HONORS LINK 2024
In the fall of 1995, the Honors College welcomed 246 undergraduates to its inaugural class, launching a new chapter in the history of honors education at Oregon State University and building on the legacy of an honors program with roots in the 1950s. This past September, as we approached our 30th anniversary as a college and 65 years of honors education at Oregon State, an incredible 850 students began their honors journeys. The number of honors students is now almost 2,000 — more than 6.5% of the total OSU undergraduate population. There are nearly as many current students in the Honors College as there are graduates of the historic honors program. This growth is a manifestation of our goal of inclusive excellence, broadening the diversity of honors students while maintaining the same high standards that have always defined the Honors College community. Our reach extends from Corvallis to Bend and all over the world through Ecampus, and with an unprecedented $7.5 million fundraising campaign continuing to build momentum, the transformative potential of the Honors College has never been greater. This is evident in this year’s Honors Link. The amazing contributions of honors students, faculty, alumni and supporters are pushing the college to new heights, opening possibilities previously unimaginable. I feel so grateful to be able to contribute to the legacy of honors education at Oregon State, and as I look toward the future, I am so inspired by all that we have accomplished and by the commitment and achievement shown in the stories you will read here. Thank you so much for your support.

Toni Doolen
Dean, Honors College

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It’s not just the product. It’s the process.

The honors thesis helps students build career skills.

The thesis has always been a cornerstone of the Honors College experience. It’s a unique opportunity for students to contribute to the body of knowledge and develop scholarly skills as undergraduates. It’s also a vehicle for professional development.

Project management, critical thinking, networking, written, verbal and visual communication are all part of the thesis process, says Honors College Dean Toni Doolen. The National Association of Colleges and Employers has identified many of these as skills students need to succeed in their careers. Honors College Associate Dean Susan Rodgers believes that “an independent project like the honors thesis is an ideal way to develop these abilities.”

Recognizing this connection and the long-term value of these skills, the Honors College has introduced a career integration module, in collaboration with OSU’s Career Development Center, for the Stage 1 thesis class that’s required for all students in their first year.

The module helps students identify the professional skills they will develop through every stage of the thesis process, skills that “are relevant to finding success in the workplace,” Doolen says.

Building skills through every process

Doolen notes that students learn project management throughout the thesis process. They have to create a work plan around time and resource constraints, including other classes or possibly a part-time job. They also have to make decisions, set milestones and meet deadlines.

“It isn’t just about writing the thesis,” Doolen says. When students go into a job interview, even if the specific topic of their thesis isn’t tied to the job, they can point to the methods they learned, the way they organized information, the people they networked with, the poster they created or the lightning talk they gave.

A thesis still relevant nearly 20 years later

For Kalan Guiley, ’04, describing his honors thesis helped him stand out in his job interviews. His thesis, documenting his work when Oregon State hosted the Human Powered Vehicle Challenge for the American Society of Mechanical Engineers in 2004, developed project management skills he continues to use nearly 20 years later at The Boeing Company in Seattle.

Currently a senior manager for global aviation safety, Guiley estimates that 85% of his engineering work involves project management. He joined Boeing in 2004 when engineering was ramping up for the 787 Dreamliner, and just as he had to coordinate multiple elements for the ASME event at OSU, he has to think about how all of the flight control systems and software in a jetliner work together.

Whenever he has the chance to talk with students, Guiley encourages them to gain practical experience. “Show me that you can work in a cross-functional team, that you can manage a schedule and a budget to actually deliver something,” he says.

“These are the skills that I think set students apart.”

Learning to self-manage and adapt during a pandemic

Throughout the thesis process, students learn resiliency. Unlike a homework assignment or a test where they know exactly what they need to do to be successful, Doolen notes the thesis is an open-ended project that they have to manage themselves.

Plus, “research never goes as planned,” she adds. Students must learn how to adapt and go on to Plan B — with support from their faculty mentor and thesis committee. They can make mistakes, but then correct and move forward. “We have this very systematic process. We have all the support mechanisms. It’s a really safe place to learn these things for the first time.”

Alanna Celaya started at Oregon State in fall 2020, when all classes were remote. Given how much COVID-19 had interrupted so many lives, her own included, she wanted to use her thesis to prevent what she calls “pandemic amnesia” and give future generations insights to help avoid past mistakes. She found parallels to the 1918-20 flu pandemic, including society’s desire to move on, return to normal and not talk about it.

But Celaya did want to talk about it. She started by interviewing people in the medical field, but then realized her research was missing a key element — the COVID experiences of average people.

So she talked to a high school history teacher, who after going through the Cuban Missile Crisis, Vietnam and 9/11 still calls COVID-19 “the craziest thing I’ve ever lived through.” A high school student she interviewed experienced the pandemic through the lens of losing their father to brain cancer and their own activism in Black Lives Matter.

Celaya had long thought she wanted to be a doctor. But her thesis experience changed that. She switched her major to public health with a medical humanities certificate because she wanted to focus on preventive care, she says.

Throughout her thesis, Celaya says she had to learn patience, recognizing people have different perspectives, and when you disagree, “you still have to be respectful.” Because she wanted to improve her public speaking skills, she prepared extensively for her thesis defense. She also learned how to accept feedback, including when told she needed to revise or take out a favorite part. The feedback process helped Celaya recognize that her mentor and committee wanted her and her thesis to be successful. And she has been.

Taking the thesis in a creative direction

The Honors College has always allowed students to complete the thesis outside of their major, and in addition to lab or field research, the thesis can be a scholarly or creative work.

Doolen says about 25% of students go outside their primary discipline for the thesis, including students in the STEM fields completing a thesis in the arts and humanities or vice versa. She believes this flexibility helps students become well-rounded members of society and more complete professionals. Honors students have written plays and poetry, produced paintings and composed music.

