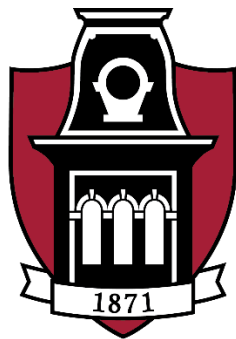


# Honors College Annual Report



UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS®

2023-2024

## Honors College

### Foreword from the Dean

This year in the Honors College we continue to achieve new and exciting milestones. The University of Arkansas Honors College is a national leader in student advising, curriculum, and programming.

The Honors College is thrilled to announce that this year ushers in the largest group of Fellows on record at over 375! While increasing the Fellowship cohort, we have maintained high standards for our new Fellows, who collectively boast an average ACT score of over 34 and a high school GPA of more than 4.2.

This spring, four brilliant Honors College students won Goldwater Scholarships, the top undergraduate prize for STEM research in the U.S. (one of these Goldwater "Four" had not even finished his first year at the University of Arkansas). Every university in the U.S. may nominate up to four Goldwater finalists; only thirteen institutions walked away with all four awards at once. In this endeavor, Arkansas ranked with twelve heavy hitters: Harvard, Penn, Wisconsin, and more. The Honors College and its research endowment make this national triumph possible.

Equally, partnering honors students with top research faculty and local medical experts intensifies our academic enterprise. During the 2023-2024 academic year, the Honors College offered an array of fascinating seminars, including an evolutionary look at the long history of teeth by Dr. Peter Ungar and a survey of the history of skin diseases taught by a Northwest Arkansas dermatologist, Dr. Scott Jackson, who recently published a book on the subject. Outside of the STEM world, Dr. Noah Pittman, dazzled a seminar of our best political junkies, who tackled the ups and downs of the spring 2023 presidential primaries and the sequel this fall: Campaign 2024.

Over the last academic year, the Honors College hosted a national conference, the National Society for Minorities in Honors, and celebrated ten years of the Path Program. We continue to hold a singular place nationally with our ability to run a recruitment machine that serves high achieving students from underrepresented regions, many who are first generation students.

The 2023-2024 academic year has been truly remarkable, marked by outstanding achievements in student awards, cutting-edge research, enriching study abroad experiences, and exceptional advising. Our students have excelled in national competitions, earning prestigious accolades that highlight their dedication and talent. Innovative research projects have pushed the boundaries of knowledge, showcasing the intellectual curiosity and perseverance of our honors community. Study abroad programs have broadened our students' horizons, providing invaluable cultural and academic experiences. Our advisors have been instrumental in guiding students toward their goals, offering support and expertise. As we look ahead to the 2024-2025 academic year, we are filled with optimism and excitement, anticipating even greater accomplishments and new opportunities that will further enhance our vibrant academic environment and honor the goals of the gifts that support our institution.

Lynda Coon

Dean

## **Students**

### **Enrollment**

The Honors College has played a crucial role in expanding the student body at the University of Arkansas while also enhancing its quality. This year has been particularly outstanding for recruiting new students to the Honors College.

- Total Honors College enrollment grew to 4,111 in Fall 2023, a 7.6% increase since 2019.
- The Honors College was able to enroll a new freshman class of 1,130 new students for Fall 2023. The average ACT for the class was 30.8 and the average GPA was 4.1. Other important statistics include:
  - 64% of the class is from Arkansas
  - 21% of the class is from a racial/ethnic minority group
- Starting with Fall 2025 admission, the Honors College will be increasing the minimum high school GPA for automatic admission from 3.75 to 3.85. The overall average high school GPA for new students at the university has steadily grown over the past decade, making this update necessary. The Honors College continues to offer an option for applicants with at least a 3.9 high school GPA but who do not have the necessary ACT/SAT score to undergo holistic application review to gain admission. Even with this change, it is important to note that we will continue to allow current UA students to apply to the Honors College, where they will be evaluated by their college GPA and credit hours attained. We fully expect to keep the Honors College enrollment at 13-15% of the total undergraduate population at the university.
- For academic year 2023-2024, the Honors College had over 1,500 prospective students visit campus with their families to meet with recruitment staff. In addition, the Honors College continues to host its signature recruitment events, including Convocation, Discovery Day, and Fellowship Interview Day. Honors recruiters also continue to meet with thousands of students through various outreach efforts, both in person and over virtual mediums.
- This year's fellowship class of 103 new students was selected from 781 qualified applicants. Out of this group of 103 new fellows, 91 will enroll at the university as Honors College Fellows. The average ACT score for new fellows is 34.15 and the average GPA is 4.25. Arkansans also make up 88% of the new Fellows class. As competition continues to increase for high-achieving students across the nation, the Honors College Fellowship remains an important competitive advantage for the University of Arkansas as it recruits the best and the brightest students from the state of Arkansas and beyond.
- Of 377 Fellows on campus in fall 2023, 322 are supported exclusively by the Walton Family Charitable Support Foundation gift, while 36 are supported by fellowships created

