

BYU HONORS

Where People and Ideas Intersect

2021
YEAR IN
REVIEW

BYU UNDERGRADUATE
EDUCATION


DIRECTOR'S NOTE

We have chosen the theme of Connections and Innovation as the focus for our 2021 yearly report. While the pandemic continued to challenge the program and our students, the breadth of cross-campus connections by students and faculty – and the resulting innovation – continues to increase. Extraordinary faculty and staff from every college on campus contribute to our pursuit of a highly engaging, interdisciplinary education for Honors students and broadening experiences for participating faculty. During the past five years we estimate that:

- **55 top researchers and artists** made presentations to first-year students highlighting the ways they ask great questions and generate new knowledge and creative works.
- **230 individual faculty advised 300 Honors students** in completion and publication of their theses.
- **230** individuals served as **faculty readers** on thesis committees.
- **50 Alcuin Fellows** and Honors Faculty Fellows taught **81 sections** of our Unexpected Connections courses.
- **101 faculty** presented at our Chocolate Chats and Disciple Scholar events.
- **140** faculty served as **Honors Coordinators** in their departments.

It is a pleasure to associate with these faculty and a tremendous learning experience for me personally to connect with people from across campus. Of course, the Honors Program would collapse without the dedicated and skilled efforts of our staff. My special thanks go to Dennis Cutchins, Julie Radle, and Vika Filimoeatu.

DR. SPENCER MAGLEBY
Honors Program Director



On the Cover: Alyssa Baer, 2021 Honors Graduate and Commencement speaker.



Alyssa Baer, 2021 Outstanding Honors Graduate represented the University's graduates as the student speaker at BYU's Commencement exercises. Alyssa's Honors thesis evaluated how the Mothers Without Borders program works with local organizations to empower women and care for vulnerable children in Zambia. Alyssa is now pursuing her graduate degree in Public Health at George Washington University.



Scan to read more

INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP



The idea that everyone is a leader in some capacity guides the new Honors Leadership Development Experience (LDE) launched in 2021, designed specifically to:

- Award students with academic credit for their experiences
- Facilitate leadership within interdisciplinary teams
- Provide foundational leadership instruction
- Provide opportunities to lead effectively, solve problems, and impact communities

A structured course sequence consists of both theory and practical application:

HONRS 310: Foundations of Interdisciplinary Leadership
Students gain both knowledge about the practice of leadership and build their own personal leadership understanding, capabilities, and skills.

HONRS 390R: Leadership Practicum

Students engage in practical, substantive leadership experiences through approved interdisciplinary projects, programs, internships, or partnerships with the Honors Program to apply theories and skills.

Meet Rory McWhorter

To guide students through their leadership development courses and experiences, we welcomed a new LDE Coordinator to the Honors team! Rory McWhorter works with students, other campus entities, and a variety of organizations to provide meaningful opportunities for our Honors students as they strive to become influential leaders.

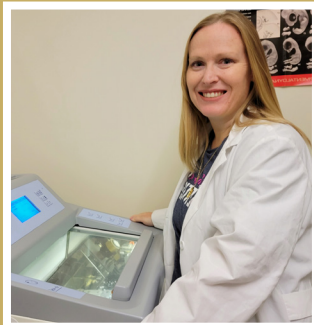




Scan to read more Honors students' stories

INNOVATIVE STUDENTS

Katrina Lantz (Neuroscience) – Hope Breathes



After 15 years, Katrina Lantz, a mother of six sons, returned to BYU to complete her undergraduate degree. In 2020, her first daughter was diagnosed with anencephaly at 22 weeks in the womb. To better understand her daughter's condition, she started working in Michael Stark's research lab to investigate reversing neural tube defects like anencephaly with folic acid. Katrina shared her story through a personal essay published in *Scribendi*. Her essay won the Staff Choice award - and the hearts of its readers.

Gabe Richardson (Physics & Mathematics) – Innovation at NASA



NASA was in the news a lot last year, and one of our own Honors students has some unexpected connections to the space program. A senior in Physics and Mathematics, Gabe Richardson was employed at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in the Pathways Program. His Honors thesis involves miniaturized instrumentation – an essential component of space exploration. The Quantum Dot Spectrometer (QDS) allows instrumentation to be miniaturized to a scale previously impossible - from about the size of a toaster to the size of a quarter and getting smaller.

