

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 graduates graduating from HNRS 4950 and this year returning with an in person graduation ceremony on April 22, 2023.**

In 2007, UCCS Honors Program was established with Dr. Hackman as our first Director. UCCS Honors Program (HP) started intentional conversation around Gray Matters that things are not just binary; life, society, interactions, and many other situations and places have the non-binary qualities – they are essentially gray matters: Honors Program mantra has been that Gray Matters!

In 2020, Honors Program developed HNRS 4950 (Honors Program Portfolios) to replace ID 4950 and INDS 4950. HNRS 3011 (Conversations on Complexity) course, a transition course from GPS 1010/3010 towards Honors Program Portfolio was offered for the first time in Spring 2021 and then in Summer 2021. 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:

Zach Bergeron, Hannah Bernard, Amy Blair, Aiden Rooney, Rebekah Shepherd, Holly Siu, Faith Swenson, Naila Tagoilelagi, Chloe Wendfeldt, Grace Wenham.

Congratulation to these students and their families! We are proud of their achievements.

HP faculty also believes that *once a student joins as HP-cohort they will always be a HP-cohort*. The new cohort 2023 document now contains feedback from our graduating students Holly Siu and Chloe Wendfeldt and allows the same rigor yet more flexibility to accommodate all degree programs.

All UCCS Honors Program students are assigned HP-Faculty Advisor, and using Carol Pina's words: "they, *the Honors Program advisors* are committed to walk with you while you are part of the HP program".

Cohort 2023 document also mentions the AMP (accelerated dual degree programs) and will be advising students of opportunities that program provides. Contact Carol Pina for more information.

We are proud of our students! Congratulations.

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

Zach Bergeron -- Honors Program Spotlight Spring, 2023

Moving from Bloomington, Illinois here for school was a massive shift for me! I never overlook how blessed I am and try to take full advantage of this great city. I enjoy hiking – especially 14ers, camping, soccer, skiing, backpacking, traveling to the surrounding states, studying at the Colorado Springs coffee shops, and just recently getting into indoor climbing!

What fascinates Zach Bergeron about the Honors Program

I really enjoyed the people in the Honors program and the staff members who served as mentors. I felt that this program allowed me to think differently and professionally organize my understanding around the topic “Complexity”.

Zach Bergeron’s Future Plans

I plan on taking a full-time position as a Financial Analyst upon graduation. The exact location of my role is in the works currently. I’ll also commission into the Army as a 2nd Lieutenant and serve in the 1-157th I Company as a Transportation Officer in the Colorado National Guard.

Acknowledgements by Zach Bergeron

I’m grateful for my fiancé - Faith Swenson - who I met during my freshmen year and shared subsequent honors movie and engagement experiences with. We’ll be married in June! I’m grateful for my great friend Brian Roberts who has been with me through it all. As a fellow ROTC cadet, we’ve shared many memorable experiences together these past few years. I’m grateful for my family for their support and love throughout college. I’m also grateful for my future in-laws and their warm and welcoming approach to letting me join the family!



Hannah Bernard -- Honors Program Spotlight Spring, 2023

I am a Colorado native who loves just about every outdoor activity our nature state has to offer. Snowboarding, hiking, camping, and everything in between. Although I am very active outdoors, I also love to read. Most recently, I have delved into leadership books which, on top of my classes, led to winning the 2022 Ethics Case Competition hosted under the Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative Collegiate Program.

What fascinates Hannah about the Honors Program

The Honors Program fascinated me because it allowed students to learn from their unique college experiences and share their findings with their Honors peers. This comradery was a great feeling with people whom I probably wouldn't have met otherwise because of the distance between our degrees.

Hannah's Future Plans

I plan to practice project management in the technology and security sales industry and build my experience over the next few years to eventually manage my own projects and maybe a business. On a more personal note, I plan to continue enjoying my hobbies and find new things to learn and experience.

Acknowledgments by Hannah

I would like to acknowledge my parents, who supported me throughout my entire academic career from kindergarten to now and taught me my drive and desire to always improve myself. I would like to acknowledge my partner for his continuous cheerleading and help when I was studying, doing, and accomplishing these past few years. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my friends, who kept me always willing to try new things and experiences to have fun.

