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University Honors Program at ISU
Faculty Guide

Introduction

The University Honors Program (UHP) at ISU provides exceptional learning opportunities through interdisciplinary education for bright, talented, and ambitious undergraduate students. The UHP curriculum provides broader, deeper, and more complex learning experiences for our students; but the program is bigger than academics alone. The UHP offers our students a living/learning community, leadership and civic engagement opportunities, individualized advising, undergraduate research, a group of committed scholars, and a community that values and recognizes the whole person.

As a Faculty member, there are many important roles you can play in the University Honors Program. Faculty can promote the program and help identify qualified students, become part of the Honors Faculty by developing an Honors H-designated course, propose and teach an HONS 3391 eight week seminar course, and serve as a subject matter expert and thesis advisor for a Honors Degree seeking student (more ways to be involved are discussed in the HONORS FACULTY section). This guide is intended to facilitate that involvement by explaining the components of the Honors Program.

The University Honors Program

MISSION

As the only Honors Degree granting institution in Idaho, the University Honors Program at Idaho State University is a program for students who aspire to a more engaging and enriching collegiate experience. The program synthesizes the idea of a structured learning community within an interdisciplinary curriculum. Each class is fashioned into small cohorts and led by extremely dedicated and passionate professors who devote themselves to the development of their students.

As these learning cohorts progress through the curriculum together, they also participate in activities that engage the students and encourage them to learn together outside of the classroom. When these students transition into their major programs, they begin to participate in individual research projects working with professors in their disciplines.

VALUES

The University Honors Program (UHP) is a research- and civic-engagement focused program that provides a transformative environment promoting intellectual curiosity, academic attainment, and the development of social consciousness.
GOALS

The University Honors Program has these goals for student development:

1. Interdisciplinary Scholarship – integrating knowledge to express well-constructed insight and originality of thought through multidisciplinary courses and methodologies.

2. Intellectual and Creative Engagement – using the appropriate methodology and theoretical framework that includes design, synthesis, and interdisciplinary research.

3. Citizen Scholar – addressing real-world problems and finding ethical solutions, a process that culminates in reflective civic engagement, respect for diversity, and service-oriented action.

Honors Vision

The University Honors Program is a catalyst for academic innovation and the celebration of academic excellence for the UHP student. In this academic learning community, the UHP seeks to inspire the academic culture at Idaho State University by providing a challenging and imaginative curriculum. This includes opportunities for students and faculty members to participate in academic activities of the UHP along with pursuing their disciplinary scholarship, research involvement, and/or artistic interests.

Benefits of Participation

For students—develop interdisciplinary problem solving and research skills in preparation for post-graduate studies. Students will become part of a community of scholars. Students will also be involved with advanced projects, internships, service learning and travel opportunities through the Honors Program, providing an exceptional undergraduate experience.

For instructors—develop innovative and interesting ways to help students dive deep into an interdisciplinary problem. Participating in the Honors Program provides a chance to work with high-achieving, passionate and creative students; new opportunities to collaborate with other faculty. Honors faculty will be a cohort as well, developing interdisciplinary relationships among departments. Help students develop their knowledge and skills, using who they are and what they bring as a foundation, and incorporating a global/civic perspective in what they are learning.

Honors Students

Although the Honors Program is shaped by formal rules and guidelines, it bears the character of its students. An intellectually energetic, fun, vibrant program is a reflection of its student body. The Honors student should see the larger Honors Program and community as an extension of
themselves. In turn, the Honors Program provides its students, as well as faculty and administrators, with a space where intellectual excellence can grow and flourish.

The educational goals of Idaho State University’s Honors Program go beyond acquisition of knowledge. Values of creativity, service, cooperation, and self-reflection are also fostered. These values, too, are a reflection of the character of Honors students, past and present, and are to be shown by a spirit of participation, community, respect, and pride.

Translating these values into daily practice means paying attention to the details that facilitate our community’s needs. Attending class and meetings, participation in leadership work and service projects, offering help to fellow students, and the like, all make for a stronger Honors Program.

**Honors Faculty**

Honors faculty should reflect the make-up of the faculty at the college, exemplify excellence in the classroom and motivate the students to do the same.

Honors faculty will:
1. Allow their passion for their individual disciplines to shine through in their teaching;
2. Embrace teaching strategies that empower students to take ownership of course material and approach questions from interdisciplinary perspectives;
3. Encourage students to learn independently from direct sources of knowledge, such as laboratory experiences, original documents and other primary sources, data collections, service learning opportunities, etc.;
4. Enhance the critical and creative thinking skills of their students;
5. Promote the active and interactive learning of their students through such techniques as coaching, mentoring, inquiry-based methods, supervised independent projects, and service learning;
6. Provide thorough, frequent, and constructive assessment of students’ written and oral work;
7. Be willing to involve students in their own research, scholarship, or creative activities.

