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# **MCKEARN HIGHLIGHTS**

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

# Table of Contents

This newsletter offers an overview of the McKearn Fellows' fellowship opportunities and how they have grown in knowledge and experience this past year. The newsletter begins with the introduction of the newest cohort of fellows and a farewell to the graduating fellows. This is followed by projects, research, conferences, and internships/teaching experiences, along with a closer look at the current McKearn Fellows.

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# Meet the 2022-2025 McKearn Fellows

Diana Alvarez is a Health Science major on the Nursing track. After graduation she plans to attend graduate school and become a nurse practitioner. As a Research Rookie, she researched how to improve early language interactions in children under the age of three. Alvarez is currently President of Bread for the World, a volunteer-based organization that fights to end world hunger. Outside of academics, she can be seen volunteering at various events around campus such as STEM Fest and the food pantry. Alvarez enjoys running and is very passionate about helping others. As a McKearn Fellow, she is excited to continue participating in research projects and to advance her professional development.



**Diana Alvarez**



**Amit  
Chaudhary**

Amit Chaudhary hails from the country of the Himalayas, Nepal. Chaudhary is majoring in Mechanical Engineering. He is curious and likes learning things practically. He worked on an electric trike during his senior year in high school, and now he's part of NIU Supermileage, a team that builds vehicles from scratch.

Chaudhary plans to work with professors from different departments to conduct various research as a McKearn Fellow. He wants to work on lithium-ion batteries and electric vehicles to make them efficient and durable. He also wishes to conduct research at Argonne Lab related to Li-ion batteries with the connections he builds at NIU. Chaudhary sees the McKearn program as something that can help him sharpen his leadership qualities and make him a responsible global citizen. Also, he enjoys playing soccer, chess, video games, watching e-sports, and singing.

Anna Scanlan is a double major in Media Studies and Psychology along with minors in English and History. At NIU, she is involved in the Research Rookies program, was the editor of The Luminary, a member of the Concert Choir in the School of Music, and writes novels in her free time. She plans to work towards earning a doctorate in screen cultures or media psychology after graduation, as well as pursue work on her own documentary filmmaking. Scanlan wants to study the impact entertainment media has on society's collective historical memory and modern phenomena and events. She sees the McKearn Fellows program as a way to gain more research experience, grow her professional network, and partake in opportunities that allow insight into different perspectives.



**Anna Scanlan**



**Louise  
Shannon**

Louise Shannon is a Biochemistry major with research interests in immunology and neurobiology. Upon graduation, Shannon hopes to attend medical school and intern at Northwestern Hospital in Chicago. Her other interests include French, classical literature (especially Russian), and violin performance. As an award-winning violinist, Shannon has traveled internationally with youth orchestras and hopes to develop her love for music and cellular biology in a global context.

Yaileen Velazquez is embarking on the pre-med path with a major in Biological Sciences along with a minor in Chemistry.

After her undergraduate years at NIU, she plans to attend medical school and become an OB/GYN. While obtaining her profession as well as when she acquires her profession, she hopes to advocate for women's health in underserved areas, promote diversity in medicine, and advocate to end health disparities. She is currently a member of the University Honors Program, Pre-Professional Association, De Mujer a Mujer, and participated in the Research Rookies program, where she investigated the external/internal reasons that lead to a sexual assault survivor reporting their sexual assault through content qualitative analysis of public tweets.

Off campus, she is a mentee under the I am Abel foundation, a medical mentoring program that promotes achievement amongst underrepresented groups in medicine. Outside of academics, she enjoys completing puzzles, crocheting, and spending time with family. She is ecstatic for the doors the McKearn Fellows Program will open for her as well as the opportunities she will have to give back to her community.



**Yaileen  
Velazquez**



**Emma  
Whitlock**

Emma Whitlock is a Biology major and is seeking to double minor in Chemistry and Spanish. After graduating from NIU, she plans to continue her education by attending medical school to become a surgeon. She is involved with the Student Health Organization and volunteers at different events both on and off campus. This past year, she has been involved in Research Rookies, where she researched lithium-ion batteries with a group in the Chemistry Department. Outside of school, she enjoys completing art projects, playing sports, and traveling. Through the McKearn Fellows program, she hopes to continue research and take part in the opportunities made available to her.



# Farewell to our Graduating Fellows!

**Cassandra Kamp**

B.S. Psychology & B.S. Rehabilitation and Disability Services

Certificate: Nonprofit and NGO Studies

Cassandra graduated in Fall of 2021 and is pursuing a career in human/social services, behavioral sciences, or non-profit management.