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



Amy Blair -- Honors Program Spotlight Spring 2023

My name is Amy Blair, and I am currently finishing off my bachelor's degree in biology with a pre-veterinary medicine minor. I was born and raised here in Colorado with my three siblings and many pets over the years. My main passion is animals, and in my free time I enjoy learning more about them or even rescuing a few injured ones myself. It has been my life-long dream to become a veterinarian, and UCCS has helped me begin realizing this dream. I also love reading (*The Kite Runner* is my all-time favorite), video games, and spending time outside in the sun.

What fascinates Amy about the Honors Program

When I first learned about the Honors Program here at UCCS, I knew I had to join. I always love challenging myself with new ideas and keeping an open mind, so the Gray Matters topic in Honors really intrigued me. I think it is important to understand that things aren't always black and white, and there is value in studying the gray. On top of this, the movie night discussions by Dr. Sackett (with refreshments from Ms. Pina, of course) allowed me to experience many wonderful films that changed my perspective on things that I may not have found otherwise. This program really provides a supportive community for students to excel.

Amy's Future Plans

After graduation, I plan on working in a veterinary clinic to gain valuable experience working with animals. I then hope to attend the veterinary school at CSU Fort Collins to earn my doctorate in veterinary medicine, although I have yet to decide if I will work with pets in a clinic or with large animals such as in a zoo. No matter what, I want to take part in helping protect the valuable biodiversity that exists on our planet through helping animals.

Acknowledgements

While it has been hard work getting to this point in my life, there are many people who have supported me along the way. Firstly, I would like to thank my parents Chris and Christina for always cheering me on and being proud of my accomplishments throughout my college career and beyond. Madison M., for always being there for me and helping me grow as a person. Dolly, who helped me get through the many angsts of life and was the best dog anyone could have asked for. And to Taco Bell, for always being open to fuel my late-night study sessions.



Aidan Rooney -- Honors Program Spotlight Spring, 2023

I grew up in Longmont as the middle child of a family of seven. I enjoy mathematics, teaching, board games and chocolate making, and I am Vice President of the UCCS Needlecraft Club. I am a member of the Chancellor's Leadership Class, I achieved first place at the UCCS Daniel's Ethics Case Competition in 2021, and I was a T. Rowe Price Fellow in 2021-22.

What fascinates Aidan about the Honors Program

My favorite part of the Honors Program were the honors designated courses. These courses shoved me out of my comfort zone and allowed me to grow closer to my professors, push the boundaries of what I was learning, and afford me opportunities I wouldn't have had otherwise. For one of my designated courses, I was able to put on a recital at the Ent Center for the Arts which was a fantastic experience.

