The University Honors Program’s Capstone Handbook offers students and faculty mentors clear guidelines and support for the successful completion of honors capstone projects. Because a traditional long essay—or thesis—is just one of many possible capstone options, the handbook uses the broader term “capstone” to describe this final honors project.

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What is an Honors Capstone Project?

As both a showcase of undergraduate work and a springboard to the future, the Honors capstone project is the ultimate “Dare to Know.” Capstone authors take responsibility for their own educations by thinking independently and managing long-term projects. They choose their own adventures as they complete their Honors journeys, building capstones that follow their curiosity, express their passion, and demonstrate their growth. Having completed a capstone, students leave USU as budding experts in their fields and skillful advocates for the value of their own work, qualities that distinguish them from their peers as they apply for jobs, graduate programs, fellowships, internships, or volunteer opportunities.

The topics of an Honors capstone vary according to a student’s major(s) and interests, but they are always of both personal and professional value. Honors students begin the program with a “dare” to ask questions, seek answers, and share knowledge. The capstone completes that challenge by immersing students in the undergraduate research or creative activity that matters most to them. We dare Honors students to follow their passions, use their imaginations, and choose their own adventures!

What Do Honors Students Say?

Honors students find the process of completing a capstone project to be both challenging and life-changing. The capstone offers the chance to chart new territory by deciding which paths one might follow after graduation from USU. Our recent graduates can perhaps articulate most clearly the value of an Honors capstone experience:

Kira Anjewierden (General Music): My capstone “means more to me than any other assignment or project I have ever completed. It … helped me to reflect on and process years of thoughts and emotions regarding classes, coursework, field experiences, and interpersonal relationships.”

Jesse Fleri (Conservation and Restoration Ecology): “I came to college with little to no understanding of what I really wanted from my next four years; I will be leaving USU knowing exactly where I want to end up.”

Thomas Hill (Mathematics): “This summer I will be working for the National Security Agency as an applied research mathematician. I will be using the same research skills I have developed during my capstone, now with applications in encryption and signal analysis.”

Ashley Houston (Animal, Dairy, and Veterinary Sciences): “Perhaps my greatest reward is the relationships I have made with my mentor and Departmental Honors Advisor.”

Bailey Livingston (Management): “I now have a deeper understanding of how different forces in the world … create the society and social norms we experience every day.”

Morgan Sanford (English): “I want to continue asking questions, researching, and writing for the rest of my life. This document will be the writing sample that I use in my graduate school applications and it is, quite honestly, the reason I decided to go.”

Hyrum Tennant (Civil and Environmental Engineering): “The most valuable part of completing a capstone project is the experience you gain solving problems. If you are a good problem solver, it doesn’t really matter what you do in the future; you will always be able to come up with the solutions to any problem.”

Elizabeth Wynn (Psychology): “The challenges and setbacks, as well as the triumphs of my capstone experience, have prepared me for my future pursuits in academia and a career.”
The Basics of an Honors Capstone

Who? Every Honors graduate completes a capstone because these projects showcase undergraduate work and act as springboards to the future. Capstones guarantee that Honors students leave USU as growing experts in their fields and skillful communicators about the value of their own work, qualities that distinguish them from their peers as they apply for jobs, graduate programs, fellowships, internships, and volunteer opportunities.

What? As the ultimate “Dare to Know,” the Honors capstone demonstrates the ability to take responsibility for one’s own education by thinking independently, managing a long-term project, and communicating ideas with others. The capstone requirement to collaborate with a mentoring professor also guarantees every Honors student an intellectual, professional, and personal guide on the path to the post-graduation future. The capstone is an exciting opportunity to grow and prepare for next steps!

Where? The foundational research or creative work of a capstone project can take place anywhere: in the field or at the library, on an internship or in the community, at USU or abroad. Students can also choose specific pathways to Honors graduation that shape where, how, and with whom they work. All Honors students qualify for the Undergraduate Research transcript designation. Those who study abroad and master a language can become Global Engagement Scholars, while those whose work clearly engages with and serves the community can earn the Community Engaged Scholar designation. These transcript designations help to demonstrate where and why students engaged in their capstone work.

When? Students usually begin planning for capstones a year before they complete them (typically as juniors) by taking HONR 3900 (a one-credit, pass/fail capstone preparation course) and submitting a capstone proposal (the final assignment of HONR 3900). They can earn Honors points by completing contracts for preliminary capstone research at any point, although substantial final research and writing are still required for the capstone itself and cannot count for both contract and capstone credit. Students typically take HONR 4900 (independent capstone credit) in their final term of working on the capstone (which may or may not be the graduation term); **students should always enroll in that final term, since faculty mentors submit final grades for capstones at the end of that course.**

Why? Capstones are required for Honors graduation because, as student testimonials suggest, these projects define the undergraduate experience and shape a student’s future. Honors capstones offer professional training, opportunities to shape graduate school essays and publications, and evidence of independent initiative. Capstone mentors provide students with detailed recommendation letters, reliable advice on how to structure and complete their projects, connections to other professionals in their fields, and insight into the pursuit of professional goals. Honors also supports capstone work financially: students can apply for up to $500 each term to support research, service, and creative work and up to $1000 one time to participate in a study abroad program.

How? While this question might initially seem overwhelming, the HONR 3900 course and this handbook—along with Honors faculty, staff, and peers—can help students to break down the capstone process and create projects they are proud to call their own. We hope that the dare to complete a capstone project is a challenge that all Honors students are well equipped to take.
Requirements for Honors Capstone Projects

Honors capstones allow students to make and share research discoveries with the help of faculty mentors. To that end, all honors capstones include the following parts:

Research

Research requires students to be curious, seek knowledge, and share that knowledge with others. Honors capstone projects allow for curiosity and discovery through a range of activities, including lab work, field research, professional apprenticeships, archival investigation, close reading of literature, and creative work. Students communicate their research findings in many different ways, including posters, conference presentations, co-authored (or individual) publications, engineering or other discipline-specific data-analysis reports, business plans with professional analysis, argumentative thesis writing, and performances or other creative productions with thoughtful process analysis. The form of this final product is determined in consultation with the faculty mentor and based on discipline-specific norms and expectations. To help students understand the place of their own research within their disciplines, they typically create annotated bibliographies or literature reviews with the help of their faculty mentors; students should format all citations correctly, according to the accepted standards of their disciplines. This work is begun during the writing of the capstone proposal and then typically polished, extended, and included in the capstone itself. Students whose research involves animals or human subjects (e.g., those who work with laboratory animals, talk with children/adults/elderly individuals, or administer surveys) often need approval from the Institutional Review Board and/or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. Mentors and students should work together early and consult these websites for more information:

IRB Basics: Getting Started
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee Information