by private donors matched by Walton support such as the Bodenhamer Fellowship. Eighteen additional Fellows are supported entirely by the Sturgis Endowment while one Fellow receives support from the Boyer Endowment.

- Six-year graduation rates for those who began in honors inched slightly higher to 84.2% (compared to last year's 84.07%) and continue to remain well above the rate reported in 2018 of 80.9%.

## Curriculum

Enrollment in the Honors College's interdisciplinary courses included 315 students in 26 courses. This is in addition to the \$440,040 the Honors College provided to the six academic colleges to support their honors offerings to nearly 4,000 students in departmentally listed honors courses. The Honors College continued to offer a variety of courses that take students out of their comfort zones and into contact with ideas, scholars, and students from other disciplines.

- In a unique opportunity for students to learn from a local clinician and medical historian, Scott Jackson, a dermatologist in private practice, equips students with an understanding of the field in his Honors Forum: Skin Disease and the History of Dermatology. This course also compels students to critically examine the grave errors in past practices. By learning about mistakes in dermatology, such as the Tuskegee Study and the Holmesburg Prison Scandal, Jackson encourages students to heavily weigh patient experience against the pure drive for innovation and advancement, fostering a sense of responsibility and awareness as they embark on their careers. "The course not only allowed me to solidify my love and passion for dermatology, but it also provided a unique platform to dive into the historical importance of where my passion originated and grew into what it is today," said Isabella Farrington, a sophomore honors biology major from Crystal Lake, Illinois. "Dr. Jackson's ability to infuse each session with an amazing energy has made the learning experience truly exceptional. It's refreshing to have an instructor who not only encourages knowledge but also instills a sense of curiosity and confidence in his students."
- Jared Phillips, teaching associate professor of history, along with Virginia Siegel, a professor of practice, oral historian and director of Arkansas Folk and Traditional Arts, and Joshua Youngblood, head of the Instruction and Outreach Unit head for the University Libraries Special Collections, led Ozarks Culture, a multidisciplinary Honors Signature Seminar diving into the history, literature, music, and folklore found in the Ozark Mountains. Through a survey of these diverse sources, many of which are archived exclusively at the University of Arkansas Special Collections, the class challenged outsider stereotypes about the region being one full of hillbillies and moonshiners. Rather, students analyzed and discussed writing on the rich customs of Ozarkers living within a 55,000-square-mile area spanning across Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and southeastern Kansas.
- One-hour courses offered by the Honors College allow interdisciplinary learning to be accessible for all schedules. In the Retro Readings series, students explored groundbreaking literary journalism with *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968) by Tom Wolfe with Bret Schulte, the chair of the School of Journalism and Strategic Media. Students also dug into complex historical debates around

the Bible with Dean Coon, compelling ambitious scholars from multiple disciplines to scrutinize and discuss complex ancient texts through a historical lens.

### **Advising and Student Success Programming: The Honors College Futures Hub**

In 2020, the Honors College introduced the Futures Hub, a dedicated team of honors staff who assist students in accessing resources both on campus and within the community to maximize their honors experience. The Hub also supports students in planning and preparing for their post-graduation goals. The Futures Hub staff operate under the "G.R.E.A.T." framework, helping students with **G**lobal experience, **R**esearch, campus and community **E**ngagement, **A**cademics, and future **T**rajectories, including graduate school, professional schools, and employment.

In August 2023, Megan Hull joined the Hub team as the Director of Curricular Planning and Student Engagement. In this role, Megan assists Dean Coon with the coordination of our Honors College courses. She also oversees student engagement with the college. Before joining the Futures Hub, Megan worked as an assistant director in the Office of Study Abroad.