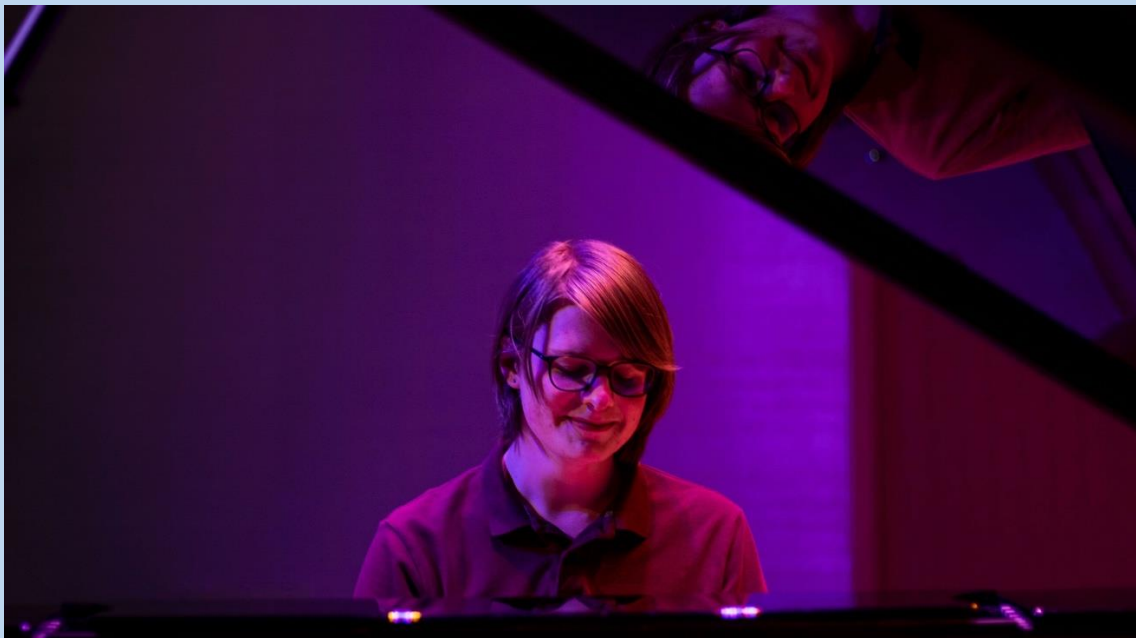
Aidan's Future Plans

In August, I will start working as a math guide for The STEAD School in Commerce City. The STEAD School is student-led school for experiential learning in science, technology, environment, agriculture and systems design, and I am very excited to be a part of the STEAD team.

Acknowledgements by Aidan

I am incredibly grateful for the support of my parents and siblings throughout my entire life. I would not be where I am today without them. Additionally, I want to thank Elizabeth Lange, my 3rd and 4th grade teacher, who inspired me to be a teacher in the first place, Carmen Rubino for being a truly excellent teacher and fostering my love of mathematics, all the teachers in the UCCSteach program for pushing my understanding of education to new heights, and Danielle Fournier and Kelly Zuercher for encouraging me to develop my musicianship over these years.

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



Rebekah Shepherd -- Honors Program Spotlight Spring, 2023

My name is Rebekah, and I am graduating with my bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering with a minor in aerospace engineering this May. I've been involved on campus as President of the UCCS Chapter of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) and as Vice-President of the Design, Build, Fly Club (DBF). I am a graduate student researcher in the Advanced Manufacturing Lab (AML) on campus. I've loved the people I have met and friendships I have built at UCCS.

What fascinates **Rebekah about the Honors Program**

The Honors Program was always an opportunity for me to broaden my understanding of the world through conversations about philosophy, science, and film. I enjoyed being able to have conversations that weren't engineering and problem solving focused, like much of my education has been. Being around people that approach the world differently than me and the other engineers I am consistently around, allowed me to explore the concepts surrounding grey matters.

Rebekah's Future Plans

I am currently in the Accelerated Master's Program (AMP) and will be continuing graduate school. I am doing a thesis-based masters and will be writing a thesis based on my research in the AML. Following graduate school, I will be pursuing jobs in materials and manufacturing within the aerospace industry.

Acknowledgements by **Rebekah**

I am very thankful for the people I have met at UCCS and my family. Dr. Sackett and the Honors Program faculty have been great resources and mentors as an Honors student. Thank you to Dr. McCollum for the opportunities to learn and research and to Dr. George for the opportunities to grow as a leader. And a really big thank you to my peers and friends that supported me growing into myself!

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



Holly Siu-- Honors Program Spotlight March 20, 2023

Hi! My name is Holly Siu and I am a senior here at UCCS. I will be graduating this Spring of 2023 with a bachelor's degree in psychology. I am from Dallas, Texas and have enjoyed pursuing my education out of state in this beautiful location of Colorado Springs. I enjoy staying active with hobbies such as hiking and working out, but I have also found pickleball, racquetball, and badminton to be equally fun. I am a Resident Assistant on campus, and I work for a company dealing poker on the side. Most of my time is spent with my friends, crafting, playing bridge, having bible studies, and finding yummy places to eat!

What fascinates Holly about the Honors Program

As someone with a high achieving mindset, this program was right up my ally. Prior to starting this program, I was excited to meet other people. And I did just that. Some of my best college friends were made here and it was fun to learn more about gray matters and complexity with them by my side. Additionally, the mentors that have helped us along the way and the strong relationships built have made the Honors Program worthwhile.

Holly's Future Plans

To be honest, I am unsure what the future holds for me. But as of recent, I plan to go home for the summer and enjoy being a college graduate. I am excited as I will be going to Iceland for the first time with my cousin as a graduation present to myself. Then in the fall, I plan to move to Oregon and take a gap year (or years) off to decide what my next move is. In my gap year, I would love to pursue psychology research or something along those lines as I know I will be returning to the academic setting for my masters, PsyD, or PhD.

