

HONORS COLLEGE

1975 DeTrobriand Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84113

Annual Report 2016-2017

Sylvia Torti, Ph.D.
Dean

Monty Paret, Ph.D.
Associate Dean

Patricia Rohrer, Ph.D.
Assistant Dean

*“The Power of Ideas to
Shape the World”*



The Honors College at the University of Utah

At the Honors College, dedicated teachers and motivated learners collaborate to build an innovative educational environment, where everyone is challenged to think, ask questions, take risks and explore the full scope of the world around them. The work is demanding, the standards are high, but here students acquire the intellectual tools that will enrich their lives and enable them to thrive in a rapidly changing global community.

PHILOSOPHY

The Honors College provides intellectually curious, motivated students with the foundations of a rigorous liberal arts education within the context of a world-class research university. Honors College students engage the best of two worlds—an intimate liberal arts experience, including coursework and living-learning opportunities, joined with a world class research university and the opportunity to engage in independent research, working closely with top researchers and scholars.

The Honors College is designed for students who choose to complete a demanding undergraduate curriculum that includes both depth and breadth of study. Students graduating with an Honors Bachelor's Degree from the University of Utah will demonstrate distinction in their majors as evidenced by coursework and a research thesis or capstone project, and they will be able to situate their discipline within a larger University context, including a sophisticated understanding and articulation of how their discipline relates to other disciplines, both presently and in the past.

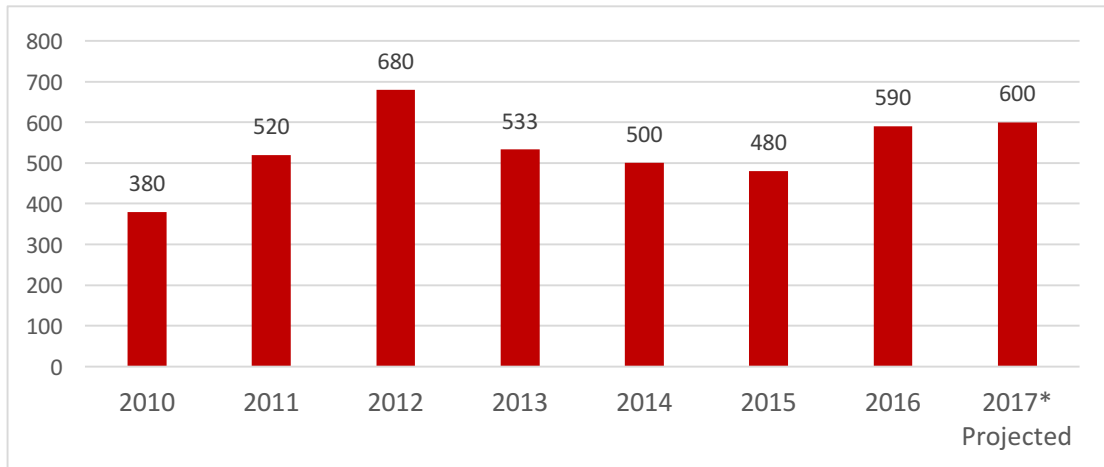
TABLE OF CONTENT

Mission Statement and Philosophy.....	1
Honors Student Body.....	3
Living Learning & Learning Communities.....	5
Graduation and Honors Degree Completion.....	6
Honors Undergraduate Research	7
Distinguished Scholarships.....	8
Ecology and Legacy Minor.....	9
Honors Academic Advising.....	10
Praxis Labs: Action + Theory 2016-2017.....	11
Scholars Groups.....	13
Curriculum Assessment.....	14
Goals for the 2017-2018 Academic Year.....	15

HONORS STUDENT BODY

The Honors College has a student body of approximately 2250. For the 2017-2018 academic year, the College received approximately 2300 applicants for 500-600 spots. Applicants are reviewed for their high school CGPA, rigor of high school courses, test scores, essay quality and interest in a liberal arts education. To ensure impartiality and reduce subjectivity, two readers review each applicant and approximately 30% of applicants go on to a third reader. In response to a “summer melt,” in 2016 (students who paid deposit in May but didn’t ultimately come to the U), we have increased our acceptance rate from 65% to 70% for 2017 (Figure 1).

