Drawn to graduate school because of their interest in complex, multi-dimensional problems, graduate students work at the edges of societal knowledge. They pave the way for many interdisciplinary relationships, fresh perspectives, and new learning. The Graduate College is committed to supporting these students’ success on their journey through graduate school.

The Graduate College oversees nine departments and programs, providing an academic home for groundbreaking interdisciplinary work across the UI campus. I would like to extend special congratulations to two of these units—the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) and the International Writing Program (IWP)—that will be celebrating their 50-year anniversaries this fall.

SLIS has spent half a century training librarians to serve the state of Iowa and beyond. This innovative, interdisciplinary program started the Iowa Teacher Librarian Distance Program, which is offered to teachers who want to earn their K-12 librarian endorsement, and created a Public Digital Humanities Certificate for students with humanities backgrounds who want to gain expertise and credentials to work more intensively with technology.

Over the last 50 years, IWP has brought more than 1,400 writers from 150 countries to Iowa City. These writers in their various ways have introduced us to their literary traditions and reminded us how complex of a world we live in these days.

In the following pages you will read more about what makes these programs truly exceptional. You also will learn about the remarkable research being conducted on campus—work on treatments for cancer, addiction, improved surgical outcomes, and suicide prevention.

As we celebrate the work of our graduate students and programs, I can’t help but reflect back on the return of David Skorton, former UI president and current secretary of the Smithsonian, to the UI campus this past spring. Secretary Skorton gave an inspiring talk about how STEM and the liberal arts nourish each other.

Dr. Skorton challenged us to reflect on the linkages between STEM and the liberal arts, and the value of a balanced education in pursuit of a full and examined life. Dr. Skorton’s timely message reminds me of the critical role graduate education plays in creating better futures; advances that would not be possible without the investment of our generous alumni and friends.

Thank you for your commitment to graduate education.

John Keller
Associate Provost and Dean
Outstanding faculty mentor awards
Faculty recognized for excellence in mentoring

The University of Iowa Graduate College awarded Dan Berkowitz and Greg Carmichael top honors for excellence in mentoring graduate students.

Berkowitz, professor of journalism and mass communication in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, is the winner of the 2016-17 Graduate College Outstanding Faculty Mentor Award in Social Sciences.

Carmichael, professor of chemical and biochemical engineering in the College of Engineering, is the recipient of the Outstanding Faculty Mentor Award in Mathematics, Physical Sciences, and Engineering.

The professors were nominated for the award by their students and colleagues.

Dan Berkowitz
In his 29-year career at the UI, Berkowitz has helped 24 doctoral students soar to great heights as scholars.

“If there were an overarching key to my mentoring approach, it would be building ownership,” Berkowitz wrote in his mentoring philosophy statement. “A student working on a dissertation is essentially testing wings for future flight. It is important to give a student enough space to work, yet also enough guidance to make that work a success.”

Nancy Muturi, who earned her Ph.D. in mass communication in 2002, used Berkowitz’s guidance to make a successful landing as a professor of journalism and mass communications at Kansas State University.

Muturi came to the UI from Kenya in the winter of 1993, the first time she left her home country to experience another culture. As an international student who was developing her writing skills, Muturi appreciated Berkowitz’s assistance with the writing process.

“His approach is different from many other professors, including myself, because he takes a holistic approach—academic, personal, and professional—while considering future goals of each mentee,” Muturi wrote in her nomination letter.

Greg Carmichael
Since 1978 when he joined the UI faculty, Carmichael has mentored 40 Ph.D. students and 35 master’s students. Over the years, his mentoring philosophy has remained the same.

“I strive to provide each student an opportunity to identify and pursue an interesting research topic in a nurturing, safe, diverse, and stimulating environment for scholarship,” Carmichael wrote in his mentoring philosophy statement. “Expectations are high, individual and collaborative skills are actively developed, and student success is measured by record of scholarship and job opportunities.”

Marcelo Mena Carrasco, who earned his Ph.D. in civil and environmental engineering in 2007, was inspired by Carmichael as a student and continues to be as Minister of the Environment for his native Chile.

