

# HONORS COLLEGE

## 2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT

1975 DeTrobriand Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84113

Annual Report 2018-2019

**Sylvia Torti, Ph.D.**  
Dean

**Laurence Parker, Ph.D.**  
Associate Dean, Student Affairs

**Monisha Pasupathi, Ph.D.**  
Associate Dean, Faculty Affairs

**Patricia Rohrer, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Dean



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Mission Statement and Philosophy	2
Honors Student Body	3
Living Learning Communities	5
Assessment of First-Year Student Experience	6
Graduation and Honors Degree Completion	8
Honors Undergraduate Research	10
Distinguished Scholarships	11
Honors Academic Advising	12
2019-2020 Praxis Labs	13
2020-2021 Praxis Labs	16
Ecology and Legacy Minor	18
Scholars Groups	19
Honors Education at Research Universities	21
Goals for 2019-2020 Academic Year	22

## **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 and sciences 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.

## HONORS STUDENT BODY

The Honors College has a student body of approximately 2300. For the upcoming 2020 entering class academic year, the College received 4200 applications for 650 spots. Applicants are reviewed on their high school CGPA, rigor of high school courses, test scores, essay quality and interest in a liberal arts and sciences education.

Figure 1. Incoming class size 2014-2020, including projected Fall 2020 numbers.

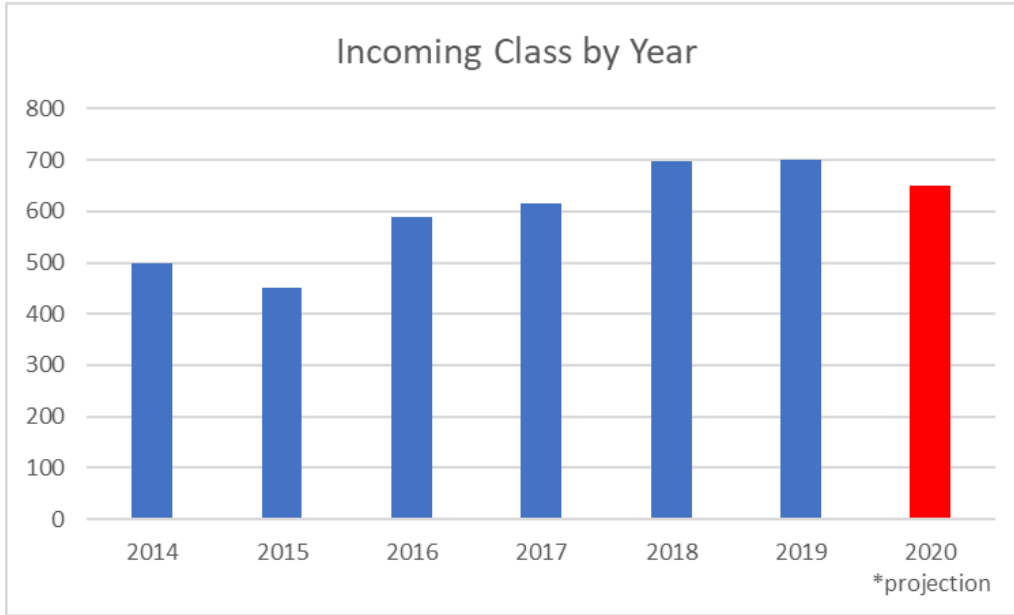
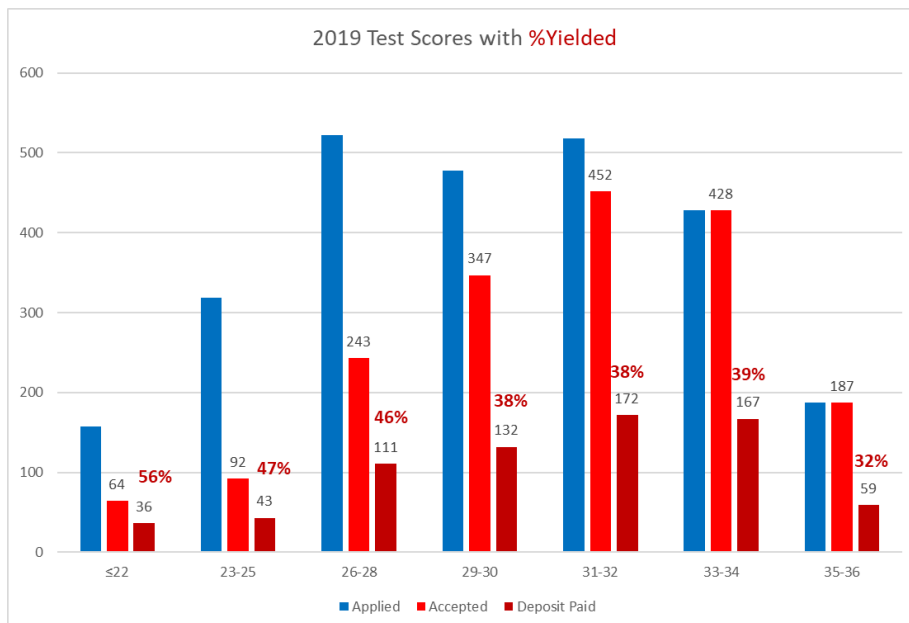