Another staff member in the Hub, Jonathan Langley, had his scope of work updated to allow for the consolidation of all pre-professional advising in the Honors College, since Jonathan will also assume pre-law advising duties for the Honors College. His title was updated from Director of STEM and Pre-Medical Professions to Director of Graduate and Professional School Planning. Having all pre-professional advising housed with the same staff member allows for more clarity for honors students seeking advising. In addition, the change to Graduate School Planning increases the scope of advising for the role, a necessary addition since nearly half of Honors College students intend to pursue post-undergraduate education in some capacity.

The Futures Hub staff offers large-group workshops, small group sessions, and one-on-one advising. This year, the Hub facilitated an incredible 700 one-on-one appointments and engaged in over 5,600 student interactions through workshops and community events. To maintain their commitment to inclusion, the Hub staff provided both virtual programming and in-person events at Gearhart Hall, Hotz Hall, the Multicultural Center, and the new CORD Student Success Center.

- **Global experience:** Futures Hub staff offer a variety of study abroad assistance, including programming and one-on-one advising that introduces students to study abroad and shares its benefits and how to participate. Students with unique or complex goals receive specialized advising. Staff also guide students through the four study abroad grant deadlines, results of which are explained below.
- **Research:** The Futures Hub focused on two key areas of the research process: initiating research projects and progressing with thesis drafts. This support aims to help more students complete meaningful projects. During National Undergraduate Research Week, the Honors College co-hosted a Research Poster Competition where 91 students presented their research, nearly doubling the previous year's participation.
- **Engagement:** Futures Hub staff assist students in making strategic engagement choices, such as extracurricular activities, volunteer work, and leadership roles, to support their

long-term goals and to enhance their college experience. The staff also continued to develop the Community Leaders program, which helps Arkansas students who are the only graduates from their high school in the Honors College, get involved, utilize university resources, and develop leadership skills.

- **Academics:** In addition to managing a comprehensive suite of courses described in the Curriculum section, Futures Hub staff help honors students maximize their academic opportunities. They collaborate with advising staff across the campus to identify top graduate school and award prospects, create intervention plans for struggling honors students, and support those in the middle to improve their chances for competitive educational and career opportunities.
- **Trajectory:** Futures Hub staff assist students in establishing a path to professional success by facilitating key experiences that build business connections and refine career interests, such as internships and job shadowing. They provide feedback and suggestions to improve students' resumes, cover letters, personal statements, and interview skills.
  - The Honors College collaborated with the premed advising program and the Student Success Center to provide MCAT tutoring to 20 students. Of the 20 students who participated, five were first-generation college students, five reported a race/ethnicity other than white, and four were from rural communities in Arkansas. The average score on the practice MCAT for participants increased 10 points over the length of the program, from 490 on the first practice test to 500 on the final practice test.
  - The Futures Hub worked with several campus and community partners to offer Lunch & Learn sessions throughout the year. Several focused on pre-medical students. Dr. Timothy Muldoon (associate professor of biomedical engineering) and Dr. Guadalupe Rodriguez (instructor) offered a Lunch & Learn session specifically for first-generation college students who want to attend medical school. Dr. John Spollen (associate dean for Northwest Arkansas, UAMS College of Medicine) offered two Lunch & Learn meetings (due to high demand) discussing UAMS with potential applicants. Every Lunch & Learn had more registrations than spots available, and we will continue to expand these in the future.

### **Nationally Competitive Awards**

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the University of Arkansas continued a long tradition of students winning competitive awards, as U of A students received nearly \$1.5 million in fellowships and scholarships. More than 300 students earned awards at both the state and national levels and were recognized for their commitment to academic excellence, research, public service, leadership, and community involvement.

- The highly competitive Goldwater Scholarship considered the nation's preeminent scholarship for students in the STEM fields, has been awarded to four University of Arkansas students: James "Ethan" Batey, an honors chemistry and physics student, Joshua Mora Sanchez, an honors mechanical engineering student, John "Sam" Sooter, an Honors College Fellow and honors physics and mathematics student, and Emilee

Walden, an honors mathematics and biology student. This is the second time in its history that the U of A has had four Goldwater Scholars in the same year. To date, 65 U of A students have received this esteemed scholarship.

