HONORS CAPSTONE PROJECT
2023-2024

Information for Prospective Capstone Advisors

The University Honors Program culminates in the Honors Capstone project. The project may be completed in one of three different paths:

- **Research Path** – Students complete an Honors research thesis in any discipline or an interdisciplinary thesis. The discipline of the thesis does not necessarily need to be the student's major, however, generally the student must possess a background in the discipline of sufficient scope to complete a thesis.
- **Creative Path**– Students complete a creative works project at an honors level appropriate to their discipline. Creative projects may include those in music, creative writing, graphic arts, dance, photography, any art, visual or mixed media, or theatre.
- **Applied Path**– Students complete an applied project that results in an actual implemented program, event, curricular method, initiative, business plan, non-profit endeavor, or other approved projects that fall "outside the box."

An honors capstone project may be completed in any discipline of the student's choice and interest and does not necessarily need to be from the student's major. Although students must have sufficient background knowledge in the area of choice, and therefore most projects will relate to a student's major or minor. Occasionally a student can successfully complete a thesis outside of their major, if they have enough background in that field or are completing an applied thesis that utilizes an interdisciplinary format. A student may complete a creative writing or other art-based project even if they are not a student in the College of Performing and Visual Arts. Interdisciplinary projects are encouraged, and there are some specific National Honors fellowships and awards for interdisciplinary work.

A capstone project may take the form of one of the following, or another project design may be sought during the proposal phase:

- Traditional research thesis on a topic from a single discipline or interdisciplinary in nature.
- Original work in art, music, creative writing or other approved area.
- Experiential education projects in teaching, nursing or other applied discipline.
- Business plans and marketing plans.
- A problem-solving project that applies theory to the issue.
- An original design for a model, prototype, or other programmatic area.
- A full program developed for implementation such as through a student affairs department on campus or a non-profit.
- A laboratory project or experiment in the sciences.

A completed honors capstone project must have the following attributes:

- Appropriate undergraduate level original research design with the student as the lead researcher for the portion of the project that comprises the capstone; or originality of thought or design for applied project; or creativity in design for a creative project.
- Familiarity with the literature/background contextual knowledge relevant to the topic.
- Seriousness of intellectual or creative inquiry and clarity in the conceptualization of the central issue, idea or concept.
- Logical organization and grammatically correct writing.
- Conclusions supported by the evidence.
- All capstone projects require a written component.
- The project's final product must be more than what is expected from other students in the discipline's capstone course (if applicable) or more than the type of project produced in a single semester, but does not need to be "masters thesis"-level quality. Projects should allow for student-directed design, and the process is more important than the final product.

See the Honors Capstone Handbook for past thesis/capstone project titles and additional information on formatting, timelines, requirements, and expectations.

Honors Capstone Advisor Role

The Capstone Advisors are mutually agreed upon by the student and faculty member via the Capstone Advisor Agreement, which should be completed during the first semester the student is enrolled in HON 351 or UNIV431 (for McNair Scholars), generally completed when the student is at junior level or first semester of the senior year. The Capstone Advisor provides mentoring and advice for students completing the Honors Capstone, with the following primary duties:

1. **Help the student develop a project that is appropriate for the time frame,** which is generally two to three semesters in length.
2. **Assist the student in framing the topic and developing a project proposal** that is of interest to the student, well-focused in nature, and appropriate for an Honors thesis.
3. **Ensure that the student's project is meaningful for the student.** The project should be a substantial research project, applied project or creative capstone project initiated by the student in an area of the student's interest, comprised of the student's own work. The student should not simply be a research assistant for the professor.
   a. That being said, the Honors Capstone project may tie into the Capstone Advisor's ongoing work in various ways, as long as the student has their own piece of the project, which is of interest to the student and has clear beginning and end dates. Students conducting research in a laboratory setting, such as physics or chemistry projects, will likely conduct research under the leadership of their faculty mentor with links with larger scientific research projects.
4. **Help guide the student's background research/literature review** with suggestions for readings, and directions for searches. However, the student does not need to rely solely on the Capstone Advisor for all information related to the background research. Students should use all of the resources at hand, such as librarians, to assist them in locating suitable background research material.
5. **Meet with the student on a regular basis throughout the process**. This may take different formats for different student/faculty combinations. The most successful

meeting schedules are regularly scheduled and occur at least every other week. Some advisors also choose to meet face-to-face with their advisee once a month, using frequent e-mail communication between meetings to keep the project on track.