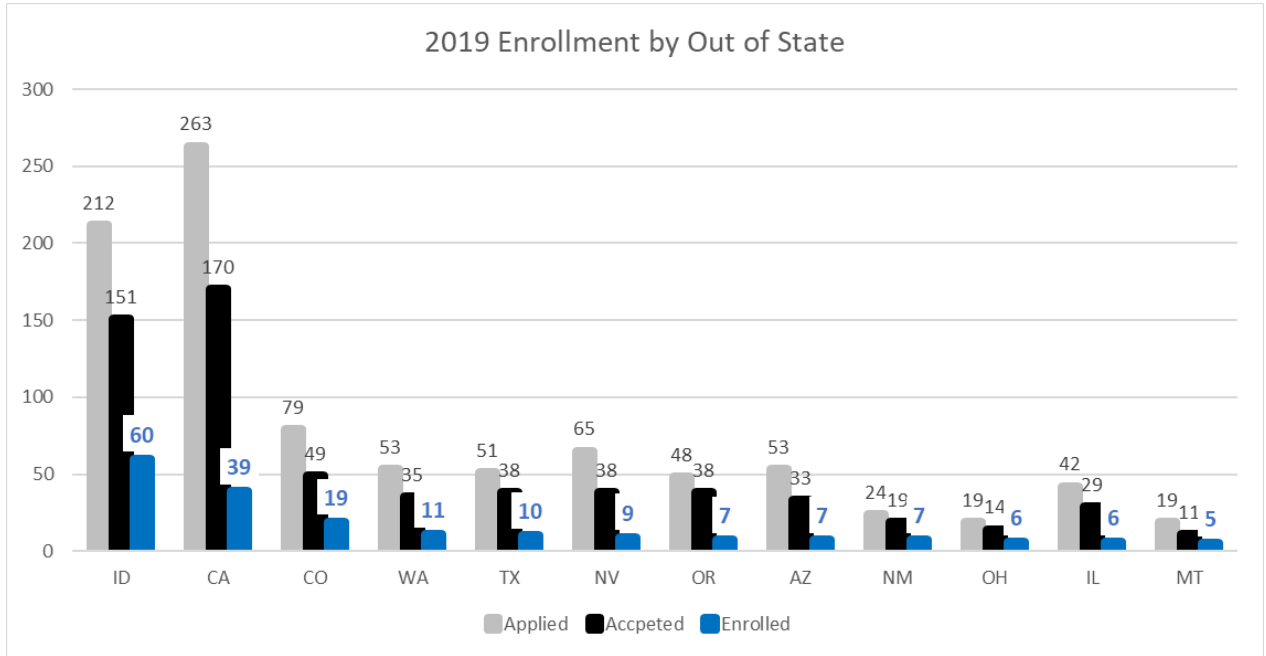
Fig. 2 ACT Scores for Applicant Pool and Acceptance Rates. Average high school CGPA is 3.9 and average ACT is 31.



In State and Out-of-State

Since 2012, Honors has grown its out-of-state population from to roughly one third of our incoming class. The College typically receives applicants from all 50 states and is currently focusing on having a greater yield from all states (Figure 3)..

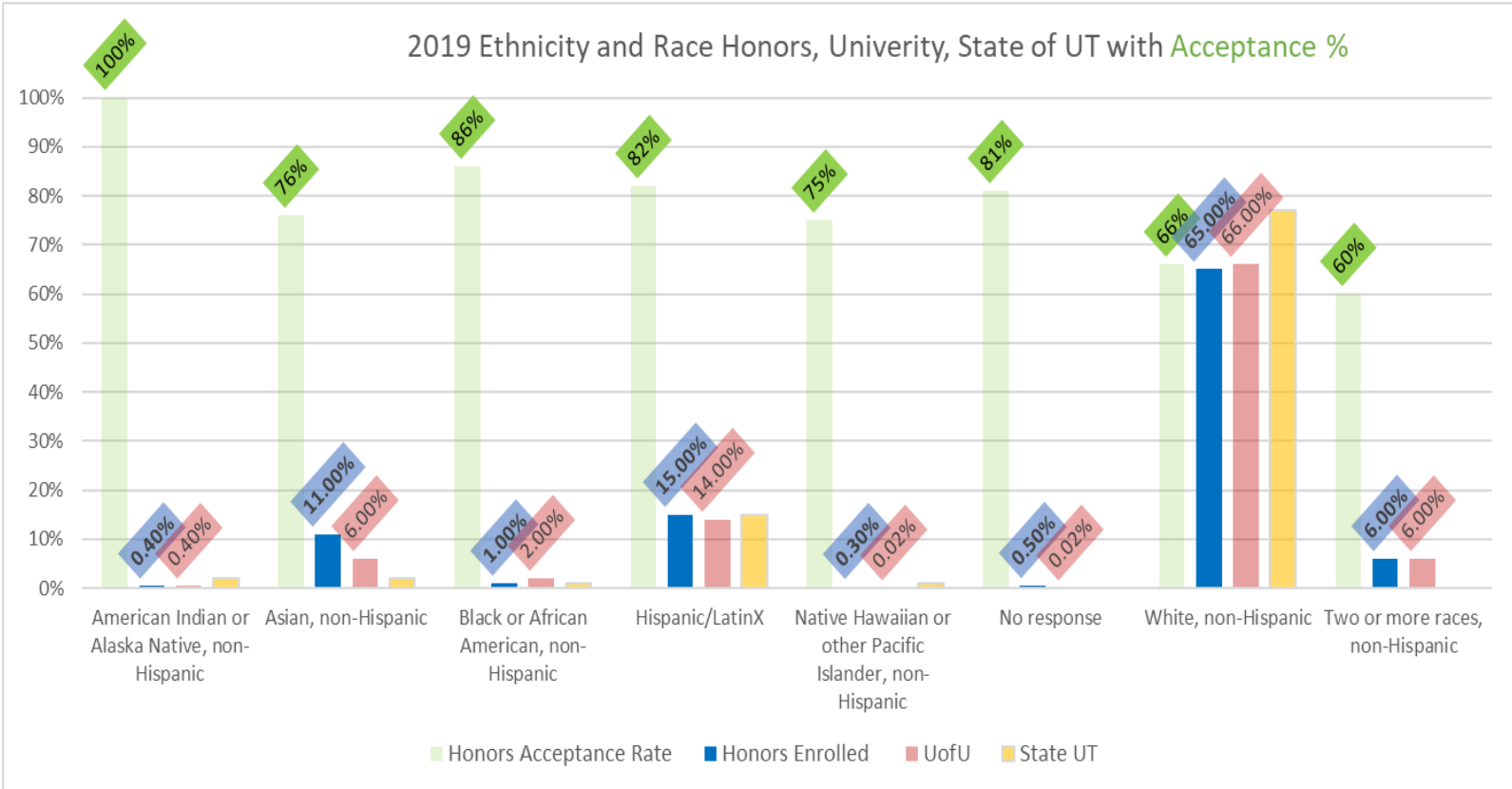
Figure 3. 2019-2020 Enrolled, Admitted and Applied Comparison by Top 10 States.