For her thesis, bioengineering major Nyssa Engebo is creating a book for children in grades K-5 about the 50 states. For each state, she highlights a scientific advancement, such as the first lung transplant, which was done in Mississippi, or a unique characteristic, like the northern lights in Alaska and the saguaro cactus in Arizona.

It was the saguaro that sparked a new direction for her thesis. Engebo originally planned to focus on her lab research. But after a visit to the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix, where she learned how this keystone species helps regulate the environment, she saw an opportunity to think about science in a creative way.

“I was doing math and science all day,” she says. “This would be a good break, a different type of problem-solving.”

Encouraged by her thesis mentor, Engebo has been pulling together facts and “finding a way to make it interesting for kids,” she says. She also applied for an OSU Interdisciplinary Student Fellowship, which pairs students and mentors across the arts and humanities, science and engineering. Her art mentor is helping her develop and refine visuals for the book. Throughout her thesis, Engebo says she’s learned “there’s a story behind everything.” For the inventions she’s including in the book, she’s learning not just how they were invented, but why. “I think it’s a helpful way to remember the humanity behind the invention.”

A unique journey for every student

Since the Honors College was established in 1995, students have completed more than 2,680 theses. Not only is each a unique contribution to the body of knowledge, each has been a unique learning experience for the student, Doolen says.

“The thesis document is almost secondary to the journey and what you’ve learned along the way.”
Jose Torres collected samples for bighorn sheep research in the Mojave Desert.

At the end of the 2023 winter term, Jose Torres became the first Oregon State University student to complete an honors degree online.

Ask him how he got here, and his story might surprise you.

"Nobody in my family’s ever gone to college or university, so it wasn’t even in my mind. We’re all working class people, and so that was my thing," he says.

Torres is a U.S. Navy veteran who joined the service straight out of high school and did three deployments in Japan, San Diego and Guam.

"I was going to become an aircraft mechanic. That was my goal," he says.

But while stationed in Guam, he saw another possible path for himself when he decided to volunteer at the Guam Wildlife Refuge. There, he worked with the Indigenous Chamorro people to help support native species in the refuge.

"I was just like — ‘How do I get your job?’" he says. "I just had no idea this was a possibility or a career choice that somebody could get paid for."

So when his contract with the Navy ended, Torres applied to the fisheries, wildlife and conservation sciences bachelor’s program through Oregon State Ecampus. He also applied to the Oregon State Honors College, which is known for high levels of faculty engagement and creating research opportunities for undergraduates.

At the end of the 2023 winter term, Torres reached out to Professor Clinton Epps in the College of Agricultural Sciences to ask if he would be willing to be his honors advisor.

"I got very lucky," Torres says. "My honors thesis is on bighorn sheep morphology, and Dr. Epps is one of the biggest desert bighorn researchers in America."

Determined to do in-person research while pursuing his degree online, Torres also applied for a VIEW Fellowship through Oregon State’s Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Sciences. Through the fellowship, he received funding to spend two months in the Mojave Desert during the summer of 2021, assisting Epps with bighorn sheep research.

"We were collecting fecal samples and behavioral information, so we had to go out and track them," Torres says. "We were hiking 6 to 8 miles a day. I got a lot of great experience from that."

Torres went on to write and defend his honors thesis on how climate impacts bighorn sheep morphology. For his thesis, Torres used a dataset from the California Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, which has collected data from bighorn sheep captures since 1978. Epps continued to advise Torres remotely throughout his honors research and thesis, despite being in different states.

While working and completing his honors degree, Torres learned about a United States Geological Service fellowship, and Epps gladly nominated him for the opportunity.

"I did three interviews," Torres says. "And when I got to the Burmese python opportunity in Florida, I said, ‘This is what I want to do. Pick me.’ It turned out to be such a great experience."

That great experience would lead Torres to an even bigger opportunity. When his fellowship ended, the USGS offered him a full-time position in Florida, helping to combat invasive Burmese pythons throughout the Everglades and South Florida. In addition to working on ongoing scientific research at the USGS, Torres helps train the next round of interns, teaching them how to do captures and necropsies, as well as how to use outdoor vehicles like swamp buggies and airboats.

Oregon State is one of the only universities in the nation that offers an honors degree online, and Torres has advice for future students who decide to pursue this opportunity.

"I’m not gonna tell you it’s easy," he says. "I’ve been working hard. But it’s been a very rewarding experience."
EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS.

Honors degree online finds strong demand from Ecampus students.

When the Honors College extended the Honors Baccalaureate to students earning their degrees exclusively online via Oregon State Ecampus, the expectation was for around 15 students to enroll by the beginning of fall term 2023. Instead, there were more than 50.

Demand has been strong because the Honors College value proposition aligns with the wants and needs of online students, most of whom are already in the workforce and pursuing a degree to advance their careers or transition to a new career path.

“There are very few universities that have embraced an honors pathway fully for distance students,” says Honors College Dean Toni Doolen. As one of the first, Oregon State is drawing new honors students from across the U.S. and from as far away as Ukraine and South Africa.

Leanna Dillon, Honors College Ecampus coordinator and academic advisor, meets with every admitted student before they enroll. She says she’s been impressed by their motivation and clear goals. They want the research experience from the thesis. They want professional development. And they want to make connections with faculty in their field, mentors who can open doors to internships, jobs and other opportunities.

“I love working with these students,” she says. “They have a why for why they’re here.”

One of the hallmarks of the Honors College experience is community engagement, and Dillon is building a new model with input from online students. She created and manages an interactive Honors College Ecampus Community in Canvas, Oregon State’s online learning management system, as well as a more informal Honors College Ecampus social community on Discord to encourage students to have conversations with her, with faculty and with each other.

