

We asked the Honors Student Ambassadors about life as an honors student. Here are some excerpts of conversations with:

Adriana: Psychology major, Health Informatics minor

Alexander: Biomedical Engineering major, Classical Civilization minor

Christian: Chemical Engineering major

Danica: Biological Sciences, Spanish double major

Iman: Criminology, Law & Society major, Psychology & Social Behavior minor

Kaylie: Biomedical Engineering major, Materials Science Engineering minor

Michelle: Biological Sciences, Art History double major, Archaeology minor

Sauntharya: Psychology & Social Behavior major

“The [Campuswide Honors Collegium] has to be one of the most diverse groups on campus, our 1,000 members come from almost every major on campus, and are involved in so many different aspects of campus life. Every member of the CHC is unique and finds their own path at UCI, but the strong community provides resources and opportunities that would be otherwise difficult to find on such a large campus.” - Iman

Academics

Faculty are involved “in helping students discover new things and aspire for success both inside and outside of the classroom,” says Sauntharya. “All it takes is being open to creating this connection. The opportunities are easy and readily available to you, all you as a student have to do is take the first step.”

While Christian knew he wanted to pursue a doctorate in chemical engineering following graduation, he never thought that reading *The Iliad* in Honors Humanities Core Course would help land him an undergraduate position in a chemical biology research laboratory. In an interview for a lab position, he impressed faculty by discussing the first documented use of enzymes in *The Iliad*, and has since then become a researcher in “DNA cloning, enzyme acceleration, and disease bio sensing.”

For Adriana, Honors Humanities Core founded her passion for international law, where she learned about “global politics and injustices around the world.” At Campuswide Honors events such as Lunch with Leadership and the Honors to Meet You student/alumni networking social, she met CHC alumni who are now practicing lawyers. This confirmed her decision to become a lawyer.

Kaylie dove into biomedical engineering research at the encouragement of her Honors Peer Mentor. After working in a lab developing treatments for Alzheimer’s disease, she was awarded an Undergraduate Research Opportunities Fellowship. Now, she works on “wearable sensors in the Khine Lab,” a project which she plans to develop into her capstone honors thesis project.

Michelle was “able to narrow [her] research focus to Baroque and Renaissance art by going abroad and studying in Florence and seeing masterpieces in person.” This led to her focus on the “depiction of anatomy and biology in Italian art, under the mentorship of passionate and supportive faculty.” She presented her research at UCI’s Undergraduate Research Symposium last May.

Community

Coming from a small high school, Adriana “found that the Campuswide Honors Collegium was constantly providing [her] with ways to build a community.” In classes with less than 20 students, professors get to know CHC students by name. At various Campuswide Honors-sponsored events, Adriana felt “known and welcomed.”

“Part of what separates Campuswide Honors students from others is that they are extremely driven and have a love of learning—so you can almost always find someone to talk to about any topic. Because of this—because of their breadth of interests—many of my closest friends are from the CHC,” says Alexander.

Iman met some of her closest friends while sharing a tent at the CHC’s annual Spring Camping Retreat, and Danica met hers over core courses with honors peers. “In the small seminars where I participated in discussions about wars in Argentina, Vietnam, and Europe, I learned a lot from classmates with a variety of majors who are now my best friends.” First-year honors halls are also spaces for students to wind down and, for Christian, to connect with a “community of like-minded, motivated peers.”

Leadership

Alexander has always felt warmly received at Campuswide Honors Student Council (CHSC) meetings, and this inspired him to apply for a leadership position on the council himself. As the CHSC President, Alexander “give[s] back and strengthen[s] the honors community” by planning and facilitating CHP events. He feels that he has developed leadership skills that will benefit his future career in medicine.

For Danica, Faculty Coffee Hour, where students network with faculty in an informal setting, was her first step into leadership in Campuswide Honors. This was the first CHC event that she attended, and was what inspired her to become an active member of the community. Her involvement centers around her desire to “help other students feel comfortable adopting leadership roles.” Within the CHC, she has held the roles of student council president, student ambassador, peer mentor coordinator, and yearbook staff member.

Advice to Prospective College Students

“For soon-to-be university students, I would offer this advice: consider your goals following your undergraduate education. It may be graduate school, law school, medical school, a job, or something else entirely. This helps prioritize what you are looking for. It led me to UCI and the CHC, the best decision I could have made!” - Christian