Student Body Diversity

Our ethnic diversity generally mirrors that of the state. Given the expected increase in Hispanic/LatinX 18-year olds, we are hoping to increase recruitment efforts for this population (Figure 4). In-state students come from 24 different Utah counties with Salt Lake county being the largest at 60% compared to last year’s 20 counties with 54% coming from Salt Lake county.

Figure 4. 2019-2020 Race and Ethnicity comparison by Honors, University and State



## LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

244

first-year students in Living Learning Community (LLC)

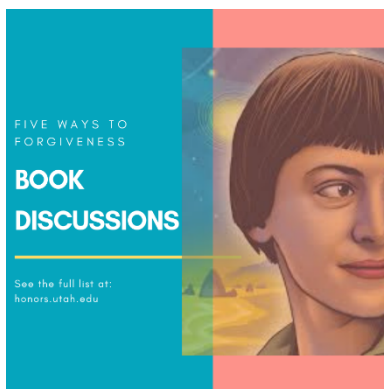
125

upper division students in Themed Community

The Honors College has an unadjusted **98% Fall to Spring retention rate of first-year students** (Office of Budget & Institutional Analysis, hereafter referred to as simply OBIA). Our success is in great part to the various living learning communities (LLC) and learning communities (LC) the Honors College offers to its students.

Students living in Honors Housing participate in a Living Learning Community (LLC) or themed community, where each small cohort of students share living space, along with selected classes and/or activities. Honors offered **eleven unique first-year LLC** for the 2019-2020 academic year, two more LLCs from the prior year, and **two themed communities** for upper division students.

Studies have shown that students who participate in these types of communities tend to earn higher grades, graduate on time and feel more connected to their alma mater ([Price, 2005](#)).



Throughout fall and spring, Honors hosted a number of events for LLC students (and commuter students) such as the annual Night at the Symphony, rafting trips, meetings with elected officials, visits to scientific laboratory on campus, and lectures and performances at Kingsbury Hall.

In the fall, Honors hosted an artist-in-residence from Argentina: Maria Correa. Correa visited 6 University, Jackson Elementary School and Davis High School. She also gave a free performance to Honors students and the SLC community at SugarSpace. In total, her visit reached over 500 students and community members. She discussed and performed music from key musicians from Argentina, e.g., Mercedes Sosa, who were active during the dictatorship, as well as those active in other Latin American countries. She spoke and sang to the ways in which music was, and is, used as a response to government-sponsored terror and/or repression. She demonstrated the ways in which the tradition of protest through music continue today in Latin America.

Each Fall the Honors College collectively reads a novel and participates in small group discussions led by distinguished faculty, deans, and vice presidents. This past Fall students discussed the novel, *Five Ways to Forgiveness by Ursula K LeGuin*. The book selection was coordinated with Scott Black's Jack Newell Honors Lecture. Honors hosted a total of 12 book discussions—one for each of the LLCs and two additional sessions open to all Honors students—were attended by approximately 300 students.

## GRADUATION AND HONORS DEGREE COMPLETION

The Honors College has an overall **adjusted 6-year graduation rate of 90%**, compared to 69% for the University of Utah (OBIA). The 90% number 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 last 5 years have shown a marked increase in the percentage of students earning Honors Degree (Fig. 8), as well as the number of colleges and majors represented by those students (Fig. 9). Honors continues to work towards its goal of having 50% Honors Degree completion of all graduating Honors students.



Figure 5. Number of Honors graduates who were awarded an Honors Degree, AY 2015 to AY 2020 (projected).

