent alumni preparing to apply for admission to medical, dental, optometry, physician assistant, and other health profession training programs that require a degree beyond the baccalaureate.



Historic Lippitt Hall, home of the Honors Program on the URI campus.

HONORS PROGRAM REFLECTIONS

The Honors Program focused on three main objectives in the 2022-2023 school year.

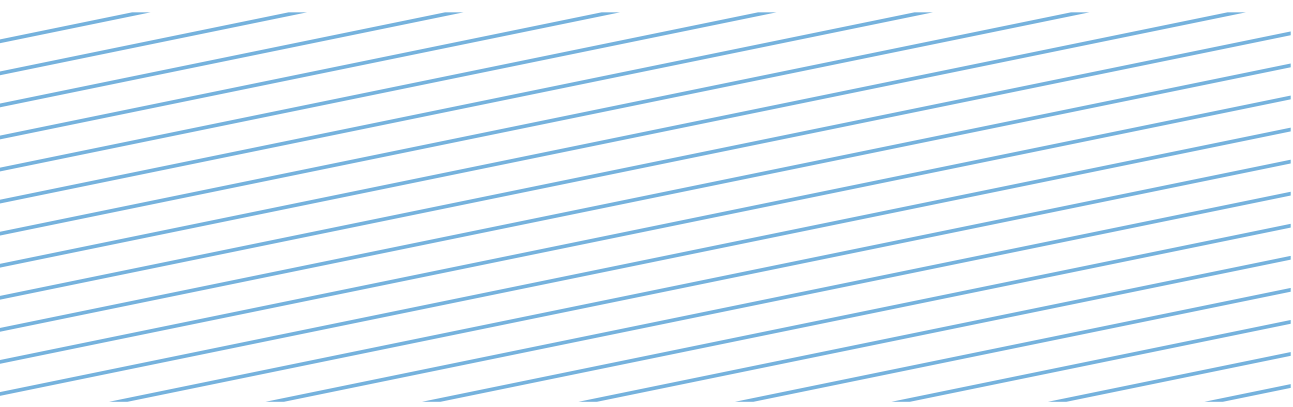
Honors Program Review & Strategic Direction Development

In the Spring of 2023, the Honors staff successfully completed a formal self study and brought on two external reviewers for an assessment by the [NCHC](#). The findings of these reviews are now guiding the new direction in which we are heading. You can find details of our self- study and our external review [here](#). While we have much work to do, we were excited to read: *“It is our considered opinion that the Honors Program at the University of Rhode Island stands at the edge of an amazing and exciting transformation, and that the changes achieved by Honors could have ripple effects that launch the University of Rhode Island toward the highest tier of institutions in the Northeast.”*

Honors Colloquium: *Just Good Food: Creating Equitable, Sustainable, and Resilient Food Systems*

This year’s Honors Colloquium was coordinated by Marta Gomez-Chiari, Professor, Aquaculture and Fisheries, and Director of the Biological and Environmental Sciences graduate program, and John Taylor, Associate Professor of Agroecology. This event brought together ten different speakers of diverse backgrounds who led a multifaceted exploration of the past, present, and future of local and global food systems through the lenses of sustainability, equity, justice, and resilience. Proudly, the speakers also included a URI Honors Program Alum, Vanessa Garcia Polanco, who is highlighted in the following pages. As part of the campus experience, we also brought in food from the recently appointed James Beard award winning chef, [Sherry Pocknett of Sly Fox Den Too](#). On-demand recordings of the colloquium events are available on our website at <https://web.uri.edu/hc/2022-just-good-food/>





Student Outcomes

This year, we were pleased to acknowledge honors student Lina Al Taan Al Hariri as winner of the Truman Scholarship. A GWS & ISD student, Lina is also a Gilman scholar and is completing an internship with the U.S. Foreign Internship program.



Students and program director Karen de Bruin at the 2023 Honors Commencement Ceremony.

We also offered our first J-term class, a film studies course taught by Thomas Zorabedian focused on the business of film-making. Students met with directors, producers, and writers, viewed 9 films and toured studios and cinemas in this highly experiential course.