Faculty Mentoring

All Honors students create a capstone committee that includes a primary faculty mentor and at least one other faculty member who must approve the final project. This second committee member is often the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student’s or the primary mentor’s home department; occasionally, it is a representative from a departmental or college Honors committee in the student’s or mentor’s home department or college. The committee may also include a third member in a field related to the project’s topic. The role of primary faculty mentors is crucial: they work closely with students, helping them to focus and refine their capstones, develop realistic timelines and work plans, understand and address research and writing challenges, and revise, polish, and present their final products. The nature of this role demands that all primary Honors capstone mentors be full-time USU faculty members with a terminal degree or appropriate credentials in the major field (appropriate degrees or credentials may vary by field). Visiting or part-time instructors may serve as capstone committee members, provided they can see the project through to its completion. Please see The Honors Capstone Committee (pp. 9-13) for more details about both faculty and student responsibilities in the Honors capstone process. Briefly, students are responsible for setting up a committee that includes a primary faculty mentor and at least one other committee member(s), completing an Honors capstone proposal, submitting a detailed work plan, meeting the agreed-upon deadlines for the project, communicating frequently and clearly with all committee members, arranging for (and documenting) the public presentation of their work, and formatting the final product according to the Honors Program’s guidelines.
Capstone Project Proposal

Prior to enrolling in an Honors capstone course (typically HONR 4900) in the term that they complete the capstone (see Course Credits/Hours of Work on p. 6), students typically enroll in HONR 3900, a one-credit class that supports them in the process of beginning their capstone projects. The course requires students to study successful past capstones and reflections on that work, define their own projects, choose their faculty mentors, and work with mentors to complete and submit capstone proposals. Students who choose to work with a professor on an existing research project may quote and cite briefly from that mentor’s research proposal in their own capstone proposals, but they must very clearly define their own roles in such projects and distinguish their words and roles from those of the mentor. Please carefully follow the guidelines on the Honors Capstone Proposal form. In addition, if a student’s major or minor requires all students to complete a non-Honors senior capstone course, Honors students may use that work as a starting point for an Honors project that deepens and extends the regular capstone experience in the major. With the help of their mentor, who may or may not be the instructor of that departmental capstone course, Honors students must articulate clearly and specifically in their capstone proposals how their Honors projects will extend substantially beyond the work of the regular capstone experience in the major.

Final Product

All capstones involve research and thus ask students not only to seek knowledge but also to communicate that knowledge to others. The final product, in whatever form(s), must be high quality work that makes both student and mentor proud. Students and faculty should allow plenty of time for multiple drafts, rehearsals, tests, revisions, etc. Future students and faculty will examine this work as a model, and Honors therefore approves only capstone proposals and projects that clearly demonstrate the value and possibilities of such projects.

Just as the pursuit of knowledge may involve various types of work (laboratory, library, field, creative, analytical, or experiential), the resulting communication can take various forms (research posters, oral presentations, written analyses or reports, live performances and lectures, creative production and process analysis, business plans with professional analysis, and academic analyses of the research process). In some cases (particularly with creative work), the final product is primarily the public presentation of the project (a show, performance, or organized event).

Students and faculty should consider the role of writing itself in the research as they determine the appropriate final product(s) for each project. Honors capstones that include material in addition to writing (experiential or field data, laboratory results, mathematical calculations, performances, photographs, art) must also include analytical, process-oriented writing (typically at least 5,000 words). Such word counts are guides: any discipline-appropriate body of work (including professional portfolios of artistic documentation, scientific diagrams, comparative charts, mechanical plans, or mathematical work) may be acceptable if the mentor and committee agree that it represents substantial work in the field and serves the student’s present and future goals. In capstones taking the form of a thesis analyzing textual or archival materials, writing itself is the primary final product; these projects are typically the length of a publishable manuscript (about 10,000 words). Because academic standards vary across disciplines, mentors and students should discuss expectations as they design capstone proposals. Suggested minimum word counts typically do not include bibliography, supplementary material, or appendices, unless that material is central to project documentation.

Please remember that if a student’s major or minor requires its own non-Honors senior capstone experience, Honors students must clearly articulate within the final product itself how their Honors capstone project exceeds and builds upon the requirements of the standard major’s capstone.
**Reflective Writing**

All capstones include a detailed reflection (1000-1500 words) on the process and value of completing the project, submitted with the capstone to the entire committee. This reflection is the last in a series of reflections that define Honors work. Honors students learn throughout the program to articulate the value of their educational experiences and to tell the story of their intellectual development.

Honors capstone reflections are different and distinct from the required writing that comprises the body of the capstone itself. This difference is crucial: the capstone writing analyzes and presents the research work of the project; the reflective writing articulates the value and meaning of the capstone experience. Reflections should articulate the problems, challenges, and triumphs involved in completing the capstone, and they often offer specific advice to future honors students.

Great capstones achieve all of the following learning outcomes, and their reflections articulate both the method and the value of meeting each outcome:

1. Create a capstone experience for the student’s undergraduate education
2. Add substantially to the student’s overall education and/or future goals
3. Create a positive, meaningful mentor relationship in support of the student’s education and/or future goals
4. Deepen the student’s research experience within the major
5. Require critical thinking about topics in that major
6. Broaden the student’s experience across disciplines (sometimes in more obvious ways than others, but students should always think broadly about the impact of their work)
7. Engage the student in his or her local or global community (again, this engagement might be more (in a service-learning capstone) or less (in a more traditional thesis) obvious, but students should always reflect on the impact their work might have on others)

**Course Credits/Hours of Work**

Honors students should register for Honors capstone credit (typically three credit hours) in the term that they plan to complete the project, since their mentors will grade the finished capstone in that term. Most students register for HONR 4900, but they may also enroll in an approved (by committee and Honors Program) independent-study course in their majors, if necessary. Honors recommends registering for three credits to ensure that students complete approximately ten hours of work per week, including meetings, research, planning, project construction, and writing. The number of credits is negotiable, depending on each student’s schedule and needs, but the amount of work is not. Capstone projects require the same amount of time for students as an entire course, but the work is focused on the management and completion of one substantial project.

**Public Presentation**

All Honors capstone projects must be presented publicly at a conference, campus research event, public defense/discussion, performance, show, or other appropriate venue, and students must document that presentation by submitting a signed Verification of Honors Capstone Public Presentation form along with their capstone. In special cases of artistic performances, shows, major service projects, or extensive organized events, the public presentation of the project will actually be the final product of the capstone process. In such cases, a detailed professional portfolio of artistic or
other relevant documentation can serve as the record of this crucial public presentation. In all cases, faculty mentors should help students to find the most appropriate public-presentation venue for their work and to document its completion. Spring graduates may participate in the Student Research Symposium on campus in April, while fall graduates may choose to present at the Fall Research Symposium. Like faculty mentors, the University Honors Program is committed to helping students arrange public presentations, but it is the student’s responsibility to seek this support and guidance.

**Digital Commons**

All Honors capstone projects are archived in the Merrill-Cazier Library’s Digital Commons, as well as in hard copy in the University Honors Program office. Students must submit a signed Electronic Capstone Approval form before graduation or request an embargo if their research is in the process of publication. The Honors Program must have this form on file before any capstone project can be made available on Digital Commons.
How Do Students Discover Great Project Ideas?

The Honors capstone is an important milestone that marks the end of a student’s college journey and the beginning of various professional paths. Remember that there is not one perfect capstone waiting to be discovered by each Honors graduate: students should consider instead the range of academic topics and ideas that have most excited or engaged them during their time at USU, as well as their long-term personal and professional goals. Capstone writers learn far more than academic skills or new information as they complete their projects: they develop as creative, critical, and engaged thinkers who can research independently, communicate and collaborate across disciplines, and articulate the impact of their ideas upon the world. These skills will continue to shape their work on every future project they undertake. The capstone may be the first long-term project in a career of research and/or creative production, or it may allow students to practice other important professional skills. Here are some tips that might help students as they embark on this rewarding journey:

- Consider every class assignment, research opportunity, study abroad experience, internship, and co-curricular activity as an Honors “Dare to Know.” Take that dare by getting excited about ideas, developing academic passions, and curiously seeking new interests wherever possible.