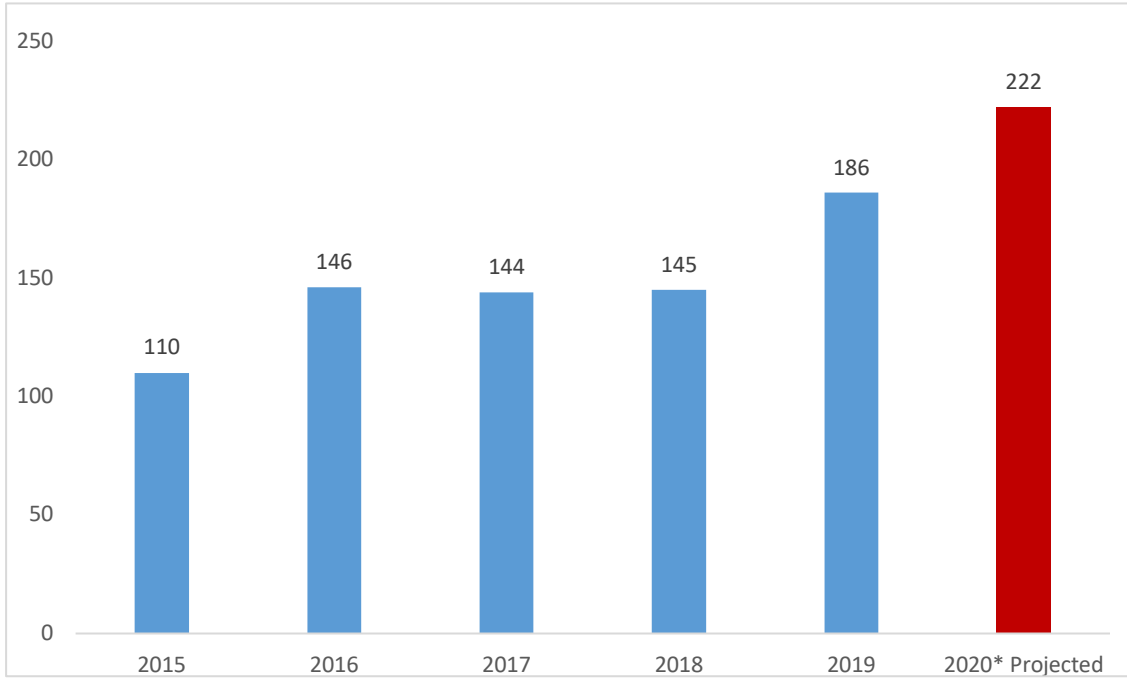
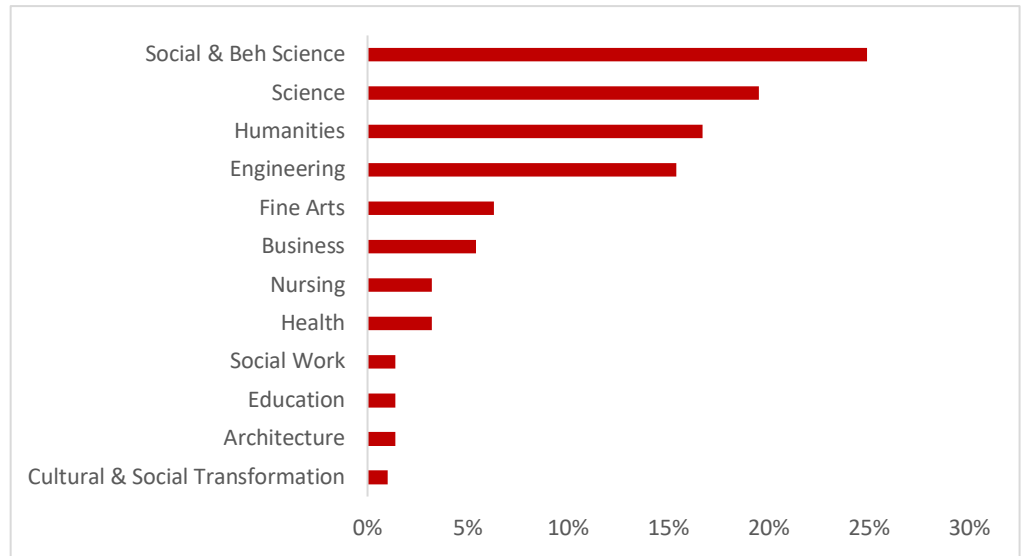
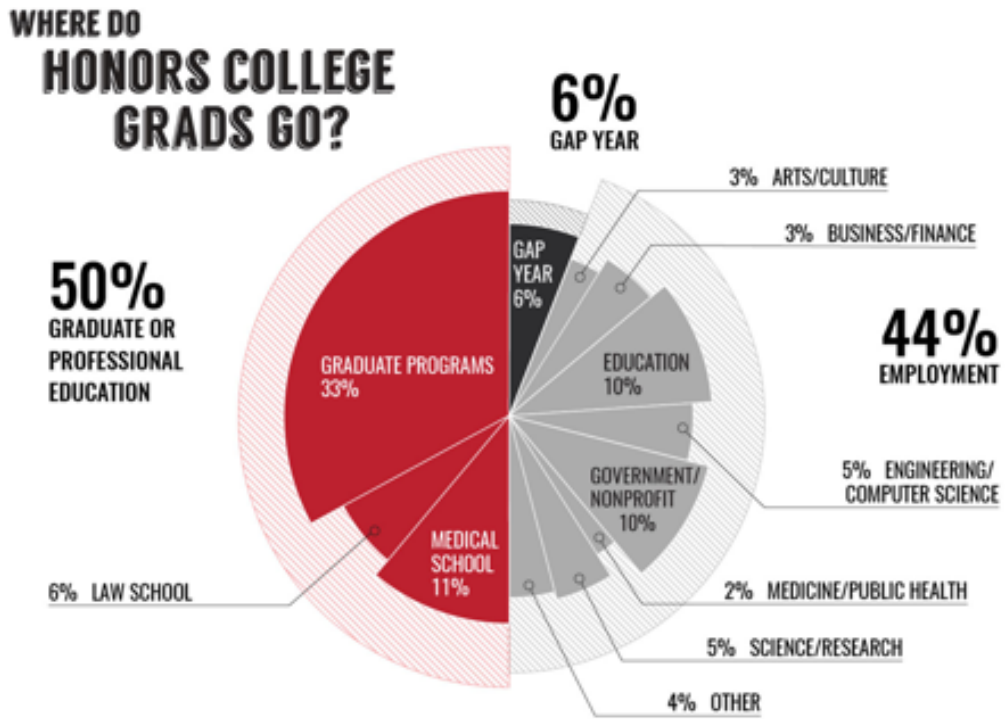