Acknowledgements by Holly Siu

I am most grateful for my mom and dad, Cathy and Arthur. They have been my number one supporters since day one and have helped me grow into the woman I am today. So a huge shoutout to them, I love you guys!!! And a special thanks to my big brother, Ben, for also being there since day one—you're cool I guess. Thank you to my boyfriend José for being my adventure buddy and bestie, I love you. And a big thank you to my best friends, y'all's company is superior, and I really appreciate the times we get to have together and all the memories we have made.

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



Faith Swenson -- Honors Program Spotlight Spring, 2023

I am graduating this Spring from UCCS with a major in Inclusive Elementary Education. My program will certify me to teach elementary, and includes endorsements in special education and culturally and linguistically diverse education as well. I have been student teaching this year in the Residency program, a full year immersion program where I take on all of the responsibilities of a classroom teacher. I have enjoyed being in a classroom for a full year and developing relationships with my students and learning about being a teacher! In my free time, I love to go to coffee shops, go hiking, paint and sew, play tennis, and cook delicious meals.

What fascinates Faith about the Honors Program

The Honors program was a great opportunity for me to meet new people as I moved to a new state and to gain perspective about the world. I even met my fiancé through the Honors program! This program has provided me with a great support system to navigate through college and to learn about complexity in education.

Faith's Future Plans

After I graduate this May I will pursue a career in teaching at an elementary level. I'm getting married this summer, then I will start my career! I hope to teach 2nd or 3rd grade in Colorado Springs and create a classroom where I can prioritize relationships with my students and make a difference in the world.

Acknowledgements by Faith

I am grateful for all of my professors and friends I have made throughout my college years, and my parents for being so supportive of my goals and aspirations. Dr. Kuzma was so much help to me as I worked through my portfolio and opened my eyes to new opportunities for engagement in the community. I am also so grateful for my fiancé Zach, who I met through the Honors program during my freshman year!

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





Naila Tagoilelagi -- Honors Program Spotlight Spring 2023

Hello! My name is Naila Tagoilelagi, and I am wrapping up my senior year! I will be graduating with a B.S. in Biology and a B.A. in Psychology. I was born in Colorado Springs but moved around a bit due to the military. Overall, I'm a free spirit! My hobbies include crocheting, roller skating, drawing, photography, hiking/biking with my dog, playing music, learning new languages... I like to do a little bit of everything. I've also spent the majority of my college career working on my research project titled "Sexual Harassment in STEM: Understanding Impacts on Well-being and Career Plans" with Dr. Elizabeth Daniels under the UCCS Psychology Honors Program and the Undergraduate Research Academy. I hope to become a physician, and I will be applying to medical school soon.

What fascinates Naila Tagoilelagi about the Honors Program

I enjoy the Honors Program because it challenges me to break out of my daily norms. The Honors Program has exposed me to a myriad of topics that I would not have known about otherwise. Specifically, I liked watching the films and film discussions. The films exposed me to other parts of the world and how movies are crafted there. I also learned about different cultures and struggles faced by other people. The Honors Program gave me insight into international affairs and helped me break out of my bubble. I also enjoyed our discussions where we had to step outside of ourselves in order to fix a problem. To me, the Honors Program is supposed to challenge you and make you uncomfortable—it is up to you to decide how you change and move forward.

Naila Tagoilelagi's Future Plans

This summer, I will be applying to medical schools. My end goal is to become a pathologist, but I will enjoy the process of learning about other specialties. I also want to address issues of racism and discrimination in the medical field. I will continue in my pursuit of knowledge and being the best person I can be. While I wait, I'll be applying for jobs to work as a certified nurse aide.

Acknowledgements by Naila Tagoilelagi

I'm most grateful for my parents' support throughout my college career; their support means everything to me. They worked hard so I could get the education I needed. They are my biggest motivators, along with my brother, so I am glad I have all of them by my side. I am also grateful for my mentor, Dr. Elizabeth Daniels, because she has taught me valuable skills, as well as bringing me onto an unforgettable project—she is truly an inspirational person. I would also like to thank Dr. Joseph Kuzma and the rest of the Honors Program faculty for their support throughout the Honors Program. I am also grateful to Jennifer Poe and the URA for supporting my research pursuits. Thank you to everyone that has supported me on my journey!