In our annual Honors Poster Conference & Awards ceremony, 48 students presented their Honors Projects and 62 students were greeted by president Marc Parlange and Provost Barbara Wolfe as they received their certificates & medals of completion. Student projects ranged from addressing food insecurity on campus, to implementing athlete refueling stations at URI, assessing nutrition education in U.S. Medical Schools, and designing a more culturally-responsive teaching program in elementary school classrooms. We also honored Gillian Hodge '23, an ISD major, as the recipient of the DeHayes Honors Excellence Award.

- URI junior Lina Al Taan Al Hariri wins Truman Scholarship for R.I.: <https://www.uri.edu/news/2023/04/uri-junior-lina-al-taan-al-hariri-wins-truman-scholarship-for-r-i/>
- Read about the success of our inaugural J-Term course “Experiencing Film in Rhode Island”: <https://www.uri.edu/news/2023/01/lights-camera-uri-in-action-students-experience-film-up-close-across-the-state/>
- View project abstracts from the 2023 Honors Poster Conference: <https://web.uri.edu/honors/the-program/honors-project/presenting/>



HONORS BY THE NUMBERS

897

URI Students took honors courses in 2022-2023.

44%

of honors students are in their first-year at URI.



70% of students identify as female.



60% of students are out-of-state residents

47

University faculty members teaching courses in the Honors Program.

59

Faculty members who sponsored students' Honors Projects.

48

Honors Capstone Projects completed in 2022-2023.

62

Students who completed the Honors Program in 2022-2023.

13

Academy of Excellence Awards received by graduating Honors Students in their majors.

STUDENT STORIES

Stephen Coutu, '24 English & Psychology, Honors Program

As a life long resident of Rhode Island, Stephen was drawn to URI as a transfer student due to the influence of the university within the community. Stephen credits his time with the honors program with helping him become immersed in the culture of URI, which was missing from his other classes. He says “It allowed me to find other students who are driven and curious and who also want to do something more in life.” Read more about Stephen and his experience at URI here: <https://web.uri.edu/honors/stephen-coutu>.



Gillian Hodge, '23 International Studies & Diplomacy, Mandarin, and Political Science, Honors Program

Not only was Gillian the 2023 Dehayes Honors Excellence Award winner, she also received an Excellence Award from her major in International Studies. Gillian has quite the academic record which includes completing two honors projects and spending a year abroad in Taiwan as part of the Chinese Flag Ship Program. Despite her heavy academic load, she says “Completing the Honors Program at URI didn’t make my four years any more difficult or time-consuming, but rather allowed me the opportunity to delve into topics I was interested in outside of the classroom and gain a more holistic education overall.” Read more about Gillian here: <https://web.uri.edu/honors/gillian-hodge>



Vanessa Garcia Polanco, '18, Environmental Resource Economics, Honors Program

Currently serving as the Government Relations Director at National Young Farmers Coalition, Vanessa uncovered her passion for mobilizing resources to help young farmers succeed in agriculture and fight climate change while at URI. She says the honors program “equipped me with a lot of the skills to apply myself as a student leader... and gave me the skills to seek professional development opportunities that I didn’t know existed... or that I was worthy to get.” Read more about Vanessa here: <https://web.uri.edu/honors/garcia-polanco/>



OFFICE OF NATIONAL FELLOWSHIPS & ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES



Led by Honors Assistant Director [Kathleen Maher](#), the Office of National Fellowships and Academic Opportunities (ONFAO) offers guidance and support to students applying for prestigious external fellowships and scholarships. These opportunities are not restricted to Honors Program students; the office works with students from any student background who meet the eligibility requirements. This includes graduate students for certain international awards, as well as recent alumni. During the academic year 2022-2023 over 145 applications were supported, over 300 1-1 meetings (30 to 60 minutes in length) and 20 workshops and information sessions were held.

URI students and alums continue to shine in national competitions, which the infographic on the following page emphasizes, however, this is not the only outcome by which to measure our success.

Those who apply but do not win or place in these competitions still derive a great deal of value from the campus process. Each year students tell us of how this deep, guided reflection on their accomplishments, goals, and aspirations, has led them to discover other opportunities, or perhaps to realize a better professional path. It aids them in identifying their mentors and in realizing the extent of their accomplishments, as well as any gaps which they need to address to successfully pursue their goals.