Students want opportunities for live conversations using the Zoom video platform, including participating virtually in Honors College events, Dillon says. “Students are seeking out this type of engagement. It’s part of my job to make sure that events and resources are accessible and relevant to Honors College Ecampus students.”

Several Ecampus students have started the early phases of their thesis, including completing the Stage 1 thesis course that’s required of all honors students. Dillon says the Honors College learned how to make the research and thesis-writing processes work for distance learners during the COVID-19 pandemic, and those support structures remain.

A year in, the Honors College is still building capacity and developing more online classes, including three- and four-credit courses students need for their major. Associate Dean Susan Rodgers says faculty who teach colloquia classes are encouraged to develop an online version or create a unique Ecampus course. She adds that honors faculty who are new to online teaching have been enthusiastic, including one who emailed at the end of the term, “Please, can I do this again?”

Significantly expanding Ecampus enrollment is one of the priorities in Oregon State’s new strategic plan, and that will include many more students earning the Honors Baccalaureate online. Already, the addition of more nontraditional students has helped create an honors community that is more representative of the OSU student population, Doolen says. And it fulfills her longstanding priority to make the transformative honors experience accessible to any qualified Oregon State student.

“Ecampus students not having access to the honors degree was never an option. We needed to get here,” she says. “As a college, we’ve shown over and over we’re very good at trying things out, learning quickly, adjusting, moving on and always centered on how to create an experience that is transformative for these really great students. I’m super proud of how we’ve done it.”

For nearly 30 years, the Honors College has been inspiring students to find their passions, realize their unique potential and grow intellectually — and the Honors Impact Scholars Program helps make sure this transformative opportunity is within reach for all eligible students. Created and recently endowed by Honors College Champions Patrick, ’74, and Vicki Stone, the Impact Scholarship aims to bring outstanding students to the Honors College and provide them with the resources to make the most of their honors experience, wherever it takes them.

Impact Scholars receive a $10,000 total award, which includes $2,000 per year for four years, plus an additional $2,000 to support either a fifth year of study or experiential learning. The experiential dollars can be spent on anything from in-depth thesis research to conference travel to international opportunities. This flexible structure supports the Honors College’s commitment to the long-lasting impact of experiential learning and the independence students have to chart their own educational course.

Honors College Dean Toni Doolen plays an integral role in the Impact Scholar experience, meeting with recipients every term. Scholars are selected based on their capacity to bring new and unique perspectives and abilities to the honors community, and these meetings facilitate dialogue that builds their capacity as thinkers and leaders, while also supporting their success as students.

Adam Gross, a business administration major with a political science minor, was one of the first Impact Scholars. He expects to graduate in 2025 and singles out the experiential learning support in the scholarship as particularly impactful. “Good research takes time and money, something most college students are in short supply of, and the additional funding will make that research more accessible and improve its scope and depth,” he says. “Traveling abroad is something I have always wanted to do, but because of the expense, have never truly considered. Now he can. And Gross is not the only Impact Scholar with eyes set on learning abroad.

Working toward an honors degree in psychology and theatre with a minor in contemplative studies, Jennah Campbell, another member of the first cohort of Impact Scholars, plans to use the funds to improve her Spanish skills while studying abroad in Spain. This will allow her to communicate psychology ideas to a wider audience and better understand the people she is studying. While unsure of her plans after graduation in 2024, Campbell recognizes that “hands-on learning is a powerful teacher and one that is essential for a life and a career after college.”

Harry Yu is one of five Impact Scholars from the 2022 cohort. The Corvallis native is majoring in computer science with plans to graduate in 2026, and he has been inspired by the scholarship to build engagement with his community. Yu is developing his skills as a software engineer and wants to use his talents and technology to better the world.

“Receiving the Impact Scholarship made me feel comfortable and welcomed in the Honors College and Oregon State community,” he says. The power of the Impact Scholars Program extends well beyond the students, and that’s by design. “An Impact Scholarship doesn’t just change recipients’ lives, though it certainly does that,” Doolen says. “By supporting the development of unique cohorts of leaders, its impact extends into our shared future, making a transformative difference for us all.”

If you are interested in supporting scholarships for Honors College students, contact Kellie Parker at the OSU Foundation at kellie.parker@osufoundation.org or 541-207-6182.
Eric MacKender, ‘00, has built a career on the foundation he established at Oregon State University and in the Honors College. He’s paid it back as the first Honors College alumnus to become an Honors College Champion, joining a group of leadership donors who have given $100,000 or more to the college in support of the university’s Believe It capital campaign.

MacKender earned his Honors Bachelor of Science in chemical engineering, and his experience was similar to that of current students, taking honors classes and writing a thesis. He developed a particular fondness for colloquia classes and came to appreciate the emphasis on excellence and continuous growth in the honors community.

“College was the first time I can remember being a member of a community that was invested in and excited about learning,” MacKender says.

MacKender recalls his favorite honors course was Systems Thinking and Process, which focused on applying theory to real-world challenges and problems. It’s a hallmark of the Honors College approach to teaching and learning that has been particularly meaningful in his professional life.

After graduating, MacKender put this way of thinking immediately into practice at Chevron, joining the designs and process engineering team at the Oak Point Chemical Plant in Louisiana. He has remained at Chevron throughout his career, earning an MBA at Tulane University along the way. Today, he is the technical manager at Chevron’s El Segundo Refinery in California.

MacKender’s thesis, “Development of a Predictive Model for Polymer Etching in a CF4/O2/Ar Microwave D,” was an opportunity to build both technically focused and broadly applicable skills. “I was very career-focused and wanted to do something in my major,” he says.

The experience allowed him to develop a range of abilities as he learned how to work with a team and write and defend his research — tools he continues to use. “We need people in the world that have breadth, and we need those that have depth,” he says. “The honors thesis is set up to allow for both.”