**Jeremy Knoll**

B.A. History & B.A. Economics

Minor: German Studies

Jeremy will earn a History PhD from The Ohio State University.

**Alison Kramer**

B.S. Accountancy & B.S. Management

Minor: Marketing

Certificate: Professional Selling

After graduation, Alison plans on working for KPMG in Denver, Colorado.

**Amanda Pollock**

B.S. Biological Sciences

Minor: Chemistry

After graduating from NIU this spring, Amanda plans to attend PA school to become a Physician Assistant.

**Cameron Simpson**

B.S. History & B.S. English

Cameron graduated from NIU in the Fall of 2021.



# Building Bridges with Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue

**Yousuf Khan**

Northern Illinois University's commitment to promoting diversity and equity is a mission that resonates deeply with sophomore Yousuf Khan. As a freshman at NIU, Khan attended the "Art and Soul" social justice event where students and faculty rallied together to paint "Black Lives Matter" on Castle Drive. Additionally, he attended and spoke at the Asian American Pacific Islander Speak Up Event, following acts of violence against Asians in the 2021 Atlanta spa shootings. Proud to know that the NIU community shares his value for advocacy and promoting diversity, Khan has planned, spoken at, and initiated a number of events this year that celebrate the diversity of NIU.



As President of the Muslim Student Association, Khan places high importance on ensuring that the organization provides opportunities for students to express their identities, feel a sense of solidarity, and learn more about the identities of their fellow Huskies. An event Khan is most proud to have contributed to is an interfaith collaboration dinner between the Newman Catholic Center and the Muslim Student Association. At the dinner, students made bonds across faiths, recognizing common values as they took time to listen and learn from each other. A takeaway from the conversations of the night was that "not only is it important to recognize our similarities across backgrounds, it is also essential to celebrate what makes us different." Khan is excited to continue to host interfaith events and collaborations through his time at NIU. Furthermore, he hopes to work with the NIU Presidential Commission on Interfaith Initiatives to make meaningful programs that encourage interfaith dialogue.

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Additionally, the Asian American Resource Center has played a central role in providing Khan the opportunity to pursue his passions for promoting diversity. As a mentor in the Asian American Resource Center's OHANA program, Khan works to create a space where students feel supported in their identity. Additionally, his engagement with the AARC's Student Fee Committee has given him the opportunity to help make decisions on allocating funding towards programs that encourage AAPI advocacy. Khan cherishes this opportunity to contribute to the development of programs and resources that ensure fellow Huskies are represented and heard.



One such program that the AARC's Student Fee Committee was able to make possible was a multicultural fashion show hosted by the Asian American Association (AAA). The event provided students with the opportunity to share their identities as they walked across the stage wearing clothing representative of their cultures. As Social Chair for AAA and emcee at the event, Khan was ecstatic to be able to provide students with the platform to express themselves as well as educate themselves on the identities of their fellow Huskies! As a Biological Sciences and pre-medicine student, Khan is excited to continue his current work while also beginning to explore how he can contribute to diversity and equity in healthcare.





# Engineering World Health

**Emily Herbert**

This spring semester proved to be one of the most challenging and rewarding of Emily Herbert's college career. One of the highlights of Herbert's year was been working with a new organization called Engineering World Health (EWH). EWH is an international non-profit that works towards expanding medical technology access to low-resource communities and hospitals. As a Biomedical Engineering major, the mission they stand for caught Herbert's attention.



Starting in January, Herbert was able to have the first EWH NIU Chapter meeting. It took a lot of planning, but it was well worth the effort. Since that first meeting, she and other members have accomplished a lot. The focus within the club this Spring semester was working on a customized tandem wheelchair for a DeKalb local. She is the primary caretaker of her parent-in-laws and wanted an option to take them for walks and other activities. The club's design team came up with a great solution and they expect to be finished before the end of the semester.

Outside of the design project, the club has been working with an organization called Project C.U.R.E. Project C.U.R.E. is a medical donation non-profit based outside of Chicago that sends out donations to countries in need. EWH was able to volunteer as biomedical technicians and troubleshoot donations to ensure they are functional before shipment. Additionally, the club is packing Kits For Kids which are small medical bags with "medicine cabinet" type products that will be sent to children in low-resource environments, most recently, in Ukraine.