- Keep a journal or file of intriguing ideas, which might occur in classes, discussions with peers, conversations with professors or staff, or extracurricular activities. No engaging idea is insignificant, and a pattern of academic excitement just might emerge.

- Choose a mentor—or a few possible mentors—whose classes or research projects have been particularly outstanding, and work with that mentor to craft a project or to become an apprentice on the mentor’s research.

- Consider the types of final products that might be most useful in the move toward a future career, graduate school, or other lifetime goals, and talk to professors about how to create such products.

For students, the most important part of deciding on a capstone idea is to talk with people whose ideas and research they admire and respect. Students can explain their own ideas and listen carefully to the responses of their respected mentors. Such conversations can help turn thoughts or excitement into concrete research plans. It is normal for students to struggle as they begin to articulate their capstone ideas, but this struggle can be productive: the very act of exploring interests and ideas with other people through conversation leads to new connections and an ability to describe one’s own academic passions more fully and clearly. If students are willing to listen to and observe others, opportunities almost always arise. Choosing a mentor first, for example, can sometimes create a place for students on an existing research project. The role of a research apprentice can lay the groundwork for more original research or creative project management in the future. Please remember that this capstone is just the first of many future projects—of all different kinds—that students will almost certainly be called upon to lead, manage, and complete. We recommend that students just get started, following enthusiasm toward clarity through conversation and research.
The Honors Capstone Committee

Every Honors student’s capstone committee consists of two professors: the student’s primary faculty mentor and a Departmental Faculty Honors Advisor (or a faculty member from an honors committee) in the student’s or primary faculty mentor’s home department. Students may add an additional faculty member with particularly useful expertise. The Honors Program Director also reads each final capstone project to ensure a high level of achievement across the USU Honors Program as a whole.

Students should choose their faculty mentors carefully. Mentoring an honors capstone project is a great deal of work. While this kind of work is a rewarding part of a professor’s job, some outstanding faculty are already overcommitted, working with many graduate and/or undergraduate students outside of their regular teaching commitments. The best way to secure a primary faculty mentor is to build several close working relationships with professors over time. Students can demonstrate their ability in classes, research projects, Honors contract work, and departmental clubs or organizations that collaborate with faculty. Professors are much more likely to agree to mentor the capstone project of a student who has already proven to be bright, organized, dependable, curious, and engaged with the field.

Please carefully review in the pages that follow the responsibilities of the student, the faculty mentor, the committee member(s), and the University Honors Program. In general, students are responsible for developing a work plan and meeting that plan’s deadlines, performing the plan’s proposed research, and composing/revising/formatting the written portion of their projects as outlined in the plan and according to Honors guidelines. In turn, the faculty mentor is responsible for guiding the student in the creation of the work plan, mentoring the research and writing processes, and ensuring a high quality of work within the discipline. The Departmental Honors Advisor in the student’s or mentor’s home department ensures that the student is aware of and meeting both Honors requirements and disciplinary standards. An additional (optional) committee member can add another kind of expertise to the project. The University Honors Program supports students and faculty and ensures that all Honors capstone projects meet minimum program standards and deadlines and thus merit the award of the student’s final capstone Honors points.
Student Responsibilities

COURSES:
- Enroll in HONR 3900, a one-credit course that asks students to read successful past capstones and proposals, decide on topics, secure faculty mentors, finalize committee membership, and submit an Honors capstone proposal. Students who cannot complete this course must meet with an Honors Advisor a year before capstone completion to schedule the appropriate preparation and training.
- Enroll in HONR 4900 or other Honors-approved capstone course in term of completion. Pass any required non-Honors capstone courses in the major before taking the Honors capstone course.
- Schedule an Honors Graduation Audit with an Honors Advisor by the third week of the term before graduation to assess Honors points and map a path toward graduation with Honors.

PROPOSAL:
- Working with faculty mentor, complete an Honors capstone proposal following the required format, including a list of deadlines and brief annotated bibliography or literature review. Submit proposal to DHA and other committee members, and revise to earn committee approval and signatures.
- Upload signed, completed proposal to Honors Canvas course; secure final approval from Honors by the second week of classes in term before capstone completion/graduation (fall or summer).
- In rare cases, if a project changes in fundamental ways, students may need to submit and secure approval for a new proposal, at the discretion of the faculty mentor. No major project changes may be made after the second week of classes in the student’s final capstone/graduation term.

WORK PLAN:
- Complete and upload an approved, signed capstone work plan, using the proposal as a starting point; include a detailed list of deadlines for research, draft submissions, updates to DHA/committee, regular (usually at least twice monthly) primary mentor meetings, and public presentation time/place.
- Plan must include key dates, particularly submission of final draft to DHA and any other committee members (one week before the last day of classes), public presentation/defense (by the last day of classes), and final deadline to Honors (one week after the last day of classes).
- Agree upon work plan with mentor and DHA/other committee members; upload signed form and plan to Honors by the end of the second week of classes in the term before graduation.

PROFESSIONALISM AND DRAFTING:
- Follow the work plan in a timely and professional manner.
- Apply for appropriate research or travel funding to support the project (e.g., Honors Research and/or Study Abroad funding, URCO grants, USUSA support, departmental or college funding).
- Discuss any proposed changes to work plan or deadlines with faculty mentor well in advance of work plan deadlines or risk jeopardizing Honors graduation.
- Submit to mentor all required drafts of the project and revise as instructed.
- Proofread and edit carefully. The Honors Writing Tutor can help with this work—start early.
- Submit a final draft to the DHA/committee one week before last day of classes. Revise as instructed.

PUBLIC PRESENTATION:
- Arrange for public presentation of the project. Students should decide on the venue and make all arrangements, with mentor/Honors support. Public presentation or defense must be completed and documented by the last day of classes in student’s capstone-completion/graduation term.

FINAL PRODUCT:
- Make all revisions suggested by faculty mentor and DHA/other committee members.
- Submit the final product to Honors no later than one week after last day of classes.
- The final product of the capstone project should be carefully proofread and formatted, and it must include the signed Honors Capstone Cover Page, a reflection and author bio (see pg. 19), Verification of Honors Capstone Public Presentation, and Electronic Capstone Approval (see capstone forms).
Faculty Mentor Responsibilities

COURSES:
- Work with student enrolled in HONR 3900 to finalize committee membership and to draft and polish an Honors capstone proposal.
- Serve as faculty mentor and/or instructor of record for HONR 4900 or another approved Honors capstone course in the completion term. If the student must pass a standard capstone course in the major, help articulate how the Honors capstone will substantially add to and extend that work.

PROPOSAL:
- Mentor student in shaping capstone idea and writing the Honors capstone proposal. Ensure that student follows proposal format, including a basic list of deadlines and brief annotated bibliography or literature review. The proposal should meet your standards for high quality work in the discipline.
- Remind student of proposal deadlines: submit to Honors by end of HONR 3900 and secure Honors approval by second week of classes in term before capstone completion/graduation (fall or summer).
- In rare cases, if a project changes in fundamental ways, students may need to submit and secure approval for a new proposal, at the discretion of the faculty mentor. No major project changes may be made after the second week of classes in the student’s final capstone-completion/graduation term.