Since graduating, MacKender has made supporting the Honors College a priority through contributions of both money and service. Making nominal donations his first year out of college, he gradually increased his giving over time. In 2014, MacKender became a member of the Honors College Board of Regents, the college’s development and advisory volunteer leadership group, and he and his family recently created a new scholarship endowment that will support Honors College students for generations to come.

As a student, MacKender received several donor-funded scholarships that helped him graduate debt-free. “It has been important to me to pay that same generosity forward,” he says.

MacKender, his wife Heather and their two children live in the Los Angeles area, but distance has not hindered maintaining strong connections to Oregon State. In addition to his work with the Board of Regents, he has hosted alumni events for the Honors College in Houston, Portland and Los Angeles. He has facilitated community-building programming for Oregon State alumni at Chevron and met with current honors students. And he has provided challenge donations for the Honors College on Dam Proud Day, Oregon State’s annual day of giving. He and Heather also support her alma mater, Montana State University, underscoring their lifelong mission of giving back.

With a firsthand understanding of the professional and personal benefits of an Honors College education, MacKender is a true champion of the college and is committed to making the same experiences he has benefited from open to all students in the future.

“The endowment allows me to leave a legacy that will help future OSU generations well beyond my time here and hopefully ease their burden, as they work hard to improve themselves and the world around them.”

Building a legacy by giving back.

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Alex Varela embraces change in the classroom and beyond.

In Alex Varela’s classroom at Oregon City High School, his Honors College experience inspires his teaching every day. Varela, ’23, credits the Honors College with giving him the skills and experience to bring holistic, diverse perspectives to his classroom.

Alongside the works of writers like Melvin Dixon, Langston Hughes, Ta-Nehisi Coates and Trevor Noah, English class staples like “The Great Gatsby,” “Catcher in the Rye” and “The Crucible” allow students of all backgrounds, identities and upbringings “to see themselves in their curriculum and engage with thought-provoking and challenging concepts they might not otherwise be exposed to,” he says.

Varela’s path to the Honors College and to his own classroom wasn’t straightforward. He and his grandfather made the 17-hour drive from Fallbrook, California, to Corvallis for a campus visit, and he says he fell in love with Oregon State. But after his grandfather’s passing, Varela was forced to drop out of high school to support himself. Still, he earned his GED and took classes at a community college.

Eventually, Varela transferred to OSU, where his advisor persuaded him to apply to the Honors College. Despite being initially unsure of his identity as an honors student, “the prospect of doing academic research was very interesting to me,” he says.

For Varela, classes were the most significant part of his honors experience. “The small class sizes allowed me to feel like I had a genuine relationship with my instructors and a meaningful impact on the class,” he says. Courses like his favorite, The History of Human Rights taught by Katherine Hubler, “create an environment wherein you are excited to learn about things you likely never considered before.”

Having earned his Honors Bachelor of Arts degrees in history and education, Varela now teaches comparative American literature in Oregon City. In his own classroom, Varela has incorporated what he valued in his honors experience, encouraging students “to research, debate, negotiate and explore meaning through literature.”

Varela makes a deliberate effort to connect with his students to help them envision a bright future. “I’ve shared my struggles from dropping out, that I’m the son of Mexican immigrants, and that I grew up doing migrant farm work,” Varela says. “I am transparent, honest and compassionate with my students.”

He describes his best days as the ones when a reluctant reader suddenly realizes that books can be funny and interesting or when a transgender student tells him his class is the one place they feel safe to be themselves. “Those days feel transcendent,” he says.

During his time at Oregon State, Varela worked as an ambassador for the College of Education and as the community relations representative for the SOL: LGBTQ+ Multicultural Support Network. He was a recurring host on the podcast “Between Identities: QTBIPOC Talks,” and he led a self-defense seminar in the wake of violence against trans people. Varela remains active in his community, joining the picket line to support striking teachers in nearby districts, writing to public officials and supporting both local and national pro-LGBTQ+ movements.

Varela and his wife have a daughter, Hana, who was born during winter break of the 2022-23 school year. Varela loves being a father, and his impassioned approach to work and life is inspired by his desire to make sure his daughter grows up to be proud of herself and her family.

Varela plans to eventually pursue a Ph.D., likely in American racial history or ethnic studies. His specific research interests are rooted in public education, and he aims to analyze the impacts of segregation, funding and performance indicators. He is also writing a novel. Set in a post-Balkanized America, it is “inspired by post-nuclear fiction and the history of the Iranian revolution,” he says. “It’s a fun research and writing exercise in between grading papers.”

In his work and personal life, Varela’s experiences inform his commitment to addressing inequities, particularly those perpetuated by the education system. He encourages the Honors College and other institutions to expand opportunities and close achievement gaps for students of color and queer students coming from nontraditional backgrounds.

Varela notes he was often the only ethnic minority in an Honors College class, while also knowing many elements of the honors experience “would be hugely beneficial to historically marginalized and systemically disadvantaged students.” Beyond diversifying the student population, he believes the Honors College needs a more robust financial aid package. “This would go a long way to improve access, equity and diversity,” he says.

Varela encourages students to “learn as much as you can from as many different kinds of people as you can. Change is inevitable and beautiful,” he says. “Embrace it as it comes.”
The scholarship committee selected Beaman for the $2,500 scholarship, and each of the runners-up received a $500 prize.

**HENDRICKS SCHOLARSHIP recognizes student achievements, research, engagement.**

Lindsay Beaman, a psychology major who is also earning a certificate in medical humanities, was named the 2023 recipient of the Joe Hendricks Scholarship for Academic Excellence. Shauyra Gaur, Anda Gherghe, Clare Jayawickrama, Bridget Price and Matthew Raffel were named runners-up.