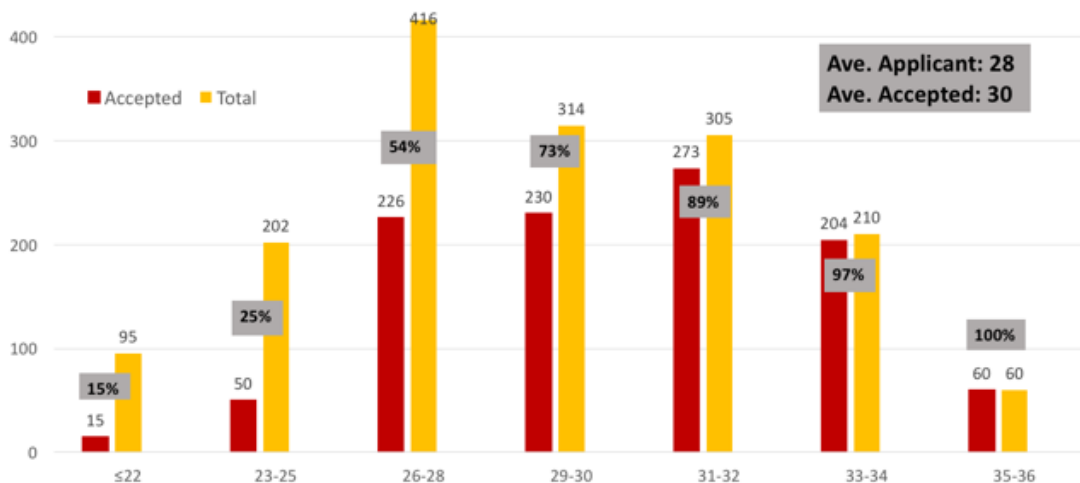
Figure 1. Incoming class size 2010-2016 with projected Fall 2017 numbers.



The caliber of students accepted to Honors, as measured by the aforementioned metrics, is strong with the average GPA at 3.9 and average ACT at 30 (Figure 2).

Figure 2. ACT Scores for Applicant Pool and Acceptance Rates.

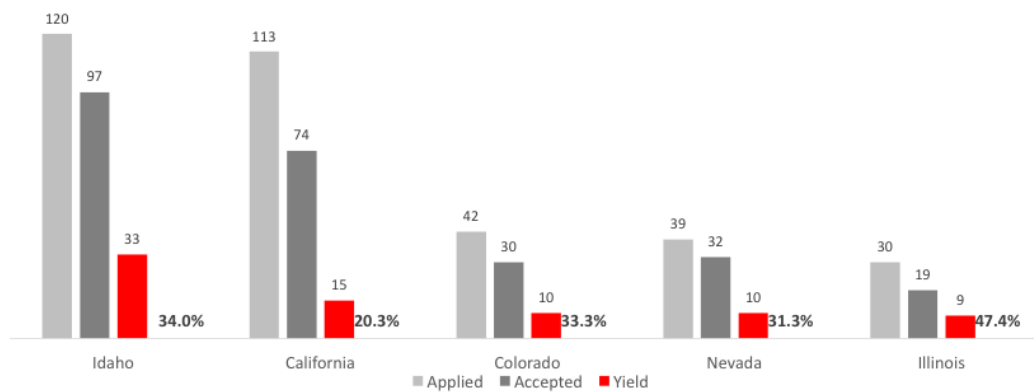
ACT Scores for Applicant Pool and Acceptance Rates



Since 2012, we have grown our out-of-state population from 11% to 26%. Our goal is to have an out-of-state population of approximately 30%. For the fall entering class of 2017, we received applicants from 47 states (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Out of state applicants and yield.