The Honors Program is successful when we have faculty in numerous disciplines across campus who contribute to the Program. Faculty can participate in a number of ways, including the following:

- Serve as a thesis advisor for an Honors Degree seeking student
- Be willing to work with a student on an Honors Contract
- Have an Honors student assist with your scholarship/research
- Attend Honors events (New Student Orientation, An Opportuni-Tea fundraiser, Honors Recognition Dinner)
- Plan a community service project with Honors students
- Be a guest speaker in an Honors class or Brown Bag Lunch Series
- Encourage high ability students to join the Honors Program
Honors Curriculum

The curriculum offered by the University Honors Program provides a firm foundation of core, interdisciplinary courses while allowing students the freedom to craft their own unique academic experience. The UHP curriculum has been developed to enrich the college experience of high achieving students. Honors courses have been developed to fulfill General Education Requirements yet there is no set or required curriculum for the University Honors Program. Each student is encouraged to take those honors courses that best meet the individual student's needs. Honors students have tremendous freedom to combine seminar courses, contract courses, research experiences, study abroad, national student exchange, and even independent study.

Members of the University Honors Program can complete either an Honors Distinction or an Honors Degree. (Students must complete a four year Bachelor’s degree to receive either the Distinction or Degree). UHP students who complete 19 credits of Honors coursework, including a 1 credit Honors Seminar (HONS 3391), graduate from the program with an Honors Distinction. The Honors Degree can be awarded in any of the Bachelor’s degrees offered at ISU (mentioned below) and requires a total number of 32 Honors credits, which are accumulated through Honors-designated courses (up to 24 Honors credits), completing TWO 1-credit Honors Seminars (HONS 3391), at least 6 credits of upper-division Honors Contract Courses, and an Honors Project or Thesis (maximum of 6 thesis credits, one of which must be HONS 4493). UHP Members who complete 32 credits of Honors coursework earn Idaho's only Honors Degree, and, therefore, a unique diploma.

Honors Degrees

Graduates of the UHP who complete 32 credits will receive one of the following Honors degrees:

- Honors Bachelor of Arts
- Honors Bachelor of Science
- Honors Bachelor of Business Administration
- Honors Bachelor of Fine Arts
- Honors Bachelor of Music
- Honors Bachelor of Music Education

Honors Program Student Learning Outcomes

Interdisciplinary Scholarship Learning Objectives

a) Written and Oral Communication: synthesize and analyze information from a variety of sources to logically present ideas in order to effectively communicate with diverse individuals and groups.

b) Integrative Scholarship: integrate knowledge to express insight and originality of thought through disciplinary or multidisciplinary methodologies.

Intellectual and Creative Engagement Learning Objectives
a) Research: engage in the creative process of formulating a hypothesis, researching those problems and drawing conclusions that lead to either original classroom assignments or larger faculty-mentored research projects resulting in contributions of scholarly work to each student’s chosen field of study.
b) Critical Inquiry: ability to analyze new problems and situations and formulate informed opinions and conclusions.

Citizen Scholar Learning Objectives

a) Civic Engagement: engage purposefully in leadership/service, mentorship and/or multi-cultural/intercultural activities within the Honors Program and Idaho State University.
b) Citizenship: actively participate and collaborate as informed members of local and global communities.

Honors Degree Seeking Student Learning Outcomes

In addition to the learning objectives noted above, the University Honors Program has identified a set of specific outcomes for students who complete the Degree component of the Honors Program.

Honors degree candidates will be able to:
   a) Write and publicly defend an Honors thesis of original research.
   b) Conduct independent scholarly work of professional or near professional quality in their field.

University Honors Program Course Characteristics

National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) guidelines provide a basic foundation for course programming that is utilized across the disciplines in the University Honors Program at Idaho State University. According to the National Collegiate Council, in comparison with non-honors courses, “The course objectives of honors sections generally reflect more emphasis on the higher levels of the cognitive domain as students spend more time on application and analysis. Students are expected to contribute more to analytical discussion in class, and writing assignments are generally more demanding in composition and research methodology.”

Note: curriculum is designed so that Honors requirements, can, when appropriate, also satisfy general education objectives, major or disciplinary requirements, and pre-professional or professional training requirements.

The University Honors Program objective is to provide the following course characteristics in all of its course programming:

- Discussion and active learning are emphasized over lectures and information-delivery. In fact, when appropriate, classes are run as seminars.
Courses provide more intensive learning experiences and students study subject matter in greater depth than a regular General Education section.

Textbooks are supplemented and/or replaced with other course materials, including primary sources and interpretive secondary sources.

