



# CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

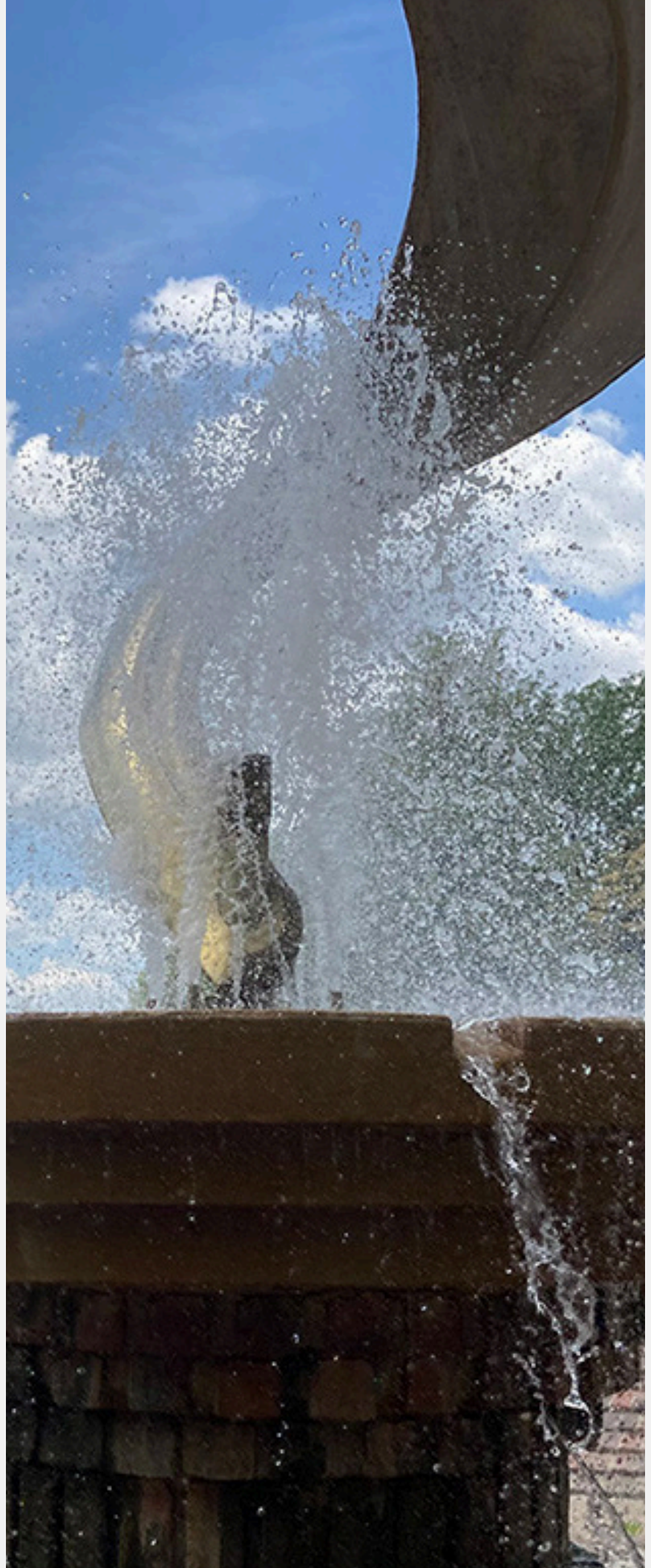
**For All Fellow  
Seekers of Truth**

**Fall 2024**

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Fall  
2024  
Newsletter





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Honors is About to Turn 20!



# From The Director

## Jeffrey Hause, PhD

Creighton's Honors Program has been very active both in the AJCU (Jesuit University) Honors Consortium and in the ~1,000-school National Collegiate Honors Council. I've learned from our long engagement with other institutions in both organizations that our Honors Program stands out as one of the best. While I am no doubt biased, I also have strong reasons to back up that bold assertion.