2016 Top 5 States to Yield Honors Students

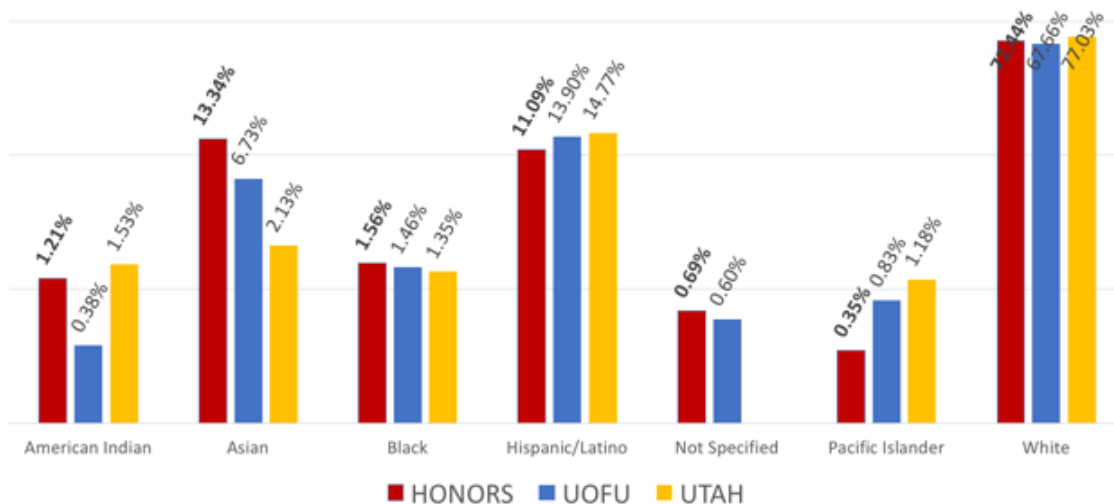


Applicants from 47 States	
80% yield from 15 states	
State and # applicants	
Idaho	120
California	113
Colorado	42
Nevada	39
Arizona	32
Illinois	30
Washington	28
Oregon	28
Montana	25
Texas	23
Virginia	14
Florida	12

Our ethnic diversity generally mirrors that of the state. Given the expected increase in Hispanic 18-year olds, we are focusing our local recruitment efforts on this population (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Ethnicity in Honors compared to UU and state of Utah.

Honors students accepted by ethnicity



LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES & LEARNING COMMUNITIES

219

students lived in a first-year Living Learning Community (LLC)

The Honors College has an unadjusted **97% Fall to Spring retention rate of first-year students** (Office of Budget & Institutional Analysis). Its success is in great part to the various living learning communities (LLC) and learning communities (LC) the Honors College offers to its students.

125

students lived in an upper division Themed Community

Students living in Honors Housing participate in a Living Learning Community (LLC) or themed community, where each small cohort of students shares living space, along with selected classes and/or activities. Honors offered **9** unique first-year LLC for the 2016-2017 academic year, and **2** themed communities for upper division students.

Students who participate in these types of communities tend to earn higher grades, graduate on time and feel more connected to the university ([Price, 2005](#)).

56

Honor students participated in Learning Communities, offering community-building spaces for students living off campus

Honors students also had the opportunity to participate in three learning communities: Science and Storytelling, Leadership Colloquium, and Research in the Sciences. These LC are specifically designed for commuting students who may have a difficult time building a sense of community because of their housing status.

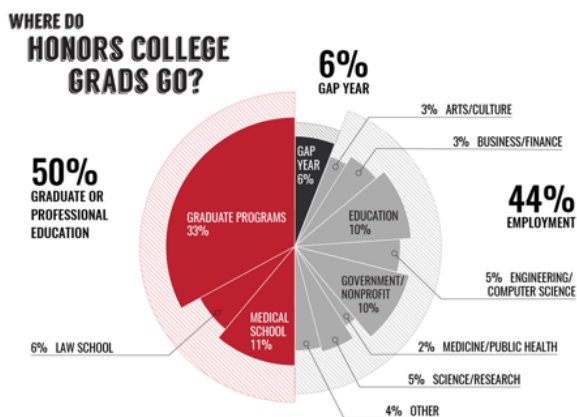
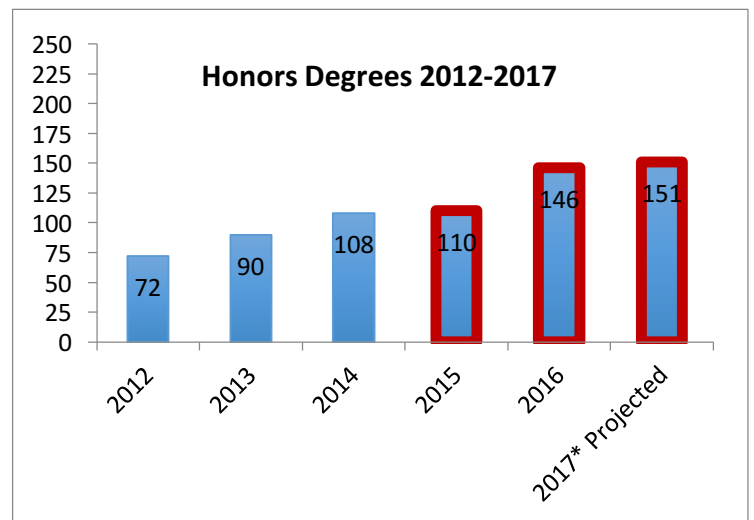
Additionally, in the 2015-16 academic year, **all** Intellectual Traditions courses became the central point for the honors learning community. In 2016-2017, all faculty incorporated out of the classroom, co-curricular activities for their students.