6. **Provide feedback to the Honors Program** about the progress of individual Honors student with respect to their honors thesis work. This feedback is formalized with the Capstone Feedback Form and becomes part of the grading rubric for these courses as stated in the syllabi for the courses, such as 80% of the student's grade in HON451 Honors Senior Thesis is provided by the Honors Capstone Advisor and the remaining 20% of the grade is earned through professional and scholarly development activities and events. A short questionnaire is provided to the thesis advisor mid-semester and at the end of the semester for feedback. The student is expected to provide the form to the advisor during a regularly scheduled meeting or may email the form. The advisor may complete the questionnaire and give it back to the student or may scan and email it to the Honors Program. Advisors are asked to contact the Schulze Chair for Honors and Interdisciplinary Studies if there are concerns about a student's progress.

7. **Review the project proposal, review the final abstract for submission for conferences or funding opportunities, and review the final thesis/capstone project**. This process of project review may require reading multiple drafts and/or giving the student specific, copious feedback. If the student needs editing beyond that which the Capstone Advisor can (or should) provide, the Capstone Advisor can recommend an external editor or the writing center for more serious writing issues. Currently the Honors Program is offering writing consultation and review with an on staff member, and students are encouraged to submit their drafts for writing review at least once per semester.

Tips for Capstone Advisors

These tips have been collected by the UNC Honors Program and from other universities:

- Student's enthusiasm for a project may be more than the time boundaries and experience will allow. Encourage students to refine and narrow their topics. They may want to consider their project as a "pilot" project, upon which they may build future work. For instance, a student that wants to write a full novel may be redirected to write an outline, develop characters, and then write a few chapters. A student wanting to conduct qualitative research with 30 interview participants may be redirected to interview 3 or 4 participants instead for their Honors capstone.
- Successful projects are often ones in which the student has a high level of passion, and although it is tempting to try to redirect the student to the capstone advisor's areas of research, if the project strays too much from the student's interest area they may fail to have the motivation to complete the capstone. However, in certain natural sciences areas, this may not be possible, and students are often quite successful working on areas of research in which there is already on-going research in the established labs of the available faculty members.
- Projects should be of original design. However, the bar for originality does not need to be as high as a Ph.D. level dissertation! Students may choose to design a program based on other successful models, for instance.
- Students should begin literature reviews or reviews of past creative works or applied program designs relating to their project early in the capstone process. You may want to

help students find relevant resources or direct them to a librarian. Advise the student to collect a working bibliography.

- Help the student to revise the project if the required methodology is beyond the available tools. Students conducting research should be taking additional coursework either through the discipline or other research courses to assist them in developing appropriate skills.

- Help the student to stay focused throughout the capstone project timeline. The Honors Program encourages that the final product for research projects be a written document no longer than 50 pages (excluding appendices). However, creative and applied projects and some humanities-based research projects may be longer. This guideline assists students so that they may convert their thesis into a publishable journal submission. Also, sometimes concise research projects may be less than a total of 50 pages, and some scientific and math theses may be much shorter, as applicable to the necessary elements of those written manuscripts.

- Assist students who plan research that requires human subjects to develop a solid IRB application. First step should be to require the student to completely review the IRB requirements and submission procedures on UNC's IRB website: http://www.unco.edu/osp/ethics/irb/index.html. The student needs to take the lead on the IRB, but submission will also need to be facilitated by the advisor. The capstone advisor is expected to sign off as the research mentor through IRB, and therefore will also need a Streamlyne account.

- Students are responsible for knowing all the deadlines and for submitting the required paperwork and documents to the Honors Program office outside of any other internally determined deadlines agreed to by the student and capstone advisor.