“He asked me if I wanted to make a contribution to clean the air in my country. He puts his students in challenging environments in which they can excel,” Carrasco wrote in his nomination letter.

Carmichael successfully balances being an acclaimed researcher in air quality modeling with developing the next generation of scientists.

Harty recognized with postdoc mentor award
The University of Iowa Postdoctoral Association (UIPDA) presented John Harty with the Outstanding Postdoctoral Mentor Award.

Harty is a professor of microbiology and pathology in the Carver College of Medicine and researches T cell response dynamics. The UIPDA recognized him as an embodiment of excellence and a mentor with extraordinary dedication to postdoctoral training.

In addition to providing outstanding technical guidance to his mentees, Harty inspires creative and independent thinking, fostering an exceptional learning environment where group members feel supported, encouraged, appreciated, and valued.
Education and what we value

Smithsonian Secretary David Skorton visits the University of Iowa

“Education and what we value: How STEM and the Liberal Arts Nourish Each Other”

David Skorton, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and former president at the University of Iowa, visited campus on March 30 to present a lecture at Hancher Auditorium titled, “Education and What We Value: How STEM and the Liberal Arts Nourish Each Other.” The event, presented by the Graduate College and Hancher, drew a crowd of over 800 people.

Skorton served as the 19th president of the University of Iowa from 2003 to 2006 and was a member of the UI faculty for 26 years in the Department of Internal Medicine and the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering before becoming the 12th president of Cornell University. He also practiced as a cardiologist and plays flute and saxophone.

A renaissance thinker, Skorton underscored the intersection of the arts, humanities, and sciences and the peril of underestimating the arts and humanities side of the equation. Skorton does not view a competition between STEM disciplines and the arts and humanities. Instead, he argued, STEM disciplines and the liberal arts nurture each other.

“Education and what we value: How STEM and the Liberal Arts Nourish Each Other”

David Skorton, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and former president at the University of Iowa

Before Skorton took the stage, Graduate College Dean John Keller took a moment to highlight the role graduate education plays in the many intersections of the arts, research, medicine, technology, and education.

“Graduate students at the University of Iowa, and at universities across the country, are currently pushing the boundaries of disciplinary knowledge and helping society move forward,” Keller said.

Illustrating this point, Keller introduced a brief showcase of UI scholarship; a jazz trio, featuring lecturer Steve Grismore, associate professor Damani Phillips; and graduate student Blake Shaw; and the winners of the UI’s Three-Minute Thesis competition, Kirsten Stoner (Biomedical Engineering) and Sara Knox (Social Work), who presented their three-minute research pitches.

The presentations represented a small sampling of the innovative work taking place on the UI campus. Reminiscing on his time in Iowa City, Skorton praised the UI for the diverse array of scholarship valued by the institution.

“The UI values the entire range of scholarly disciplines, from astrophysics to poetry,” Skorton said. “The value of combining STEM, and the liberal arts, including arts, humanities and social sciences, has had a major influence on my life as an educator, as an administrator, and as a student, which for me is a joyful, lifetime profession.”

Skorton also emphasized that faculty and graduate students, through interdisciplinary and collaborative work, can keep the University of Iowa a magical place.

“I think the greatest asset that every creative or cultural institution has is its creative people,” Skorton said. “The students and faculty and staff of a university are critical. Every single student, every single staff member, every single faculty member.”

After the talk, Dean Keller conducted a question-and-answer session with Skorton, which was full of laughs, but also important points.

“Look to the past to help create the future,” Skorton quoted from Drew Gilpin Faust, president of Harvard University. “Look to science and to poetry. Combine innovation and interpretation. We need the best of both, and it is universities that best provide them.”

Watch Online

To view the full lecture visit: youtube.com/watch?v=h3ePa11RhzM
The Graduate College’s STEM Leadership Development Program addresses the need to prepare STEM doctoral students for future leadership roles that require a variety of skills, tools, and talents that differ from research in the lab or field. The National Science Foundation funded this year’s inaugural program that supported nine students from seven different doctoral programs for on- and off-campus professional development opportunities to help prepare students for post-graduate opportunities. The program was designed by Associate Dean Sarah Larsen and Assistant Dean Jennifer Teitle.