GRADUATION AND HONORS DEGREE COMPLETION

The Honors College has an overall **adjusted 6-year graduation rate of 86%** (Office of Budget & Institutional Analysis), this includes students who graduated with the Honors Bachelor's Degree and those who chose to earn a conventional Bachelor's Degree. Additionally, on average, students graduate with a higher CGPA compared to their non-Honors peers.

In terms of the Honors Degree, the highest undergraduate degree conferred by the University of Utah, the last 4 years have shown a marked increase in the number of students earning Honors Degree, as well as the number of colleges and majors represented by those students (Figure 5). Honors continues to work towards its goal of having 50% Honors Degree completion of all graduating Honors students. For the year 2015-2016, that number increased to **25% from 18%** (Office of Budget & Institutional Analysis).

Figure 5. Honors Degrees conferred between 2012 and 2016, with 2017 projected numbers. The borders around AY 2015, 2016, and 2017 represent the years Honors has had a formal advising structure.



A May 2017 survey of recently Honors Degree graduates, continued to show that half of our graduating students go on to pursue graduate studies. Those pursuing a graduate study program were admitted to places such as Harvard, UC Berkeley, Cambridge University, and Princeton, to name a few.

151
Projected Honors Degrees

46
Majors Represented

9
Colleges Represented

HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

“The spring Oxford Consortium for Human Rights conference was one of the best highlights of my college experience thus far...As I am interested in the study of conflict, the most exciting section of the week was a lecture and discussion by Dr. Hugo Slim, director at the International Red Cross (IRC). I discovered how academic work is taken into consideration by the IRC for ongoing aid operations. **It was an insightful moment: learning that academic research on conflict actually informs the practice of aid work to war zones.**”

Oxford Consortium Participant, March 2017

As part of the Honors Thesis, which is the culmination of the Honors Bachelor’s Degree, students engage in undergraduate research in their disciplines under the supervision of a faculty member. For most students, working closely with a research faculty is the single most transformative experience of their undergraduate careers (Alumni Survey).

“Writing a thesis has been integral to helping me gain research skills and develop my own understanding of what I want to do for a career and what is important for future graduate research.”

Honors Graduate, Class of 2017

Honors collaborates closely with the Office of Undergraduate Research in assisting Honors students engage in independent, original research and to present their work at conferences. At this year’s Undergraduate Research Conference (URS), **144 Honors students presented their research**, a 15% increase from last year.

Carol Castañeda Honors Bachelor of Arts in Spanish Education, presenting her Honors thesis at URS 2017



The Honors College also supported over **20 students** to attend national conferences through **small travel grants**. Students had the opportunity to travel to places such as California, North Carolina, and Washington, D.C. For the 2017-2018 academic year, Honors will work towards increasing this number.

Additionally, in collaboration with the Tanner Center for Nonviolent Human Rights Advocacy, Honors sponsored **three students** to attend the Oxford Consortium for Human Rights at University of Oxford, United Kingdom, and to do research on the topic of human rights after conflict.

DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARSHIPS

Churchill Scholarship

Every year the Honors College guides and mentors students throughout the application process for Rhodes, Marshalls, Gates-Cambridge, Boren, Udall, and Churchill, to name a few. In 2014, the University of Utah became Churchill-eligible. This year **the University of Utah had its second Churchill Scholar**, math senior Michael Zao.