Rachel Miner (Economics) – A Holistic and Nuanced Approach



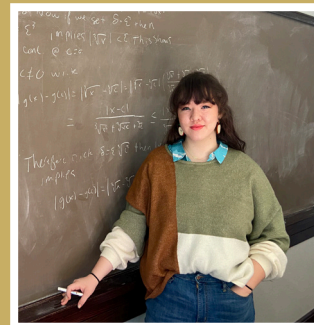
Honors student Rachel Miner was named a 2021 Truman Scholar, the premier graduate fellowship in the United States for those pursuing careers as public service leaders. Rachel has worked extensively on public policy in the United States Senate, and with Dr. Julie Valentine and the Utah State Legislature, to help draft and facilitate support for three separate bills that ensure protection to sexual assault survivors. Rachel is also Executive Director of Bellwether International – a nonprofit organization she founded to protect and promote freedom of religion.

John Richardson (History) – Singing to Success



John Richardson spent his weekends in an unlikely place — at the Cathedral of the Madeleine in Salt Lake City as a cantor. John admitted that as a Latter-day Saint student attending BYU, there was a massive learning curve as cantor, but John thrived on the interfaith connections – just as he loved the interdisciplinarity of Honors. His love for both history and music intersected in his Honors thesis which explores conversion during the times of the conquistadors, looking specifically at the use of music in the spiritual conquest of the Nahua Peoples of Mexico.

Annie Kim (Math Education) – Solving for X when we don't know Y



While working as a mathematics student teacher at Salem Hills High School, Annie Kim began working on her thesis to explore the different types and frequency of variables in middle school math textbooks. Inspired by a Math Education assessment, Annie noted that when faced with deviation in variables, students failed to get the correct answer or didn't even attempt the problem. She hopes that understanding how variables are used can help teachers guide students through sticky math problems, making middle school just a little easier.

Colt Halter (Psychology) – Monkeying Around



When a professor invites you to spend the summer hanging out with monkeys, you say yes. Colt Halter, a senior Psychology student, wasn't just monkeying around, though. A summer spent observing and befriending numerous species of monkeys became the basis for his Honors thesis, in which he explored stress levels and mothering styles in rhesus macaques. Colt used data from his time at the California National Primate Research Center (CNPRC) to synthesize hormone levels, behaviors, and parenting styles to develop a nonhuman model for human behavior.

INNOVATING AT THE INTERSECTIONS

HONRS 227:

"The Comedy of Life: Exploring Social Structures Through Humor" considers how humor and comedy come from class hierarchies, gender relations, and other unspoken cultural codes.



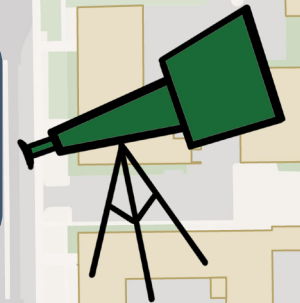
HONRS 227:

"Race and Music" interrogates the question of what it means to be American in a racial and musical context, considering race in music and music of race, the historical rhythm of racial progress, and where we go from here.



HONRS 223:

"Transcendent Skies: Literature and Astronomy" considers the influence of the heavens on writers and readers as students explore how science has changed, in worlds seen and unseen.



HONRS 220:

"X-Mutants IRL: Evolution from Darwin to Dothraki" explores the evolution and structures of life and language, analyzing DNA, the Indo-European language family, and luminaries in their fields.



UNEXPECTED CONNECTIONS:

Faculty, students, and disciplines from across campus all intersect in Honors. Together we connect ideas and methods, experiment with course design, discover interdisciplinary perspectives, and try new approaches to learning in the Unexpected Connections courses.



TNRB

HFAC

TMCB

JFSB

KMBL

ESC

EB

BNSN

MSRB

LSB

INNOVATIVE FACULTY

Thesis Advisor



Justin Giboney, School of Technology

Faculty thesis advisors supervise the development of students' honors theses from inception to completion and are key to a successful thesis experience – even more so than the topic itself! In 2021, Dr. Giboney advised two Honors student theses - one on automated cyber ranges and another focused on cybersecurity learning.

Honors Faculty Fellow



“I love the chance to explore ideas outside of traditional paradigms and curricula because the best and most exciting knowledge is sometimes the kind of thing you can’t really easily predict or over-program.”

- George Handley, Comparative Arts & Letters

“The intersection of disciplines lets us see information in a new way. The Honor’s program allows me to help students discover this amazing space for learning.”