And that **NONE of these successes would have been possible without dedicated faculty mentors who go above and beyond to support their students.** Two to five, three or oftentimes four, letters of recommendation from URI faculty members, as well as an institutional letter of endorsement or campus evaluation penned by ONFAO with committee support, are required per application. A great letter takes a substantial amount of time to prepare! Boiler-plate letters and empty superlatives do not suffice for these special opportunities. Faculty themselves often prepare multiple drafts of their letters. We wish to heartily thank the faculty who put in that time, and in so doing launch their mentees into opportunities which are often transformative personally, professionally and intellectually.

To learn more about the specific fellowships and awards, and their recipients, view our detailed report: <https://web.uri.edu/fellowships/ar-22/>

ONFAO Points of Pride

\$1.27M+

Amount of external funding garnered through ONFAO-supported fellowship applications (to support URI students and recent alumni).

73%

The percent of applicants who were selected as awardees, alternates, or finalists for awards requiring formal institutional nomination or endorsement (Boren, Fulbright, Gaither, Goldwater, Truman).

25%

of URI's Fulbrights in the past six cycles have been Talent Development Scholars.

2

Fulbrights this year who are community college transfer students and alumni of the Gilman Scholarship program (Pell eligible students).

6

Number of Gilman Scholars who have become Fulbrights.

5th

URI's ranking in the nation for number of undergraduate awardees for the Boren Scholarship, making it a "top producing Institution."

42

Number of URI Sophomores who have been named Hollings Scholars since the program's inception in 2000, making us a top producing Institution.

73%

The percent of applicants who were selected as awardees, alternates, or finalists for awards requiring formal institutional nomination or endorsement (Boren, Fulbright, Gaither, Goldwater, Truman).

STUDENT STORIES

Lina Al Taan Al Hariri, '24, Gender & Women Studies, International Studies & Diplomacy, Honors Program

Lina came to URI as a transfer student and quickly found herself at home in her honors classes and ONFAO director, Kathleen Maher's office. In her short time at URI, Lina has been awarded a Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, as well an opportunity in the U.S.> Foreign Service Internship Program. Most recently, Lina became a Truman Scholar and looks forward to finishing her honors project before pursuing post graduate studies abroad. Read more about Lina here: <https://web.uri.edu/honors/lina>



Kevin Suggs, '23, Computer Engineering & Japanese


As a Boren Scholar, Kevin is committed to starting his career in the Federal Government. He also applied for several other awards, including the Demers, Watanabe and Gilman which were used to fund an entire year abroad in Japan. Read more about Kevin's experience at URI here: <https://web.uri.edu/honors/kevin-suggs>

Timothy Berard '20, Political Science & Africana Studies

With a strong interest in International Relations and building cross cultural exchange, Tim was a frequent visitor to the ONFAO. He applied for several awards, such as the Pickering, Marshall, Gilman, Demers, multiple Fulbrights, and NALCAP. His experiences with these awards include “.. [learning] Arabic remotely through a Gilam and Demers fellowship... [exploring] Spain through the NALCAP program and [I] will be embarking on a Fulbright grant to the UK.” As a graduate, Tim continues to work with ONFAO and shares his upcoming plans here: <https://web.uri.edu/honors/timothy-berard/>





Recent award recipients are pictured, from top left: Alexandra Sinno (need details); Logan Beattie, Costa Rico (need details); Lina  Taan Al Hariri (need details)

PRE-HEALTH PROFESSIONS ADVISING PROGRAM

Assistant Director Andrew Simmons has led the Pre-Health Professions Advising Program since 2016 and chairs the Health Professions Advisory Committee (HPAC).

The Pre-Health Program supports student and recent alumni preparing to apply for admission to medical, dental, optometry, physician assistant, and other health profession training programs that require a degree beyond the baccalaureate. Though housed in the Honors Program, Pre-Health Advising is open to all URI students.

