

**CLASS OF 2021**

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

# DISABILITY GRADUATION

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CELEBRATION



**IOWA™**



# CONGRATULATIONS

Welcome to the University of Iowa's Second Annual Disability Graduation! UI would like to do more to support and celebrate its students with disabilities. We were excited to have worked with a dedicated group of students and staff to plan an affinity graduation for individuals who identified as disabled or living with a disability. This graduation will join the many other community-specific graduations to allow space for and intentional focus on our students.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social gatherings, this in person event is more intimate. Thus, we worked with graduating students to compile memories and stories to commemorate their time and accomplishments at the University of Iowa. Students were given the option to attend in person or to be honored on our website or both. This program and our website displays the student-curated profiles along with the list of students and faculty/staff awardees. We are so proud of you!

Thank you students for your tenacity, flexibility, and grace throughout this process. A special thank you to the UI Students for Disability Advocacy & Awareness (UISDAA) and the Disability Graduation 2021 Planning Committee for your efforts to ensure we had a venue to celebrate.

In solidarity,

**The Disability Graduation Planning Committee**

# KEYNOTE ADDRESS

## **Kristal Marlow Gibson, M.A., J.D.**



Kristal Marlow Gibson is currently the Associate Director of the Office of Student Accountability, handling mostly sexual misconduct investigations involving students. She is moving this summer to the new Office of Institutional Equity in the Division of Equity and Inclusion and will be adding responsibilities involving staff and faculty. Kristal is both an attorney and a certified mediator. She also has worked for the University of Iowa as the Associate Ombudsperson, a Civil Rights Investigator, an adjudicator, and as the author of the On Iowa orientation modules on Academic Integrity. Before joining the University, she was the Director of Test Security at ACT, inc. and served as an attorney in the U.S. Justice Department, both as a United States Attorney criminal prosecutor and as an Honor's Program trial attorney in the Civil Division.

Congratulations graduates! It's a great honor to have been invited to share in this ceremony with you today.

Congratulations to all of you! I want to commend you for your strength, your perseverance, and your intelligence. You should celebrate and take great pride in the fact that through your own individual efforts and your hard work you reached your goal. But of course you've had the support of family, friends, and, if you were lucky, some staff and professors along the way who are celebrating with you as well.

In 1979, Mike Blaser, Cayse Hayes, Cynthia Anderson, Archie Greene, Jane Kelleher, along with many others were the first wave of students with disabilities to attend the UI in the aftermath of federal law that prohibited schools and universities from discriminating against students with disabilities and required that these institutions provide reasonable accommodations to include them—the forerunner of the ADA. Like you, their very presence on campus challenged the university to implement and abide by the law.

Like you, their success demonstrated what we can do given the opportunity, let alone what they might be able to do if someday actually given equal opportunities. Like you, they left their mark, both large and small, on the university. Their story is part of your story. Your story is part of their story. You're connected to them. There's a link. Just as students who attend this ceremony in the years to come will be connected to you and will be here in part because of you and what you've accomplished.

Congratulations everyone!  
Kristal Marlow Gibson, M.A., J.D.



# OUTSTANDING DISABILITY VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP AWARD

In partnership with the 2020 Diversity Catalyst Seed Grant and the Council for Disability Awareness, the Disability Graduation Planning Committee is able to recognize incredible undergraduate and graduate students with the second annual **Outstanding Disability Volunteer Leadership Awards**. This year's recipients are motivated and innovative students with disabilities at the University of Iowa who are involved in disability affairs, advocacy, research, awareness, activities, and/or community building. They go above and beyond in their daily duties to exemplify disability as diversity and to move the University of Iowa towards greater accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities.

## FACULTY/STAFF AWARD



**Jennifer Haylett, PhD** College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

"...Dr. Haylett sets a perfect example to other university professors. She is kind, supportive, understanding, and engaging during lecture, office hours, and running into her around Iowa City. She has never made me feel as though I needed to create a narrative around my disability to receive accommodations.

## STUDENT AWARDS



**Natalie Oostenbrug** College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Bachelors in Interdepartmental Studies with a Self-defined Emphasis on the Intersection of Western Biomedicine and Social Sciences**

"...She's truly a dedicated advocate for disabled students and disabled people in general. She took part in pushing for and organizing a Disability Graduation. She doesn't just point out injustice - she offers reasonable solutions."



**Sam Singh** Tippie College of Business

**Bachelors in Finance**

"...She's been part of eight executive boards and has advocated for diversity and inclusion within them all. She has always promoted diversity and exemplifies that disabilities do not have to severely impact the trajectory of your academic and extracurricular careers."