Our program stands out in part for its innovative curriculum. In the Jesuit community, we're one of the few schools (along with Seattle) to have an alternate core tailored for the distinctive Honors community. But just as important are the inspiring courses our faculty offer. This past year, Drs. Scott Eastman and Ryan Spangler taught students the history, culture, politics, and theology of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, and over spring break the students traveled to Spain to walk the pilgrimage route themselves, to get a feeling for what it means to be a pilgrim. Our Program offered financial aid to help any students who needed aid to make the trip.

If you still live in the vicinity of Omaha—or if you read Creighton's publicity materials—you may know that Prof. Gintaras Duda, Chair of Physics and onetime U.S. Professor of the Year, taught an Honors course in which our Program partnered with the local science museum, the Kiewit Luminarium. The course ("Science Communication and Exhibit Design: Exploring Science and Religion") addressed a question that has become increasingly important in the age of scientific distrust and misinformation, namely, how scientists should present their ideas both to each other and to the general public. The course also treated the impediments to and importance of accurate scientific communication. The capstone for the course was working with the staff at the Kiewit Luminarium on their science and religion exhibit.

This academic year, we are offering new courses, including one that respects Creighton's priorities in both justice and academic rigor. This fall, Prof. Tricia Ross is offering a course on Creighton's "Unsung Heroes" in which students do archival work in the effort to uncover information about some of our most remarkable students and others affiliated with Creighton who, because of factors such as race or religion, never received the recognition they deserve. I hope to have updates for you on what they find in future newsletters!

Of course, it's not just our faculty who make our program stand out. Our students are, as always, among our campus's most influential leaders. Honors student Emily Meister is serving as CSU President, one of many Honors students to hold this position, including Parker Rieffenberger, Patrick Marta, and John McCoy.

We are also proud of our many alums who continue to interact with the Honors Program. It was particularly wonderful to welcome back two former Honors Board Presidents, Dr. Eric Hansen ('12) and Dr. Daniel Poston ('16). Each spoke informally with a large number gathered in the Honors Suite, passing along the benefit of their experience in their respective fields. The students all reported back to me how much they learned AND how charmed they were by our visitors. A LARGE number of alums helped out with applications this year, and they have my particular gratitude.

Although I am officially on sabbatical this year and Dr. Erin Averett is Acting Director, I will continue to work with alums. So, if you are ever in the area, or you'd like to meet over Zoom, please let me know!

# From the Outgoing President

## **Grace Jaworski**

The Honors Program Student Advisory Board proudly reflects on another successful year of building community among our students. Our wonderful new freshman class, the Class of 2027, brought fantastic new energy and was highly involved in our programming. They participated in the long-running tradition of the Honors Freshmen Retreat in September and also helped bring momentum to our second annual Honors Freshman Talent Show in the spring semester. The board has worked hard this year with our Honors Program RAs to foster a supportive community on Swanson 9.

A program I was especially proud of this year was Honors Connect; one of our mentorship programs. Cleo Zagurski, our VP of Student Affairs, spearheaded new events where our freshmen met with upperclassmen for advice, support, and good food! I was thrilled to see so much excitement for Honors Connect throughout the year. Cleo also deserves a shout-out for continuing the work of George Varghese with the Honors Book Exchange. We now collect textbooks at the start and end of each semester and provide opportunities for Honors students to request books from our library. Everything is completely free. I hope to see that program continue to grow.

Honors students were blessed with an incredible new postdoctoral fellow this year, Dr. Matthew Pincus, who taught both freshmen courses and some upper-level SAMs. He has been a vibrant addition to our community and has helped the Honors Board build connections through several creative events. In October, Dr. Pincus organized a successful pumpkin-carving event, and in the spring, we celebrated the ancient Athenian festival of Munichia with cupcake decorating in the Honors suite. I confidently speak for the student body when I say that we are lucky to have Dr. Pincus with us.