Herbert also applied and was accepted into EWH's Summer Institute program which sends students from across the country to developing countries in order to fix medical devices and train locals. She was placed in Guatemala and will serve for two months this upcoming summer. Herbert is extremely excited to learn Spanish as well as increase her technical skills. In addition, training the local community on how to fix some of these issues will be extremely rewarding and inspire sustainable change for the hospitals.

Herbert is proud of what she accomplished this semester and hopes to continue creating an impact this summer and next semester.

# Honors Advocacy Initiative: Current Work

**Grant Goral**

Drawing on inspiration from last year's Honors Advocacy Initiative (HAI), Grant Goral has continued building HAI in the mold of Huskies Helping Huskies. For Fall 2021 and Spring 2022, Goral worked with a cohort of Honors students to further shape the environment of the Honors Program as one of openness, success, and belonging.

The Fall 2021 cohort focused on creating an action plan where students believed the program should be moving in order to best support those from a wide variety of backgrounds. Since Honors students come to college with a range of life experiences, the Fall cohort wanted to work to ensure the success of all students in the program. One of these action plan ideas centered on better mentoring and advising for first generation college students.



In Spring 2022, HAI has worked to implement those plans that were developed in the fall in conjunction with the Honors Staff. One of the key tasks that the spring cohort will complete is enhancing the new Honors Lounge space (left) with exhibits that build the diverse community of the University Honors Program. Students in the lounge will have access to an array of resources from the many diversity and cultural centers on campus. HAI strives to make the Honors Program a place where all students have the resources they need to succeed.

Goral, a junior, is hoping to establish HAI as a permanent facet of the Honors Program that will live on even after he has graduated — “I see this is an opportunity for students to build the foundation of a necessary resource for every new Honors student in the future.” He hopes that his senior year will see even more fruitful results with a larger cohort.

# Capstone on Sustainable and Ethical Products

**Alison Kramer**

Alison Kramer completed her senior capstone project through the Honors Program. Her project focused on finding alternatives to single-use products that are widely used by most consumers. She also focused on finding brands that are both sustainable and ethical in all aspects of the supply chain from harvesting the materials that go into the product to receiving it at the front door. All aspects of the product had to be ethical. She realized that consumers did not have a lot of time to research what brands are good and which are bad. To help solve this problem, she created a list of criteria to help consumers understand if the brands they are purchasing from follow these practices.

After taking the time to create a set of criteria to use when looking at different brands and products, Kramer tested out these products. She ordered a wide variety of items. Some of those products include bathroom cleaners, kitchen paper towels, and food storage containers. During the semester, she wrote a thorough product review after completing product testing. Her end goal was to create a booklet that consumers could use to find products and brands that were as good or better than current products that follow the guidelines mentioned previously. While her capstone project was only a semester long, Kramer plans to continue updating the booklet with sustainable brands and more reviews on what products are good alternatives to single-use products to help consumers make a more informed choice.

Pictured below are three items that Kramer tested. On the left is a bamboo floss that can be composted after use. The middle photo shows a reusable bowl cover to take the place of plastic cling wrap. On the left is mouthwash tablets that come in a glass/aluminum jar that is 100% recyclable. The final project contains an appendix to rank brands with links to find all of the products that she recommended in her capstone project.