WORK PLAN:
- As early as possible, work closely with student to create a detailed capstone work plan, using the proposal as a starting point; include specific deadlines for research milestones, writing and draft submissions, reports to DHA/ committee members, regular (usually at least twice monthly) meetings with primary mentor, and time/venue for public presentation.
- Ensure that work plan includes all key dates, particularly submission of mentor-approved final draft to committee (one week before last day of classes), public presentation/defense (completed/ documented by last day of classes), and final Honors deadline (one week after last day of classes).
- Prompt student to get approval for work plan from DHA/other committee member(s) and then to upload the plan to the Honors Canvas course by end of second week in term before graduation (fall or summer).

PROJECT OVERSIGHT:
- Communicate with student about the professional importance of following the work plan.
- Encourage student to apply for research/travel funding to support the project (e.g., Honors Research and/or Study Abroad funding, URCo grants, USUSA support, departmental or college funding).
- Students may not change deadlines without securing mentor approval well before the deadline they propose to change. **If students miss two deadlines or ask for frequent, disruptive changes to the work plan, mentors should notify the Honors Program immediately.**
- Require several drafts of the project and give the student prompt, detailed feedback. Final mentor-approved draft is due to committee no later than one week before the last day of classes in final term.

PUBLIC PRESENTATION:
- Discuss with student possible venues for public presentation and encourage student to apply as appropriate for Honors, university, and departmental travel funding. Public presentation or defense must be completed and documented by the last day of classes in student’s completion/graduation term.

FINAL PRODUCT:
- Ensure that the student has made all of the committee’s required revisions and that the final product represents high quality Honors work in the discipline. Insist on proofreading and editing.
- Communicate with student about final deadlines and requirements: the student must submit carefully proofread and formatted final product, reflection, bio, and forms (see pg. 19) to Honors no later than one week after the last day of classes in the term of graduation. Sign only once read/approved.
Departmental Honors Advisor/Committee Member Responsibilities

Departmental Honors Advisors from the student’s or mentor’s home department typically serve as a second member on a student’s committee. Departments with many graduates may choose to share this responsibility. While committee members should have detailed knowledge of the Honors Program, students and mentors are free to shape the committee further by adding an additional member with particular expertise. Committees may consist of 2-3 faculty members, depending on the needs of the student and project. The responsibilities of these committee members include:

COURSES:
- Even DHAs who do not serve on the committee are responsible for meeting with students enrolled in (or auditing) HONR 3900 and helping them to identify suitable faculty mentors, finalize committee membership, and review capstone project requirements on the Honors website.
- Students enroll in HONR 4900 or another approved course for honors capstone credit in the term of completion; substitutions require the entire committee’s (and Honors) approval.

PROPOSAL:
- Read proposal promptly once mentor and student complete it; a signature indicates approval, so committee members may offer feedback and should sign only once required changes are made.
- Support student in meeting proposal deadlines: students must upload to the Honors Canvas course and secure Honors approval by week two of term before capstone completion/graduation (fall or summer).
- In rare cases, if project changes in fundamental ways, students may need to submit and secure approval for a new proposal, at the discretion of the faculty mentor. No major project changes may be made after the second week of the student’s final term.

WORK PLAN:
- Verify that work plan includes a timeline for regular updates to committee members on project progress and all key dates, particularly submission of mentor-approved final draft to committee (one week before last day of classes), public presentation/defense (by last day of classes), and final deadline to Honors (one week after last day of classes).
- Suggest changes and sign/approve plan; student must upload to Honors by end of week two in term before capstone completion/graduation.
- DHAs/committee members may choose to require students to submit a draft or drafts to them; please build due dates into the work plan.

PROJECT OVERSIGHT:
- Meet with student as requested and indicated in work plan. DHAs and committee members are not responsible for initiating meetings.
- DHAs/committee members who require drafts are responsible for returning prompt, detailed feedback, as indicated in the work plan.
- Expect to receive the mentor-approved final draft of the project one week before last day of classes.

PUBLIC PRESENTATION:
- Discuss with student possible venues for public presentation and encourage application for appropriate funding from Honors, USU, and department/college. Public presentation or defense must be completed and documented by the last day of classes in the student’s completion/graduation term.

FINAL PRODUCT:
- Ensure that student has made all of the committee’s revisions and that the final product represents high-quality Honors work in the discipline. Insist that student proofread and edit.
- Communicate with student about deadlines and requirements for final product, which must be proofread, formatted, and submitted to Honors with all forms (see pg. 19 for details) one week after the last day of classes. Sign only once read/approved.
University Honors Program Responsibilities

The Honors Program does not actively mentor each project but serves instead to ensure that all projects meet Honors standards. Honors Program responsibilities include:

COURSES:
- Each term, Honors offers HONR 3900, a one-credit, pass/fail course that requires students to read completed capstone projects, reflections, and proposals; decide on a topic; secure a faculty mentor; finalize committee membership; and submit an Honors capstone proposal.
- Students enroll in either HONR 4900 or another approved course for Honors capstone credit in the completion term; advise students to complete any required non-Honors capstone course in the major before enrolling for Honors capstone credit.
- Honors staff members are available for individual consultations at any time to answer the questions of capstone mentors and committee members.

PROPOSAL:
- The Director gives final approval of the Honors capstone proposal; all proposals must be submitted as the final assignment of HONR 3900 and then resubmitted, if necessary, to earn Honors approval by end of second week in term before capstone completion/graduation (fall or summer).

WORK PLAN:
- Honors archives capstone work plans and shares them with students and faculty.
- Honors staff members ensure that work plans are submitted on time (the end of the second week of classes in the term before graduation) and notify students and mentors if deadlines are missed.
- Once work plans are submitted, Honors verifies that they include key dates for submission of mentor-approved final draft to the committee (one week before last day of classes), public presentation or defense (by last day of classes), and submission of revised final project to Honors (one week after last day of classes).

PROJECT OVERSIGHT:
- Honors staff members provide support, as requested, to students, faculty mentors, and committee members involved in capstone projects.
- Honors guarantees timely review of applications to the Honors Research and Study Abroad Fund and supports students in applying for other funding.
- Honors staff members communicate with students about upcoming or missed deadlines.

PUBLIC PRESENTATION:
- Honors can assist students in finding appropriate venues for public presentation. Public presentation or defense must be completed and documented by the last day of classes in the student’s capstone-completion/graduation term.

FINAL PRODUCT:
- The Honors Writing Tutor can help students to edit, proofread, and format the final project. Honors staff members ensure that students submit a high-quality project by the deadline (one week after last day of classes) and include with the project the signed Honors Cover Page (indicating that mentor and committee members have read and approved the project), reflection and author bio (see pg. 19), Verification of Honors Capstone Public Presentation, and Electronic Capstone Approval (see capstone forms).
- The Honors Director reads all capstone projects to ensure that they meet or exceed program standards and signs the cover page to indicate final program approval.
Brief Description of Important Tasks and Deadlines

• **ENROLL IN HONR 3900 at least one year (3-4 semesters) before** capstone completion/graduation. If necessary, students graduating in fall term may enroll as late as the spring prior to graduation; students graduating in spring should enroll by the spring prior to graduation, since the course is not offered during the summer. Students in some disciplines, particularly those requiring significant laboratory research or focused fieldwork, may need to take this course during sophomore year. If you cannot enroll in this one-credit course, **make an advising appointment** to map your pathway to capstone completion at least a year before graduation.

