Honors and Undergraduate Research

Honors and Undergraduate Research provides high-impact educational experiences and challenges motivated students in all academic disciplines to graduate from an enriched, demanding curriculum. The programs administered by the office bring together outstanding students and faculty to build a community of knowledge-producers, life-long learners, nationally recognized scholars and world citizens. Through Honors and Undergraduate Research, motivated students have access to Honors courses, co-curricular enrichment activities and research programs that can be customized to enhance each student’s personal, professional and intellectual development.

Undergraduate Research

Honors and Undergraduate Research promotes, coordinates, creates and assesses undergraduate programs involving creative scholarship, inquiry and research in all academic disciplines at Texas A&M. As a recognized “high impact practice,” undergraduate research experiences increase undergraduate student learning and success, not only while students are at Texas A&M, but long after graduation.

In terms of professional and intellectual development, being involved in undergraduate research allows students to learn more about their future professional field, to participate in a scholarly community of like-minded students and to develop a close working relationship with acclaimed faculty. Research experiences make students more competitive for scholarships, internships, jobs, international opportunities and admission to top graduate and professional programs. Perhaps most importantly, engaging in undergraduate research allows students to experience the excitement of creating new knowledge, solving cutting-edge problems and developing new insights—life skills that are increasingly important in our world.

Campus-wide programs coordinated by Honors and Undergraduate Research include the Undergraduate Research Scholars program and the publication of Explorations: the Texas A&M Undergraduate Journal. The office offers workshops for students on obtaining summer research opportunities, starting out in research and thesis writing, as well as workshops for faculty and graduate students on mentoring undergraduate researchers. Honors and Undergraduate Research also works with groups across campus to promote and facilitate activities that support undergraduate research opportunities, such as summer Research Experience for Undergraduate (REU) programs and the HUR-Sigma Xi Research Expo. Lastly, the office provides assistance for developing externally funded proposals and implementation of funded projects that have undergraduate research involvement, such as National Science Foundation REU, Beckman Scholars, and Howard Hughes Medical Institute Education grants.

Undergraduate Research Scholars Program

Any junior or senior student with a cumulative Texas A&M GPR of 3.0 or above may apply to the Undergraduate Research Scholars program. In addition, groups of at least two to four students collaborating as a team on a single project may also apply. The Research Scholars program requires two long semesters of independent research supervised by a faculty advisor that culminate in a scholarly product. The scholarly product may be a research thesis, an accepted article in a professional journal, an exhibit, a performance, or other product as determined by the faculty advisor in collaboration with the Honors and Undergraduate Research Office. Participants are selected for this program based on the quality of their project proposal and their academic record.

Explorations: The Texas A&M Undergraduate Journal

Explorations is a student-run journal guided by faculty and administrators that selects and publishes student-authored articles of general interest in any area. Articles are submitted in a two-stage process: first, proposals for articles are reviewed by faculty-student teams; secondly, the resulting full-length articles undergo a second round of peer review. Acceptance to the journal is competitive—less than 20% of submitted proposals are accepted. Recently published articles have been from a wide range of academic fields: music, creative poetry, forensics, cancer biology, astrophysics, nanomedicine, computer algorithms, business, geosciences, sociology, aerospace engineering and cultural anthropology. To review recent issues and to find upcoming submission deadlines, visit the Honors and Undergraduate Research website.

Undergraduate Research Ambassadors

Undergraduate Research Ambassadors represent Honors and Undergraduate Research at research, recruiting, and outreach events. Juniors or seniors with an extensive background in research, a GPR of 3.0 or higher, outstanding oral communication skills and the ability to describe research to a general audience may apply to the program. A dozen Ambassadors from multiple disciplines are chosen each year, trained in presentation and leadership, and then participate in a variety of activities including meeting with highly placed members of the University Administration, distinguished faculty, outstanding alumni, prospective students, and parents.

Workshops and Events

Honors and Undergraduate Research offers informational workshops on undergraduate research for undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty. Additionally, we coordinate numerous public events that celebrate and promote undergraduate research, providing venues for students to present their research projects, for faculty to recruit new student researchers, and for recognition of the research efforts of both students and faculty. Workshops and events are publicized through emails, newsletters, and the Honors and Undergraduate Research (http://hur.tamu.edu) website.