Another highlight for the Honors Program Student Advisory Board was our second-ever Honors Winter Formal! Attendance increased from last year, and we had an incredible night of music, food, and fun. This event was once again held in the Skutt Center Ballroom, which transforms into an awesome venue with the right lighting and music. In addition to the formal, the Honors Community Service Program is also continuing to thrive, and our partners at Holy Family Community Center have been a joy to work with.

It has been a privilege to serve as Student President for the past two school years, giving me a unique opportunity to help sustain some of our newer programs. I am leaving the board in the best possible hands and have no doubt that it will continue to flourish. Brady Culp, the incoming Student President, is an exceptional individual. He is the embodiment of all our Honors Program values, and I am proud to hand him the reins.

# From The President

## **Brady Culp**

I have always believed that who we are is the composite of the people we get to spend our time with. As I reflect on my first two years in the Honors Program, I can't help but think back to my high school days. I made a lot of friends in Peoria—friends so important to me I hope they'll be at my wedding someday—but it took coming to Creighton to really feel like I had a family. I can't help but attribute that to the wonderful people on Swanny 9.

Now, while I imagine I'm not alone in feeling warmly about our living-learning community, it is with great pride that I can offer something empirical in support of thinking highly of the most recent Honors cohort. Last year, the program saw eight students recognized as College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Seniors, including the outstanding seniors in both the Humanities (Angelia D'Souza) and Natural Sciences (Grace Jaworski). Likewise, in March, rising seniors Riley Link and Hannah Graff both won Goldwater Scholarships, arguably the highest recognition for undergraduate research in the country. And speaking of highest honors, the outgoing Honors President, Grace Jaworski, was one of two recipients of the Spirit of Creighton award, the highest recognition that the university has to offer its graduates .

And, of course, this is without mentioning all the grad schools, gap years, and great people to be celebrated from the 2024 cohort.

That said, as I look fondly back at the year behind us, I stand just as excited to get started on the year ahead. Corny or not, I couldn't help but smile a little bit after finding out who got voted onto the board this year because I genuinely believe that they are the A team. It is an absolute privilege to be able to work with them this year, and with their help, the Honors Program has developed a few initiatives that we look forward to putting into action.



The first directive is the revitalization of the Honors Diversity committee. In the words of committee member Cleo Zagurski, “The Honors Diversity and Inclusion Committee promotes a welcoming space for incoming and current Honors students by recognizing their different lived experiences. It incorporates the Jesuit values of cura personalis and forming and educating agents of change by creating opportunities for success, individuality, and innovation. Our goal is to foster an inclusive community that hears, attends to, and promotes the program’s diverse perspectives.

Likewise, the program also looks forward to a robust expansion of the Mental Health Committee. While Honors has always been notable for a high level of personal and academic achievement, it has been noted that the Swanson Nine lifestyle can occasionally warp people’s perception of success. College is so much more than GPAs and CV additions, and the committee is working to develop and implement strategies that promote emotional well-being, reduce stress, and provide support resources tailored to the unique pressures faced by high-achieving students.

Furthermore, the board is working towards a major revamp of the Honors Blueline site. There is much to be proud of in the variety of resources that are offered to Honors students, and we intend to fully centralize these resources for ease of access. By combining advising information, portfolios, and opportunities for mentorship/menteeship all in one place, we hope to make the Honors experience just a little more pleasant to navigate.

Lastly, I would just like to reiterate my gratitude to the wonderful people who make this program up, and for the influence they have played in my life. It is a genuine privilege to be in this position and to be supported by so many people—I don’t take it lightly. Here’s to a great 2024!

Sincerely,  
Brady Culp

# View From Swanson 9

## Summer Ryan, Class of 2027

I had the rare experience of spending more 5:00 am mornings awake on Swanson 9 than anyone else on the floor. It was a peaceful time, when the lights from Creighton Hall were waving through the night and into the windows of the girls' neutral zone, where I could be found leaving room 924 for rowing practice. The only sound was the air conditioner in the hallway; no music from the other rooms, no chatter in the boys' NZ, just me padding down the hall in my slides to fill up my water bottle and meet my teammates in the Swanson lobby.