- All written documents must display college-level writing. Although students start with varying levels of writing ability, and not every student needs to be exceptional at writing, their writing must still be coherent, grammatically correct, and suitable to the discipline's expectations. Students should be sent to outside assistance early in the process if the capstone advisor determines that the writing quality needs additional support. The UNC Writing Center can provide assistance: https://www.unco.edu/writing-center/ .

General Timeline and Steps for RESEARCH Based Projects

Semester 1:

Developing the Project Preliminary Proposal/Prospectus (Enrolled in 1 credit of HON351 or UNIV431)

- Refine a research topic
- Start reading relevant literature and create a tracking system for the literature review
- Develop general research question(s) and project purpose statement as applicable
- Work with HON351/UNIV431 instructor and department chairs or Honors department liaisons to find a capstone advisor
- Write a preliminary capstone proposal with project design (preliminary methods and methodology when appropriate), literature or background review, timeline, and references.
- Obtain signatures for the proposal on the capstone proposal approval

Semester 2 and 3:

Conducting the Project (Enrolled in 1-2 credits of HON451 each semester for a TOTAL of 2 credit hours OR may take a directed studies course with their thesis advisor for up to 2 credits towards their project OR may enroll in departmental capstone courses to use for Honors Capstone, if approve by Schulze Chair and Honors Capstone Advisor.)

- Meet with the capstone advisor **regularly** during the semester
- Fully develop methodology and methods or research procedures and protocols and seek outside faculty assistance if needed.
- Finalize proposal. Obtain signature on proposal approval form when proposal is fully approved.
- Submit IRB application or *IACUC* approval of animal use protocols
- Continue refining the literature review or background research section.
- Finalize and/or pilot test methods, instruments and tools as needed
- Collect and analyze data/evaluate results for research project
- Revise/update literature review as needed to align with results
- Complete all work for the project as outlined in the proposal and along the timeline developed.

FINAL SEMESTER:

Concluding and presenting the Project

- Meet with the capstone advisor regularly throughout the semester.
- Write results, conclusion, and/or discussion sections as applicable
- Revisions, revisions, revisions: plan on completing at least 2-3 drafts
- Present project at Student Showcase for Artists and Scholars and/or Honors Research Night. May also present at additional professional conferences.
- Obtain signatures for the final thesis on the thesis approval form. Once final capstone is approved (by both capstone advisor and Schulze Chair), submit the form and an electronic copy of the thesis to the Honors Program Staff (Executive Director), for final review and approval.
- Print finished capstone in the Honors office (Michener L-98) for binding

| General Timeline and Steps for |
| CREATIVE OR APPLIED CAPSTONE Projects |

Semester 1:
Developing the Capstone/Creative Project (Enrolled in 1 credit of HON351)
- Commit to thesis project
- Read the Honors project requirements in the student handbook
- Develop general area of interest(s)
- Start reading relevant literature/exploring relevant works and create a tracking system for the review process
- Refine project topic and purpose and develop specific plan to complete identified expected product
- Work with HON351 instructor and Honors Program staff to find a project advisor
- Write a full project proposal including introduction, project, background research, artist statement (if applicable), timeline, and references.
- Obtain signatures for the proposal on the capstone proposal approval form

Semester 2-3 (may be one, two or three semesters of work):
Conducting the Project (Enrolled in 1-2 credits of HON451 each semester for a TOTAL of 2 credit hours OR may take a directed studies course with their thesis advisor for up to 2 credits towards their project OR may enroll in departmental capstone courses to use for Honors Capstone, if approve by Schulze Chair and Honors Capstone Advisor.)
- Meet with the capstone advisor regularly as needed
- Finalize specific plan to complete identified expected product
- Finish background research and/or artist statement
- Obtain any necessary software or supplies
- Engage in rehearsal or production/creation of project