**Grant Tapken** College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Bachelors in Religious Studies & Ancient Civilizations**

"...Grant is very active in the community and is an advocate for individuals with disabilities on campus. He does everything he can to educate his peers and the community, while also voicing changes that need to be made to allow others to succeed."

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## **ANDREW CROWLEY**

**Bachelors in Ethics and Public Policy**

**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

**Bachelors in Economics**

**Tippie College of Business**

**Minors** Business Administration

**Acknowledgements** Thank you Mom and Dad for your support throughout my education career!



## **NYADIEW A. ERNST**

**Bachelors in Interdepartmental Studies**

**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

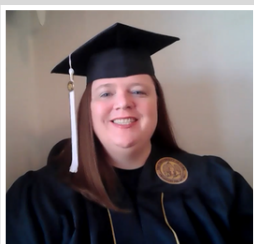


## **JESSIE LYNÆE EVELAND**

**Bachelors in Speech and Hearing Science**

**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

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**LINDSEY E. FORD**

**Bachelors in BLS Organizational Studies**

**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

**Certificates** Psychology Nonprofit Leadership and Philanthropy

**Favorite U.I. Memory** Being able to participate in several group projects while in attendance fully online has allowed me to meet other wonderful students and feel a sense of belonging at the University.

**Acknowledgements** Larry, I am immensely blessed to have such a supportive spouse. You have put up with my not coming to bed until 3 or 4 a.m. and my venting over frustrating classes. Yet you still made sure I had my Pepsi and asked me almost everyday if I had my homework done. Myah, your assistance in teaching me how to use Google products helped me get through several classes. You also listened to me complain and fed me when I was hungry. To my sister Tammie, I blame you for all the stress of the past two years but thank you for encouraging me to go back to school. To my J's- Jane, Judy, and Jaime-you are the best friends a girl could ask for and were there for me when I needed a break. And finally, the congregation of Finley Chapel United Methodist Church. Your acceptance of my health issues and my limitations has been so appreciated. More importantly, your encouragement to remember to practice self-care translated to my being able to achieve this goal.



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**SHAYLA ELENA IDES**

**Bachelors in Informatics Media**

**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

**Favorite U.I. Memory** My favorite memories from the UI are the many nights of games played with the friends I've made here.



**HANNAH ROSE KINSON**

**Bachelors in Journalism and Mass Communications**

**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

**Certificates** Literary Publishing

**Acknowledgements** Thank you Madj and Dad for being so supportive of me throughout college and being there for all my phone calls. I couldn't have done this without you. Thank you Jacky for being a great sister and someone I can look up to.



**ABBIE ANN LIECHTY**

**Bachelors in Political Science with Honors**

**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

**Minor** Economics

**Favorite U.I. Memory** All the time that I got to spent learning and playing rugby.

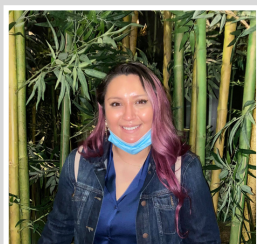
**Acknowledgements** I would like to thank my parents that supported me when learning of my disability and the professors that I had that were willing to work with me.

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**EMMA JANET MEYER**

Bachelors in Political Science  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences



**JENCI Z. MUNIZ-MENDOZA**

Bachelors in Enterprise Leadership  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Minors** Art

**Favorite U.I. Memory** El Rimo event hosted by the LNACC

**Acknowledgements** Thank you to all my professors that have helped me along the way!



**FAITH NDAVI**

Bachelors in Chemistry  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Minors** Biology and Spanish, Pre-Med

**Favorite U.I. Memory** One of my favorite memories from UI is participating as a model and dancer at the annual Walk it Out Fashion Show.

**Acknowledgements** Thank you Mom and Dad for continuously believing in me, and knowing I would make it this far even when I did not believe it myself.



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**KOFI DANIEL OPAM**  
**Masters in Nonfiction Writing**  
**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

**Achievements** Iowa Arts Fellowship

**Acknowledgements** Thank you to my advisor Inara for her unwavering support in my creative vision, my therapist Britte for holding me up when things got hard, my parents Danielle and Osafradu for their unconditional love, and my grandma Marie Denise for watching over me.



**NATALIE OOSTENBRUG**  
**Bachelors in Interdepartmental Studies with a Self-**  
**defined Emphasis on the Intersection of Western**  
**Biomedicine and Social Sciences**  
**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

**Minors** Sociology

**Favorite U.I. Memory** At about 2 in the morning of final's week, a main library security guard came to tell my partner and I that everyone else left and that he had to close down the library for the night. Since we were the only students left, we danced ourselves out while blasting Redbone's "Come and Get Your Love."