# Publications and Clinical Placement

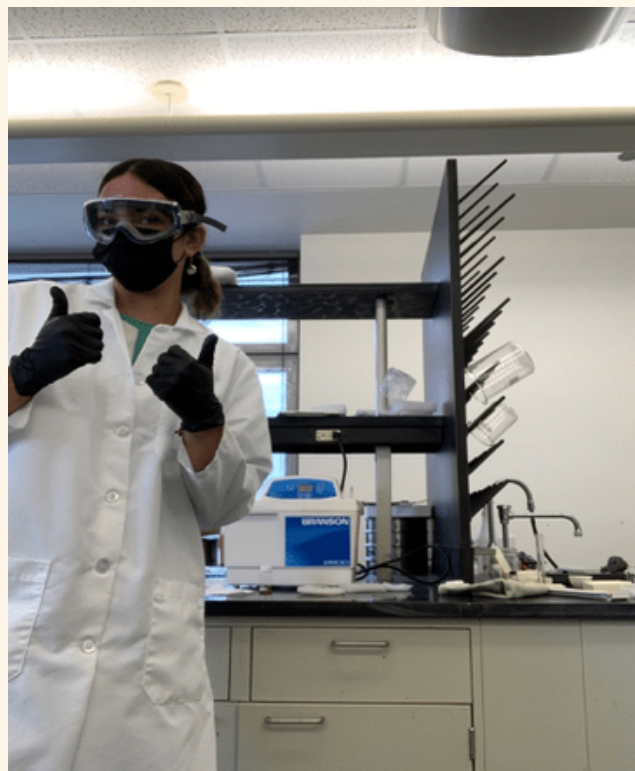
**Rebekah Gonzalez**

This past year, Rebekah Gonzalez worked with Dr. Tao Li's research group of the Chemistry & Biochemistry department. In the Fall, Gonzalez continued work on a multi-year polymer-protein core-shell nanoparticles project. Gonzalez and two other students were working to develop particles that maintain bioactivity and bio-functionality in non-native environments. Gonzalez also worked with the group to publish an article in the Catalysts online journal by MDPI. The article is entitled "[Immobilization of Enzymes by Polymeric Materials](#)." The article focuses on the different applications of enzymes immobilized on polymer supports in the biotechnological industries. The article was published in October of 2021.

Gonzalez has now begun to work on the synthesis of cathode materials, the fabrication of coin cells, and investigating the solvation behavior of electrolytes for battery materials. In the future, Gonzalez will be visiting the research group's lab located at the Argonne National Laboratory.

Over winter break Gonzalez visited multiple sites for her clinical placement that will start in the Fall of 2022. The assignment will be at a hospital in the DeKalb or Chicagoland area and is for Gonzalez's second major, Medical Laboratory Sciences (MLS). The students of the MLS program will be given a clinical placement for the 2022-2023 academic year. Gonzalez will work alongside practicing medical laboratory scientists and technicians to learn about hospital flow. She will

learn how to perform quality control operations, and how to work as a medical laboratory scientist in the clinical setting. Gonzalez visited Ann & Robert H. Lurie's Children Hospital in Chicago, Swedish American Hospital in Rockford, CGH Medical Center in Sterling, Northwestern Medicine's Kishwaukee Hospital in DeKalb, Advocate Good Samaritan in Downers Grove, and the Javon Bea Hospital in Rockford. She submitted her clinical placement preferences at the beginning of the semester and will receive a placement in the upcoming months.





# Health Disparities Among Minority Groups

**Sara Plettau**

This semester Sara Plettau completed nursing research projects about health disparities among minority groups. The first project focused on how women display symptoms of heart attacks differently than men do. She found that while women suffer from heart disease at lower rates than men, women are more likely to die from heart disease. This is because there is a lack of successful interventions targeted toward women that work, and there is a lack of research on heart disease that involves women as subjects. Plettau hopes to raise more awareness about this issue since heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States.

In the second project, Plettau learned about disparities that transgender individuals face in health care, and specifically how their mental health is affected by the lack of knowledge health care workers have on transgender individuals. She found that there are several interventions in healthcare that can help shrink health disparities in this population. These include more frequent and comprehensive education plans for health care workers using simulation as a tool to practice therapeutic communication. Additionally, a focus on empathy and understanding for the patient with their specific mental health needs in mind can make a big difference in patient satisfaction. As a third semester Nursing student and as a Northern Prairie Alliance e-board member for the School of Nursing, Plettau hopes to use this research and her leadership position to educate nursing students and promote cultural competence in the next generation of future nurses.



# Research Across Departments

**Amanda Pollock**

For each of Amanda Pollock's three years at NIU, she participated in undergraduate research in a variety of fields. Her first year, she was a part of the Research Rookies program. She worked with Dr. Christina Odeh from the Department of Allied Health and Communicative Disorders on a study that explored spatiotemporal gait characteristics in children who had autism spectrum disorder in comparison to those who did not. Last year, Pollock conducted research in the Department of World Languages and Cultures with Dr. Mandy Faretta-Stutenberg. She worked on a project that compared the exposure to various Spanish language domains among students who took a study abroad trip. For this project, she presented at the Honors Council of the Illinois Region Student Symposium and the Conference on Undergraduate Research and Engagement, winning first place in the Education and Humanities category.