• **SUBMIT HONORS CAPSTONE PROPOSAL by the last day of class in HONR 3900.** If the proposal needs work, you may be asked to revise, but you **must secure final Honors approval by the end of the second week in the term before capstone completion/graduation (fall for spring graduates; summer for fall graduates).**

• **SUBMIT DETAILED WORK PLAN** (expansion of the timeline in the capstone proposal) **by the end of the second week in the term before capstone completion/graduation (fall for spring graduates; summer for fall graduates).**

• **COMPLETE AN HONORS GRADUATION AUDIT** with an **Honors Advisor by the end of the third week in the term before graduation (fall for spring graduates; spring, not summer, for fall graduates).** The audit determines which Honors graduation requirements still need to be completed and helps map your path toward graduation with Honors.

• **ENROLL IN ANY REQUIRED CAPSTONE COURSE IN YOUR MAJOR by the term before capstone completion/graduation (fall for spring graduates; spring for fall graduates).** Students should ideally complete this course before enrolling in HONR 4900 (capstone), since an Honors capstone project will often build upon or expand the work of the regular capstone for the major. **Taking a required non-Honors capstone up to two terms before graduation may be advisable in some cases; check with an Honors Advisor and the Departmental Honors Advisor in your home (major) department.**

• **FINAL, MENTOR-APPROVED DRAFT DUE TO DHA (in student’s or mentor’s home department) AND ANY OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS no later than one week before the last day of classes in the student’s capstone-completion/graduation term.**

• **DEFENSE AND/OR PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT completed by the last day of classes in the student’s capstone-completion/graduation term and verified with signatures on the Verification of Honors Capstone Public Presentation form.**

• **FINAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR REVISED, POLISHED CAPSTONE** is **one week after last day of classes in the capstone-completion/graduation term, by 5:00 p.m.** Submission must include a signed, correctly formatted Honors Cover Page, reflection and bio (see pg. 19), Verification of Honors Capstone Public Presentation, and Electronic Capstone Approval (see capstone forms).
Suggested Honors Capstone Timeline: The University Honors Program recognizes that each student and capstone project is different and that a variety of circumstances will shape each student’s timeline to completion. Honors offers this suggested timeline as a starting point for students and mentors, who will work closely together to develop a timeline that is realistic and feasible for each other and for the proposed project.

3-4 SEMESTERS BEFORE CAPSTONE COMPLETION/GRADUATION
- Begin thinking about a project topic in the year before completion and/or graduation (ideally 4 semesters prior to anticipated capstone-completion/graduation term).
- Enroll in HONR 3900, a one-credit capstone preparation course. In this course students will…
  - Learn what is required to complete a capstone project
  - Study examples of outstanding capstone projects in their fields
  - Read examples of outstanding capstone proposals on related topics
  - Write brief descriptions of their proposed projects to share with prospective faculty mentors
  - Secure capstone mentors and complete their own capstone proposals by the end of the term
- If students are unable to take this course, they should schedule an advising appointment to discuss.

2-3 SEMESTERS BEFORE CAPSTONE COMPLETION/GRADUATION
- Begin project research, working closely with capstone mentor.
- Develop a detailed work plan and research schedule in collaboration with primary mentor and in consultation with DHA and other committee members.
- Complete any required capstone course in the major to lay groundwork for Honors capstone.

2 SEMESTERS BEFORE CAPSTONE COMPLETION/GRADUATION
- Continue research and/or begin writing the capstone project.
- Maintain regular contact with capstone mentor, DHA, and other committee members and complete high quality work in a professional, responsible way.
- By the end of the third week of classes in term before capstone completion/graduation, schedule a mandatory Honors Graduation Audit to assess Honors points and map the path to Honors graduation.

SEMESTER OF CAPSTONE COMPLETION/GRADUATION
- Register for HONR 4900 or other approved (by committee and Honors) capstone course.
- Submit drafts to mentor, DHA, and other committee members according to work plan. Since all projects require multiple drafts, meeting scheduled deadlines is crucial. Students should remember that they are involved in professional relationships with the faculty members on the committee.
- Complete and document for mentor a public presentation or defense of the project, which must occur by the last day of classes in the capstone-completion/graduation term.
  - FOR SPRING GRADUATES: Students may participate in Student Research Symposium during Research Week. Applications and abstracts are required and are due in March.
  - FOR FALL GRADUATES: Students may participate in the Fall Student Research Symposium or work with their mentors and Honors staff to find venues for presentation.
- Provide entire committee, including the DHA, with a mentor-approved final draft of the project by the deadline in the work plan, at least one week before the last day of classes in the capstone-completion/graduation term.
- Revised, polished, and complete capstone projects are due to the Honors office one week after the last day of classes in the capstone-completion/graduation term. When students submit the completed capstone project, they must also include a correctly formatted and signed Honors Cover Page, reflection and bio (see pg. 19), signed Verification of Honors Capstone Public Presentation, and signed Honors Electronic Capstone Approval (see capstone forms).
- Attend the Honors Medallion Ceremony and reception upon graduation!
Deadlines and Timeline for SPRING Graduates Completing Capstones in Final Term

Spring and summer terms BEFORE capstone-completion/graduation year (typically junior year)
Enroll (or have previously enrolled) in HONR 3900 no later than spring of junior year. This one-credit class requires students to submit an Honors Capstone Proposal. Work with mentor to begin project research, including literature review, laboratory work, creative planning, fieldwork, and/or primary source reading.

Fall term senior (final) year
1) Spring graduates must secure approval of their capstone proposals from the Honors Program no later than the end of the second week of fall term senior year.
2) By the second week of fall term, students should also have met with each member of their committees to finalize a detailed work plan, including firm due dates for each draft of the project and for the public presentation or defense, which must be completed and documented by the last day of classes. Sample work plans are available from the Honors Program.
3) Complete an Honors Graduation Audit with an Honors Advisor by the third week of fall term.
4) Complete any required non-Honors capstone course in the major.
5) Honors requires several drafts to the mentor plus a final mentor-approved draft to all committee members. Typically, only the primary faculty mentor reads the preliminary drafts, but students are responsible for giving the DHA and any other committee members regular progress reports: include these report dates in the work plan. Students should collaborate with their primary faculty mentors to set up reasonable deadlines for each draft of the project.

