

FALL 2023 Graduation Ceremony

Honors Program Salutes Honors Program Students

Congratulations to all students, family, parents, and friends.

Dear UCCS Honors Program's Faculty, Mentors and Community: **We are honoring all our recent Fall 2023 graduates: Hanna Hesse, Kathryn Shoemaker, and Sanam Waintrub.**

Starting Spring 2024, UCCS-Honors Program will offer guidance to all its cohorts towards pursuing graduate studies. Dr. Karen deVries will be the POC for all 14 UCCS AMP programs. Dr. Kuzma and Ms. Carol Pina will also assist Dr. deVries. UCCS-HP will also partner with UCCS-ICORE (Interdisciplinarity & Complexity Oriented Researchers and Educators) and leverage GMI program's focus on Complex Systems to provide both MSCS-GMI¹ and PhD opportunities to qualified UCCS-HP cohorts seeking graduate studies program in Gray Matters and Complex Systems. 30% of all GMI Program graduates' thesis work is on Complex Systems².

UCCS-Honors Program will also ask its students to engage in UCCS-ICORE's Complexity Group's 4 initiatives (i) ICORE-Tech -- UCCS-PRONTO Project (POC: Dr. Semwal. Dr. Susan Taylor to provide CU-development guidance. (ii) ICORE-Marine & Wild-Life (POC: Ms. Carol with Drs. deVries and Semwal assisting) (iii) Honors Program HUB's TinyHomes (POC: Dr. Kuzma) and ICORE's Computational Empathy initiative (POC: ICORE members Drs. Pina-Thomas, Philips and Semwal assisting), (iv) ICORE-SOUTHWEST Gray Matters Education initiative (POC: Dr. Semwal with all HP Faculty assisting including Dr. Sackett on sabbatical from UCCS-HP).

In Summer 2024, UCCS-Honors Program will participate in UCCS-ICORE Fourth Symposium and introduce its first Gray Matters and Complex Systems Film Focus Series by offering two movies on Gray Matters after the conference.

All UCCS Honors Program portfolios are part of [UCCS Digital Collection](https://archives.mountainscholar.org/digital/collection/p17393coll18)
<https://archives.mountainscholar.org/digital/collection/p17393coll18>

Attached are spotlights on our most recent honors program portfolio students: Hanna, Kathryn and Sanam. Congratulation to these students and their families! We are proud of their achievements.

We are proud of our students! Congratulations.

UCCS Honors Program Director on behalf of UCCS Honors Program Faculty, Staff, Portfolio Mentors.

¹ Dr. Semwal, Director of UCCS Honors Program is Program Coordinator for MSCS-GMI program.

² <https://icore.uccs.edu/>

Hannah Hesse -- Honors Program Spotlight Fall, 2023

I was born in Carmel, Indiana and moved to Colorado Springs when I was 10. I never imagined I would stay in Colorado, much less my hometown, for college but I am grateful for my time at UCCS and in the Honors Program. I love learning French and chose to minor in it my Sophomore year. I would love to live in France one day and become fluent. I love reading, learning history, going to the movies, and spending time with friends and family!

What fascinates Hannah about the Honors Program

I am grateful for the experiences the Honors Program has provided me to explore the concept of Gray Matters through many different lenses and mediums. Whether it was films, books, presentations, or guest speakers, I learned to look at events, scenarios, and topics through a gray lens, rather than just in black and white. Each topic and guest speaker Dr. Kuzma, Dr. Semwal, and Dr. Sackett brought into our Honors classes provided a new perspective into our conversations on complexity and Gray Matters. I am thankful I had the opportunity to explore a topic for my portfolio that was not part of my degree plan, but rather a subject of interest I had always had: history and women in the French Resistance. Without the Honors Program I would not have been able to explore this subject and I am grateful for the push and support Dr. Sackett gave me in conducting my research and completing my portfolio.

Hannah's Future Plans

I plan on pursuing a career in social media management and content creation, hopefully within the tourism, travel, and hospitality sector. I also am currently applying to teach English abroad in France in hopes of becoming fluent in French!