During her senior year, Pollock participated in yet another research endeavor for her Honors Capstone with Dr. Douglas Wallace from the Department of Psychology. The study looked into the effect of age on susceptibility to the loss of cholinergic function, and it was conducted by using a female rodent model of Alzheimer's disease. Pollock analyzed food protection behavior videos of old and young female rats to examine how spatial and temporal processing was impacted by age in females. Afterward, she performed statistical measures and used the results of this analysis to present her findings at the Conference on Undergraduate

Research and Engagement. Her research is important as it will provide a better understanding on the effects of Alzheimer's disease, and it may bring future studies closer to finding better treatment options or a cure. Pollock is thankful to have received so many opportunities to perform research in a variety of fields during her undergraduate career.

Pollock graduated from NIU with a degree in Biological Sciences. She always had a passion for healthcare and wanted a career in the medical field. Pollock decided to work toward this goal by applying for graduate school to become a Physician Assistant. Upon completion of her Master's degree, she is considering working in obstetrics or gastroenterology. Prior to this step, however, she decided to take a year off from school to work and acquire further patient care hours in order to make herself a more competitive candidate.

# Houseflies (*Musca Domestica*) Body Taste Responses to Denatonium Benzoate, Quinine, Sucrose Octaacetate, and Other Bitter Compounds

**Merveille Muyizere**



Merveille Muyizere had the opportunity to work in Dr. Bethia King's research lab in the Department of Biological Sciences. She worked on a project where she tasted the different body parts of houseflies such as legs, wings, and the antennae to sugar, and bitter compounds.

Like many other animals, insects have taste organs that are known as gustatory receptors, or simply taste receptors. Gustatory receptors are members of a large G-protein coupled receptor family distantly related to the insect olfactory receptors. The taste sensilla can also be found in body parts such as wings, and the antennae. These body parts, including the legs, have these hair-like projections responsible for detecting tastants such as sugar and bitter compounds through an extension of their proboscis (elongated feeding tube attached to the head of an animal).

It is very important to know how these body parts respond to these compounds as they serve a purpose of creating effective pesticides that will work against insects, thus in return minimizing an insect's nuisance, and reducing their effect as vectors of certain pathogens.

Muyizere was able to taste each of these body parts, and see how strongly they react to each compound. The compounds could either be tasted individually, or mixed with other compounds. This research was shared in an Honors Council of the Illinois Region "HCIR" presentation, and in NIU's Conference on Undergraduate Research and Engagement (CURE).

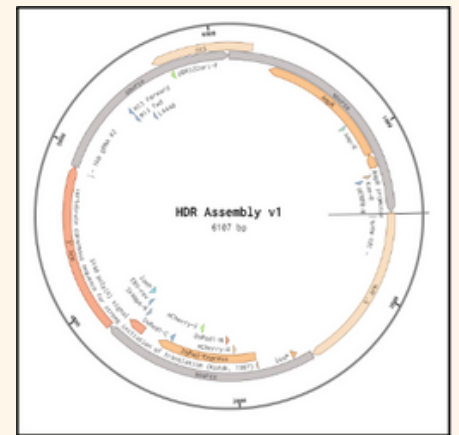


# At the Molecular Level: CRISPR in Action

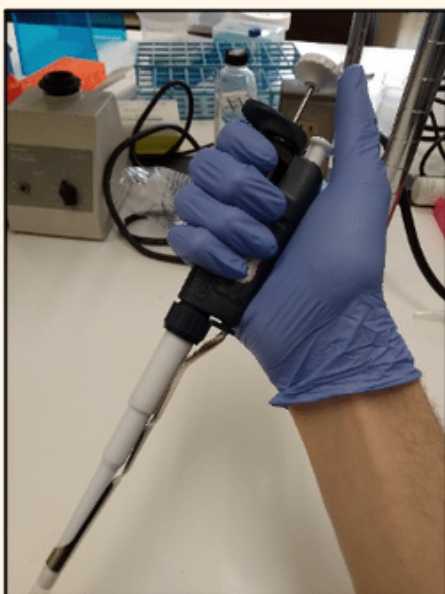
Leif Verace

As though fruit flies weren't small enough, Leif Verace's research focused on constructing DNA plasmids at the molecular level. These plasmids are designed such that, once injected into the *Drosophila* embryo, they will facilitate CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing to generate a novel mutant line. This line was extensively studied to gain new insights into gene function and the pathways involved in cell migration.

CRISPR has been a hot topic not only in the world of science, but also in popular culture as a revolutionary means of editing an individual's DNA. Indeed, CRISPR is an elegant solution to modify a wide range of sites in the genome; it accomplishes this by "programming" the Cas9 protein, essentially a pair of molecular scissors, to cut DNA at a specific site. A large portion of DNA can thus be removed, and new DNA inserted via cellular repair mechanisms.