Campus and community resources are utilized to broaden the classroom experience and bring in interdisciplinary perspectives.

Assignments are more rigorous.

Assignments require students to synthesize sources and ideas both in writing and in oral presentation.

Student work is evaluated with higher standards of expectation.

Assessment focuses on critical thinking and synthesizing information over test-taking or mastery of facts.

Honors-specific courses include a final capstone/research paper or project. These are student/instructor-conceived and require the integration of multiple sources and/or perspectives.

For faculty, courses in the Honors Program should serve as a “laboratory within which faculty feel welcome to experiment with new subjects, approaches, and pedagogies. When proven successful, such efforts in curriculum and pedagogical development can serve as prototypes for initiatives that can become institutionalized across the campus.” (NCHC)

Types of Honors Courses at ISU

There are three different types of Honors courses at ISU:

1. **HONS Prefix:**

   **HONS prefix** courses are run through the UHP and may be taught by faculty from UHP or relevant departments across campus. These can be either traditional courses or 1 credit seminars (HONS 3391). HONS 1101 and HONS 1102, for example, are approved General Education courses for Objectives 1 and 4, respectively. In most cases, agreements between Deans and UHP mean that a faculty member who agrees to teach a regular HONS class (not 3391) count the commitment toward their regular teaching load. For HONS 3391 seminars (1 credit, 8 weeks), the course does not count towards the regular teaching contract and faculty receive additional compensation.
2. –H Designation:
We also offer a –H designation on individual sections that ensures that the section is reserved for UHP students. Historically, these sections have operated independently of regular sections of the same course. Recently, UHP has begun coordinating with departments to have –H sections co-occur with regular sections (e.g., GEOL4403-01 and GEOL4403-H1 are taught in the same room, at the same time, but have different syllabi). This should be viewed as analogous to co-occurring 44xx/55xx sections of a class. For these classes, we do not anticipate having sufficient UHP enrollment to merit an independent section. Students in a –H section should have a syllabus that establishes altered course expectations compared to their regular-section classmates. The nature of the modification is flexible according to the style of class and desires of the instructor, but should push the UHP students to engage more deeply with the course content. Possible alterations include asking the UHP students to complete a term project, expanding the expectations of an existing term project (55xx-type expectations, as opposed to 44xx expectations), and designing and implementing an applied service project. Fundamentally, the increased expectations should be driven by application of, and engagement with, the course content, and should not be “drill”, or “busy-work” activities. Faculty are encouraged to discuss their ideas with the UHP Director if they would like additional guidance.

3. Honors Contract:
The third option for Honors credit at ISU is for students to arrange an individual Honors Contract for a class with their professor. Honors Contract courses are departmental courses offered under an "Honors Contract" between the student and instructor. Contracts are intended to provide students with a more engaging experience that allows them to work more closely with the instructor and explore course material in a more meaningful way.

An Honors Contract Course requires that the student and instructor agree, on a case-by-case basis, to the Honors requirements for the course.

The following are Contract policies:

1. Students must adhere to all course policies and complete all course assignments. The fact that the student is working for Honors credit does not guarantee a high grade. Final grades should reflect the quality and content of all of the student's work in the course. Engaging in an Honors contract does not exempt the student from doing the other course assignments.

2. Instructors are required to determine whether the student has completed the terms of the contract by the same date grades are regularly due for the course. “Incompletes” are not permissible for Honors Contracts, unless the student has obtained prior permission from the Honors Program Director.

3. All Honors Contracts must be approved by the Honors Program Director.

4. Lower division Contract Courses may only be general education objective courses if they are not offered through the UHP.
5. Contracts must be submitted to the UHP within the first three weeks of the semester.

6. Online courses are NOT eligible to be contracted.

7. Summer courses are NOT eligible to be contracted.

8. Contracted courses must be taught by faculty. Therefore, courses taught by teaching or graduate assistants are NOT eligible to be contracted.

9. Courses already designated as Honors courses are NOT eligible to contract. Even if the course is not being taught every semester.

10. The Honors Contract work may take a variety of forms. It must, however, demonstrate a deeper connection to the course content. In most cases, the UHP discourages term papers. Ideas from past contracts include: creating a hands-on module for middle schoolers that teaches about a course topic; working in the faculty member’s research lab for X hours; volunteering translation services (language classes); carrying out an independent research project; making an educational video that can be used by the faculty/department for outreach; in 44xx/55xx classes, working to the same expectations as the 55xx students in the class.

For more please visit the website: https://www.isu.edu/honors/current-students/honors-curriculum-and-courses/

Questions?

Please don’t hesitate to contact any of the Honors faculty/staff if you should have any questions or concerns.

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