On-campus activities
On-campus activities included both exploring their own values and talents as well as being offered the perspectives of University of Iowa senior scholars. One on-campus activity centered on exercises to help students explore their personal leadership styles using the Gallup StrengthsFinder. Students were coached on how they can not only understand but also cultivate their own talents identified in the exercise, as well as how they can support unique strengths in others. Students were charged with solving scientific problems as a group. They also met with a panel of distinguished interdisciplinary faculty on campus, including Professor Vincent Rodgers (Physics and Astronomy) and Professor Aliasger Salem (Pharmaceutics and Translational Therapeutics). These faculty members shared insight into the various roles they take as educators and researchers on campus and the greater community.

Students appreciated the exposure to various perspectives.

“It’s always nice to meet and hear from someone who has taken an alternative path in scientific careers,” says Kathryn Klarich, a doctoral student in civil and environmental engineering. “We don’t hear about those types very often from our advisors and often we forget that other options are available.”

Learning leadership in Chicago
As a capstone to this leadership training, students traveled to Chicago where they networked with peers from Northwestern University and UI alumni leaders in Chicago area.

The trip started with a stop at Argonne National Laboratory, a multidisciplinary science and engineering research center. Students met with Perry Motsegood (’12 Ph.D.), a chemist who studies methods for processing used nuclear fuel. Motsegood answered the students’ questions, covering topics ranging from daily life in his lab to the impacts of government shutdowns on operations.

Students also toured some of Argonne’s facilities, including vehicle research, where they were exposed to research addressing wireless charging of electric vehicles, emissions testing, and efforts to improve the efficiency of conventional diesel engines.

The last stop at Argonne featured a visit with Dr. Richard Coffee at the Leadership Computing Facility. Coffee explained his group’s work in supercomputing and the current scope of Argonne’s efforts in supercomputing.
Johnathan Culpepper, a Ph.D. student in civil and environmental engineering, valued the opportunity to directly engage with government leaders about their perspective on leadership.

“The opportunity to discuss typical responsibilities within their labs, physically explore such a different working atmosphere, and talk about transitioning from graduate school to a post-doc position or full-time employment has made me open-minded towards opportunities I can explore when I approach my Ph.D. graduation,” Culpepper says.

UI’s leadership group also met with a cohort of students from Northwestern University for a leadership training session lead by Adam Goodman, director of Northwestern University’s Center for Leadership and faculty member in the McCormick School of Engineering & Applied Sciences.

Goodman led an interactive session focusing on the state of effective leadership today and how people learn to become effective leaders. He advised students to not only be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, but to play to their strengths and build a team to compensate for their weaknesses.

“Meeting the other participants was one of the highlights. Everyone was so friendly and genuine,” says Rachel Anderson, a Ph.D. student in psychology. “It was nice to meet people from other programs and get out of my small department. Even though we all had different backgrounds, we had common themes and issues that brought us together. I really enjoyed it.”

Before returning to Iowa City, the students’ experience was capped with a visit with Bridget Coughlin at Shedd Aquarium. Coughlin shared her story of earning her Ph.D. in biochemistry in 1999 from the University of Iowa. After graduation, she began a more traditional research position but realized she craved a more person-focused relationship with science. She served as the vice president of strategic partnerships and programs and adjunct curator at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, where she worked for a decade. Since 2016, Coughlin has led the Shedd Aquarium as president and chief executive officer.

Coughlin related to students that she believes her love for science and “natural geekiness” is what set her apart from the other candidates in competing for her current role. She shared her plans for expanding on the traditional exhibits and using her geekiness to inspire future exhibits at the museum that highlight the importance of conservation.

“(Coughlin) delved into specifics about how she got to where she is today, which is of great interest to young scientists,” says Reinaldo Franqui Machin, a doctoral student in molecular and cellular biology. “I think this definitively opened my eyes to even more possibilities available as a Ph.D.”