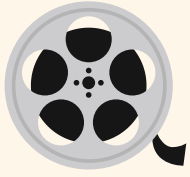


In Verace's research, two tasks were necessary for the CRISPR gene editing to be successful: (1) proper cutting of the genomic DNA to knockdown gene function and (2) insertion of a fluorescent marker into the cut site (necessary for screening which flies carry the mutation). The first task can be accomplished by providing the specific guide RNAs to program Cas9, while the second relies on providing a fluorescent protein flanked by regions of DNA identical to those flanking the cut site (known as "homology arms").



Verace independently designed the final plasmids, along with the experiments necessary to synthesize them. After many long sessions of pipetting, growing bacteria, setting up reactions, and analyzing DNA gels, the plasmids were fully synthesized and verified by sequencing. This work was presented at the annual Midwest *Drosophila* Conference. The next exciting step, CRISPR gene editing and mutant analysis, is just around the corner, so stay tuned!





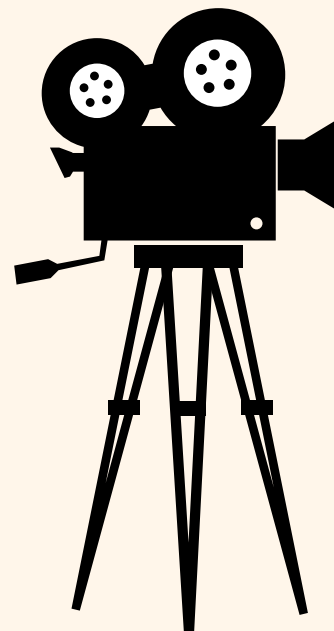
# On the Representation of Disability in Film

**Aidan Bengford**

Aidan Bengford completed academic research on the positivity of disability representation in English language feature films. Historically, disability representation has not been positive in popular film media. People with disabilities are often portrayed as either incapable, unable to be a part of society, or excellent examples of overcoming adversity. These portrayals take away the personhood of people with disabilities. Bengford's research aims to see whether or not that type of portrayal is still prevalent in modern popular film media and how that reflects the current American culture and perspective surrounding the discussion of disability.

So far, Bengford's research team has coded the levels of positive representation of 162 films with many more to go. The research team plans to watch every movie from 2000-2020 that has a main character with a disability and code for levels of positivity by the end of the summer. The movies watched so far have had generally high degrees of positivity except in the area of personality, which has been more mixed. There may be some selection bias in these preliminary findings since all movie watchers get to choose the movie they watch (given it hasn't been watched yet). This could bias them towards watching movies that they expect to like. These movies could be more likely to have care put into the representation and have a positive bias. This will be corrected when the study is complete, but the preliminary findings may have been somewhat skewed.

Bengford presented this research at NIU's Conference on Undergraduate Research and Engagement (CURE) and at the Honors Council of the Illinois Region "HCIR." The presentation was tailored to a general audience, focusing on the potential for enhancing education around disabilities and how movies tell stories using disability. The research will also be printed in a disability-focused journal centering more on the quality of representation in popular culture and how that has changed compared to prior research.



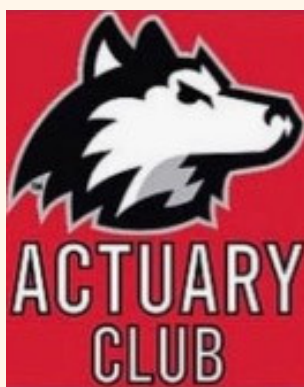
# Actuarial Conference Involvement

**Caitlin Hensley**

Caitlin Hensley is a sophomore double majoring in Actuarial Sciences and Finance. She has a passion for working with numbers and learning how numbers can dictate the world we live in. Over the course of this semester, she attended many conferences that would develop her skills in preparation for a career as an actuary.

Hensley attended the CAS Student Webinar which discussed workers' compensation, pandemic impacts, insights, and strategies for facing the "New Normal". This conference emphasized the challenges that the pandemic brought to P&C insurance by making it difficult to predict the extent of the pandemic's full behavioral and economic consequences. The presenter, Erin Davidson, talked about strategies actuaries can use to help predict the unpredictable. She also attended the SOA virtual candidate connect virtual – 2021 ImpACT Conference in which presenters focused on sharing lessons learned from Management Consulting. Additionally, she attended the Actuarial Research Conference at DePaul University, the CAS 2021 Annual Meeting, and the Annual Midwest Actuarial Student Conference. Overall, these conferences were a great experience and a great stepping-stone into the actuarial world.