The program is guided by four goals: Knowledge, Planning, Reflection, and Application. Each of these goals is addressed through workshops, events, web and print resources, outreach, and individual advising. In AY 2022-2023, the pre-health program implemented 23 workshops, meetings, and events. Around 1,000 students and recent alumni interested in health careers are registered with the program.

Students and recent alumni receive comprehensive support for their applications through the Application Prep Program, which consists of two tracks:

- Track A supports students and recent graduates applying for admission to medical, dental, optometry, or podiatry school.
- Track B supports students applying for admission to physician assistant schools.

Additionally, Pre-Health Advising supports students on special admission routes through the Brown Early Identification Program and The URI-Johnson and Wales Master of Physician Assistant Studies Linkage Agreement.

All applicants receive comprehensive support throughout the year-long admission processes. This includes on-going advising on a range of issues (e.g., selecting schools, wait lists, multiple



acceptances, etc.), personal statement writing, standardized test-prep strategies, and admission interview preparation.

Along with our usual programming and services, In the coming year we look forward to providing more support for students preparing for the MCAT; offering an event highlighting the similarities between careers as a nurse practitioner and physician assistant; and ensuring that students from backgrounds historically underrepresented in healthcare take advantage of all the support our program, the University, and the national health profession organizations have to offer.

PRE-HEALTH BY THE NUMBERS

Outcomes, Applicants for 2023 Admission Supported by the Pre-Health Program

	Admitted	Not Admitted	Waitlisted	Total
MD & DO Programs	20	3	0	23
Dental	7	1	0	8
Optom	1	0	0	1
PA	19	6	2	27
Other	1	0	0	1
All Supported Applicants	46	10	3	60
HPAC admit rate	87.5%			
PA admit rate	70.4%			
Med admit rate	87%			

STUDENT STORIES

Bhavya Chatragadda '25, Double Majors in Molecular Neuroscience and Microbiology, Honors Program

Bhavya aspires to be a cardiac surgeon and has thrown herself into many clubs at URI. In addition to serving as a Pre-Health Ambassador, she is also president of DocOpp, URI's pre-med club, a member of the CELS Seeds of Success Program and BE the Match, as well as an Honors Advisory Council member. She also works in Dr. Fellini's lab performing Neuroscience research with a focus on cell biology. Read more about Bhavya here: <https://web.uri.edu/prehealth/bhavya-chatragadda-25/>



Nikita Maryanov '23, Biological Sciences

As a Brown EIP student, Nikita will be starting his MD program at Alpert Medical School in August of 2023. He is a certified Flight/Critical Care Paramedic and since graduation has worked full-time for a municipal 911 EMS service, while also participating in EMS research. He plans to pursue a career in Emergency Critical Care. Read more about Nikita, and the value he found in Pre-Health Advising helping him prepare for a career with “a high barrier to entry” here: <https://web.uri.edu/prehealth/nikita-maryanov-23/>



Lila Berle '21, Cell and Molecular Biology, Biochemistry

Lila came to URI as a transfer student, who was attracted to the affordable opportunities that the university provides to in-state students. She proudly took advantage of the support Pre-Health provided, appreciating the “very clear guide” Dr. Simmons provided while she was “exploring the possibility of a career in medicine.” This fall, Lila starts medical school at the University of Maryland. You can read more about her experience here: <https://web.uri.edu/prehealth/lila-berle-21-3/>





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2022-2023 HONORS PROGRAM GRADUATES

Kevin Beck
Olivia Belitsos
Krysta Bouchard
Aidan Boving
Jillian Bump
Isabella Caldwell
Yuvi Cambero
Chloe Chiruna
Rachel Colegrove
Madison Cote
Sacha Cottineau
Allison DeLuca
Marie Fam
Katie Famiglietti
Ariel Finkle
Eva Finkelstein
Laine Fischer
Keely Ford
Jovanna Fusco
Katie Gheysen
Chloe Gilligan
Revaa Goyal
Kaylee Goyette
Kristen Harder
Hailey Hendricks
Maggie Hill
Gillian Hodge
Caroline Johnson
Maureen Kennedy
Michael LaValva
Emily Light