- Khadeeja Asif, a Bodenhamer Fellow and honors chemistry and Arabic student, and Nina Thomas, an honors international and global studies, Latin American and Latino studies, and Spanish student, received the Critical Language Scholarship as part of the National Security Language Initiative.
- Andie Forbes, an honors environmental, soil, and water science student, won the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Ernest F. Hollings Scholarship.
- Amelia Southern Uribe, an honors journalism and political science student, was both a Truman and Udall Scholarship finalist.
- Sherjeel Naeem, an honors anthropology and biology student, was a LUCE Scholarship finalist.
- Katherine Chamberlin, an honors international business student; Sherjeel Naeem, an honors anthropology and biology student; and Gabrielle Vatthanatham, an Honors College Fellow and honors French student, won Fulbright English Teaching Assistantships.
- Gabrielle Bulliard, an Honors College Fellow and honors biomedical engineering student, received the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship to begin in the 2024-25 academic year. In addition to Bulliard, one U of A student received an honorable mention.
- Twenty-two University of Arkansas undergraduates were awarded the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship. This program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, allows undergraduates with high financial need to study or participate in an internship abroad to develop career and language skills.
- Honors College students continue to secure competitive internships across the state and nationally. Locally, students pursue experiences with major corporations such as Walmart, Tyson, JB Hunt, and Stephens and with local startups. They support the efforts of non-profits such as Canopy, The Community Clinic, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and the Children's Therapy Team. Summer positions in Washington D.C., are popular in Senator Boozman's office as well as with other representatives and agencies.

### **Path Program**

- The Honors College Path Program recruits students from underrepresented backgrounds who have exemplary records of high-school academic success, but who lack the requisite 28 ACT score required for automatic Honors College admission as an incoming freshman. These students become top-performing college students through a bridge program before their freshman year, intensive staff and peer mentoring throughout their

college career, and a growing scholarship program. Updated honors admissions requirements have meant that some Path Scholars are honors eligible as incoming students. To date, 49.9% of Path students enroll in the Honors College after achieving the required 3.5 college GPA. The honors enrollment rate for Path students who move into the Honors program is 65%. In May 2024, the seventh cohort of Path Scholars graduated from the University of Arkansas. Of those who also enrolled as Honors Students 90% graduated within four years.

- 80% of the Path students who enrolled in Honors from the seventh cohort have enrolled in graduate programs to pursue degrees in agricultural economics, social work, nursing, and early childhood education. Four graduates decided to take a gap year before pursuing graduate school. One will teach English in Japan through the JET Program, another will be a Teach for America fellow in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the others will gain work experience. Overall, Path maintains an 81% five-year graduation rate for Walton-funded students.
- During the 2023-2024 school year, Path welcomed its sixth cohort in which all students received scholarship support. The 19 first-year students had an average high school GPA of 4.0 and ACT of 25.
- More than 57.8% of this year's first-year students are from a rural area and 100% are first-generation college students. Over 52% became honors eligible in their first year. After their first year at the U of A, the cumulative GPA for the cohort is 3.5.
- Two Path Scholars obtained notable internships. Stephanie Escobar, an honors political science major, completed an internship in Washington, D.C., with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. Accounting major Kalifa Hulsey completed an accounting internship with the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

## **Grants**

### **Study Abroad**

This year, the Honors College awarded \$1,143,590 across 263 student grants for study in 32 countries. Breakdown by program type is as follows: 5 academic year 2024-2025 with \$41,025 awarded, 54 January/May/August 2024 intersession with \$144,505 awarded, 48 semester (spring and fall 2024) with \$324,925 awarded, and 156 summer 2024 with \$633,135 awarded. The vast majority (80%) of the students traveled to Europe. However, travel to Asia (8%), Australia (5%), and Central/South American (5%) is on the rise.

Travel has returned to its pre-COVID-19 peak, and awards are up nearly 24% over the 2022-2023 academic year. This academic year, the Honors College offered grants at two award levels (40% and 20% of program costs). This new 20% award level allowed us to provide a greater number of awards and we again spent more money than the endowment has earned. Annual award dollars will begin to fall as the Honors College spends out nearly all of the carryover from the unspent funds for the 2019-2021 academic years.



## Research Grants

Research grant numbers still lag behind their pre-COVID peaks, but are also rising, thanks in part to numerous workshops throughout the year to assist students in getting started with research and in preparing applications for SURF and all types of Honors College research grants, including travel grants.

The Honors College awarded 335 grants totaling \$1,383,814.