Spring term senior (final) year
1) Register for HONR 4900 or other approved (by committee and Honors) capstone course.
2) Students continue to submit drafts and meet regularly with each committee member as outlined in work plans.
3) After revising with the primary mentor, students submit a polished final draft to the entire committee (DHA and any other committee members) at least one week before the last day of classes. This date allows time for faculty to review the project before a defense (must be completed by the last day of classes) and for students to complete required revisions before the final Honors deadline (one week after the last day of classes). Students should remember that the revisions required by mentors and other committee members are not optional. All Honors students must work with their mentors to craft a high quality final project that makes both mentor and student proud. Students will earn Honors credit for their capstone projects only if their mentors and committees believe that the final product is carefully crafted, thoughtfully revised, and professionally presented; signature of the cover page indicates this endorsement. Students who do not complete all requested revisions to final projects by the deadline are ineligible to graduate with Honors. It is the student’s responsibility to edit and proofread; keep in mind that the capstone becomes a public document that includes both the student’s and mentors’ names. Help with editing is available from the Honors Writing Tutor.
4) March/April: Spring graduates may choose to present their work publicly at the USU Student Research Symposium during Research Week. Abstracts are generally due in March for this April event. Contact the Office of Research for more information.
5) April: All final drafts to committees are due one week before the end of classes; defenses or public presentations must be held and documented by the last day of classes. Attend Honors Medallion Ceremony and reception. At the Medallion Ceremony, students receive Honors medallions to wear at USU/college graduation ceremonies and a certificate of Honors achievement. Fall graduates are invited to attend the Honors Medallion Ceremony and graduation reception in the spring after graduation.
6) May: All final, revised copies of capstone projects are due to the Honors Program office one week after the last day of classes. The final copy must be carefully proofread and correctly formatted, including signed copies of the Honors Cover Page, reflection and author bio (see pg. 19), Verification of Honors Capstone Public Presentation, and Electronic Capstone Approval (see capstone forms). All capstone projects are bound and digitized so that they can become a permanent part of the University Honors Program library and Digital Commons. Students should make sure to submit a carefully crafted capstone that will make them and their mentors proud for years to come!
Deadlines and Timeline for FALL Graduates Completing Capstones in Final Term

Fall and spring terms BEFORE capstone-completion/graduation year (beginning of junior year)
Enroll (or have previously enrolled) in HONR 3900 no later than spring of junior year. This one-credit class requires students to submit an Honors Capstone Proposal. Work with mentor to begin project research, including literature review, laboratory work, creative planning, fieldwork, and/or primary source reading.

Spring and Summer terms junior year (the year before capstone completion/graduation)
1) Complete an Honors Graduation Audit with an Honors Advisor by the third week of spring term.
2) Complete any required non-Honors capstone course in the major.
3) March/April (Spring term): Fall graduates may choose to present their work publicly at the USU Student Research Symposium during Research Week, if their projects are ready for presentation. Abstracts are generally due in March for this April event. Check with Office of Research for more information. Students may also present at the Fall Student Research Symposium or work with their mentors and Honors staff to find another fall public presentation venue.
4) Fall graduates must secure final approval of their capstone proposals from Honors no later than the end of the second week of summer term before senior year.
5) By the second week of summer term, students should also have met with each committee member (DHA or other members) to finalize a detailed work plan, including due dates for each draft and for the public presentation, which must be completed/documented by the last day of classes. Please note that many faculty are on nine-month contracts and may be unable to work with you in the summer; students should plan to work independently and to present faculty the results of their work early in their final fall term. See the Honors staff for sample work plans. Honors requires several drafts, plus a final mentor-approved draft to all committee members. Typically, only the primary faculty mentor reads the preliminary drafts, but students are responsible for giving the DHA and other committee members regular progress reports: include these reports dates in the work plan. Students should collaborate with their primary faculty mentors to set up reasonable deadlines for each draft of the project.

Fall term senior (final) year
1) Register for HONR 4900 or other approved (by committee and Honors) capstone course.
2) Students should meet with primary mentors in the first week of classes to report on summer work. Successful students follow the work plan, submitting drafts and meeting with committee members.
3) After revising with the faculty mentor, students submit a polished final draft to the rest of the committee (DHA and other members) at least one week before the last day of classes, allowing time for faculty to review the project before a defense (completed by the last day of classes) and for students to make required revisions before the final Honors deadline (one week after the last day of classes). The revisions required by mentors and other committee members are not optional. Honors students must work with mentors to craft high quality projects that make both mentor and student proud. Students earn Honors credit for capstone projects only if mentors and committees believe that the final product is carefully crafted, thoughtfully revised, and professionally presented; signature of the cover page indicates this endorsement. Students who do not complete all requested revisions by the deadline are ineligible to graduate with Honors. It is the student’s responsibility to edit and proofread; keep in mind that the capstone becomes a public document with both student’s and mentors’ names attached and therefore requires professional work. Editing help is available by appointment with the Honors Writing Tutor.
4) October/November: Complete and document public presentation of the project, as necessary.
5) November/December: All final drafts to committees are due one week before the end of classes; defenses or public presentations must be held/documentated by last day of classes. All final, revised capstone projects are due to Honors one week after the last day of classes. The submitted copy must be carefully proofread and formatted, including signed copies of the Honors Cover Page, reflection and author bio (see pg. 19), Verification of Honors Capstone Public Presentation, and Electronic Capstone Approval (see capstone forms). All capstone projects are bound and digitized as a permanent part of the University Honors Program library and Digital Commons. Students will receive Honors medallions to wear at spring commencement and a certificate of Honors achievement. December graduates are invited to attend the Honors Medallion Ceremony and reception in late April/early May.
Capstone Task Checklist for Students

- Complete one-credit HONR 3900 capstone preparation course (3-4 semesters before capstone completion/graduation) and/or review requirements with an Honors Advisor.

- Submit Honors capstone proposal (last day of HONR 3900), ideally one year before capstone-completion/graduation term, but no later than the second week of the term before graduation.

- Enroll in any required capstone course for major (completed before the Honors capstone-completion/graduation term, when students take Honors capstone credits).

- Submit detailed work plan (by end of week two in term before Honors capstone completion/graduation) with signatures guaranteeing student’s agreement to meet all deadlines and to communicate clearly and fully with all committee members (primary mentor, DHA in student’s or mentor’s department, and any other committee members).

- Schedule a graduation audit with an Honors Advisor (by end of week three in term before capstone completion/graduation) to ensure a smooth pathway to Honors graduation.

- Register for HONR 4900 or other approved (by capstone committee and Honors Program) Honors capstone course in the term of capstone completion/graduation.

- Submit final draft to mentor (typically one month before the end of the capstone-completion/graduation term).

- Schedule defense or public presentation of project (must be held/completed by last day of classes in capstone-completion/graduation term).

- Submit primary mentor-approved final draft to DHA in student’s or primary mentor’s home department and any other committee members (by one week before the last day of classes in capstone-completion/graduation term).

- Make any suggested revisions or changes.

- Submit final capstone project with all required revisions, sections (including reflection and author bio; see pg. 19 for details), and formatting (due one week after the last day of classes in capstone-completion/graduation term); students must submit BOTH a hard copy and an electronic copy by email or using USU’s big file transfer (https://bft.usu.edu).

- Along with that final capstone submission, include all required forms, with signatures: a correctly formatted Honors Cover Page, a Verification of Honors Capstone Public Presentation, and the Electronic Capstone Approval (see capstone forms).
Formatting an Honors Capstone Project

Because disciplines have different standards and conventions, capstone projects do not all look the same. Below is the standard structure of an Honors capstone, with REQUIRED sections indicated in **BOLD**. Students are encouraged to organize their projects in this recommended order, unless their faculty mentors decide that another discipline-specific format is more appropriate. Please include all **BOLD** sections.

1. **Title page (REQUIRED, not paginated)—see [template](#)**: Please provide signature space for all committee members (mentor, DHA in student’s or mentor’s home department, other committee members) and the University Honors Program Director. Please spell all names and titles correctly.