Grant, Proposal, and Project Assistance

Honors and Undergraduate Research provides faculty with a wide variety of support services for undergraduate research program and proposal development and implementation. Please contact the office directly for more information.

Other Capstones

Honors and Undergraduate Research offers additional one year Capstone experiences to any Junior or Senior with a cumulative Texas A&M GPR of 3.0 or above. The Undergraduate Teacher Scholars Program allows Scholars to create their own Honors seminar or to improve an existing course in collaboration with a faculty expert. The Undergraduate Service Scholars Program pairs students with community leaders to develop and carry out projects that benefit the greater community.
Undergraduate Leadership Scholars Program enables student leaders in various organizations to hone their skills as they plan and implement improvements to their organization’s programming and impact in collaboration with their faculty advisor. All participants for these programs are chosen based on the quality of their proposals, their academic record and the recommendation of their faculty or community advisor.

**Admission to the University Honors Program**

The university-level Honors distinction offered by the University Honors Program is Honors Fellows. Students are admitted to the Honors Fellows curriculum on a competitive basis. Incoming freshmen apply as part of their application for admission to the university. Continuing students may apply each Spring for entry in the Fall prior to completing 60 credit hours at Texas A&M.

Applications are evaluated on the basis of the student’s record of academic achievement and demonstrated potential for creativity, intellectual ability, imagination, curiosity, willingness to try new things and self-awareness. Once admitted to the Honors Fellows curriculum, students are designated as “Honors Students” and may then access specific privileges and resources, including additional academic advising, priority registration, contracting non-honors courses for Honors credit, Honors Independent Study and enrolling in graduate-level courses for undergraduate Honors credit. Honors Students also receive priority for the Honors Housing Community and advising for competitive national fellowships.

Freshmen admitted to the University Honors Program are required to live in the Honors Housing Community and participate in the Honors Freshman Learning Community course. To remain in the program, all students (freshman and continuing students) must make progress toward the Honors Fellows distinction and meet minimum co-curricular participation requirements. See the section on Maintaining Honors Status.

**Honors Fellows Curriculum**

The Honors Fellows curriculum requires 30 credit hours of honors coursework (including 9 credit hours from the University Core Curriculum and 12 credit hours of upper-level coursework) and a “capstone experience.” The University Honors Program works with academic departments across the university to ensure that appropriate Honors courses are offered. Honors courses have limited enrollment and encourage participatory learning. In Honors classrooms, students work closely with many of the University’s most acclaimed faculty. Material in Honors courses is intended to provide increased complexity, not simply more work or greater difficulty. Small class size (usually not more than 25 students) also allows Honors courses to undertake activities and utilize facilities not readily available to undergraduate students. Honors classes may be special sections of regularly offered courses or courses developed specifically for Honors Students. Students are encouraged to visit regularly with University Honors Program advisors to ensure that their course selection meets both degree and Honors curriculum requirements.

To complete Honors Fellows curriculum requirements, Honors Students must complete a capstone experience. The requirement may be met by engaging in the Undergraduate Research Scholars Program, by preparing and teaching an Honors Seminar as part of the Undergraduate Teacher Scholars Program, by undertaking a community service project as a participant in the Undergraduate Service Scholars Program, by developing an enhancement project for a student organization through the Undergraduate Leadership Scholars Program or by completing a capstone project designated by their home department. Students should consult with a University Honors Program advisor in the planning stages to seek approval for their capstone experience.

Honors Students are afforded several avenues to earn Honors credit in addition to regularly offered Honors courses. Honors Students may contract for Honors credit, engage in Honors independent study or take graduate courses that count toward undergraduate degree requirements. Honors Students should consult with University Honors Program advisors about these opportunities.

Honors Students with unique intellectual interests and specific educational goals may also “major” in Honors by pursuing the innovative University Studies – Honors (USHN) degree. Students may combine a range of related academic areas into a coherent degree plan by designating an “area of concentration” in combination with two established minor fields of study. The formulation of the degree plan requires students to conceptually link their course selection to a specific “problem” that will be addressed in a capstone thesis.