Chelsea Longa
Aisling Macaraeg
Anthony Makashov
Morgan Maleonski
Sarabeth McClain
Mollie Melnick
Zoey Mendoza
Allison Mogauero
Caitlin O'Leary
Ashley Picard
Shelby Plotkin
Alexander Pretorius
Cristian Rodriguez-Gervais
Angela Rossi
Emma Rousseau
Antonia Simmons
Joellyn Speredelozzi
Kate Stavely
Katherine Stearley
Ashley Tai
Sonika Tahiliani
Rose-Phoenix Teixeira
Rhiannon Toole
Erin Torgersen
Clare Tyler
Samantha Valakos
Kiara Ware
Libby Ware
Giacomo Wholey
Jillian Wilson
Joseph Waits

2022-2023 HONORS PROGRAM TEACHING FACULTY

Karl Aspelund
Jiangping Cai
Vincent Colapietro
Mark Comerford
Lynne Derbyshire
Theresa Devine
Jill Doerner
Erin Earle
Maling Ebrahimpour
Nina Eichacker
David Fastovsky
Jay Fogleman Jr
Douglas Gobeille
Emmett Goods
Daniel Graney
Steven Gregory
Carolyn Hames
Allison Harper
Christopher Hunter
Heather Johnson
Carnell Jones
Musa Jouaneh
Leonard Kahn
Ambarish Karmalkar

William Kinnersley
Brett Lucht
Thomas Mather
Kathleen McIntyre
Cate Morrison
Sara Murphy
Bahram Nassersharif
Barry O'Connor
Natalie Pifer
Jennifer Pigoga
Nikolaos Poulakos
Tracy Proulx
Smita Ramnarain
Douglass Reed
Ian Reyes
Rebecca Romanow
John Rooney
Michael Tammaro
John Taylor
Thupten Tendhar
Yu Wu
Qingyu Yang
Thomas Zorabedian

WHAT'S NEXT?

As we have alluded to in other areas of this report, the Honors Program is in metamorphosis. While we will continue to offer the academic experiences our students are accustomed to, including programs through the ONFAO and Pre-Health Advising, the new direction of Honors is focused on equipping the changemakers who we believe hold the power to save our world.

Many of us in Honors are parents, and we are reminded every day that we are at a critical juncture when it comes to our planet and our current way of life. Climate change, biodiversity collapse, pollution, threat of war, economic insecurity, declining democracies, the rapid rise of artificial intelligence - these are just some of the challenges our children are facing. We see the Honors Program as a place where students can learn about these challenges and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to confront them. Instead of letting our children enter the world full of fear and anxiety about their futures, we want to equip our students with the agency and tools to become influential changemakers.

In the next academic year, we will begin to take steps towards this new vision, beginning with a comprehensive and thorough review and redesign of the Honors Curriculum. Led by our incoming associate director, Karl Aspelund, we have designed an introductory course for all students entering the Honors Program at URI. The course (HPR124) is titled "Welcome to Planet Honors!" and will introduce the students to working collaboratively and creatively on interdisciplinary solutions for local manifestations of global problems. We are happy that Cynthia Taylor (CAS: Sociology and Anthropology) will be the instructor and are excited to soon welcome our first cohort to Planet Honors!

While our new strategic direction is for now just that, a direction, we can give readers a preview of some of the changes to come. The program will likely become a thirty-credit program, instead of the current eighteen-credit program, in order to better align with national norms in Honors education. Given that our "crown jewel" is the Honors Colloquium, and that the Colloquium spawned the Honors Program, we aim to return to our roots. Moving forward, we will organize clusters of courses and experiences around the Honors Colloquium, which will allow students, regardless of their majors, to obtain a knowledge base in the most pressing issues of our times — the historic leaning of our Colloquia. The skills that students will obtain through these focused courses and experiences will be rooted in four new programmatic goals: creative problem solving, social innovation, interconnection, and policy advocacy. Moving forward, students will also have the opportunity to pursue Honors-level work in their majors as we build in much more flexibility into the program.