**Acknowledgements**

Thank you Mom and Dad for all the love and support and encouragement. Thank you Adam and little Penny for being by my side through it all. Thank you Dr. Haylett, Kristal Gibson, Vickie Houser, Dr. Bruno, and other university staff and faculty who have helped me navigate my time here at Iowa.

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## MARIA PEARSON

Bachelors in English Education

College of Education

Bachelors in English

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Minors** Psychology, Human Relations

**Certificates** Teacher Leader

**Achievements** Study Abroad Experience in Thailand

**Favorite U.I.** Football games, hiking and canoeing Big Bend National Park, and

**Memory** studying abroad in Thailand.

**Acknowledgements** Thank you Mom & Dad for all of your support and everything you've done for me over the years! Thank you Mom for always being there for me. Thank you Katie Newcomb for all you have done for me! I love and am extremely grateful for you all!



## SARAH SCHLOSSER

Masters in Book Studies

Center for the Book

**Achievements** Fulbright Fellowship

**Acknowledgements** I would like to thank my cohort, professors, and family for supporting me though my time here. I would also like to thank my early teachers for letting me believe college was possible and encouraging me to continue learning and studying despite my learning disability.

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**SAM SINGH**  
**Bachelors in Finance**  
**Tippie College of Business**

**Minors** Human Relations

**Certificates** Risk Management and Insurance

**Achievements** Named as a Tippie Top 21  
Won Leadership Award for the Center of Diversity and Achievement  
Two time panelist for Tippie College of Business' Finance Seminar

**Favorite U.I. Memory** My favorite memory at Iowa has been meeting all the incredible people I have over the last four years.  
There was so many. I loved the sporting events, the events downtown and on campus, and interacting with students.

**Acknowledgements** Thank you to my parents and sister, Sana. I wouldn't have been able to do this without you three constantly cheering me on!



**ALLISON THERESA STEGER**  
**Bachelors in History with Honors**  
**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and**  
**Graduating with University Honors**

**Minors** German

**Certificates** Museum Studies

**Favorite U.I. Memory** My favorite memory from UI is probably the time me, Andrea Courtney, and Kaydee Ecker went to Special Collections to learn about the history



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of SDS (Student Disability Services) in preparation for writing the petition to relocate SDS. We learned a ton about what the university used to be like - from blueprint designs of Burge decades ago and names for certain offices across campus - and how we ended up in the situation where SDS was put in the Burge basement. It felt like we were uncovering a huge mystery that other disabled students always wondered about, but barriers kept them from finding answers. But here we were, discovering truths and preparing to share them to everyone so that we could make change. It was truly a remarkable experience for me to take part in the movement to relocate SDS and know our efforts yielded a successful and promising outcome.

**Acknowledgements** Thank you to my family, friends, and professors for always supporting and believing in me.



## GRANT TAPKEN

**Bachelors in Religious Studies &  
Ancient Civilizations**

**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

**Acknowledgements** Anna Holbrook, thank you for everything you have done for me over these past four years! You always encourage me to push myself if it was self advocacy, working with a student in need, or helping me chase my dreams. It was my most sincere pleasure of having the chance to get to know you, work with you, and call you a friend. You were so instrumental in my time at the University of Iowa and for this I am forever grateful.



## KELSEY WOODWARD

**Bachelors in Health and Human Physiology**  
**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

**Favorite U.I. Memory** Meeting my lifelong friends and joining my sorority.

**Acknowledgements** Thank you to all my professors for encouraging and helping me along the way!



# THANK YOU

Disability Graduation is a result of love and advocacy, brought to being through the labor of many individuals, both the past and present. We would like to take a moment to thank and acknowledge the following organizations, departments, and people for their incredible effort and support.

**Steven Edwards, M.A.**

**Kristal Marlow Gibson, M.A., J.D.**

**Bria Marcelo**

**Natalie Oostenbrug**

**Alison Theresa Steger**

**Dr. Erin Stresow**

**Michael Venzon, M.Ed.**

**Cassie Walizer, M.Ed.**

**Center for Diversity & Enrichment  
(CDE)**

**Council for Disability Awareness  
(CDA)**

**Disability Graduation Planning  
Committee**

**The Division for Diversity, Equity,  
and Inclusion**

**The Division of Student Life**

**Student Disability Services (SDS)**

**University of Iowa Students for  
Disability Advocacy and Awareness  
(UISDAA)**

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Visit the 2021 Disability Graduation website.