- Mary Davis, Molecular Biology & Microbiology

Alcuin Fellow



Leslie Hadfield, History

Guest faculty engage in informal discussions about their research with Honors students in bi-weekly Chocolate Chats. Dr. Leslie Hadfield joined us for a discussion about white saviorism, to help us better understand what it really is, and how to overcome it. Of course, there’s always a chocolate treat!

Chocolate Chat Presenter



Honors 120 “Superhero”



Brian Christensen, Art

Top researchers and artists from across campus introduce students in Honors 120 to a wide variety of disciplines and perspectives. As a professor of art and a sculptor, Dr. Christensen shared his creative process through an image presentation of his work, and related his philosophy, context, and methods. Together the class discussed motivation and spirituality through art and each individual’s creative potential.

Honors Coordinator



Len Novilla, Public Health

Honors Coordinators represent the Honors Program in each department on campus, working with Honors students from their freshmen year through to their Honors thesis. Dr. Novilla has served as the Coordinator in Public Health for nearly twelve years and has overseen at least twelve Honors theses during that time, including four theses in 2021.

HONORS SCHOLARS

Every year the Honors Program awards scholarships to advanced Honors students in recognition of their academic achievement and progress toward Honors graduation.



THE ROBERT K. THOMAS SCHOLARSHIP

Amy Griffin | Communications and Journalism Major
My Honors experience helps me find creative solutions to real-world social problems. I've found my niche where I can make a difference and feel like I am effecting real change in communities, especially for minorities.



Jane Morrissey | Spanish and Latin American Studies
The excitement I have found in learning through my Honors experience helps me see that there are always multiple perspectives, and with that, countless ways to solve problems and help the world transform.



Anna Osguthorpe | Economics
I love how the Honors Program teaches me to appreciate variety and to find the best in every aspect of my studies. Some of my best experiences at BYU have been semesters when the classes I take complement each other, and I love drawing "unexpected connections" in my education.



Kaylin Hill | Anthropology
I have absolutely loved my experience in the Honors program! The interdisciplinary nature of the courses has allowed me to study perspectives I ordinarily wouldn't encounter in my major, enriching my education here at BYU.

KHONA SCHOLARSHIP

Autumn Clark | Information Systems
The Honors program has given me the chance to accomplish all of my big plans for college: studying abroad, research opportunities, challenging classes, and the chance to build something culminating and meaningful.

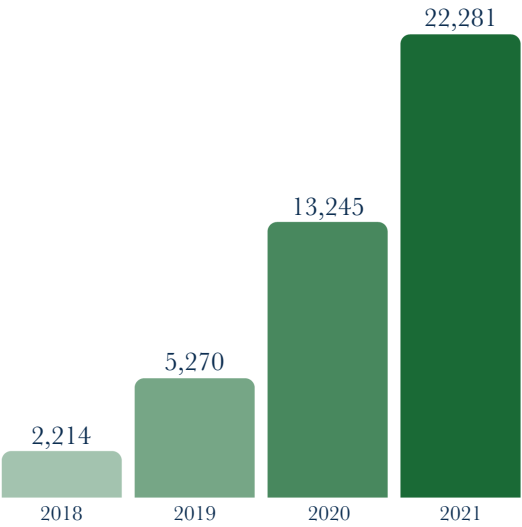
Hadley Robertson | Experience Design and Management
I became interested in inclusion initiatives after a forum address in 2018. That, combined with research on the National Issue Forum Institute's (NIFI) deliberative dialogue program, led to my thesis on inclusion and deliberative dialogues for adolescents.

WEST HONORS SCHOLARSHIP

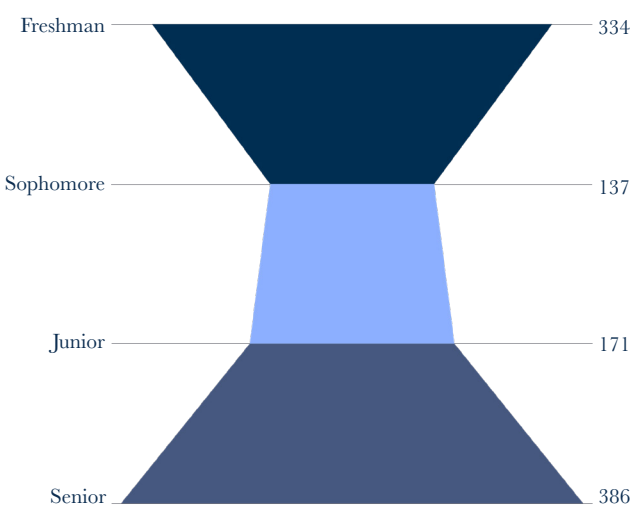
At the end of 2021, we announced a new scholarship endowed by the West family. This scholarship will be awarded to Honors students early in their university career who are first generation college students beginning in 2022.