- **Traditional Research Grants** (191 grants, \$948,500)  
These grants continue to be the Honors College's main form of support for campus research. This year, 191 grants were made to students totaling \$662,000 with an additional \$286,500 awarded to their mentors. Awards were made to students in all colleges across 51 majors. The largest number of awards went to biological sciences (19.9%), chemistry and biochemistry (12.0%), mechanical engineering (11.5%), psychological sciences (11.5%), and biomedical engineering (7.9%).
- **Student Undergraduate Research Fellowships (SURF)** (36 grants, \$103,200)  
SURF grants are competitive state grants like the Honors College Traditional Research Grants. By coordinating grant cycles with the state's SURF program, the Honors College leverages its own research funds to make awards to more projects. In all, SURF awarded \$62,000 to students and faculty augmented by Honors College grants of \$103,200. As in previous years, high-quality proposals not funded by SURF were reviewed for Honors College Traditional Research Grants.
- **Conference and Workshop Travel Grants** (55 grants, \$55,664)  
There were 55 Conference and Workshop Travel Grant awards, down slightly from last year's peak of 69. While most students traveled domestically, 10 students attended conferences in Canada, Scotland, and Japan. Students from five colleges and 21 majors traveled to present their research throughout the year. Students studying psychology (12) comprised the largest cohort by major, followed by public health (9) and mechanical engineering (6).
- **Faculty Equipment and Technology Grants** (15 grants, \$90,000)  
Faculty Equipment and Technology Grants help faculty purchase specialized equipment and software for projects staffed by honors students. This year's call resulted in 15 awards totaling \$90,000 for projects related to walking with osteoarthritis, enhancing security and resiliency of energy delivery systems, building a database of known toxic algae blooms in Arkansas waters, using video gaming to teach Italian language and culture, and using eye tracking to better understand a child's communicative development.
- **Internship and Research Travel Grants** (31 grants, \$139,450)  
International Internship and Research Travel Grants were up as a whole, from 23 last year to 31 this year. Twenty-five students participated in international internships with Belize (6), Mauritius (4), and Ireland, Italy, Japan, and Spain (each with 2 students) topping the list. Due to changes in program activities, the Belize and Mauritius

experiences were funded through International Internship instead of Extended Research Travel, thus flipping most funding from Extended Research Travel into International Internship. The Walton College of Business (12 students) and Fulbright College (9 students) sent the highest number of students by college on these experiences. Five students were awarded funds to collect data for their projects, three of which went to Canada, Peru, and Poland.

- **Research Team Grants** (17 students in 7 grants, \$47,000)  
Research Team Grants included seven projects and funded 17 students (\$30,000) and their mentors (\$17,000) across four colleges. Project topics spanned a variety of disciplines, from examining the effect of animal assisted therapy on behavior and emotional regulation in children with autism spectrum disorder to exploring awareness tips and coping strategies related to sexual harassment on TikTok to developing a voting app that will provide University of Arkansas students with the mechanics of how to register, change their registration, vote early, vote absentee, and vote in person while attending college.

## Impact

The Honors College remains dedicated to attracting talented students to the University of Arkansas, providing them with essential resources for their success, and launching them into leadership roles both within the state and beyond.

## Student Success

- **Kennedy Hicks** is deeply committed to STEM education. She is majoring in biochemistry with minors in child services and medical humanities, aspiring to become a pediatrician. In her free time, she conducts research with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), attends conferences nationwide, spends summers with the U of A STEAM Camp, and even finds time to write a thesis about chickens. Despite her packed schedule, she also diligently worked toward publishing a paper on the correlation between socioeconomic status and STEM outcomes in the *Journal of the Arkansas Association of Teacher Educators*. Hicks, from Little Rock, Arkansas, collaborates with Clare Brown, an assistant professor at the UAMS Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health, as part of the S.U.P.E.R Project. The S.U.P.E.R. (Serving Underrepresented Populations through Engagement and Research) Project provides undergraduate students the opportunity to gain a foundation in public health and conduct community-based research focusing on health disparities affecting Arkansas's underrepresented populations. Beyond her research with UAMS, Hicks has presented and attended conferences in her field. She believes these experiences prepared her to present her first-authored paper at the 16th Health Disparities Conference hosted by Xavier University of Louisiana. In the Honors College, Hicks has found similar support as a Path Scholar. "I have a family here: mentors, alumni, fellow Path students, staff," she shared. "If I need help or need direction, I know which way to go."
- **Hailey Hoog** is an Honors College Fellow from Jenks, Oklahoma, who graduated with a degree in biomedical engineering. She is also a Center for the Study of the Presidency

and Congress Presidential Fellow, Indian Health Service Scholar, a Harry S. Truman Scholarship Finalist, and two-time Udall Foundation Honorable Mention. During her time on campus, Hailey completed an internship with Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital as part of the Four Directions Summer Research Program; interned with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium in Anchorage, Alaska; and procured, accessioned, and organized specimens for storage in the Alaska Area Specimen Bank as an Arctic Investigations Program intern for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Hailey will continue her education at the Yale School of Medicine this fall.

