



# FALL NEWSLETTER 2020

## *Presidential Scholars Program*



## Socializing While Social Distancing

Given the unprecedented conditions of the Covid-19 Pandemic, UIowa's PSP had to get creative with events this semester to give scholars the opportunity to connect and create amidst such unusual circumstances! A variety of experiences have been organized for our PSP members this fall, courtesy of Events Chairs Haley Lightfoot and Caroline Meek. Held both virtually and in-person (following all Covid-19 safety guidelines), students could opt to attend backyard yoga, Zoom discourse meetings, pumpkin painting, and movie nights!

PICTURED:

- **ABOVE:** Backyard Yoga
- **BELOW:** Pumpkin Painting



# A Word with Our Freshmen

"What is the best piece of advice you could give, based on what you've learned this semester?"

"A thought came to my mind while working. It was that quote from Winnie the Pooh, "You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think." I think we can all agree that 2020 was a year that tested our bravery, strength, and intelligence. We've had to figure out things no one else in history has had to before: navigating a quasi-online hybrid virtual instruction rotating classroom first semester of college, for one, not to mention dealing with the mental toll of physical distancing and separation, and of course the countless individual obstacles we've all experienced on our own. But guess what? We're still here. We are surviving. If you would have told me one year ago that I'd have to be brave, strong, and smart enough to navigate a year like this one, I'd have little to no faith that I could. That's where this "more than you believe, seem, or think" thing comes in. How exactly did we get through all those obstacles that 2020 threw at us? For me, it certainly wasn't with whatever strength I thought I had. There must have been some hidden reserve somewhere, a hidden treasure, filled with an emergency stock of bravery, strength, and courage. That's quite an amazing thing, isn't it? We human beings are pretty hardy folk. We've taken a lot in 2020, and something tells me we'll have the strength to get through whatever else the future has to offer."



Abby Temple,  
Mechanical Engineering,  
Rockford, IL

"This semester has overwhelmingly showed me the importance of community membership and its value in providing support through adversity (like the pandemic), fostering individual growth, shaping one's identity/values, achieving goals, and giving advice. As one community member to another, I advise you to constantly seek meaningful connections and inspiring people to engage with (whether that's in a club, research experience, job, class, etc.) and never hesitate to reach out to others along your journey. :)"



Sydney Pearl,  
Biomedical Sciences,  
West Des Moines, IA

"You have the ability to shape your identity. That probably sounds pretty basic, and it is, but it's also easy to forget. Freshman year of university is a time of change for almost everybody, and it's usually for the better, but this year has been different because of Covid. While we've tried to squeeze some amount of normalcy out of the present situation, a lot of people have not had the university experience they anticipated. For those who have come out of this semester with stronger, clearer, and more authentic identities, this advice might not be as helpful. However, if you've found that this semester you haven't felt yourself or that people think you're somebody that you're not, then this advice is for you. You need not base your identity off the present situation; you know who you are."

Julian Wemmie,  
Chemistry,  
Coralville, IA





Amy Rohlfing on a spring break volunteer trip in Arkansas with the University of Iowa chapter of Students Today Leaders Forever in 2009

## Alumni Spotlight: Dr. Amy Rohlfing, PhD

*The following is an excerpt from an interview with Presidential Scholar alumna Amy Rohlfing, '09BS. The full interview can be read on the PSP Alumni Spotlights webpage.*

Tufts IRACDA Postdoctoral Fellow  
Department of Molecular Biology and Microbiology

**Please tell us a little bit about your education, as well as what your current professional role entails**

I graduated from University of Iowa with a B.S. in Biochemistry in 2009. To gain more research experience before graduate school, I joined the lab of Dr. Kris DeMali in the Biochemistry department at Iowa. I ended up in the Biomedical and Biological Sciences PhD program at Harvard University. My PhD took me about 6 years to complete and I graduated with my doctorate in Microbiology and Immunology in 2015. I am currently an IRACDA postdoctoral scholar at Tufts University in a lab studying the human pathogen *Clostridioides difficile*, or C. diff for short. As a postdoctoral scholar, I am completing my training to become an independent researcher. My goal is to be a professor at a primarily undergraduate institution where I split my time between teaching and research. I had so many wonderful opportunities to do research as an undergraduate and I want to provide that opportunity for the next generation of scientists.