Members of the 2017 Graduate College STEM Leadership Development Program.
Research, communication, and the 3MT
Kirsten Stoner wins 2016 Three-Minute Thesis competition

By Cristobal McKinney

To explain her research, Kirsten Stoner, a fourth-year doctoral student in the University of Iowa Department of Biomedical Engineering, walks over to a cabinet and retrieves a life-sized model of a human spine. She bends the stiff column of vertebrae as far as they will go and explains that she studies the way abnormal growths or slipped disks can compress the spinal cord, specifically in the neck, causing devastating nerve damage. The condition is known as cervical myelopathy, and her research is helping to develop a computer model to better understand it.

“You know when you hit your funny bone and you get that really tingling feeling?” she says. “What’s happening is you’ve hit a nerve. So the same thing as that happens with your spinal cord in cervical myelopathy, but it’s your spinal cord, which is connecting everything to your brain.”

Friends and family have told Stoner that she talks too much, a surprising declaration considering she recently won the Three-Minute Thesis competition. The annual contest, open to master’s and doctoral students and hosted by the Graduate College, asks competitors to explain their research to general public audiences in three minutes or less.

According to Suresh M.L. Raghavan, professor of biomedical engineering and this year’s graduate studies director, this sort of communication skill is vital for career development.

“I think from any angle one looks at it, communicating research is very important,” says Raghavan. “We see that the students who are good technically and can communicate well have far brighter career prospects.”

This year, judges from around campus selected 16 finalists from among more than 40 competitors. The first-place winner in the master’s and doctoral categories received $500, and honorable mentions and a “People’s Choice” winner each received $250. In addition to the cash prize, Stoner also represented the UI at the inaugural Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools Three-Minute Thesis Competition in April.

While all graduate student researchers are encouraged to participate in 3MT, Stoner and six other 3MT competitors received practice and encouragement from a graduate student seminar, which this semester focused on training researchers how to communicate with non-researchers. Raghavan led the seminar, and the seven 3MT competitors in the class received feedback from fellow classmates, instructors, and communications staff from the UI Office of Strategic Communication.

In structuring the course, Raghavan was partly inspired by his experience in the Communicating Ideas Workshop, which helped him hone his communication skills. Designed to help faculty researchers concisely describe their research to non-scientists, that workshop culminated in the faculty participants each creating a one-minute video explaining their research.

During her 3MT presentation, Stoner wasn’t allowed to use props, but in her office, she freely uses whatever she can find on her desk to explain the computer model of the human neck that she is developing. Stoner compares a rectangular eraser to a thumb-sized hedgehog figurine and explains—while compressing the eraser between thumb and forefinger—that it’s easy to predict how forces will affect a regularly shaped object made of a single material, like the eraser, but the human neck, like the hedgehog figurine, is irregularly shaped and made of various materials, each of which respond differently to forces and compression.
The surgery to help people with cervical myelopathy isn’t new, Stoner says. The procedure involves removing portions of some neck bones and sometimes fusing other bones together in order to alleviate pressure on the spinal cord.

However, it’s difficult to anticipate which bones, if altered, will yield the best results. Patients sometimes have to undergo more than one difficult and complicated surgery. Stoner’s model will change that by helping the surgeon see how neck bones can push against, compress, and make room for the spinal cord. She hopes the model ultimately will help surgeons understand how cervical myelopathy affects spinal blood flow, neuro-electrical transmissions along the spinal cord, and other poorly understood aspects of the condition.

Thrilled by math and science at an early age, Stoner first wanted to be an aerospace engineer, but she felt that biomedical engineering was a better way to serve the community.

“As engineers,” she says, “we can sit here and think of all the coolest things to do, but unless they’re actually clinically relevant, they’re not going to help people. We could think of all the random stuff in the world, but it’s really about what surgeons need, what physicians need, and how we can help them to help people.”

You be the judge
To view the full list of finalists and competition videos, visit: grad.uiowa.edu/three-minute-thesis-competition-at-the-university-of-iowa

UI Three-Minute Thesis Winners

Developed in 2008 by the University of Queensland, Australia, 3MT offers a forum for graduate students to share their dissertation research with a general audience in an oral presentation lasting three minutes at most. The competition has since grown to include more than 125 universities worldwide, including 45 in the United States. The Ph.D. winner of the UI competition advanced to a regional competition hosted by the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools.