FINAL SEMESTER
Concluding the Capstone/Creative Project (Enrolled in 1 credit of HON451 or discipline based capstone course)
- Meet with the capstone advisor regularly
- Create a final version product for the project (i.e. musical score, photographic portfolio of visual work, poetry collection, unit plan, etc.)
- Write discussion/reflection section
- Revisions, revisions, revisions: plan on completing at least three full drafts
- Present work at Student Showcase for Artists and Scholars or other appropriate venue, conference, class, etc.
- Obtain signatures of final approval from thesis advisor, departmental liaison, and honors director on the Final Capstone Approval form.
- Print finished thesis in the Honors office (Michener L-98) for binding and include one or more final products if appropriate (i.e. a CD recording of a musical composition as well as the written score)

UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
CONTACT INFORMATION

University Honors Program Staff

Loree Crow, Executive Director for Undergraduate Academic Engagement
Email: loree.crow@unco.edu
Phone: 970-351-2948

Corinne Wieben, Ph.D., Schulze Chair for Honors and Interdisciplinary Studies
Email: Corinne.Wieben@unco.edu
Ross 3295A

Margaret McKeown Kelley, Student & Faculty Support Specialist
Email: margaret.kelley@unco.edu
Phone: 970-351-2940

Krista Caufman, Director for McNair Scholars
Email: krista.caufman@unco.edu
Phone: 970-351-1920

Jordan Garcia, Ph.D., Assistant Director and Instructor for McNair Scholars
Email: Jordan.garcia@unco.edu
Phone 970-351-4618

Location

U-Engage (Undergraduate Academic Engagement)
University of Northern Colorado
Michener Library L-98
Lower Level, Northwest corner

Phone

(970) 351-2940

Web Site

http://www.unco.edu/honors

E-mail

honors@unco.edu

HONORS PROGRAM

CAPSTONE ADVISOR FEEDBACK FORM

- Honors Program students who are enrolled in HON451 are required to obtain feedback from their capstone advisors in order to provide the Honors Program with the current status of the student and project.
- Each semester the student is enrolled in HON451, the student must submit a minimum of 2 feedback forms in order to be considered to be making adequate progress.

Student to complete this section:

Student Name_____Bear email_____

Project topic_____

Capstone Advisor Name_____

Thesis course enrolled in this semester: ❑ HON351. ❑ UNIV431 ❑ UNIV432 ❑ HON451
❑ Other:_____

Faculty Thesis/Capstone Advisor to complete this section:

The student has been prepared for meetings and communicates in a timely and professional manner.
❑ Strongly Disagree ❑ Disagree ❑ Neutral ❑ Agree ❑ Strongly Agree ❑ N/A

The student appears interested in the chosen topic/project.
❑ Strongly Disagree ❑ Disagree ❑ Neutral ❑ Agree ❑ Strongly Agree ❑ N/A

The student's writing is at a level appropriate for honors work in the applicable discipline.
❑ Strongly Disagree ❑ Disagree ❑ Neutral ❑ Agree ❑ Strongly Agree ❑ N/A

The student is making adequate progress on the honors project.
❑ Strongly Disagree ❑ Disagree ❑ Neutral ❑ Agree ❑ Strongly Agree ❑ N/A

Grade to be provided for the honors project proposal/thesis work to date.
❑ A   ❑ B   ❑ C   ❑ D   ❑ F ❑ I or NR   Other:_____

Comments - If you have any concerns about this particular student's progress or ability to complete the project, please provide details here.

Signature of Capstone Advisor_____ **Date**_____

Please complete this form and then return the form to the student each month. You may alternatively scan and email the form to loree.crow@unco.edu *with the student's name in the subject heading.*

UNC HONORS PROGRAM

THESIS/CAPSTONE PROPOSAL APPROVAL SIGNATURE FORM

- ▪ Honors Program students must obtain approval of their Honors Thesis/Capstone Project before beginning the project.