It wasn't until I returned after practice, usually cold and soaking wet with frost sticking to my leggings, that Swanson 9 started to come alive. I'd step back onto the floor, eager to change into dry clothes, and meet the sometimes groggy but ever-smiling faces of many honors students heading to 8:00 am biology. And they thought I had rough mornings! From that time on, Swanson 9 was an engine revving up, and it gained speed as each day zoomed by.

Although every day on Swanson 9 refused to stay exactly the same and went by faster than Nate can sprint, there were many constants on the floor, too. Sharing was a constant. One of the greatest benefits of living together with the Honors freshman was the many ways we shared our own lives and knowledge with one another. We shared mnemonic devices for remembering mitosis and meiosis, inspiration for a thesis statement, or interpretations of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. We shared pickleball techniques, the steps to a line dance, and dresses for a concert at CHI. No matter if you'd lived in Omaha your whole life or had shown up from as far away as Hawaii, there was always someone on the floor who could offer you a new perspective or idea. Or, someone like me, who could teach you the delights of a wonderfully undercooked treat known as gooey butter cake.

Another constant was the noise. Quiet was one of our most popular sounds, but never a lonely one. A silent NZ on floor 9 meant that everyone was studying together, supporting one another's hard work simply through our presence. But honestly, the quiet never lasted too long; eventually, we couldn't hold back the need to talk with one another. The students on Swanson 9 are the kind of people that make you want to let the dam burst and hear the chatter flow. From creating a bracket of which roommates would win wrestling matches against each other to helping Riley design his poster boards for the hall, every conversation was a moment worth cherishing because of the way they brought us all together. And finally, when Swanson 9 was filled with the sounds of races running down the halls, music from Josh's guitar, or Mario Kart on the nights we converted the floor into a gamer's paradise, everyone on campus knew our floor was the place to be.

The last thing that never changed on Swanson 9 was our self-made system of support and friendship among one another. I never had to worry about how to reach one of my friends if I needed their help; I walked down the hall, knocked on a door, and was immediately welcomed in, every single time. Everybody cheered each other on in their successes. Everyone offered a shoulder to cry on and a listening ear in the hard times. We all made a choice every day to share our unique goodness with those around us, creating lasting friendships that are worth celebrating.

I stayed on Swanson 9 for a few days after everyone moved out in May so that I could finish the rowing season. The floor was quiet all day, and not the same kind of quiet as our study sessions had been. Every door was unlocked, and I could walk into anyone's room, but I wouldn't find my friends there. Sure, I was on Swanson 9, but I wasn't living on Swanson 9 anymore, because what made that floor my home, home for all of us, was each other. We won't ever get to live all together again, but our floor is still alive; it's just changed locations. Every time honors students get together, to study, to sing, to run a race, to play video games, to dance, to laugh, to cry, to be friends to one another, our Swanson 9 is in that space, too. I will always be grateful because once you live on Swanson 9, you never move out.

# HONOR ROLL

# 2024

## Michaela Cantu



Michaela Cantu ('17), former Vice President of Programming on the Honors Board, received her MSW from UNO in 2020. She now lives in Portland, OR with her spouse, two cats, and a dog. She's working as a community-based counselor for women on parole and probation in Multnomah County. Most of her work addresses trauma, recovery, and the navigation of systemic issues.

## Daniel Poston

As of May 16th, Daniel Poston ('16), onetime Honors Board President, is Daniel Poston, MD/PhD. He has begun an Internal Medicine residency at Cornell, where he also conducts research.



# HONOR ROLL

# 2024

## **Dr. Ryan Jones**

Dr. Ryan Jones ('15) completed his psychiatry residency and is in New Zealand for the year to work in their hospital system and explore the extraordinary countryside.