Sara Knox, Social Work
How Helpful Are Specific Techniques in Online Counseling?
1st place and People’s Choice winner, Master’s category

Sara Knox is a second-year Master’s student in social work at the University of Iowa where she previously completed a BS in Economics. Since 2007, Sara has volunteered on the crisis hotline and worked as a trainer of suicide intervention skills at the Crisis Center of Johnson County. Her research focuses on online crisis intervention and how online counselors can best help people who use that resource.

Magdalene Ameka, Pharmacology
Lose the Weight by Ignoring the Fat
People’s Choice, Doctoral Category

A third-year graduate student in the lab of Dr. Matthew Potthoff in pharmacology, Magdalene Ameka came to the US from Kenya in 2006. She received her Bachelors’ degree from the University of Houston in 2009 in biochemistry and biophysical sciences. She is currently working to understand how the liver-derived hormone Fibroblast Growth Factor 21 (FGF21) regulates energy homeostasis.

Vijay Permeswaran, Biomedical Engineering
Reverse Shoulder Replacement
Honorable Mention, Doctoral Category

Vijay Permeswaran is a fifth-year Ph.D. student originally from LeMars, IA completing a degree in Biomedical Engineering. He earned his bachelor and master’s degrees in biomedical engineering from the University of Iowa in 2012 and 2014 respectively. He works in the Orthopedic Biomechanics Laboratory, where his research focuses on improving patient outcomes following reverse shoulder arthroplasty.

Anh-Vu Do, Chemical and Biochemical Engineering
Using Ultrasound to Enhance Tumor Cell Killing
Honorable Mention, Doctoral Category

Anh-Vu Do is a fourth-year Ph.D. student in chemical and biochemical engineering. He has multiple bachelor degrees from the University of Georgia, majoring in psychology, biology, and biochemical engineering. Under the guidance of Professor Aliasger Salem, Do’s research focuses on designing novel methods of controlled drug delivery to enhance cancer treatments and tissue regeneration.
International Writing Program celebrates 50 years
For five decades, the IWP has brought the world to Iowa

Christopher Merrill likes to say that in his job he has a chance every hour to realize how little he knows about the world.

As director of the International Writing Program (IWP), Merrill welcomes 30 to 35 of the world’s emerging and established writers to the University of Iowa each fall to participate in the Fall Residency Program, where writers enhance their literary talents and share stories of their homelands through the written and spoken word.

“We have the chance in this small town to bring together writers from so many places who remind us that the world is a much more mysterious place than we imagine,” Merrill says.

Writing world comes to Iowa City
Over the course of the 12-week Fall Residency, in addition to working on their own projects, writers give readings and lectures about their work and cultures, collaborate with artists from other genres and art forms, and travel and interact with American audiences and literary communities across the United States.

Ameena Hussein, a novelist from Sri Lanka, had never experienced anything like the IWP before traveling to Iowa City in 2005 as a visiting writer.

“I began to think more about my writing and to aspire to write better as a result of this program,” Hussein says. “In subsequent years, IWP also gave me a chance to visit Greece and the Maldives, where together with other creatives from other parts of the world, we discussed issues that were relevant and timely in these unique settings, which combine history, culture, the environment, and the fact that we all belong to the global village.”

As part of the IWP family, Hussein is friends with writers from Syria, Libya, Japan, and Kazakshatan.

“I am part of a larger world—the world of creatives that transcend nationality, faith, and politics,” Hussein says.

Yvonne Owuor, a novelist from Kenya, credits IWP for reconnecting her with the soul of storytelling.

“IWP complicated my notion of state and nation and home,” Owuor says. “It expanded my soul and imagination to understand that country is bigger than the geographical space into which one was born. It imbued me with a new restlessness, an inability to be complacent and contented with the comfortable and familiar things of belonging.”

IWP’s cultural diplomacy
For the first 35 years of the IWP, the world came to Iowa.

That all changed with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. That dark day in American history caused cultural diplomacy at the U.S. State Department to be redefined. IWP played a key role in that process.

“After 9/11, we started to think of cultural diplomacy as a two-way exchange,” Merrill says. “Every fall, writers from around the world come here. Now, we also take
writers out to places of strategic interest. We opened up the world to writing, to the magic of Iowa City, to our distance learning programs.”