The award was established by alumni and friends in honor of Joe Hendricks, the founding dean of the Honors College, following his retirement. It recognizes outstanding Honors College students for their academic achievements, research and campus engagement.

The scholarship committee selected Beaman for the $2,500 scholarship, and each of the runners-up received a $500 prize.

**LINDSAY BEAMAN**

Lindsay describes her Honors College experience as being filled “with opportunity, innovation and encouragement. I am surrounded by students and faculty who encourage others to think in creative, outside-the-box ways to promote learning and create change,” she says.

Lindsay appreciates how her professors push her to ask hard questions and turn her interests into actions, especially through research. During summer 2023, Lindsay worked at the Mayo Clinic as a biomedical ethics intern researching disparity issues in regenerative biotherapeutics.

Lindsay’s internship will help inform her thesis, “Racism, Institutional Betrayal and Historical Trauma: The Implications of Physician Perpetrated Microaggressions.” Through research and community engagement, she wants to share the lived experiences and uplift the voices of people experiencing violence.

“I feel shocked and deeply honored to be named this year’s Hendricks Scholar,” Lindsay says. “The Honors College has so many talented and dedicated students, so the opportunity to be recognized along with the other outstanding nominees is something that brings me so much excitement.”

Lindsay was nominated by Courtney Campbell, the Hundere Professor in Religion and Culture in the School of History, Philosophy and Religion.

**SHAUYRA GAUR, ’23**

Shauyra, a computer science major with minors in mathematics and political science, appreciates the Honors College community and how his classmates’ drive has pushed him to excel. While a student, he was deeply involved on campus, serving as the president of the Association for Computing Machinery and the vice president for BridgeUSA.

Shauyra successfully defended his honors thesis, “Productivity Playlist: Interpolating a Musical Path Between Emotions Using a K Nearest Neighbors (KNN) Algorithm,” in spring 2023. He was nominated by his thesis mentor, Patrick Donnelly, an assistant professor of computer science at OSU-Cascades. A Fulbright Scholar, Shauyra is now pursuing his master’s degree in artificial intelligence at Radboud University in the Netherlands.

**ANDA GHERGHE, ’23**

Anda, a microbiology major with a minor in chemistry, has a passion for research and health care. She successfully defended her thesis, “Recent Stressful Experiences and Electronic Nicotine Product Use Among Young Adults,” in spring 2023. She was nominated by her thesis mentor, Anita Cservenka, an associate professor of psychology.

“I am surprised and excited to receive this scholarship!” she says. “I am honored to be recognized for my achievements alongside the other nominees. I feel grateful for this opportunity.”

Anda is currently working as a medical scribe at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland. With the goal to have a career that blends health care with mentorship and research, she plans to return to school to pursue a doctor of nursing practice degree next year.

**BRIDGET PRICE, ’23**

Bridget, a double major in chemical engineering and bioresource research with a minor in chemistry, held several leadership positions in the Honors College during her four years as a student. She served as an Honors College ambassador, resident assistant in Sackett Hall for the Honors College Living-Learning Community and co-president of the Honors College Student Association.

“The Honors College has always felt like my home base,” she says. Bridget successfully defended her thesis, “The Role of Microbial Symbiosis in Algal Biomass Cultivation,” in summer 2023. She is currently researching algae at Wageningen University and Research in the Netherlands through the Fulbright Student Program. After that, she will pursue her Ph.D. in chemical engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**MATTHEW RAFFEL, ’23**

Matthew, an electrical and computer engineering major with a minor in computer science, focused his extracurricular activities on supporting others in the College of Engineering through the Society of Professional Hispanic Engineers and the Oregon State International Friendship Program.

Matthew was nominated by his thesis mentor, Lihong Chen, an associate professor of electrical engineering and computer science. He successfully defended his thesis, “Leveraging Transformer Encoder Output for Effective Token Summary in Simultaneous Translation,” in fall 2022. Deeply involved in research, he appreciates that this award confirms he is on the right academic path. Matthew remains at Oregon State, where he is pursuing a Ph.D. in computer science.

**CLARE JAYAWICKRAMA, ’23**

Clare, a bioengineering major with a minor in Spanish, was a frequent volunteer as a student helping others on campus through the Newman Center and the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry.

Clare worked in Stephan Giovannoni’s microbiology lab and was nominated by Sarah Wolf, one of the lab’s graduate student researchers. With Giovannoni as her mentor, she successfully defended her thesis, “Investigating Microbial Enzyme Kinetics in Low Oxygen Systems,” in spring 2023. Clare plans to spend a year as a volunteer missionary with the Newman Center at American University in Washington, D.C., then begin medical school the following year.

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**BRIDGET PRICE, ’23**

Bridget, a double major in chemical engineering and bioresource research with a minor in chemistry, held several leadership positions in the Honors College during her four years as a student. She served as an Honors College ambassador, resident assistant in Sackett Hall for the Honors College Living-Learning Community and co-president of the Honors College Student Association.

“The Honors College has always felt like my home base,” she says. Bridget successfully defended her thesis, “The Role of Microbial Symbiosis in Algal Biomass Cultivation,” in summer 2023. She is currently researching algae at Wageningen University and Research in the Netherlands through the Fulbright Student Program. After that, she will pursue her Ph.D. in chemical engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**MATTHEW RAFFEL, ’23**

Matthew, an electrical and computer engineering major with a minor in computer science, focused his extracurricular activities on supporting others in the College of Engineering through the Society of Professional Hispanic Engineers and the Oregon State International Friendship Program.

Matthew was nominated by his thesis mentor, Lihong Chen, an associate professor of electrical engineering and computer science. He successfully defended his thesis, “Leveraging Transformer Encoder Output for Effective Token Summary in Simultaneous Translation,” in fall 2022. Deeply involved in research, he appreciates that this award confirms he is on the right academic path. Matthew remains at Oregon State, where he is pursuing a Ph.D. in computer science.