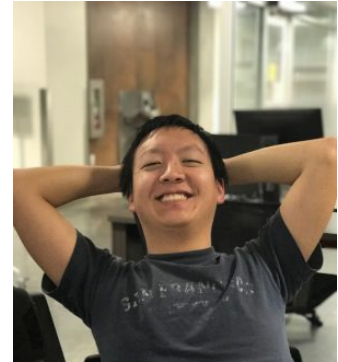


Photo Source and News Release: <https://unews.utah.edu/university-of-utah-student-awarded-prestigious-churchill-scholarship-2/>

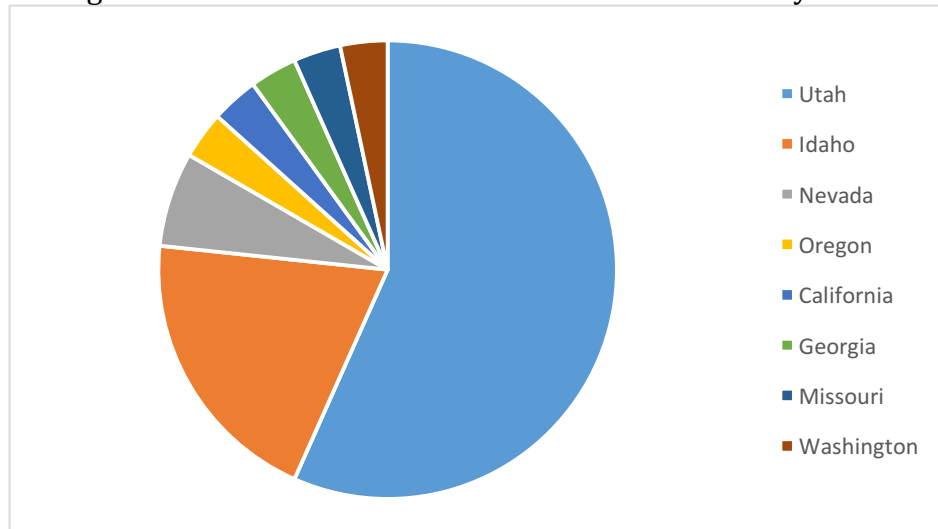
Fulbright

Two Honors students, Alison Shimko and Tuscan Thompson, were awarded **Fulbright Fellowships** to teach English in Spain and South Korea, respectively. Alison earned an Honors Bachelor of Science in Speech and Hearing Science. Tuscan completed an Honors Bachelor of Science in Biology.

The Eccles Distinguished Scholar Program

Thanks to the generosity of the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation, the Honors College recruits and supports **30** excellent students per year. The Eccles Distinguished Scholarship allows the Honors College to compete with Ivy-League schools. For the Fall 2017 class, we received 306 applications and interviewed 55 finalists for the 30 spots. Eccles scholars participate in a cohort experience during their time as undergraduates.

Figure 6. 2017-2018 Eccles Scholars State of Residency



ECOLOGY AND LEGACY MINOR



Honors students in Centennial Valley Montana:
<http://ecologyandlegacy.tumblr.com>

“What will my legacy be and how do I live my life now to better ensure my legacy comes to be?”

In Summer 2015, the Honors College offered the Ecology and Legacy Minor for the first time. **Ten students**, along with Professors Andy Hoffman, Associate Dean Paret, and Dean Torti, participated in an intensive 6-week summer block. Students used science, arts, and humanities to critically think about interactions between humans and their world. They spent two weeks each in the Great Salt Lake, Centennial Valley, Montana, and the Peninsula Valdes in Patagonia, Argentina learning about the different ecological systems. At the end of Fall 2016, all ten students successfully completed the minor and worked on a collection of writings and photos to capture their experiences. A [PDF file of the book](#), *Impact*, can be accessed online.



Peninsula Valdes in Patagonia, Argentina

In Spring 2017, Honors offered this minor for the second time. **Eleven students** will be participating in this experience through Fall 2017. Students on average received \$2,000 in scholarship funding to facilitate their participation on this deeply engaged experience.