- **Stephen Pierson**, an Honors College Fellow, began his research journey by focusing on engineering education, specifically on computer-aided manufacturing (CAM), software used to plan manufacturing. Based on this experience, he developed a framework for engineering coursework to address weaknesses in recent graduates identified by a survey from the American Society of Mechanical Engineering. While emphasizing the importance of technical knowledge, Pierson advocates for “the need to reconcile the hiring needs of industry with mechanical engineering curricula” and suggests that introducing CAM into existing coursework could help meet that need. He presented his research at the American Society of Engineering Education Midwest Section Conference and his full coursework proposal at the National ASEE Conference in 2023. Pierson later shifted his academic focus toward studying microchannel heat sinks. His research on heat sinks earned him a first-author byline at the ASTFE Eighth Thermal and Fluids Engineering Conference. His accolades extend further; out of 5,000 applicants, Pierson won the nationally competitive Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship in 2023, sparking a passion for pursuing a doctorate. Reflecting on his experiences at the Honors College, Pierson credits undergraduate research opportunities for shaping his future plans. He will continue his education at the U of A, guided by Dr. Han Hu, with a Distinguished Doctoral Fellowship in mechanical engineering.
- **Sam Sooter**, from Bentonville, Arkansas, bought undergraduate physics textbooks as a sophomore in high school and worked through them for fun. Naturally, he began concurrently taking classes at the University of Arkansas. At age 16, Sooter began working in Woodrow Shew's lab, studying the brain criticality hypothesis. Shew, an associate professor of physics, inspired Sooter to study physics and approach it with a neuroscience concentration. By the time Sooter enrolled at the U of A and secured an Honors College Fellowship, he was on the verge of first authoring a paper with Antonio Fontenele, a postdoctoral fellow in the Shew Lab. *Science Advances* published the paper in the spring of his freshman year. Sooter is now close to finishing his second first-author publication, this time leveraging his double major in mathematics to create a tool to calculate “distance to criticality” from recordings of neural activity. When not researching neural activity in mice, Sooter broadened his studies by taking Honors College courses that aligned with his other interests, such as politics. The honors experience and the opportunity to engage in high-level research have influenced his career plans, steering him toward graduate studies. Sooter won the nationally competitive Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship in 2024 during his freshman year, a scholarship toward Ph.D. studies.

## Alumni Successes

- After graduating from the University of Arkansas, **Warick Sabin** (B.A., political science, *summa cum laude* '98) went on to receive his M.A. in philosophy, politics, and economics in 2000 from Oxford University. He is the current president and CEO of Deep South Today, a Pulitzer Prize-winning newsroom.
- **Mervin Jebaraj** (B.A., international relations, European studies, and economics, *summa cum laude*, '07) went on to earn his M.P.A. from the University of Arkansas in 2011. He is currently employed by the Walton College of Business as the director for the Center for Business and Economic Research.
- **Mallory Hurst** (B.S.E., *summa cum laude*, '09) attended the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences after obtaining her undergraduate degree. She currently works as a dermatologist at St. Bernards Healthcare in Jonesboro, Arkansas.
- **Russell Locetta** (B.S.M.E., *magna cum laude*, '16) is now making significant contributions as a regional reliability engineer and rotating equipment engineer at Cargill, a greenfield renewable diesel refinery located in Nebraska that takes beef tallow and soybean oil and converts it into diesel fuel.
- **Srivaishnavi (Vaish) Shah** (B.S. finance and information systems, *cum laude*, '17) currently serves as the senior vice president of technology and information security at Wells Fargo.
- **Alister Brown** (B.A., psychology, *magna cum laude*, '21) studies primate behavior at Central Washington University, where he graduated with a Master of Science in June 2024. Alister plans to begin working on a Ph.D. in ecology and evolutionary biology at Texas A&M in the fall of 2024.