Hensley also served as NIU's Actuary Club vice president. The club's goal was to introduce aspiring students to the actuarial profession. She is currently studying for the Society of Actuaries Exam FM (Financial Mathematics) and plans to take the exam in the summer of 2022.



# Fostering a Passion for Chemistry

**Emmett Rogman**

Emmett Rogman stayed active in his pursuit of Applied Mathematics, Biochemistry, and Statistics. Early in the fall semester, he was given the opportunity to begin teaching for the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry as an introductory laboratory teaching assistant. He was thrilled about the position and said "I am excited that I can give back to the department as well as the university that granted me the opportunity of an education. I hope to pay this forward to the students in my introductory class." Unsure about what the future holds for him he added "I think this was the perfect opportunity to figure out if teaching is a passion I hold."



As a teaching assistant, Rogman was responsible for briefly lecturing the chemistry 111 class every week about 1st year theory, and then guiding students through laboratory exercises. He was also responsible for the safety of the students, and for giving feedback to them after evaluating coursework and laboratory performance. When asked about his mindset as a teacher he says "We all remember what it was like when we began our professions and studies, and more importantly what kind of a difference instructors and mentors make in the process. I hope to create a low-stress environment where I can give the students a solid foundation of chemistry. I also hope to give meaningful advice to them since I was in their shoes not too long ago, as a few words can go a very long way."

# Internship at Gettysburg

**Jeremy Knoll**



Over the summer, Jeremy Knoll served as an interpretive intern at Gettysburg National Military Park in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. This is a highly competitive internship that was nearly canceled due to park housing shortages caused by the ongoing pandemic, but Knoll was able to receive funding from the McKearn Fellows Program that enabled him to complete the internship. Some of the work that Knoll did was in Visitor Services, which entailed staffing the information desk in the Visitors Center, answering visitors' questions, and helping to orient visitors to the park's self-guided auto tour.

However, much of Knoll's work was dedicated to interpretive programming. He was able to use Gettysburg's research library in order to write his own 45-minute walking tour of the Soldier's National Cemetery, which focused on the identification of soldiers killed at Gettysburg and how these men were remembered. Over the course of the summer, Knoll delivered this tour to more than 500 visitors in groups as large as 50 and as small as a single family. He also wrote a 30-minute battle overview program that used simple props and volunteers to explain how the battle took place in a way that made it easy for families and children to understand. In addition, he was involved with a children's history program where he engaged in living history demonstrations and showed children reproduction artifacts in order to teach them about Civil War medicine and a soldier's life in camp during the Civil War.

During the summer, Knoll was also involved in some miscellaneous projects relating to the park's online presence. He wrote and delivered three short videos on individuals or artifacts related to the Battle of Gettysburg, which were posted to the park's education Facebook page. He also had the opportunity to do transcription work on a project that was digitizing archival documents related to the dedication of various Confederate monuments on the battlefield. This was an especially relevant task for Knoll, given his recent research project on the dedication of Civil War monuments in Illinois. Overall, this internship was an excellent learning experience for him, and regardless of whether he enters academia or moves toward public history, his time in Gettysburg will serve him well.





# **Conference on Undergraduate Research and Engagement Award Winners**

NIU's Conference on Undergraduate Research and Engagement (CURE) allows NIU students to formally showcase research or engagement projects that they have undertaken throughout the academic year. This year's conference was held both in-person and virtually on the ForagerOne platform. The in-person symposium took place April 26th, 2022, with posters and presentations also available for viewing throughout the week of April 25th, 2022 on ForagerOne. Posters and presentations were judged and the top three presentations in each category of the conference were recognized. The following McKearn Fellows were recognized with awards for their outstanding presentations.