To be completed by Student:

Student Name _____ Bear Number _____

Thesis Project title _____

_____

Thesis/Capstone Advisor Name _____

Thesis course enrolled in this semester: ❏ HON351　❏ UNIV431　❏ UNIV432　❏ HON451
❏ Other:_____

Honors Project type: ❏ Research　　❏ Applied　　　❏ Creative　❏ Other:_____

STUDENT SIGNATURE:_____

To be completed by Thesis/Capstone Advisor:

Grade earned for the honors project proposal/thesis work to date.
❏ A　　　❏ B　　　❏ C　　　❏ D　　　❏ F　　　❏ I or NR　　Other: _____

The current status of the student's **Thesis/Capstone Project PROPOSAL** is as follows:
❏ Fully Approved　　❏ Approved w/revisions required　❏ Not Approved/Needs work

By signing this form, the thesis/capstone advisor agrees to supervise the student's proposed thesis/capstone project per the proposal and thesis advisor agreement and per the Honors Faculty Handbook and Upper Division Honors Program specifications. The advisor's signature on the thesis title page when submitted upon completion of final and complete thesis/capstone written project will serve as final approval of the thesis.

/CAPSTONE ADVISOR SIGNATURE:_____Date_____

SCHULZE CHAIR SIGNATURE:_____Date_____

UNC HONORS PROGRAM

FINAL CAPSTONE APPROVAL FORM

- Honors Program students must obtain approval of their Honors Capstone Project before printing.
- This form should be completed and submitted by the following semester deadlines:
  - Fall: **December 1**   Spring: **May 1**   Summer: **August 1**
- If additional time is required to obtain <u>Full Approval</u>, this form should still be turned in by the deadline. The final capstone MUST BE APPROVED no later than the **last day of the semester** when the student is graduating, or the student's Honors distinction will be removed from their diploma and transcript. The student may still be eligible to print their capstone if completed after the end of the semester.
- This form is required to be fully completed and signed before the Honors Program will check off the capstone requirement on the student's Degree Works.
- This form is also required before a student will be allowed to submit their capstone to the University Digital Depository.

To be completed by Student:

Student Name_____Bear Number_____

Current semester (semester completing project)_____Semester Graduating_____

Final Thesis Project title _____

_____

Capstone Advisor Name_____

Honors Project type: ❑ Research   ❑ Applied   ❑ Creative   ❑ Other:_____

STUDENT SIGNATURE:_____Date_____

To be completed by Capstone Advisor:

Grade earned for the honors project capstone work to date.

❑ A   ❑ B   ❑ C   ❑ D   ❑ F   ❑ I or NR   Other: _____

The current status of the student's **Capstone Project** is as follows:

❑ Fully Approved   ❑ Approved w/some revisions required   ❑ Not Approved/Needs Major work
❑ Other: _____

If the project is <u>Not Approved</u> at this stage, then the project must be resubmitted and a new form signed when approved.

CAPSTONE ADVISOR SIGNATURE:_____Date_____

To be completed by Honors Departmental Liaison:

❑ Fully Approved   ❑ Approved w/some revisions required   ❑ Not Approved/Needs Major work

SCHULZE CHAIR FOR HONORS SIGNATURE:_____Date_____

HONORS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIGNATURE:_____Date_____

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HONORS PROGRAM

CAPSTONE ADVISOR AGREEMENT

This form and the list of objectives/timeline serves as a working agreement between the honors student and thesis/capstone advisor. The capstone advisor agrees to provide written periodic feedback to the Honors Program when the student is actively enrolled in HON351 or HON451. The Student is expected to provide the feedback form to the advisor. The student should submit this completed agreement form to the Honors Program office during the first semester the student is enrolled in HON 351. The documents will be kept in the student's honors program file.

Student Name:_____ Bear Number:_____

Bears Email:_____Expected Date of Graduation:_____

Major(s) & Minor(s):_____

Capstone Advisor:_____

Title (e.g. Professor, Lecturer)_____

Department/Discipline _____

Please explain why you have chosen this faculty member to be your Capstone Advisor:

Note - Please attach a list of objectives/timeline for the project. The list should be developed in consultation with your Capstone Advisor.

Student Signature:_____Date_____

Capstone Advisor Signature:_____Date_____