Earlier this year, Merrill gave a lecture with a question-and-answer session for students at the International University of Moscow. Merrill says these students were quite interested in how the United States teaches creative writing and what American literature is all about.

IWP also exposed the war-torn city of Baghdad, Iraq to writing. Merrill and his colleagues brought together Iraqi writers, professors, and municipal officials and helped them nominate Baghdad for the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. In 2015, Baghdad gained membership into the Creative Cities Network.

“I am quite proud of our role in helping heal the wounds of war through some small creative action,” Merrill says. “It allows writers in Baghdad to be in touch with all these creative writers from UNESCO cities of literature around the world.

“In cultural diplomacy, we’re trying to share our enthusiasm, our curiosity, and our ideas about writing.”

**IWP’s leader**

Merrill, a poet, essayist, journalist, and translator, has directed the International Writing Program since 2000. His impact is felt locally in Iowa City—a UNESCO City of Literature—and all over the world.

Owuor credits Merrill for taking a risk on her, a stranger starting out in the world of writing.

“Chris Merrill has been a version of the three witches of Macbeth for me; invoker of literary destiny, a presence at the back of my creating mind that is a lightning rod,” Owuor says. “He provides the assurance to continue even when the literary realms and landscapes become filled with uncertainties. Without him, I would not be writing with the abandonment I do now. I would not have known that it is OK to toss the illusion of certainties into the air and trust the unknown.”

Simply put, he is an inspiration in the world of writing.

“He is the captain of the IWP ship that he steers so deftly,” Hussein says. “He is someone who is constantly enthusiastic about all he does and who is completely engaged with people in a meaningful way.”
Five UI grad students win NIH awards

National Institutes of Health honors early career researchers

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the largest public funder of biomedical research in the world, investing more than $32 billion a year to support the training of biomedical, behavioral, and clinical researchers.

The NIH’s Kirschstein-National Research Service Award (F30) seeks to enhance the integrated research and clinical training of promising pre-doctoral students who are in a combined MD/PhD or other dual-doctoral degree training program. The Kirschstein-National Research Service Award (F31) works to help promising pre-doctoral students develop into productive, independent research scientists while conducting dissertation research.

Five University of Iowa graduate students earned National Research Service Awards during the 2016-17 academic year.

Nicholas Borcherding, Molecular and Cellular Biology

New cases of breast cancer affect 232,000 people in the United States and 1.7 million people globally each year.

In the United States, 20-25 percent of these new invasive breast carcinoma cases are categorized as HER2+. Being HER2+ means that the breast cancer cells produce too much human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2), a protein that signals cell growth.

“Overall, the project aims to develop a better understanding of the disruption in regulators secreted by the pre-malignant field in tumor-initiating cells that are permissive to HER2-positive tumor initiation,” Nicholas Borcherding wrote in his public health relevance statement as part of his F30 application.

Caitlin Cosme, Psychology

In her NIH research description, Caitlin Cosme wrote that, “cocaine addiction remains a costly and debilitating disorder in large part due to the high relapse rates observed in individuals addicted to different drugs of abuse.”

Cosme’s proposed experiments will investigate the neural circuitry underlying the insular cortex’s regulation of cocaine-seeking behavior.

“The results from these studies will be critical for developing new treatments that target this region as part of the ongoing effort to reduce relapse among drug-addicted individuals,” Cosme wrote in her public health relevance statement as part of her F31 application.

Kelly Falls, Free Radical and Radiation Biology

Despite extensive treatment, 200,000 people die annually in the United States from lung and breast cancers.

This high death rate suggests that new treatment approaches are needed. Falls will investigate two FDA-approved drugs currently used for other conditions that may also be effective against cancer cells.

“By determining how these drugs exploit fundamental differences in oxidative metabolism between cancer versus normal cells, we can gain better understanding of the mechanisms by which they selectively target cancer cells for the development of new combined cancer therapies to improve outcomes and limit progression of disease,” Falls wrote in her public health relevance statement as part of her F30 application.