2. Copyright notice (recommended – not paginated): Honors recommends that students include the copyright page as the first page in any submitted document unless the research is subject to provision of research contracts, patent rights, or other agreements made by the student or faculty mentor with USU. Faculty and students should be aware that all capstone projects submitted to the Merrill-Cazier Library are for public use. Students should include a copyright notice immediately following the title page. This page should not be numbered; center the notice on the page and format it as follows:

   Copyright 2020 Student’s Name
   
   or
   
   © 2020 Student’s Name
   All Rights Reserved

3. **Abstract (REQUIRED: begin pagination here with lower-case Roman numerals—e.g., i, ii, iii...)**: The abstract is typically 250-500 words summarizing the project’s research question, methodology, and results/conclusions. An abstract is designed to help readers understand quickly and efficiently what the project does: please include any crucial part of your project (thesis statement, hypothesis, etc., depending on your field). Honors can provide examples.

4. Dedication/preface (optional – continue Roman pagination): usually very brief, e.g., “For my family.”

5. **Acknowledgements (REQUIRED: continue Roman pagination)**: Students typically thank their faculty mentors, any members of their research teams, their departments and colleges, and anyone else who has supported the project. They often thank organizations that helped fund any part of the project (USUSA, URCO, the University Honors Program, departments or colleges, etc.). They may also add personal acknowledgments (e.g., support from spouse, family, friends), as desired.

6. Table of Contents (recommended – not paginated itself; may be brief for some capstone projects): Indicate major sections of project and beginning page numbers, including chapters and appendices or, at a minimum, Final Written Product, Bibliography, and Reflective Writing sections.

7. List of Tables, Figures, Photos, Definitions, etc. (recommended if project includes such information: not paginated itself): Include page numbers on which tables, figures, or photos appear.

8. **Final Written Product (REQUIRED: begin Arabic (1, 2, 3) pagination):** Must be completely edited and free of errors. **Include word count of this section, if applicable, on first page** (see Requirements for more information).

9. **Reflective Writing (REQUIRED: continue Arabic pagination):** Include word count and see Requirements for minimum.

10. Endnotes (optional, depending on bibliographic style: continue Arabic pagination): Not necessary if using footnotes or if not including any notes.

11. Bibliography or Works Cited list (highly recommended but guided by discipline: continue Arabic pagination): Typically, at least 15 sources that the paper quotes or uses as background, formatted correctly according to disciplinary conventions.

12. Appendices (optional, depending on project: continue Arabic pagination for cover sheets or any included pages): If project includes non-written materials, please do include those materials, preferably on DVD or in charts/tables, in this section.

13. **Professional Author Bio (REQUIRED: continue Arabic pagination):** Written in third person, this paragraph includes student’s major/minor, college academic accomplishments, and future plans.
Frequently Asked Questions

Are students required to complete their Honors capstone projects in their majors?
Designed as the culmination of every Honors student’s undergraduate educational experience, the Honors capstone project should focus on some area of interest in the student’s major (or sometimes minor) field. This choice allows students to develop close professional relationships with faculty in their academic disciplines. Because interdisciplinary learning is central to the Honors experience, students may also choose to pursue interdisciplinary projects, provided these projects extend disciplinary knowledge in meaningful ways. Students who are working in disciplines outside their majors often choose to add the DHA from the faculty mentor’s home department, rather than the DHA from the student’s home department, to the capstone committee.

Can an Honors capstone project re-work a previous paper or project?
It is academically dishonest to recycle, with minor additions or changes, a paper already completed and submitted for a grade or Honors contract points. A student who proposes to add a different introduction or a longer conclusion, more examples, or illustrations to an existing paper is certainly not proposing anything that can be considered the capstone of an Honors education; such work is therefore unacceptable. However, a capstone project that builds upon and extends a student’s past work in new and deeper ways is indeed the capstone to an undergraduate education. Students often develop capstone ideas from successful Honors contracts, which students can productively use to complete some preliminary research in their areas of interest. Contracts can thus serve as a means of testing out ideas that students might want to pursue in more depth in their capstone projects. Similarly, a required non-Honors capstone course in the major often allows a student to complete a chapter, portion, or starting point for an Honors capstone.

What if students cannot complete all of the work described in their Honors capstone proposals?
As students work on their capstone projects, they will almost certainly find that the project changes and develops in unexpected ways; such changes are part of the research and creative processes and should cause no concern, so long as the project continues to grow and progress. As students complete preliminary research and creative work, they often collaborate with their faculty mentors and committee members to narrow or refocus the project as necessary. Similarly, if students discover that essential materials or equipment are unavailable, they should work with their mentors and committee members to modify the project appropriately. It is always acceptable for students to shift the focus of the project if they do so with the help of their mentors and with the agreement of all members of the Honors capstone committee. If students and committee members cannot come to an agreement about how to modify a project, the Honors Director can help the group to find a solution. If the project changes in fundamental ways, students may need to submit and secure approval for a new Honors capstone proposal, at the discretion of the faculty mentor; such changes must earn approval of the entire committee, as well as Honors. No substantial project changes may be made after the second week of the student’s final term.

What happens if a student fails to complete the Honors capstone project?
Students graduate with honors only if they complete their Honors capstone projects, and the University Honors Program therefore makes every effort to help students succeed. In extenuating circumstances, if students decide that they cannot complete their projects, they should 1) immediately notify the Honors Program and Director of the decision, and 2) understand that they will not earn an “A” in a designated Honors capstone class. Honors will consult with the faculty mentor and the Departmental Honors Advisor/committee members to determine an alternate assignment (usually a shorter paper) and grade (no higher than a “B”). If students make this decision early in the semester, they may petition to withdraw from HONR 4900 or other approved Honors capstone course and register for an independent study in their major without penalty. Please consult with Honors staff about this possibility.
Resources and Assistance

Scholarships: Please see the Honors Program Scholarships web page for a complete list. Scholarships specifically designed to support students working on capstones include the following:

- **Helen B. Cannon and Lawrence O. Cannon Awards**: These $1500 scholarships are awarded to two outstanding juniors preparing to complete capstones in the coming year. One scholarship goes to a student in the humanities, arts, social sciences, business, or education; the other is awarded to a student in science, technology, engineering, or math. The awards committee reviews capstone plans, achievements in honors, and future goals. Spring and fall graduates are welcome to apply by FEBRUARY 1.

- **Morse Scholarship**: This $500 scholarship is awarded to an outstanding junior with financial need who is working toward graduation with honors in the coming year. The awards committee reviews capstone plans, achievements in honors, and future goals. Apply by FEBRUARY 1.

- **Honors Research/Study Abroad Funds**: Students may apply for up to $500 per term to support research, conference travel, or other scholarly/creative activity and up to $1000 one time to support study abroad. Honors accepts applications on a rolling basis.

- **Undergraduate Research and Creative Opportunities (URCO) Grants**: Many Honors students apply for and win UCRO grants for their capstone research. URCO deadlines are October 15, February 15 and June 15; more information is available on the Office of Research website.

Community Spaces and Resources: Honors students are invited to relax in our student lounge (LLC A, Room 112) and to make use of these additional resources:

- **Honors Capstone Archives**: Honors houses and indexes capstone projects completed since 1971 (Honors was founded in 1964). More recent projects (2009-) are also available through USU Digital Commons.

- **Library Computer and Study Room**: Honors students may request (from Honors staff) a key code to the Joyce Kinkead Honors Study Room (334H) on the third floor of the Merrill-Cazier Library. The room features computers and is open during regular library hours. We encourage students working on capstone projects to use this resource.