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Graduating from Oregon State University with Honors Baccalaureate degrees in chemical engineering and bioresource research, plus a chemistry minor, Bridget Price, ’23, is glad to see years of planning coming to fruition.

“My uncle and grandfather are chemists, and my family has a farm in the Willamette Valley,” she says. “I started getting interested in the intersection of agriculture and engineering in high school when I read about scientists in the Netherlands doing research to build a more circular economy with a focus on sustainable agriculture. It was an ‘aha!’ moment. I could incorporate my chemistry and engineering interests into agriculture to help the world.”

Price pursued other interests as well. She joined the Honors College Student Association during her first year and later served as president. She competed nationally in cross country during her first year as a member of the Oregon State Running Club, and she was a resident assistant in Sackett Hall for three years.

But perhaps Price’s greatest passion during her time at Oregon State was research. She never stopped thinking about the research article she encountered as a high school student, which proved to be her main motivation for applying to the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

What especially caught her interest was algal biofuel production and algal cultivation at Wageningen University and Research in the Netherlands. “It was agricultural engineering, which I had never heard of before,” she says. “I started looking into Fulbright as a way to conduct research there. Also, I’ve always wanted to see the world, experience different cultures and meet people who think differently.”

Price is grateful to have been selected as a Fulbright Scholar, which made possible her research position at WUR. Her project proposal centers on enhancing wastewater treatment systems using oxygenic photogranales, which are pellet-shaped aggregates of algae and other microorganisms.

“Normally, if you grow algae in wastewater, it can be hard to recover the biomass for its secondary usages, such as biofuels,” Price says. “By forcing it to form these granules, you can more easily remove algae from the water. I’d look at these granules and study how to maintain them within a wastewater treatment system.”

Following her year in the Netherlands, Price will head to the University of Wisconsin-Madison to earn her doctorate in chemical engineering and further develop her research skills and experience. She then wants to pursue a career as a research scientist in the biofuels industry — and help the world by promoting sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels.

Shaurya Gaur, ‘23, who earned an Honors Baccalaureate degree in computer science, discovered his passions for technology and social policy early in life.

“My dad worked in tech, so I’ve always been around it,” Gaur says. “In high school, I took programming, engineering and 3D modeling courses and learned Python and Java. I also joined our Model United Nations, developing my interest in policy. I knew I wanted to solve problems for a positive social impact.”

Gaur enjoyed coding so much that he entered the College of Engineering as a computer science major and got involved early. Through the Oregon State chapter of ACM, the Association for Computing Machinery, he found the motivation to “get down to brass tacks and figure it out” when encountering coding challenges. He also explored opportunities to learn more about politics, eventually leading the Oregon State chapter of BridgeUSA, a nonpartisan organization promoting student discussions around political issues.

“We focused on civil discourse, getting people who disagree on issues across the political spectrum to come and talk with pizza in front of them, promoting constructive, empathetic conversations,” Gaur says.

An immigrant who moved to the United States at age 7, Gaur maintains strong family ties in India and has returned multiple times to visit. Through these visits and hearing his cousins’ stories about living in Europe, he grew determined to live and study overseas.

Shaurya Gaur found a perfect fit at Radboud University in the Netherlands, which offers a master’s degree in artificial intelligence with an emphasis on social impact. He knew that, with its General Data Protection Regulation, the European Union has been deeply invested in the intersections of AI, data and society.

“I’m interested in fairness in the design process of AI models and social networking, modeling how information and disinformation flow,” he says. “Society has started tuning in more about bias in AI and the impact social networks have, and the EU has become a leader in tech policy with the AI Act and Digital Markets Act. I want to get in on that.”

Gaur is interested in continuing his AI research through a doctorate. Eventually, he hopes to apply his skills in the public sector or for a nonprofit.

“I want my work to have a good social impact,” he says. “That will fulfill me.”
Can you learn the history of commerce by playing board games?

Dennis Adams’ colloquium shows how.

When you walk by Dennis Adams’ classroom, it doesn’t really look like a college class. It looks more like a group of friends hanging out, playing board games and getting a bit too competitive. It’s no surprise that the course, History of Commerce Through Board Games, has become one of the most popular Honors College colloquia.

Adams, an instructor in the College of Business, first conceived of the concept after learning from a colleague that he could teach an honors colloquium on any topic he wanted. Inspired by his colleague’s course on comic books, Adams decided to create a class using board games.

As he searched for a central academic theme, Adams realized that many board games, especially newer European games that students may not be as familiar with, featured commerce as a central component. And with that, he found his theme. Adams first taught the class in fall 2019, and after a hiatus when all classes were offered remotely — he didn’t think he could recreate the experience of playing board games over Zoom — the class is back in person and has become immensely popular. It is offered every term and fills quickly.

Each class session is divided into two parts. In the first part, a group of students gives a short presentation on that week’s historical commerce topic, such as currency, commodities or trade. During the second part, students break into small groups and play a board game like Carcassonne, Ticket to Ride Europe or Seven Wonders that highlights the week’s theme.

At the beginning of the term, students help determine how the class will be structured, setting up groups for presentations and gameplay. Adams enjoys how students put their own spin on the class each time it runs. One term, students decided to keep score of who won each week, with the student winning the most games at the end of the term earning a prize. In other terms, students decided to use props and food in their class presentations.

Adams likes to let the students direct the class, in a choose-your-own-adventure path that reflects the structure of a board game. Rather than assign readings to prepare students for class, he asks each student to share something about the class’s topic or a time period that they find interesting, which leads to a class discussion. Since students lead the conversation, each term is unique, and Adams often learns something new alongside the students.