# AWARDS & HONORS

# 2024

## Awards and Honors from our Graduating Class

Grace Jaworski, Lauren Kettler, Maisie Laughlin, and Elyssa Pereyra won Clare Boothe Luce Scholarships.

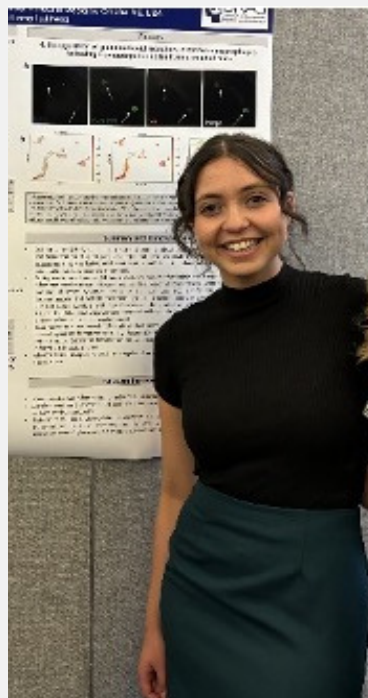
Grace Jaworski, Andree-Zeid Kakish, and Jonathan Li were Nebraska INBRE Scholars.

In addition, Grace Jaworski took 3rd place at the Big East Undergraduate Research Symposium and won the Spirit of Creighton Award.

Jack Diers won a Goldwater Scholarship.



**Jack Diers**



**Elyssa Pereyra**



**Grace Jaworski with Fr.  
Hendrickson**

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT ON DRs. ERIC HAAS AND LYNNE DIECKMAN

## **Dr. Molly Carrig**

Drs. Eric Haas and Lynne Dieckman are two faculty members to whom Honors students have turned time and time again for academic guidance and opportunities. These pillars of the Creighton Chemistry Department have inspired not only a strong cohort of chemists, but also students who found their calling in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry, mathematics, teaching, and marketing. Across all these fields, students speak of how these Creighton professors helped them to take advantage of undergraduate opportunities, to discern their future career field, and later to serve as mentors for those following in their footsteps.

Dr. Haas began his educational journey considering becoming a physician, as so many Creighton students do. However, after working in a research lab during a summer, he realized that the physician lifestyle, especially for specialties in which he was most interested, was not compatible with his greater life goals. In the following year, he had the opportunity to practice teaching at the undergraduate level. He recalls Jim Olson, his general chemistry professor, serving as a personal mentor during this discernment process. Dr. Haas served as Olson's teaching assistant for three years and during this time learned "the business of teaching chemistry." This practice teaching at the undergraduate level led Dr. Haas to identify undergraduate education as his calling, with special attention to a one-on-one teaching style. Since then, Dr. Haas identifies everyone in the Chemistry Department as having contributed to his current teaching style, especially emulating the "superhuman" Dr. Juliane Soukup, who is not only an excellent colleague but a mentor to many Honors students as well.

On the other hand, Dr. Dieckman knew that “deep down, [she’s] always wanted to teach.” When she was young, she would arrange her stuffed animals in rows and teach them like a kindergarten class. Originally, she wanted to be an art teacher, but she pivoted to STEM after uncovering that passion in college. She now finds research both energizing and humbling as she reports findings no one else in the world has observed. Dr. Dieckman now recognizes her high school chemistry teacher as a mentor as well—an educator who was “terrifying...but pushed [her] harder than anyone else ever had.” In fact, he was the one to push her toward applying for a full-ride scholarship in chemistry, which set her on the STEM path for the rest of her career. While many students may shrink away from demanding teachers, Dr. Dieckman highlights the value of embracing challenge: “If it weren’t for this one, strong, (scary,) yet amazing mentor, [she] would not be where [she is] today.” Other strong mentors along this journey include her graduate school advisor, Dr. Todd Washington, as well as Creighton faculty including Dr. Juliane Soukup and Dr. Nicole Kaufman.