Andrea Hallberg, Molecular and Cellular Biology

Andrea Hallberg seeks to understand the processes by which craniofacial regions develop in embryos. She proposes to characterize the regulation of the tfap2 gene (part of the neural crest specification gene regulatory network) using zebrafish, a common model organism for embryonic development.

“The proposed research aims at understanding, at a genetic level, neural crest specification, one of the very first steps in craniofacial development,” Hallberg wrote in her public health relevance statement as part of her F31 application. “It is relevant to public health because craniofacial defects are the second most common birth defect in the United States.”

Bianca Mason, Molecular and Cellular Biology

Bianca Mason’s research uses genetic and pharmacological methods to study migraine-like behaviors in a pre-clinical rodent model; her current project examines the neuron peptide CGRP.

“Migraine is a debilitating disorder that is accompanied by sensory alterations such as photophobia,” Mason wrote in her public health relevance statement as part of her F31 application. “This study seeks to identify how peripheral CGRP causes light aversion in mice, which may help identify new targets for the development of better treatments for migraine.”
Award-winning researchers
Iowa scholars earn top honors with nationally competitive awards

The University of Iowa’s outstanding graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and staff continue to earn nationally competitive fellowships and awards, bringing prestige, funding, and networking opportunities to their studies and professional endeavors.

Dina Garcia, Iowa Institute for Oral Health Research

Dina Garcia, a postdoctoral fellow, was presented a Mass Media Science & Engineering Fellowship from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

This highly competitive 10-week summer fellowship strengthens the connections between scientists and journalists by placing advanced undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate level science, engineering and mathematics students at media organizations nationwide. The AAAS Fellows use their academic training in the sciences as they research, write and report today’s headlines, sharpening their abilities to communicate complex scientific issues to non-specialists. AAAS typically selects from 15-20 Mass Media Fellows each summer.

Garcia will complete her fellowship work at CNN Español.

Sanjena Sathian, Creative Writing

Sanjena Sathian was one of 30 recipients of a Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans in 2017. The fellowship is awarded to outstanding immigrants and children of immigrants who are pursuing graduate school in the United States.

Selected from 1,775 applicants, each graduate student was chosen for their potential to make significant contributions to U.S. society, culture, or their academic fields.

The daughter of Indian immigrants who raised her in Georgia, Sanjena studies at the Iowa Writers’ Workshop. Her writing engages Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, technology, diaspora, and gender.

Iva Patel, Religious Studies

Iva Patel was awarded a junior fellowship from the American Institute of Indian Studies to carry out her project, “Taming of the Mind: Practice and Pedagogy in the Bhakti Lyrics of the Swaminarayan Sect.”

Junior Fellowships are for graduate students doing research for their doctoral dissertations in India. Patel will spend 11 months in India conducting her doctoral research.

Jill Hauer, Genetics

Jill Hauer earned a National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship in 2017. The NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) awards fellowships to outstanding graduate students based on their demonstrated potential for significant achievements in science and engineering. The GRFP provides three years of financial support within a five-year fellowship period for graduate study that leads to a research-based master’s or doctoral degree.

In her application, Hauer proposed to study the genetic basis of C3 glomerulopathy, a disease that causes the kidneys to malfunction. Features of this disease include high levels of protein in the urine, blood in the urine, and low levels of protein in the blood.

Hauer intends to use a combination of computational molecular simulations and experimental assays to analyze genetic changes found in patients with the disease. Ultimately, these methods could help develop a tool to make better patient prognoses and treatment decisions based on patients’ personal genetics.

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School of Library & Information Science Turns 50
SLIS helps students find career paths as librarians

Since its inception in 1967, the University of Iowa’s School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) has helped master’s students find their identities as librarians.

Through courses, assistantships, and joint programs with the Center for the Book and the College of Law, students find jobs that match their interests and allow them to best serve their patrons.

“The thing I’m proudest of is that we’ve been able to create a context for people to figure out who they want to be in this field,” says Jim Elmborg, associate professor and director of SLIS from 2006 to 2011.

This fall, SLIS will commemorate 50 years of educating the next generation of librarians. The SLIS 50th Anniversary Reception will be held October 18 at the Coralville Marriott Conference Center. The SLIS Open House and Library Tour is scheduled for October 20.