Engineering student Ian Replinger enjoyed this approach, describing it as “totally different from my engineering classes” and noting that one of his favorite aspects of the class was listening to “my peers’ quite funny takes on different concepts.”

Adams likes how board games allow students to act and participate in the class in a way they can’t in other courses. “Playing a board game, students can take risks and be misleading and competitive, things they can’t normally do,” he says. While some students, like Replinger, take board games very seriously and try to win, others just appreciate the chance to do something fun outside of their usual studies.

Ultimately, Adams aims to create a low-key atmosphere in the class, encouraging students to step out of their comfort zone by presenting and interacting with other students, working in groups and playing games. He says his goal for students in the class is to “gain confidence through taking risks and making mistakes.”

And if you stop to poke your head inside Adams’ classroom, you’ll see that he’s achieving his goal.
Lessons in the field...literally.

Fall extension courses give students hands-on experiences before classes start.

Students in the Field to Fork Farming class visited farms and agricultural production sites in the Willamette Valley, then made a meal together using ingredients from the day’s stops.
Dedication and contributions distinguish recipients of 2023 Honors College faculty awards.

Every year, the Oregon State University Honors College recognizes faculty for outstanding teaching, research and undergraduate mentorship. For 2023, Eliza Young Barstow, a senior instructor in the School of History, Philosophy and Religion, is the Margaret and Thomas Meehan Honors College Eminent Professor. Christopher Stout, an associate professor in the School of Public Policy, is the Margaret and Thomas Meehan Honors College Eminent Mentor.

“These awards recognize the dedication and contributions of two of the Honors College’s most committed faculty partners,” says Associate Dean Susan Rodgers. “Drs. Barstow and Stout have gone above and beyond in their service to honors students, and they set a model for how much our community benefits from working with faculty from across the university.”

“Congratulations to Eliza and Chris,” says Honors College Dean Toni Doolen. “They represent the best of the Honors College community, and I am proud to recognize their dedication to our mission of inclusive teaching and mentoring excellence.”

Eliza Young Barstow has taught history and religious studies since 2016 and began serving as associate director of religious studies in fall 2023. She has developed several Honors College colloquia courses, including Race, White Supremacy and the State of Oregon; the Handmaid’s Tale; and American Religious Diversity. She has also served as a thesis mentor and committee member for multiple honors students.

Barstow is currently working on public history projects in Corvallis, and she led research to help the Corvallis School District evaluate candidates for new names at three elementary schools in 2021. A faculty senator and chair of the Honors College Council, Barstow won the College of Liberal Arts Isabelle Brock Memorial Outstanding Instructor Award in 2021. In summer 2022, she received a teaching innovation fellowship from the Oregon State Center for the Humanities to design a survey-level course on new religious and religious movements.

An alumna of the Schreyer Honors College at Penn State University, Barstow believes the small, academically focused community within a larger university was instrumental to her success, and working in a similar program allows her to give back. At Oregon State, she’s had the opportunity to create innovative colloquia courses that span multiple disciplines. She has also enjoyed serving on thesis committees, knowing how many alumni have cited their honors thesis as one of the most rewarding parts of their undergraduate experience.

“I was delighted to learn that the Honors College had selected me for the award,” Barstow says. “Working with Honors College students and administrators is one of the most rewarding parts of my job. It’s delightful to know that there are other people out there who appreciate my work.”

Christopher T. Stout joined the College of Liberal Arts School of Public Policy in 2015 and is an associate professor of political science. His research interests include racial and ethnic politics, gender and politics, political behavior, representation and Congress. He is the author of two books, “Bringing Race Back In: Black Politicians, Deracialization and Voting Behavior in the Age of Obama,” and “The Case for Identity Politics: Polarization, Demographic Change and Racial Appeals.”

Over eight years, Stout has mentored nine Honors College student thesis projects and served on 14 thesis committees. He credits his former mentors for inspiring his own mentoring work.

“Knowing the significance of good mentorship inspires me to work with honors students,” he says. “The students we work with go on to do amazing things, and by modeling good mentorship, they too will be better able to help the next generation succeed.”

Stout says he enjoys watching students learn and embrace the research process. But most importantly, Stout loves how he learns from his students. “I am a better teacher and scholar because of the conversations that my students and I have and the research that we collaborate on.

“I felt extremely honored and grateful to be nominated and receive this award,” he says. “I thought back to all the wonderful students that I’ve had the opportunity to work with during my time at Oregon State University. I thought about how proud I was to see each of them produce groundbreaking research in the social sciences, which answered pressing questions about contemporary politics. I feel lucky to have crossed paths with so many great honors students.”
Judge Mary Deits Rousseau, ’71, has lived a life committed to public service. A trailblazer for women in law and a dedicated advocate for equality in the judicial system, Rousseau credits her time at Oregon State University and the honors program for setting her on a path toward working for the general good. It’s a path that continues for the Honors College 2023 OSU Alumni Association Alumni Fellow.

Born in Portland, Rousseau graduated high school in Medford. During her four years at Oregon State, she explored liberal arts topics such as journalism and law. She also participated in the university’s original honors program. It offered a few additional classes and some opportunities similar to the Honors College that was established as a degree-granting college in 1995.

One of Rousseau’s business law professors encouraged her to pursue law school, and after graduating with a B.A. in sociology, she enrolled at Willamette University in Salem. “At that time, there weren’t many women lawyers,” she says. “I think my class of 125 students had four or five women.”

Hiring practices at the time reflected this. “It was honestly pretty hard to get hired back then [if you were a woman] even if you did well in law school,” she says. The only entities hiring women were in the public sector, and even those opportunities were rare.

After earning her law degree and passing the Oregon State Bar in 1974, Rousseau became just the third woman to work as an assistant attorney general at the Oregon Department of Justice. During her 12-year career in the attorney general’s office, Rousseau worked on a wide variety of legal issues.