**As someone who graduated from the University of Iowa during the Great Recession (BS '09), what advice would you give to current undergrads entering the job market during this economic downturn?**

After graduating from Iowa, I went straight to graduate school. Most biomedical science PhD programs will cover tuition and provide a stipend. While other smaller schools are struggling financially right now, major research universities and institutes are still hiring and bringing in new graduate students. If you are considering graduate school, make sure it is something you really want to do and something that you will really need for where you want to get in your career. It is a long and challenging road. And I know everyone says this, but reach out to your network. Reaching out to your network can really help. I learned about my first adjunct teaching position from someone who worked in the same department as I did in graduate school. You never know who might have a lead on a job or have ideas about career paths you weren't aware of.

# Alumni Responses to Previous Survey Question (Spring 2020)

**Who was the faculty member who made the biggest impact on you? In a few words, why:**

<b>James Lindsey</b> - He challenged me to dig beyond the assigned reading and class work. He not only taught the history and theory of foreign policy, but because he'd recently served on the National Security Council, he talked about the nuts and bolts of formulating modern, post-Cold War foreign policy.	Tim Gannon, 99BA
<b>Tom Carroll</b> - He always made us work hard in class but was always willing to offer scholastic and professional help outside of class.	Matt Walz, 06BA
<b>Dr. Kris DeMail</b> - In the Biochemistry Department, I worked in Dr. DeMali's lab for two years and she gave me so much of her time. She taught me so much about being a scientist and helped me get into grad school.	Amy Rohlffing, 09BS
<b>Dr. Myron Welch</b> - He was "instrumental" in my formation of a music educator. He was patient, nurturing, and wise.	Kathy Poduska Ripley, 84BM
<b>Mac Marshall</b> - Chair of Anthropology, he shared his enthusiasm for the topic while also supporting the wide variety of professions that anthropology grads considered.	Brenda Sutherland Mainwaring, 86BA, 89MA
<b>Kelly Kadera</b> - She was my honors thesis advisor in political science and spent many, many hours coaching (coaxing?) me to finish.	Lauren McCarthy, 06BA
<b>Richard Fumerton</b> - Demonstrated that you could study Philosophy and still seem like a normal human being.	Allen Hogg, 85BA, 97MBA

## New Survey Question!

What are your favorite places to eat in Iowa City?

**We look forward to keeping in contact:**

Be sure **you** contact information is up-to-date with the UI Center for Advancement, copy this link to update your info:  
<https://www.foriowa.org/update-information/>

## From the Archives



*Thanks very much to Brenda Sutherland Mainwaring, 86BA, for agreeing to let us share this wonderful photo from the UI Archives!*

"Coming from a high school class of 350 to a freshman class of thousands was intimidating. The Presidential Scholars Program gave me an anchor to narrow my world view to something manageable. The Scottish Highlanders and the Unified Program also helped me create a smaller world that I could manage as a freshman."

- Brenda Sutherland Mainwaring, '86BA in Anthropology, '89 MA (second from right)

## PSP Program Leadership

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Art Spisak  
**Staff Advisor:** Camille Socarras

### Executive Board

**President:** Anthony DeSalvo  
**Vice President:** Allison Beckner  
**Secretary/Treasurer:** Samalya Thenuwara

### Committee Chairs

**Alumni Relations:** Hannah Heindel & Hieu Nguyen  
**Outreach:** Carly Heying  
**Events:** Haley Lightfoot & Caroline Meek  
**Communications:** Enna Pehlic