Figure 6. Colleges represented based on the number of students who applied to graduation with an Honors Degree in AY 2019 (OBIA).



A May 2019 survey of recently Honors Degree graduates, continues to show that half of our graduating students go on to pursue graduate studies. Students pursuing graduate study or professional schools were admitted to places like University of Oxford, Columbia University, Northeastern University School of Law, University of California Berkeley Law, University of Utah School of Medicine, and University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, to name a few.



## HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

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 (Honors Alumni Survey, 2016).

*"My research experience has been really incredible, unlike anything I've done on campus. It has really helped me apply what I am learning in my classes to real life situations, get to interact with grad students and faculty members."*

—Honors Graduate

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 Symposium (URS), **215 Honors students presented their research, a 26% increase from the prior year.**

Jasmine P. Robinson, recipient of the Marriott Library Thesis Award, presents her research at URS 2019.

Jasmine graduated in Spring 2019 with her Honors Bachelor of Science in Peace and Conflict Studies.



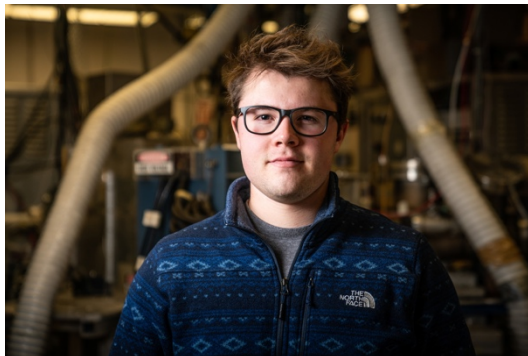
The Honors College also supported over **40 students** to attend national conferences through **\$500 travel grants**. Students had the opportunity to travel to places such as California, North Carolina, and Washington, D.C. Additionally, faculty mentored and sponsored Honors students to present their research at national conferences. **Dr. Michael Gills** took students to the **Association of Writers & Writing Programs** annual conference where Honors students were recognized for their contributions to the field. **Dr. Laurence Parker** collaborated with several students who presented their research at the **Asian American Studies Association** annual meeting in Madison, Wisconsin and to the **Critical Race Studies** conference at University of California, Los Angeles Law School.

## 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 fourth Churchill Scholar**, chemistry and physics major, Cameron Owen.



### *Utah System of Higher Education 2019-2020 Student Appointment*

Governor Herbert appointed Sheva Mozafari, Honors Integrated Health Science, to the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) to serve as the student regent for the state. Sheva will be a voting member of the Board on issues related to educational policy. Sheva was also the recipient of the Hinckley Institute of Politics Matheson Award.

### *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 2019 class, we received 500 applications and interviewed 55 finalists for 30 spots. Eccles scholars participate in a cohort experience during their time as undergraduates.

As part of the mission and design of the Eccles Scholarship, 60% of Eccles scholars are Utah residents. Eccles scholars from out-of-state came from 10 different states including New York, New Jersey, and Nevada, to name a few. This year's cohort is quite diverse representing four ethnic and racial identities (Fig. 9). The average high school cumulative grade point average (CGPA) was 3.93 and 32 ACT.