2021 BY THE NUMBERS



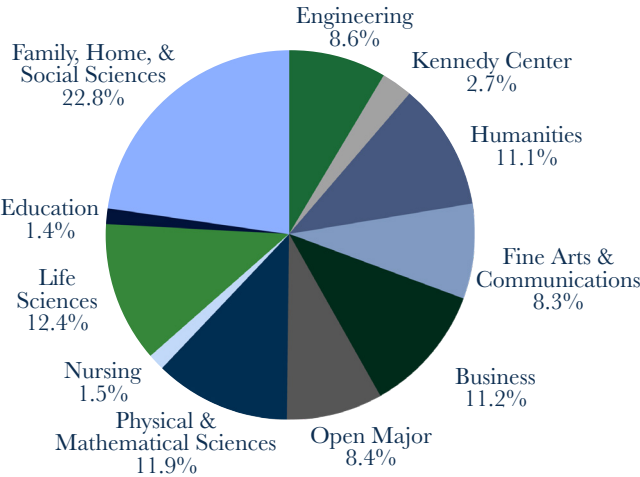
Honors Thesis Downloads



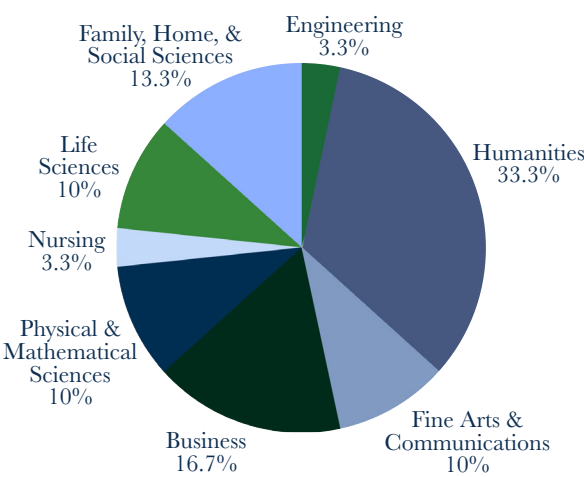
Honors Students by Class Standing

- Honors class sections: 56
- Course enrollments: 2,584
- Active Honors students: 1,420
- Thesis proposals: 60
- Great Question Essays: 89
- Honors Graduates: 55
- Participating Faculty: 247
- Students Advised: 452

Honors Students by College



Honors Faculty by College





HONORS PROGRAM

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

Thank you to the Alcuin Fellows, Honors Faculty Fellows, and Adjunct Faculty for their invaluable contributions to our Honors courses this year:

Nicole Bay | Linguistics
Matt Bekker | Geography
Natalie Blades | Statistics
Ryan Christensen | Philosophy
Mat Duerden | Experience Design and Management
Dean Duncan | Theater and Media Arts
Aaron Eastley | English
Julianne Grose | Molecular Biology and Microbiology
George Handley | Comparative Arts and Letters
Carl Hanson | Public Health
Jennifer Haraguchi | French and Italian
Brian Hill | Experience Design and Management
Wade Hollingshaus | Theater and Media Arts
Luke Howard | Music
Janelle Macintosh | Nursing
Grant Madsen | History
Tracy Maylett | Leadership
Laura Middleton | Leadership
Rex Nielson | Spanish and Portuguese
Marc Olivier | French and Italian
Jamin Rowan | English
Jacob Rugh | Sociology
Kurt Sandholtz | Public Service and Ethics
Kerry Soper | Comparative Arts and Letters
Mikle South | Psychology
Denise Stephens | Astronomy and Physics
John Talbot | English
Karl Warnick | Electrical Engineering
Clint Whipple | Biology
Steve Wood | Chemistry and Biochemistry

BYU Honors Program Administration
Spencer Magleby | Director
Dennis Cutchins | Associate Director
Julie Radle | Assistant Director
Vika Filimoeatu | Advisement Supervisor

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