As we think through the structure of the new incarnation of Honors, we also aim to create an original program that will set us apart from our competitors. Organizing around the Honors Colloquium allows us to organize around our specific areas of expertise at URI. Our new foundational course will allow us to ground students specifically in the URI context of the Kingston campus, the North Woods and the Narragansett Bay. And recruiting specifically high-achieving students who see themselves as forces for positive change will give us a specific admissions focus that aligns with our curricular reorganization, which will hopefully allow us to improve our retention rates. Improved retention rates will raise the prestige of our URI Honors Program as our students and graduates go on to receive prestigious fellowships, pursue graduate studies and successful change making careers.

Also to look forward to this upcoming year is our 60th Honors Colloquium, which will be hosted in conjunction with the College of Business, which is itself celebrating its 100th year. Through this collaboration, we are inviting students, faculty, staff and the broader community to participate in a forum entitled, “Not Business as Usual: Business for the Common Good.” This colloquium will focus on how businesses can be a power for good in our world, exploring issues of sustainability, equity and justice. And as a pilot for our new curricular reorganization, the College of Business is offering Honors students the possibility to earn a co-curricular badge in sustainable business if they take both our Honors Colloquium course and three additional pre-selected Honors business courses in sustainable development. We are very excited about this partnership with the College of Business, as we are about similar partnerships that are taking root with a number of the other colleges across campus.

HOW TO SUPPORT HONORS

At this stage, Honors seeks support from our friends in a number of ways!

- We are always in need of financial support which is used to fund student enrichment programs, inclusive of scholarships, community-building events, academic opportunities, technology and materials to support learning experiences, and travel for our fellowship candidates. You can donate at any time by visiting the [RhodyNow funding page](#) and searching for “RhodyNow: Honors Program.”
- We also welcome the support of faculty and staff who wish to play a role in helping Honors establish new relationships on campus and in the broader community. As we embark on this journey, with sustainability and social equity at its core, we appreciate introductions and shared connections that will help us drive deeper collaboration and experiences for our students. If you have an idea or introduction you’d like to make please email melissa.stevens@uri.edu.

SPECIAL THANKS

DONORS

We offer our sincerest thanks and appreciation for the donors who have contributed towards program success this academic year.

- Dr. Donald H. DeHayes & Dr. Betty Rambur
- Dr. Laura L. Beauvais & Mr. Paul Forte
- Dr. Michael A. Rice & Mrs. Rufina D. Rice
- Dr. Cheryl A. Foster & Mr. Colin McCullough
- Dr. Jill K. Doerner
- Ms. Kathleen Maher & Mr. Roberto Aguirre
- Assistant Prof. Kathleen M. McIntyre
- Dr. Richard P. McIntyre & Ms. Deborah M. Barber
- Dr. Anne I. Veeger & Mr. Patrick A. Craft
- Ms. Jennifer A. Cahalan & Mr. William H. Karn
- Prof. Galen A. Johnson & Ms. Jean Johnson
- Mrs. Kristin F Stearley & Mr. Sean F. Stearley
- Mr. George M. deWalder

FACULTY

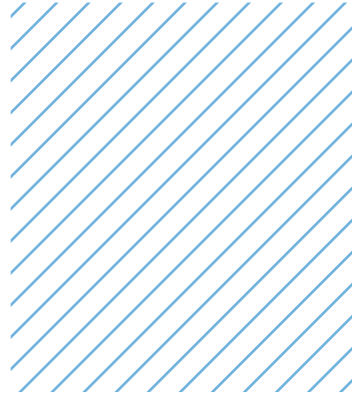
We would like to thank the faculty & staff members across the university who have supported Honors by teaching courses, sponsoring student projects, mentoring and nominating award applicants, and serving on committees for review prep cycles. Our students and our program could not be successful without your support!

FRIENDS OF HONORS

Across the university, Honors depends on the support of our friends for guidance and mentorship. We would like to thank you all for your dedication to our mission, both present and future, and look forward to working with you to bring our newest vision to life.



Clockwise from top left: Students sharing their research at the Annual Honors Poster Conference; Student Revaa Goyal poses with President Marc Parlange at the Honors Commencement Ceremony; Student Emily Light presents at the Honors Poster Conference; Students meet Basil, the therapy dog, during a finals de-stress event in the Honors Lounge.



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