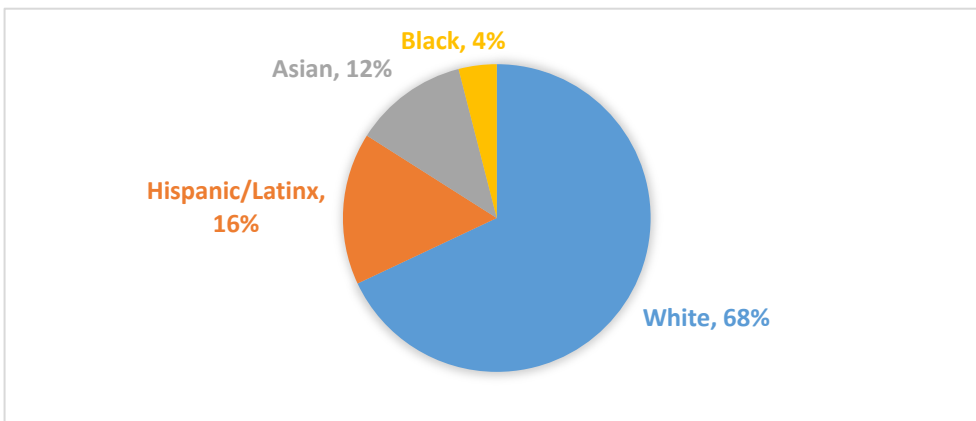


Figure 9. Ethnic demographics of 2019-2020 Eccles Scholar Cohort.

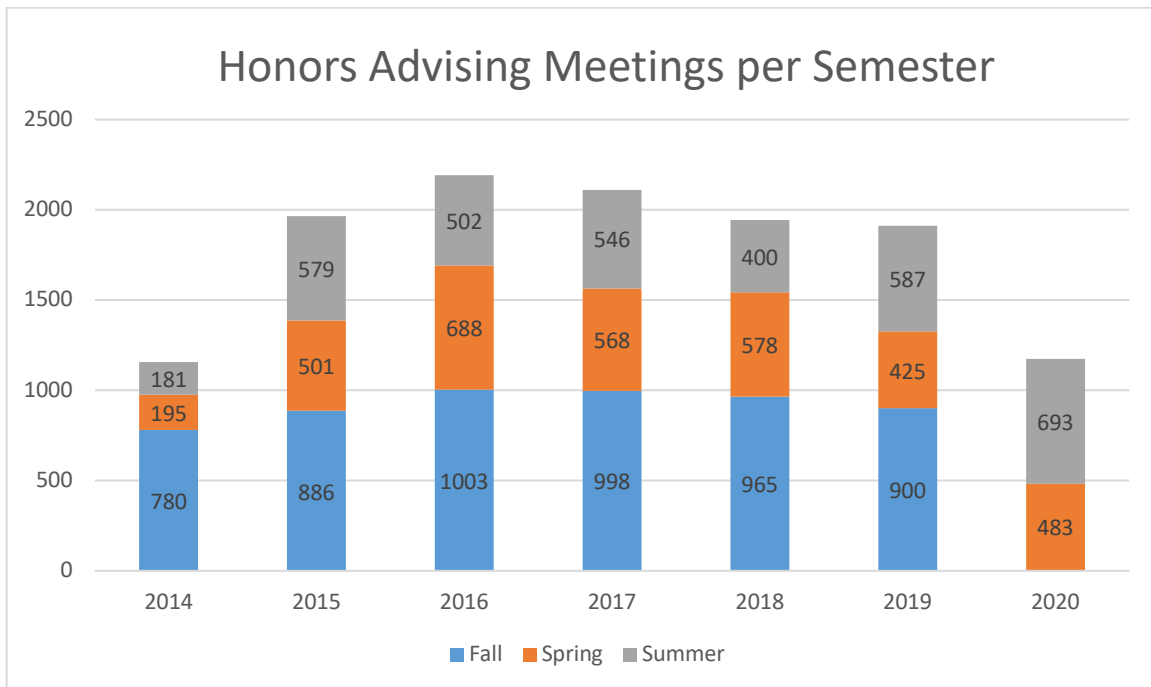
## HONORS ACADEMIC ADVISING



**Advising Team: Karleton Munn, Kelly O'Neill, Aaron Reynolds, Amber Thackeray**

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 2019-2020 academic year (Fall 2019 and Spring 2020), advisors **met with 1383 students**.

Figure 10. Number of Students seen by Honors Advisors, Spring 2014 – Summer 2020



## PRAXIS LABS: THEORY + ACTION 2019-2020

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 2019-2020 the Honors College offered

**4** Praxis Labs

and served

**43**

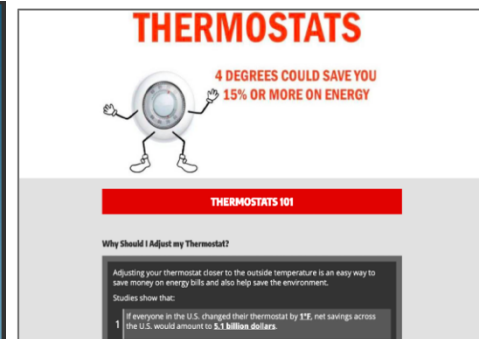
Students Participants

### Anthropocene New: Utah Snow, Climate Change & Social Resilience

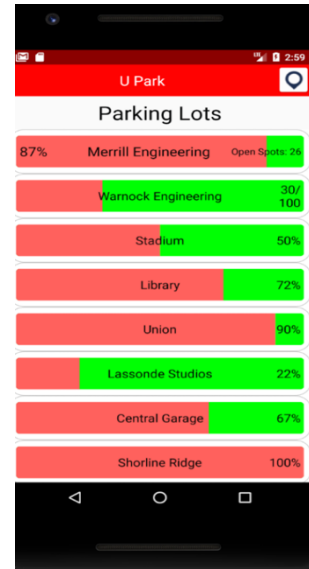
Human activity has now brought about such profound and far-reaching changes in the earth systems that we have become the dominant force of environmental change on the planet. Due to these changes, we have entered a new geologic epoch our our own making, the Anthropocene. There are many facets to and consequences of the Anthropocene but the largest is the impending global crisis posed by anthropogenic climate change.