## College Successes

- In October 2023, the Honors College hosted the National Society for Minorities in Honors conference, welcoming over 80 honors faculty and staff from across the U.S., hailing from diverse institutional profiles. The conference theme “Why Honors?” explored the value of an honors education for students from underrepresented backgrounds. Sessions ranged from mentoring first-generation students to imaginative programming for diverse undergraduate clientele to foregrounding research in an honors undergraduate experience. The Honors College Path Program set a high bar at this meeting for how to successfully recruit diverse students to join an honors college.
- Inspired by an honors intersession course on privacy, a group of Honors Arkansas faculty collaborated on writing an open-access book, *Human Privacy in Virtual and Physical Worlds* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024). By moving beyond the limitations of a single disciplinary lens, the book aims at a richer, comprehensive, and lasting analysis of human privacy from 10 different disciplines. Honors Arkansas is an alliance of honors colleges and programs from across the state collectively working to enhance the scholarly,

professional, and social experiences of high-achieving students. Each May Intersession, Honors Arkansas partners honors scholars with faculty from multiple institutions with the goal of diving into pressing subjects of great interest to the current generation of students.

- In the spring 2024 Honors College Forum on Presidential Primaries, former Governor of Arkansas Asa Hutchinson offered students gathered around the seminar table his unique insights into the presidential campaign process, the primary system, and his prognostications on the upcoming fall presidential race. The conversation spanned Governor Hutchinson's distinguished legal and political career, including his tenure in Congress and his commitment to the state of Arkansas. This rare opportunity allowed students to glean firsthand knowledge from a political figure and apply it to their own understanding of politics and governance.
- In April 2024, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Honors College Path Program, a nationally significant initiative for recruitment and mentorship of students from underrepresented backgrounds. The program provides scholarships and pathways to academic achievement and honors education. Honors College staff, alumni, donors, current Path scholars, and community members gathered to celebrate the program's success over the past decade at the new Windgate Studio + Design Center. Alumni of the Path Program have largely chosen to stay in Arkansas and make a difference for their local communities in the areas of healthcare, law, entrepreneurship, and education. Path alumni are also "paying it forward" by making gifts to fund a new scholarship for current Path Scholars.

## **Conclusion**

We had much to celebrate in 2023-2024: the Goldwater "Four," ten years of Path stars, and our commitment to serving minorities in honors. The current academic year promises to be equally luminous, as we bring in the largest class of fellows in our history.

Honors education in this country is transforming rapidly, and research is its vital center. Our fellows and honors scholars choose the University of Arkansas Honors College because of intense, sustained research opportunities--in the lab, studio, or archive. Even though we have created one of the largest honors colleges in the US, our students continue an upward trajectory, intellectually speaking. Because the profile of incoming classes has climbed into the highest academic terrain, we have decided to move the minimum high school GPA for admittance to the Honors college from a 3.75 to a 3.85. This move makes sense given our prospective student's zeal for obtaining lofty heights.

Recruiting such a gifted cohort of honors scholars necessitates more curricular adventures. We aim to perfect our seminar rotation, rounding out the inspired series with specialized colloquia on cancer research, global development tactics, and the wizardry of supply chain economics. So many great seminars are in the works, involving faculty, administrators, and local community leaders. Our Futures Hub too refines its craft, making alliances across campus with all staff members committed to making the University of Arkansas a model in effective outreach,

mentoring, advocacy, and career advancement. This team of life-design professionals delights in meeting--and even exceeding--the ambitions of Arkansas's best undergraduate scholars.

This past August, we hosted the sixth annual Honors Arkansas retreat atop Mount Magazine. There, honors faculty and administrators from across the state strategized about this year's Honors Arkansas research seminar and forum. Our last forum on the charged subject of privacy morphed into a book published by Palgrave MacMillan, which just came out this spring. This inspiring group of honors deans are planning yet another volume on how to run an honors college. Another publisher is interested in publishing this tome open access, so that all honors educators may benefit from tips on curriculum, recruitment, philanthropy, nationally competitive awards, and more.

Finally, the Honors College will host a meeting of the SEC honors deans and their staff in April 2025. Then, we shall tackle pressing issues in the honors business, from artificial intelligence to the enrollment cliff affecting many of our colleagues nationwide. Honors at Arkansas has assumed a leadership role at the national level of the academy, something envisioned during its creation.

The Honors College has established a rigorous, adventurous, and inclusive model for honors education. With a steadfast commitment to intellectual rigor, inclusion, and collaboration, our college is poised for continued national greatness.