“We played a really important part in these students’ lives. They could have gone somewhere else, but they came here,” says Elmborg, who estimates he taught over 1,000 students during his time at the UI. Elmborg left Iowa this summer to become director of the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alabama.

Dual degree programs create opportunities
Suzanne Corriell, a 2007 SLIS graduate, is glad she came to the University of Iowa for her master’s degree. Corriell benefitted from SLIS’ dual degree program with the College of Law.

“It was really helpful that there were SLIS graduates at the College of Law library,” Corriell recalls. “I talked with Ellen Jones and she immediately helped me forge a path and figure out what I wanted to do after I graduated from law school.”

Corriell serves as the acting circuit librarian at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in Richmond, VA.

Jillian Sparks, a 2015 SLIS graduate, has an appreciation for rare books and special collections, so SLIS’ joint program with the Center for the Book was a perfect fit for this California native. She had a two-year assistantship in Special Collections, the most formative experience during her time at the UI.

“I received hands-on training about how books work, how they are made, and the processes and historical background,” Sparks says. “I made lots of trips to Special Collections to handle special materials. All that was very valuable given where I work now.”

Sparks is a special collections librarian at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

Small program does big things
The UI’s School of Library and Information Science is a small program, with about 70 students and five faculty members during the 2016-17 academic year. However, the program does innovative, impactful research and outreach projects.
In 2012, SLIS started the Iowa Teacher Librarian Distance Program. This program is offered to teachers who want to earn their K-12 librarian endorsement while earning a master’s degree in library and information science.

It’s the teacher librarian’s role in Iowa schools to integrate communications and technology literacy with the love of books for their students.

In 2015, Elmborg helped create a Public Digital Humanities Certificate at the University of Iowa. This certificate is available to graduate students from any department in the university, but it is primarily intended for students with humanities backgrounds who want to gain expertise and credentials to work more intensively with technology.

“We have been able to do some things that are really forward looking. The key to that is we don’t ever put limits on ourselves for what we can do,” says Elmborg. “Even when I made mistakes, I chalked it up to experience and went in another direction. The underpinning of that is community and public service. That was drilled into me when I was in school at Iowa.”

This fall, SLIS will increase its class size to 45 students, with Chaoqun Ni and Margaret Zimmerman joining the faculty.

“Two new faculty coming in this fall (increasing Iowa’s total to six with Elmborg’s departure), along with teacher librarian tuition streams and the new budget model, allows us to double up sections on the Tier 1 courses,” says Dave Eichmann, director of SLIS. “We can reduce class size while increasing the size of our program.”

After graduating in 1972, Steve Brogden’s journey took him to Thousand Oaks, CA, where he was director of the Thousand Oaks Library. As a library director, this Des Moines native exhibited a real sense of community and public service—traits instilled in him at the University of Iowa.

“One of most important things to do as a director or a leader is to set a tone. I welcomed new ideas,” Brogden says. “I think we’ve made smallness a virtue.”

Carl Orgren, director of SLIS from 1981 to 1996, agrees that the small size of the Iowa program contributes to the success of its students.

“There’s a connection among the students, which is an important part of their lives,” Orgren says. “Since the program is small with a small number of faculty, a lot of relationships are close. The program is one or two years, and it puts the students where they’re going to be in the future.”

Save the Date!

Please join us at our 50th anniversary reception on Wednesday evening, October 18, 2017 from 6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. as the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) celebrates 50 years of training librarians for Iowa. This event will be held in conjunction with the Iowa Library Association’s Annual Conference at the Coralville Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Coralville, Iowa.

On Friday, October 20, we are hosting a SLIS Open House and Library Tour in the UI Main Library. Our Friday activities begin at 1:00 p.m., ending at 4:30 p.m., and will include videos highlighting our past as well as features of our current programs. Walk the SLIS hallways, view 50 years of photos, and record your own oral/video history for future generations of librarians.

If you plan to attend one or both events please register at slis.uiowa.edu.

Keep watch for an exciting announcement to be released soon regarding our new anniversary student scholarship fund!