**Maintaining Honors Status**

To remain in the Honors Fellows curriculum, Honors Students must:

1. Maintain a 3.5 cumulative GPR,
2. Maintain a 3.25 GPR in honors coursework,
3. Maintain full time enrollment status,
4. Make progress toward curriculum requirements by taking at least 6 Honors credits per year,
5. Fulfill annual co-curricular participation requirements,
   a. Freshmen: Live in Honors Freshman Housing (or obtain a waiver) and participate in the Learning Community Course, and
   b. Continuing Students: Participate in at least one Honors Student Council event each semester.
   c. All: Prepare or update an ePortfolio on an annual basis.

Honors Students who fail to meet any of these requirements will be given a semester of probation to correct any deficiencies. Honors Students who fail to meet requirements after a semester of probation will be dismissed from the program.

**The University Scholars**

The University Scholars program identifies students who embody academic leadership and enhances the personal, professional and intellectual development of these students.

University Scholars receive a scholarship stipend and participate in a number of development activities, including University Scholar Exploration Series, which are intimate discussion-based seminars offered on a wide variety of topics. Additionally, University Scholars serve as ambassadors for Honors and Undergraduate Research at Texas A&M University, representing the office at outreach events and in our publicity materials.

Each spring semester, eligible students are invited to apply for the University Scholar program. The application process involves an extensive written application and, for the approximately 40 students selected as semi-finalists, an in-depth interview. In the end, approximately 12 students are invited to join the University Scholar program.

Freshmen who meet the eligibility criteria for the program will be contacted via their official Texas A&M University email accounts at the start of the
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Spring semester. Students with questions about eligibility should contact Honors and Undergraduate Research.

**Honors Student Services**

Honors Students have access to numerous special services and programs. Throughout the academic year, Honors and Undergraduate Research coordinates several recreational and community-building events, lectures and workshops. Honors Students are invited to engage in leadership opportunities and contribute to the development of university-level Honors programming through the Honors Student Council and as Honors Housing Community leaders or University Scholars.

Honors Students also receive additional academic advising to help them complete the Honors curriculum; furthermore, specialized advising is available to help students prepare for major national fellowship competitions such as the Rhodes, Truman or Goldwater Scholarships, as well as the Fulbright Program for U.S. Students and the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program, among others. Information about services and opportunities for Honors Students is distributed regularly via weekly email bulletin.

**Services for All Students**

Honors and Undergraduate Research challenges all motivated and high-achieving Texas A&M students to explore their world, expand their horizons and excel academically. While some services of the office are exclusive to Honors Students, advisors are available to talk with any student who is interested in sampling the academic challenge of an Honors course, committing to an undergraduate research project, applying to the University Honors Program or engaging the process of self-discovery entailed in preparation for national fellowships.

Continuing students with a minimum 3.5 cumulative GPR who have not applied or not been accepted to the Honors Fellows program may enroll in honors coursework during their assigned registration time. Students who would like to meet with a University Honors Program advisor may sign up for an appointment through Sundial. All students interested in the services offered by Honors and Undergraduate Research are encouraged to sign up for the email bulletin.

**Graduation with Honors**

All Honors courses and participation in the Undergraduate Research Scholars program are designated on a student’s transcript, demonstrating to future employers or admissions committees that the student has engaged with an enriched, challenging curriculum. Honors Students who complete the Honors Fellows curriculum are further designated as Honors Fellows.

Undergraduates in some academic colleges and departments may pursue additional graduation distinctions. These graduation distinction requirements work in concert with the Honors Fellows plan, and many students graduate with multiple distinctions. In general, all Honors graduation distinctions require that the student complete a substantial body of Honors coursework, hold a minimum cumulative Texas A&M GPR of 3.5, and a cumulative Honors course GPR of 3.25 with no grade lower than a C in an Honors course.

These Honors graduation distinctions are separate from “Latin Honors” such as *cum laude*, *summa cum laude* or *magna cum laude*, which are conferred by the Office of the Registrar and are based upon cumulative GPR and residency requirements.