## **Aidan Bengford**

Positivity in Disability Representation in Modern Feature Film

2nd place in Education Category

Link: <https://symposium.foragerone.com/cure2022/presentations/42172>

## **Caitlin Hensley**

How the Interlacing of the Psychology of Greed and Corporate Economics Affects Working Class Americans

3rd place in Business and Entrepreneurship Category

Link: <https://symposium.foragerone.com/cure2022/presentations/42415>

## **Anna Scanlan**

Background Variables and Spanish-Language Proficiency Measures: Exploring Relationships for Second-Language and Heritage Language Learners

1st place in Humanities Category

Link: <https://symposium.foragerone.com/cure2022/presentations/42258>



# Fellow Fun Facts!



**What are the Fellows listening to? We asked for the Fellows' guilty pleasure songs:**

Fireflies - Owl City

Burnin' Up - Jonas Brothers

Island in the Sun - Weezer

I Will Survive - Gloria Gaynor

Feel Good - Mohbad

Somewhere Only We Know -  
Glee Cast Version

The Gambler - Kenny Rogers

Jealousy, Jealousy - Olivia Rodrigo

Toxic - Britney Spears

The Best Day - Taylor Swift

Papa Loves Mambo - Perry Como

Let It Go - Idina Menzel

## Fellow Recommendations - Classes or Clubs:

I would highly recommend participating in OHANA! The club is a great way to learn about the identities of other students as well as share your own! - Yousuf Khan

A history class on a subject you don't know much about is always a great way to learn a lot in a semester! - Jeremy Knoll

The NIU Penguin Players!! - Rebekah Gonzalez

Mock Trial. You can learn a lot about performance and public speaking. It's also really fun. - Aidan Bengford

If you play an instrument, the marching band and pep band are really fun and rewarding classes! - Sara Plettau

Research Rookies, COMS 100 - Merveille Muyizere

Real analysis was a challenging but rewarding course, philosophy is an alternative. As for a club, I simply advise finding something related to a hobby/interest. - Emmett Rogman

COMS 100 with Professor Madelyn Anderson - Grant Goral

Leaders in Ethics and Academic Discipline and NIU PINK - Alison Kramer

Class: PHIL 103, Contemporary Issues in Ethics - This class has students discuss a variety of ethical issues and hear others' points of view. Club: Bread for the World - a service organization to help feed the hungry around the world! - Amanda Pollock

NIU Rover Club, Math Club - Leif Verace

Engineering World Health, we work on bringing medical technology to developing communities and you don't have to be an engineering major! - Emily Herbert

# Fellow Fun Facts!

## We asked the Fellows...

Choose a survival dorm meal:



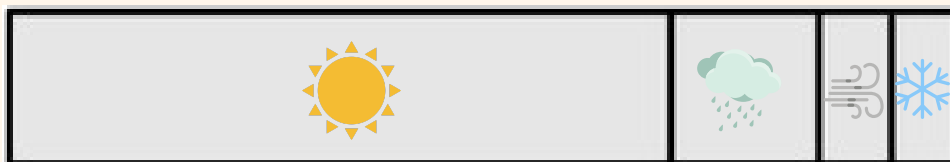
Ramen  
38.46%

Mac & Cheese  
23.08%

PB&J  
15.38%

Cereal  
23.08%

Which do you prefer?



Sunshine  
69.2%

Rain  
15.4%

Wind  
7.7%

Snow  
7.7%

Would you rather:



Meet Mini Mish!  
54%

Attend a winning  
football game!  
46%



Never watch TV again  
92%

Never listen to music again  
8%

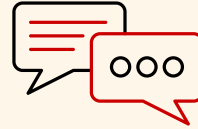


Get up very early  
38%

Stay up very late  
62%

# Words of Wisdom

**The Fellows were each asked to share a favorite quote:**



**Yousuf Khan** "Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest." - Quran Chapter 13, verse 28

**Grant Goral** "There is no end to the adventures we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open." - Jawaharlal Nehru

**Alison Kramer** "If you don't ask the question, the answer is always no."

**Sara Plettau** "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor." - Desmond Tutu

**Jeremy Knoll** "Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today."

**Aidan Bengford** "I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead." - Mark Twain

**Rebekah Gonzalez** "Despite everything, it's still you."

**Caitlin Hensley** "There are no constraints on the human mind, no walls around the human spirit, no barriers to our progress except those we ourselves erect" - Ronald Regan

**Emmett Rogman** "Happiness is closer than you think."

**Merveille Muyizere** "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." - Mahatma Gandhi

**Leif Verace** "The perfect man employs his mind as a mirror; it grasps nothing; it refuses nothing; it receives, but does not keep." - Chuang Tzu

**Amanda Pollock** "I shall pass this way but once; any good that I can do or any kindness I can show to any human being; let me do it now. Let me not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again." - Stephen Grellet

**Emily Herbert** "We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too." - John F. Kennedy



*Thank you for reading!*