Through interdisciplinary readings and discussions throughout Fall 2019, students in this lab determined that the university’s goal of 2050 zero-carbon emissions was too late and insufficient. Students decided to create a project centered around (a) political action, (b) outreach to the community, and (c) and thermostat education.

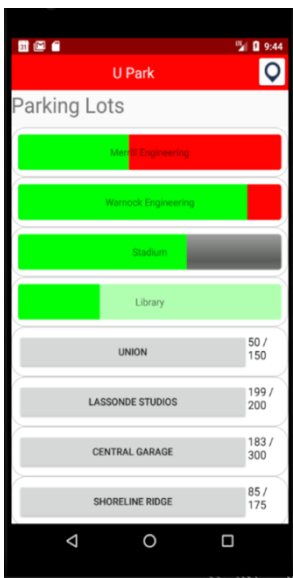
Although the lab experienced several challenges and complications as a result of their efforts, including navigating COVID-19, there were successes. For example, students collaborated with existing sustainability groups on the University of Utah campus. They spread word of their project to the broader community and addressed the importance of climate change to college students and youth. Additionally, the lab developed an effective informational sticker for thermostats for campus-wide approval in certain buildings on campus.



**Automation** As a new decade begins we look back and see how much our world has changed over the last ten years. Looking towards the future, this pattern shows no sign of stopping. One of the major catalysts for this change will be the ad-vent and implementation of automation. We are already seeing automation in our daily lives, whether it be artificial intelligent assistant on our phone or a self-driving technology that enables our cars to operate themselves. The industry has also already seen a major change regarding intelligent manufacturing systems and mining operations that utilize driverless vehicles and machinery. The rise of automated systems and artificial intelligence rises many questions. Especially regarding the entity that will hold responsibility when automation goes wrong. During our first semester we focused on learning these types of issues.



In learning about automation we covered many different aspects and issues involved with this technological evolution. The aspects we covered included history, ethics, economics, law, psychology, and the impact on fields such as mining, aviation, and civil engineering. Each class we were fortunate enough to hear from experts dealing with these aspects of automation and artificial intelligence. We heard from professors, specialists in the industry, and innovators working to bring this technology into our daily lives. Throughout the semester we kept track of different issues involved with the adoption of automation into our world and thought about potential projects that could work towards solving these issues. As a class, one of our goals for the project was to create something that could impact our local university community in a meaningful way. We wanted to create something that we found engaging and useful.



As a largely commuter school, many students drive to and from campus daily. One of the most significant problems that has arisen from this is parking. Parking on campus is challenging as lots fill up quickly in the morning. On any day, you can find people driving around and between parking lots in an attempt to find an open parking spot. The tools of automation can help us solve this problem through an app that uses image recognition from cameras around campus to count cars in a lot, find open stalls, and relay that information to commuters.

### *Behaving Like Animals-*

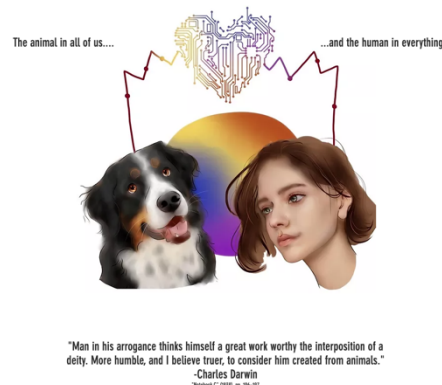
## Behaving Like Animals



Most definitions of the “human” hinge upon the characteristics that distinguish us from other animals. Yet, human bodies and brains have far more in common with our animal kin than we often like to admit. In both respects, then? commonalities and differences? other animals are essential to defining and comprehending what it means to be human.

This Praxis Lab began with the late-19th-century origins of contemporary evolutionary thinking and experimental physiology. By the time that Charles Darwin published *The Descent of Man* in 1871, a rich tradition of comparing anatomical and skeletal features of humans and other animals had long existed. Darwin placed these insights in the context of a common evolutionary origin for all organisms, providing a foundation on which to build productive comparisons between humans and other species. From these historical roots, we proceeded into the 20th century and beyond, where we explored such topics as: the nature of human relationships with animal companions and workers; the construction of animal models for biomedical research; the threats of zoonotic disease transmission; the ethics of food production; our ecological entanglement with and reliance on other organisms; and the basic tenets of ethical animal care.

*Behaving Like Animals* focused particularly on the psychological and physiological parallels between humans and other animals that enable us to draw meaningful causal and therapeutic conclusions about the origins of human behavior, from the healthy to the pathological. What are the ramifications of our evolutionary and emotional connections to other animals? What obligations do we have to all animals, and how do we effectively fulfill them? And, ultimately, how do our relationships with and understanding of other animals both construct and deconstruct what it means to be human?





***Truth, Deception, and Information Disorder***

- In August of 2019, we began studying misinformation in all its forms, but primarily focusing on fake news and other forms of deliberate disinformation. As the COVID-19 virus emerged in early 2020 and rapidly turned into a pandemic, however, our attention moved from fake news and became



increasingly focused on the surge of misinformation about the virus, something the World Health Organization would eventually describe as an “infodemic.” We came to realize that while the spread of the Coronavirus would eventually run its course, the epidemic of misinformation, so easily spread and magnified through social media, would remain and resurface in other areas.