HONORS ACADEMIC ADVISING

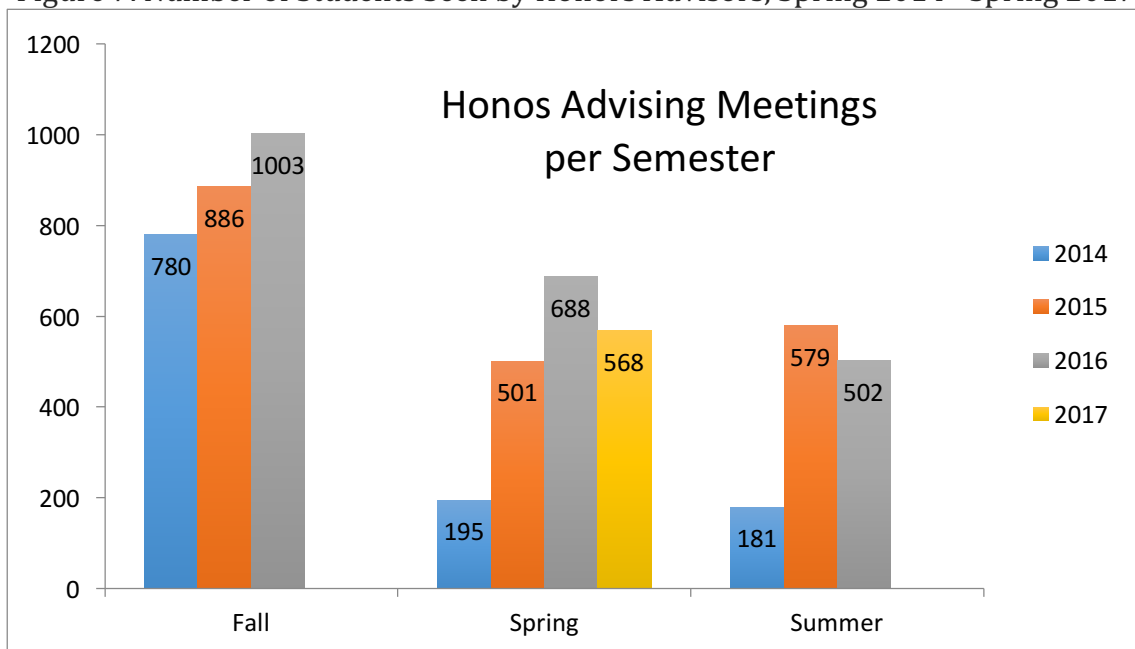


Honors Advisors (Left to Right): Kelly O'Neill, Michelle Taliaferro, Ginger Smoak, Kyle Carsey, Aaron Reynolds

Honors Advisors are organized around University colleges. This “bridge-like” structure allows Honors advisors to know and understand the nuances of each major, as well as build relationships with advisors and faculty thesis mentors in each department, leading to better integration of the Honors curriculum and more personalized advising. Student response to this structure and to their advising options has been overwhelmingly positive.

For the 2016-2017 academic year (Fall 2016 and Spring 2017), advisors **met with 1571 students**. In addition to continuing with First-Year and Second-Year Mandatory Advising, advisors will implement a Third-Year Advising program for 2017-2018.

Figure 7. Number of Students Seen by Honors Advisors, Spring 2014 –Spring 2017



PRAXIS LABS: THEORY + ACTION 2016-2017

Honors College Praxis Labs are deeply-engaged experiences which draw students from all disciplines to collaborate on innovative project-based solutions to pressing societal issues.

Over the years, Praxis Labs have addressed a multitude of societal challenges in Health & Society, Energy & Environment, and Social Justice.

For 2016-2017, the Honors College offered

5 Praxis Labs

and served

55

Students Participants

Education, Incarceration, and Justice- Sponsored by a generous grant from the Kaiser Permanente Company. Students explored the historically rooted relationship among education, incarceration, and justice. They were introduced to contemporary research, activism, and policy debates surrounding mass incarceration. They also visited physical sites of state punishment, such as jails, prisons, and juvenile detention centers.

Together, they learned about national organizations and robust college-in-prison programs that provide educational opportunities to individuals under incarceration and assist with re-entry and enrollment in college post-release. Students connected with the state Department of Corrections and the Utah County Sheriff's Office, read work written by currently and formerly incarcerated people, as well as felony-disenfranchised individuals, and heard from directors of leading college-in-prison programs across the country.