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

Chloe Wendfeldt-- Honors Program Spotlight Spring, 2023

Hello! My name is Chloe Wendfeldt and I am from Mountain Home, Arkansas. I have enjoyed living in the great state of Colorado while I have pursued my Bachelor's of Science in Nursing at UCCS. Throughout my college career, I have enjoyed skiing, camping, hanging out with my friends, and volunteering as a companion for hospice patients. Living in Colorado has opened so many doors for me, and for that I am forever grateful!

What fascinates Chloe Wendfeldt about the Honors Program

Something that fascinates me about the honors program is the dedication the honor's faculty have to their students. The faculty goes the extra mile to create engaging conversations and encourage honor's students to get to know each other. I have enjoyed working with Ms. Carol Pina and my advisor, Dr. Semwal, throughout my four years in the honors program, as well as the rest of the honors faculty. Of course, one of the best parts of the honors program is that I got to hang out with my dear friend, Holly Siu, who I have made so many good memories with throughout college!

Chloe Wendfeldt's Future Plans

After graduation I will be living in several different states for the foreseeable future due to my husband's service in the military. I will also be pursuing my nursing career and intend to continue volunteer work in my future communities. I am not exactly sure what my future holds, but I am excited for the next season of my life to begin!

Acknowledgements by Chloe Wendfeldt

I am grateful to God, who has been sovereign over every situation I have encountered in my life and who I can trust to care for my future. I am so thankful to my parents, Chris and Kelley Nosari, who have supported me through every endeavor and my brother, Hunt Nosari, who has put up with me for twenty-two years and helped me move into college and my first apartment! I am grateful for my wonderful family, my loving grandparents: Nonnie and Papa, Pa Tom and Grandma Paula, and my Maamaa (who inspired me to be a nurse!). I also have the best friends in the world who are always there for me when I need them! I appreciate all my teachers and clinical instructors who go the extra mile for their students. A good teacher really does make all the difference! Last but not least, I'd like to thank my husband, Reese, who is my best friend, #1 shoulder to cry on, and my favorite adventure buddy!



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

Grace Wenham -- Honors Program Spotlight Fall, 2021

My name is Grace Wenham and I am in my fourth year at UCCS working towards my bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering and a minor in Strategic and Organizational Communication. I was born in Arizona but have lived in Highlands Ranch since I was about 7 and I love Colorado. I am a member of the UCCS Track and Field program and my event is 400m hurdles. I also enjoy hiking, biking and skiing.

What fascinates Grace Wenham about the Honors Program

One thing that drew me to the Honors Program was the prospect of staying close with my freshman year GPS cohort as we all continued to attend Honors Program events and discussions throughout our college experience. These discussions about complexity were valuable to me and I began to apply the lessons learned to my college experience. Another thing was the appeal of being recognized for my grades and achievements in school. Once I was in the Honors Program, I especially appreciated the film discussions that Dr. Sackett often led because they always proved to be insightful and were a learning experience in which I had the opportunity to hear the different perspectives of my peers.

Grace Wenham's Future Plans

I am in my fourth year at UCCS and therefore I must graduate from the Honors Program, but I have another year left to complete my bachelor's degree. I hope to graduate in May 2023 with this degree and potentially secure a job with Xcel Energy, whom I am currently interning with. I hope to find a job where I can contribute to finding cleaner energy solutions in order to help combat the climate crisis. I don't currently have plans to pursue a Master's degree, but should the need arise I would consider completing this step as well.

Acknowledgements by Grace Wenham

I am grateful for my family for always supporting me and encouraging me when I doubted myself. I would also like to thank my mentor Dr. Semwal as well as Dr. Sackett and Dr. Kuzma whom I all considered to be role models and looked up to very much. Last, I would like to thank my professor Mr. Adragna for leaving a lasting impression on me through his positivity and support as well as being the most organized and thoughtful professor I've had the opportunity to learn from.

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