We recognized that misinformation is a global issue that will only get significantly worse if appropriate action is not taken. We noted with concern how the social media platforms, although committing significant resources to combating misinformation, were fighting a losing battle due to their sheer size and the massive volume of misinformation that is posted on their platforms.

What could we realistically do, in just a few short months and with a limited budget, to make a meaningful contribution to addressing the misinformation epidemic? We ultimately developed a misinformation vaccine of sorts that targeted three distinct local groups over which we could possibly exert some influence: middle school students who represent future consumers of digital media and voters; college students, most of whom are already robust consumers of digital information and who will be voting for the first time this November, and Utah’s 17 announced Gubernatorial candidates, who are potential generators of misinformation and who we believe have a unique responsibility to be leaders in the fight against election misinformation.

Consequently, we developed three separate, yet related, campaigns, each targeting one of the identified groups. We hoped to effect both short term and long term change. As hereinafter described, our three campaigns were our Middle School Education Campaign, our U of U Awareness Campaign, and our Gubernatorial Pledge for Election Integrity Campaign.

## 2020-2021 PRAXIS LABS

### College Affordability

Faculty: Julie Hartley, Ph. D., and Jason Taylor, Ph.D.

The costs of college have soared over the past two decades. Tuition has increased nearly 200% and living costs and other educational expenses have increased even more dramatically. The result is that students and families are paying the price for college and accumulating billions of dollars in student debt along the way. College is becoming unaffordable and the rate at which students attend and complete college continues to be stratified by income and race.

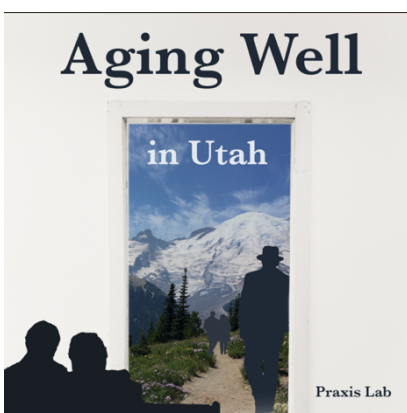


How did we get here and is our current system and infrastructure of financing college working? What is causing college costs to increase and how can we make college more affordable, accessible, and equitable for the next generation of Americans? Is the answer “free” college, expanding state investments, public debt forgiveness, increasing private investment, reforming federal financial aid, making colleges more efficient, reducing inflated administrative salaries, delivering more online education, or something else? What are our most promising solutions and who will they impact.

The current trajectory of financing college is unsustainable. This praxis lab will explore the terrain of postsecondary education financing and financial aid policies, and it will interrogate the causes and the consequences of the college affordability crisis. The lab will offer students an opportunity to explore and assess college affordability and help us all reimagine and redesign sustainable solutions.

### Ageing Well in Utah

Faculty: Linda Edelman, RN., Ph.D., and Troy Andersen, Ph.D.



The world’s population is aging which has implications across society. Utah, which has the distinction of being the youngest state in the nation, is the seventh in growth of adults 65 years and older. The Age Friendly Movement supports the inclusion of people of all ages to actively participate in the world around them. This praxis lab will explore the impact of an aging population through lectures, readings and interactions with older adults and aging services.

The Age Friendly Movement will serve as a framework to explore aging topics including healthy aging, health care delivery, community planning, education and sustainability of the workforce and ageism. Emphasis will be placed on the 4M’s of age friendly health systems – mobility, mentation, medications and what matters most – and how social determinants of health and health policies influence where and how people age successfully in Utah.

## GOALS FOR THE 2020-2021 ACADEMIC YEAR

The Honors College has developed a five-year, 2019-2023, strategic plan that includes:

### Support students through Honors Degree completion

- Expand the Honors College integrated minor, which allow for students to complete their Honors core curriculum around a them and simultaneously earning a minor;
  - Building on the Ecology and Legacy minor, we are developing two additional minors and more versions of Ecology and Legacy.
  - Integrated minor in Health: one in Utah and one in Ghana
  - Integrated minor in human rights and resources: one in Utah and one in Ghana.
  - Additional Ecology and Legacy versions in Utah and Tanzania.
- First-semester hybrid class, Honor 1000 for first-year students what will them with the history and purpose of the Honors College; why it is important related to student success; and key points of information to know about the University of Utah campus;
- Third-year mandatory course that will connect student to others in their cohort major and keep them on track to graduation;
- Increase financial support to Honors students who present their research at regional and national conferences in their disciplines.

### Cultivate a diverse student body

- Maintain percentage of out-of-state students at 30%;
- Increase inclusion and diversity of student body—Utah rural counties, ethnic diversity, and first-generation students.

### Continue to strengthen the rigor and relevance of our curriculum and assess learning outcomes

- Honors has taken steps to evaluate its curriculum learning outcomes and impact of different programs;
- Associate Dean Pasupathi will be spearheading assessment efforts that focus on what makes the Honors College a transformative experience for students using mixed methodological measures.

### Elevate national profile of University of Utah Honors College

- Deans, faculty and staff will continue to submit proposals to present at national conferences.