Then, at 36, she started to contemplate a career change. “I think you should sort of change jobs at least every 20 years,” she says. But she made the shift ahead of schedule when Oregon Gov. Victor Atiyeh appointed Rousseau to the Oregon Court of Appeals in 1986. Once again a trailblazer, she was only the second woman to serve on the court. “The stars aligned, and I was appointed, much to my shock,” she says.

In 1997, Rousseau was appointed chief judge, one of the first women in the U.S. to lead a court of appeals at the state level. During her tenure, Rousseau instituted a range of reforms and programs designed to make legal processes more equitable and accessible, including an appellate settlement program that dramatically reduced the state’s caseload backlog and became a national model.

As chief judge, Rousseau led outreach efforts for school-aged children, providing opportunities for underrepresented populations to learn about the courts, meet potential role models in the legal profession and imagine new career pathways. She also served as president of the National Chief Judges Association.

Rousseau retired in 2004, but she is still an active senior judge focusing on private arbitration and mediation. She also remains highly involved in her community and in the university that helped launch her career.

Rousseau’s service to the Honors College, Oregon State University and the state of Oregon reflects a deep and abiding commitment to supporting all Oregonians. The Alumni Fellows award recognizes this commitment, providing a model for other alumni and current students.

“It’s important to let yourself evolve, I did it throughout college and my career, and I still do. You do not have to know what you want to do in high school or college. It is okay to be patient and just evolve at your own pace.”

— Mary Deits Rousseau, ’71
Dam Proud Day 2023, Oregon State University’s fourth-annual day of giving, set new records for the Honors College in both total giving and number of donors. In all, 137 donors gave to support student scholarships, well beyond the college’s goal of 80 gifts and last year’s total of 89. Overall, donors gave $57,579 to the Honors College, the 13th-highest total among the 50 participating units at the university. In addition, the Honors College had the highest giving rate for faculty and staff among academic units.

“I am amazed once again, but no longer surprised, by the support the Honors College community has shown us,” says Dean Toni Doolen. “Not only did our supporters help us reach our goal, they set an entirely new bar for our sense of what is possible.”

All donations supported Honors College differential tuition and experiential learning scholarships. Differential tuition funds the Honors College’s unique classes and programming and is currently $1,500 a year. More than 35% of Honors College students have financial need.

By meeting the year’s total donation goal, the Honors College unlocked more than $36,000 in challenge gifts from a range of honors community members:

- Honors Program Alumni Challenge, created by Karen Bolin, ‘82; and Duane, ‘77, and Rebecca Goen.
- Honors College Alumni Challenge, created by Eric, ‘00, and Heather Mackender; Tari Tan, ‘08, and Ian McLachlan; and Grant, ‘04, and Danielle Cyrus, ‘03.
- Honors College Faculty Challenge, created by Joe Hendricks and Hazel Reeves; Dan and Wanda Arp; Kerry Ahearn; Kevin Ahern, ‘86, and Indira Rajagopal; and Jim and Bonnie Krueger.
- Honors College Parent Challenge, created by Susan Lair and Douglas Trobough; Dan, ‘81, and Margaret Porth; Jill and Randy Thomas; Rahul and Samantha Shah; Meena and Kevin Baker; Amy and Stefan Groetsch; and Kevin and Anne Spencer.

“I am so proud of how honors alumni, faculty, staff, families and students came together to make the 2023 Dam Proud Day the biggest yet for the Honors College,” Doolen says. “This commitment demonstrates why the Honors College has such a strong future ahead of it, and I cannot wait to see what we can do together this year.” Dam Proud Day 2024 is on April 24.

Learn how to get involved in OSU’s annual day of giving by contacting Kevin Stoller at kevin.stoller@oregonstate.edu or 541-737-6425.
WHAT’S NEXT FOR THE CLASS OF 2023.

The Honors College is excited to share the degrees earned, future plans and thesis projects for a selection of this year’s graduating class. We’re proud of all honors graduates and wish them continued success as they go on to what’s next.

Lorenzo M. Curtis
Degree: H.B.S., Ecological Engineering
Thesis: “¡Sí, se puede! Employing a Personal Testimonio to Show Young Latinx Students and Families That Their Dreams of College are Well Within Reach”
Lorenzo is now working as a wastewater operations specialist for the Portland Bureau of Environmental Services.

Ian Grant
Degree: H.B.S., Biology
Ian has enrolled at the Carlson College of Veterinary Medicine at Oregon State to earn his doctor of veterinary medicine.

Sirena Prog
Degree: H.B.S., BioHealth Sciences
Thesis: “Exploring the Community Needs of Groups That Are Underserved by Oregon State University’s Counseling and Psychological Services”
Sirena is enjoying a gap year before going on to study medicine or clinical psychology. During this time, she plans to travel internationally, do work exchanges and explore jobs where she can focus on mental health and public health outreach.

Becca Wygal
Degrees: H.B.S., Interior Design; H.B.A., Spanish
After graduation, Becca has continued working as a design assistant for Wander Studio in Portland.

Sauda Kiggundu Namiiro
Degree: H.B.S., Chemical Engineering
Thesis: “Electrochemical Assessment of Binder Free COXNI1-Xsy Electrocatalysts Supported on Carbon Nanofibers for Oxygen Evolution Reaction in Alkaline Media”
Sauda is pursuing a Ph.D. in chemical engineering at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, focusing on process systems engineering and the circular economy.

Meet more graduates from the class of 2023 and see where they’re headed next at honors.oregonstate.edu/hc-graduates.
2023
HONORS COLLEGE GRADUATES

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Includes students who graduated in fall term, 2022 and winter, spring and summer terms, 2023.