Gender, Health & Human Rights: More than a woman's issue? - Students grappled with some of the following questions: What defines 'human rights' and 'health'? Do, and should, these definitions vary across place and time? How is health gendered? In what ways do human rights influence health? Are the issues that have garnered the most attention in the fields of human rights and women's health really the most pressing issues? To what extent does heterosexism shape our understandings of human rights and health? How does women's health relate to the health of other populations or the population more broadly? They explored the role of national and international institutions, such as federal governments and the World Health Organization that address the link between gender, health and human rights. This Lab was co-sponsored by the Tanner Center for Human Rights and University Health Sciences.

Opening the Mind's Eye - A growing body of neuroscientific research confirms that contemplative practices such as meditation and traditional yoga have measurably positive effects on memory, attention, and empathy. Students explored and experienced contemplative practices from around the world and throughout history—from the ancient to the modern, from the spiritual to the secular, from the visionary to the embodied—and consider these practices' potential for interacting with, and deepening, university education.

Students learned hands-on practices from the lab instructors and from distinguished visitors from numerous secular and spiritual traditions (mindfulness and insight meditation, Zen and Tibetan Buddhism, traditional yoga, Quaker practice, Catholic and Islamic mystical poetry, contemplative psychotherapy and Jewish Kabbalah, among others). Students in this Praxis Lab conceived and implemented collaborative and innovative class projects to apply these practices to the University of Utah.

When Machines Decide: The Promise and Peril of Living in a Data-Driven Society

New technologies may reshape and restructure society in ways we might not expect and cannot predict. In this Praxis Lab, students explored the ways in which the data revolution is changing our laws, our society and even the way we think of ourselves as free-willed humans. Will Big Data and machine learning usher in a new age of enlightenment or result in an erosion of autonomy and replace human judgments?

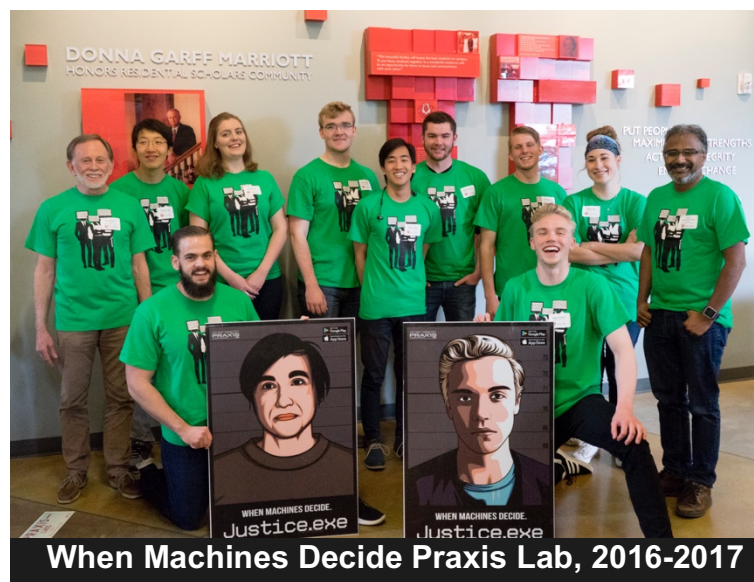
Students focused on the “increasingly important need for algorithmic literacy, transparency and oversight, particularly in the context of the use of algorithms in the criminal justice system. They (1) designed an educational simulation to illustrate the function of algorithms in the context of criminal sentencing; (2) created several pre-packaged course modules that faculty in a variety of disciplines could integrate into their existing curriculum to educate students about algorithms and their increasing role in modern society; and (3) curated a set of best practices designed to promote the transparency and oversight of algorithmic systems” (Praxis Final Report).

How We Die (Honors College, Health Sciences). People no longer die primarily of infectious and parasitic disease. Now the great majority of people in the developed world with advanced health care systems die slow deaths, of degenerative diseases typically diagnosed long in advance and exhibiting long downhill courses, made possible in part by modern medical science—cancer, heart and other types of organ failure, the dementias. This is how we die. But is it how we wish our dying to go, either for ourselves or for those we love?

Students explored the current political ferment over end-of-life medical practice and right-to-die legislation, and constructed more sensitive and effective ways of responding. Students collaborated with AdThing to produce ads, a website and created a continuing internship to move this work forward in the Honors College.