When reflecting on mentorship, Dr. Haas stresses the importance of humility and recognizing all those who have helped along the way. He uses inspiration from their example to mentor the next generation of STEM students: “I like to pay that forward and use whatever influence I might have to help the next person land in a career they love as much as I love this one.” For those who would in turn hope to return the favor and serve as mentors themselves, Dr. Haas recommends practicing patience along their career path. Dr. Haas also stresses the importance of passion, teaching that “You have to absolutely love this job to do it. If you don’t love it, it’s too much work.” Similarly, Dr. Dieckman believes that “the number one quality required is heart.”

Dr. Dieckman identifies genuine care, concern, empathy, honesty, dedication, and patience as qualities of a strong mentor. Dr. Dieckman would advise considering the mentoring styles of those you admire and taking pieces of their techniques into your own approach. From her previous mentors, she's carried forward the principles of holding high standards and pushing mentees to achieve more than they may have aimed for themselves. She also emphasizes the importance of honesty and transparency so that students can learn productively from their mistakes. Along with this emphasis on magis, always striving for more, Dr. Dieckman stresses that all mentees deserve respect and compassion, and should be treated as you would have wanted to be treated at their stage in life.

When discerning a career and later mentoring those in the field, finding stellar people who both support you and challenge you to do better is certainly a priority. Both Dr. Haas and Dr. Dieckman identify the people as what makes the Creighton Honors Program special. They recognize Drs. Hause and Averett as strong leadership with incredible dedication to the program. They also appreciate the Honors students themselves, how they take advantage of the program structure to pursue unique opportunities with both drive and compassion. No matter into what field Honors students matriculate after graduation, they are undoubtedly blessed with a strong, supportive cohort of Honors graduates as well as excellent faculty, always happy to continue mentorship long after graduation.



**Dr. Dieckman**



**Dr. Haas**



# THE CONSIDER! TALKS

Consider!

When we hear that someone we know has been convicted of a crime, what is our reaction, and what should our reaction be?

How can one prepare for the chaotic life of an emergency room physician?

What were ancient werewolves like, and how would Plato help us understand them?

Why are we so afraid of math when it could be our best friend?

I'm sure you all want to hear what this year's Consider! speakers had to say about these questions! The talks are short but packed with interest. Spend a few minutes with some of your fellow Creighton Honors folks online.

Ellysia McElroy (class of 2025, English and Classics): "Plato and the Wolf"

Riley Link (class of 2025, Math): "Math: Our Silent Ally (and Why it isn't Terrifying)"

Sarah Norris Hoff, PhD (BA Psychology, 2009): "Just Vision: Our Attitudes toward Criminal Offenders"

Manaswita Tappata, MD (BS Biology, 2016): "Unexpected Lessons from Medicine"



# HONORS IS ABOUT TO TURN 20!

In 2005, Honors Director Geoffrey Bakewell introduced the University to the “New” Honors Program. Some of you may remember the “Old” Program, which consisted of smaller and enriched sections of Creighton Core classes, together with a handful of specialized seminars (many of which were taught by Dr. William O. Stephens). The “New” Honors Program would instead focus on interdisciplinary courses and metacritical thinking with the goal of introducing students to both the sources and methods of disciplines—and so the famous SAMs were born!

To celebrate our 20th birthday, we will have special events and opportunities for alumni. The events are still in the planning stages, but we are very excited about the possibilities. Stay tuned for more news!



# STAY IN TOUCH!

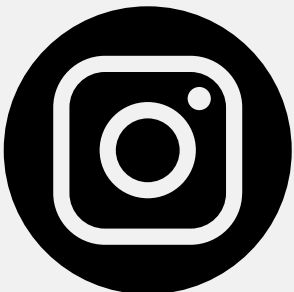
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