Acknowledgements by Hannah

Thank you first and foremost to my amazing Mom and Dad for their continuous love and support throughout my education and for helping me grow into the person I am today. You have pushed and supported me to pursue dreams and opportunities (such as the Honors Program!) that are outside of my comfort zone, and I am forever thankful for that! Thank you to my sister, Gabriella, for also encouraging me and pushing me to work hard and follow my dreams. Thank you Dr. Rob Sackett for being not only my Honors Advisor, but my Honors Portfolio Advisor AND my Honors Designated Courses Professor. I would not have been able to accomplish all I have in my time at UCCS without your guidance and support! Lastly thank you to all professors, friends, and mentors who have been there to push, encourage, support, and help me throughout my time at UCCS!



Kathryn Schoemaker -- Honors Program, December 2023

I am a Human Physiology & Nutrition major on the pre-medicine track. The best part of my major has been taking part in the Cadaver Dissection lab, first as a student and later as a TA. I am incredibly honored to be nominated as the Outstanding Graduate for my major. True to my Colorado native roots, I love to ski. Steamboat is my favorite ski area.

What fascinates Kathryn about the Honors Program

I am so fortunate for the community that the UCCS Honors Program fosters. As I was a freshman during 2020, the small cohort size and interactive nature of the Honors Program GPS class allowed me to form some of my first connections at UCCS during such an isolating time.

Because of the Honors Program, I now place on emphasis on seeking out diversity around me. As a future physician, I often find myself considering multiple perspectives and appreciating the complexity in areas of STEM. However, the classes and group discussions part of the Honors Program have helped me to expand this thinking to other areas of my life.

Lastly, I am so appreciative for the faculty of the Honors Program. Throughout my Honors Portfolio and medical school application cycle, each one of them was so supportive and eager to help.

Kathryn's Future Plans

I will be starting medical school in August 2024. As the application cycle is not finished until well into the Spring, I could still have a few acceptances trickle in. However, based on the acceptances I have now, I will be attending the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine. Go Hawkeyes! Kathryn Schoemaker, MD coming to a bedside near you in about 4.5 years.

Acknowledgements by Kathryn

I am so grateful for my instructors and professors at Hybl. Throughout my journey to medical school, I received excellent advice, help with my personal statement, eager LOR writers, lifelong mentors, and confidence when I needed it most. Specifically, I am so thankful for Sabine. She helped a timid freshman learn to stand on her own two feet and was always in my corner through every step of applying.

I also owe a million "Thank Yous" to my parents. You two have believed in me from the start. I am so lucky.

Congratulations on being UCCS Honors Program's spot-light feature!



Sanam Waintrub -- Honors Program Spotlight October 17th, 2023

My name is Sanam and I am a senior here at UCCS pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Biochemistry and a Minor in Spanish. I was born and raised in Denver Colorado where I grew up with my identical twin sister. Having a father who is from Chile and a mother who is from Tajikistan, we both grew up speaking Russian and Spanish at home which has ignited my passion for learning new languages and exploring different cultures. I love traveling around Colorado in search of the best coffee shops and restaurants and I hope I can cross off visiting Alaska off my bucket list one day! Lastly, I am a huge lover of cats, anything autumn themed, and all things matcha.

What fascinates Sanam about the Honors Program

When I first began college amid the pandemic, I knew that I wanted to surround myself in a community where I could feel supported and stimulated academically. Not wanting to repeat being the shy teenager that I was in high school, I wanted to push myself out of my comfort zone by meeting people from various backgrounds and where I could have my own views and beliefs be challenged. Therefore, when I saw the description for this program and its focus on Complex and Grey Matters, I applied immediately. Not only have I met some awesome people here who have pushed me to do my best, but I have also found amazing opportunities that I could participate in that I would not have been able to if I only stayed within the bounds of my degree program alone.

Sanam's Future Plans

After UCCS, I am planning to take a gap year to study for the notorious MCAT exam and apply to medical school in the summer. I hope to see myself becoming a physician who can serve her local community as well as provide care in underrepresented communities. Although I do not know what specialty I want to pursue yet (that's a later me problem, let's just focus on getting in first), I do know that I want to serve as an advocate for all future patients by bridging the gaps that exist in our healthcare system and I intend to use everything that I have learned from my time here to help me achieve this goal.

Acknowledgements by Sanam

The path to medicine is a long and winding road and I am grateful that I do not have to do it alone. I am forever grateful to my parents who instilled in me the value of receiving an education and whose support never wavered. I would not have been able to survive college without my sister who has been my best friend since day one and who never fails to tell me the hard truths that push me to become my best self.

Congratulations on being UCCS Honors Program's spot-light feature!