Final Reports for these and past Praxis labs can be found at:

<https://honors.uta.h.edu/course-planner-degree-requirements/cool-courses/cool-courses/praxislab>



SCHOLARS GROUPS

Students from a variety of disciplines work with faculty and community members to explore their interests, consider career opportunities, develop professional skills and investigate and implement solutions to pressing problems in the community and in the world. Scholars Groups included the following:

- **Global Health Scholars Group** - The Honors College works with Dr. Steven Alder at the Office of Global Health/Division of Public Health to help students confront health-related issues of the present and future in a local and global context, and work one-on-one with local refugee communities. Summer study/work abroad programs optional in Ghana, Peru and India.
- **Legal Scholars** – Students who are interested in how legal issues interact with social, political, business and cultural realities meet with Randy Dryer to discuss contemporary legal topics, addressing current legal trends, observing actual court proceedings and interact with judges and practicing lawyers.
- **Urban Ecology and Sustainability Scholars**—Students who are interested in the long-term health of their communities work with Stephen Goldsmith to imagine and implement new energy-saving solutions on campus. Their many successes are showcased on their website: <http://urbanecologyscholars.org>
- **Art Community Museum Education (ACME)** – A partnership between the University of Utah Honors College and the Utah Museum of Fine Arts created to engage students in rethinking the public role of the museum through art, community engagement, and education.
- **Next Generation Scholars** – A group of students who engage in intellectual discussions around education, specifically K-12. The group met once a month to discuss various reading. Additionally, they completed **312 internship hours** at South Kearns Elementary.

89

distinct students benefited from a Scholar Group during the 2016-2017 academic year.

Students engaged in:

- Advocacy
- Service
- Discussions
- Project Development
- Mentorship
- Career Advising
- Networking Opportunities

CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT

The Honors College has seen an increase in its demand for courses compared to previous years. In 2016-2017, Honors offered a total of 59 sections of Honors Writing, Intellectual Traditions, and Science, which form the core of the curriculum, a **10% increase** from the previous year. The increase is slightly higher when elective courses are included.

In 2014, Honors began to review its curricular rigor starting with the Intellectual Traditions courses. The following year, we revised the learning outcomes and common assignments of the lower division writing curriculum. In 2016-2017, Honors:

- Piloted a qualitative assessment plan for Learning Communities, starting with Science and Storytelling. Findings suggest that LC students felt connected to their campus and larger community, developed abilities to self-assess, and made connections across disciplines;
- Created expectations and guidelines for HONOR and HON designed courses, which reflected the learning outcomes of the Honors Degree experience;
- Revised its statement on the relationship between lower-division and upper-division writing courses;
- Worked to develop a College-wide curriculum assessment plan based on the learning outcomes of the Honors Degree:
 - demonstrate expertise and research skills in their major field, particularly through the completion of an Honors Thesis Project;
 - demonstrate interdisciplinary perspectives across the liberal arts and sciences
 - demonstrate intellectual independence, articulating arguments that critically analyze information from a variety of sources and perspectives;
 - actively participates and collaborates as informed members of local and global communities
 - be well prepared for graduate school, professional study, and careers in the public, private or nonprofit sectors

To carry out the college-wide curriculum assessment of learning outcomes, Honors is working to create a small faculty committee. The final plan will be available online after July 1, 2017 at <http://ugs.utah.edu/learning-outcomes-assessment/assessment-plans.php>.

GOALS FOR THE 2017-2018 ACADEMIC YEAR

Continue to assess our curriculum and unique learning communities

- As previously mentioned, Honors has taken steps to evaluate its curriculum learning outcomes and impact of different programs. These efforts will continue.

Publications and presentations.

- In addition to on campus presentations to various student groups, our Director of Admissions and Director of Assessment co-presented in April 2017 at the HERU, Honors Education at Research Universities, Conference to their peers on the topic of using data assessment outcomes to guide decisions.
- This Fall, Honors will submit a proposal to host the next HERU conference in Spring 2019.
- Dean and staff will continue to submit proposals to present at national conferences.

Alumni survey and determining the “value” of the Honors Degree.

- We began to survey alumni after they leave the college to determine where they go and the value of the honors degree. We will continue to develop alumni relations for fundraising purposes as well as providing a measure of the “value” of an Honors degree.

***“The Power of Ideas to
Shape the World”***