- **Honors Capstone Support on Canvas**: Honors also creates and maintains a Canvas support page for all students working on capstone projects. All students who earn final approval on their capstone proposals are automatically added to this group. Students may chat with peers, ask Honors staff specific questions, and find information about upcoming deadlines and opportunities on this page.

Writing and Editing: Honors hires a writing tutor from the USU Writing Center. This tutor holds regular office hours and is trained to help students improve writing at any level, from a paper for an introductory course to an Honors capstone project. The writing tutor can help students learn to proofread and edit effectively; students MUST do this polishing work on their capstone projects and are encouraged to make use of this resource.
Examples of Outstanding Capstones

These projects are available in the Honors Program or in Digital Commons (2009-present). Please notice that some of these capstone projects have been published (citations and links included).

College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences

Animal, Dairy, and Veterinary Sciences


Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning


Nutrition and Food Sciences


Plant Science


Caine College of the Arts

Art


Interior Design


Music


Music Therapy

Jon M. Huntsman School of Business

Economics

Management Information Systems

Marketing

Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services

Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education

Elementary Education

Psychology

College of Engineering

Biological Engineering

Civil Engineering

Electrical and Computer Engineering

Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Anthropology

English
▪ Cambri McDonald Spear, “Reforming the Performance of Masculinity: Stephen Crane’s Critiques of Riis’s and Roosevelt’s Civic Militarism,” Fall 2014.

History

Journalism and Communication

Religious Studies

Sociology

Spanish
▪ Blain Chaise Housley and Brandon Kay Shumway, “Medical Interpretation in Cache Valley Clinics,” Fall 2013.

S. J. and Jessie E. Quinney College of Natural Resources

Environment and Society

Watershed Science
Wildland Resources
- Jamie Reynolds, “Quantifying Non-game Fish Sampling Biases and Demographics to Better Understand the Role of Fish in Pelican Diet and Distribution at Strawberry Reservoir, UT,” Spring 2015.

College of Science

Biology

Biochemistry

Computer Science

Geology

Mathematics

Mathematics Education
- Michael Buhler, “Spock, Euler, and Madison” Graph Theory in the Classroom,” Fall 2012.

Physics

Statistics
Advice from Past Honors Students:

**Gracie Arnold – Marketing**
“When […] students attempt to complete a capstone project, surrounding themselves with strong professionals and advisors can make all the difference.”

**Sam Beirne – Wildlife Science**
“I would … recommend starting the capstone process early and … writing at each stage of the process. Starting … early produces a more comprehensive and thorough paper. Writing at each stage of the process is a good way to document the project more effectively without trying to remember every detail at the last minute. I also kept a notebook with all of the components of my project for reference.”

**Sara Calicchia – Animal, Dairy, and Veterinary Science**
“I was told to take extremely detailed notes in my laboratory journal during the laboratory research phase, and I am very thankful for that piece of advice. I had run so many different reactions and there were so many figures and results in the notebook that sifting through the critical parts of the procedure was a large task. After I found the information I needed, the Methods section was basically already written for me.”

**Nicholas Decker – Landscape Architecture**
“Seriously consider what you want to study in depth as you write your initial proposal. Professors are an excellent resource at this stage, especially because they understand what it takes to develop a thorough piece of research specific to your field. Spend time with them as a junior and, if possible, before then. Executing a thesis project as part of a professor’s research is another excellent way to stay on track.”

**Natalie (Andrews) Evans – Journalism and Communication**
“My thesis was a cause I cared about, and for a semester I felt like a woman with purpose. I spent days presenting in high schools and displayed the results at the Student Showcase. Make sure you have a supportive faculty advisor. Mine really went to bat for me. He found classrooms for me to present in, teens to survey that fit my demographic, everything. He became a great mentor for my senior year of college; he always wanted to know what I was doing afterwards, and he’s part of the reason I have the job I do now as a reporter at the Herald Journal. So get a good advisor, because life after graduation is important, and you never know when a current professor may have taught your future boss like mine did.”

**Samuel Mitchell – Electrical Engineering**
“It was a proud moment when the controller that I designed [for my capstone project] worked better than the systems I had found from professional journals. It is quite apparent that most of the papers I had read were more concerned with producing a novel method than developing a controller that simply works. This was the first time that I saw that my research mattered outside of my lab. I realized what I was doing was something where I could contribute to the scientific community at large.”

**Brooke Nelson – Journalism and Communication**
“Do as much of your project on your own as possible. Faculty support is essential (keep asking professors for help until you find someone as passionate and supportive of your project as you are), but you will be more productive and feel more in control if you are the one setting the schedule and identifying the goals. Professors should only be there to double-check your research and offer advice when you start feeling overwhelmed or become thrown by something you find along the way. Natalie and I had a great experience with our mentor. He checked in with us every two weeks to see if we needed help, but stayed completely out of the planning. This project was completely our own, and after as many hours as you will spend on it, that’s a feeling you’re going to want to have.”
Madalyn Page – Anthropology
“I would strongly encourage students to try and publish their honors thesis because even though the shiny gold honors medal is worth it as a reward for completion, I would assume that every honors undergraduate thesis represents the potential of a person and the potential of where their academic research field is headed.”

Luke Petersen – Agriculture
“Work closely with your supervising professor and try not to put it off until the end of your last semester. No matter how easy your class load might seem your last semester, you don’t have time to procrastinate.”

Michelle Pfost – Elementary Education
“A piece of advice that I would give future students completing an honors thesis is to make sure to choose a topic that you are passionate about. My first topic was one that I was interested in, but I knew that I wouldn’t be motivated enough to complete it. By doing something that I can actually use in my future career, I was able to complete this project even when being super busy! So you can do it and it is possible!”

Laura Pruitt-Stephens – Psychology
“My top two pieces of advice to those completing an honors thesis are:
1. Start Early; it takes longer than you may think.
2. Don't give up: if you are planning to go on to graduate school, knowing the process will provide you with invaluable experience and insight.”

Christine (Merrill) Russell – History
“Because I completed an honors thesis, I was able to create a project I really wanted to do with a professor who specialized in that area – as opposed to attending a class with a professor […] who is a specialist in another area, and with students who pick the easiest subjects they can to get by. I can’t honestly say that I did more work, even, but simply that I had a greater opportunity to dig a little deeper and have a little more fun with a thesis that fit me perfectly. Thanks to the Honors Program!”

Brooke Sorenson – Elementary Education
“Start early! Your thesis isn’t a project that should be tackled in the last semester of your senior year because it should be something you are interested in or have been thinking about for several semesters. My thesis was the capstone of my education at Utah State, and I wanted to put the time into it that would make it be a worthwhile project. When deciding just exactly how to complete my thesis, I found it very helpful to have another reason for completing it other than to fill the honors requirement for graduation. A big project like this should be useful for something other than to sit on a shelf and never be read. I decided that, from my research, I could write an interesting article and get it published in a scholarly journal (which I did.) I also used my research to conduct a good staff development/training meeting at my student-teaching elementary school. Being able to actually use my research for something was much more rewarding than just handing it in to the Honors office.”

Austin Spence – Biology
“I only ever took one English class, yet I spent more time writing my thesis and manuscript than I did coming up with the idea or doing the data collection. I also was only required to take one statistics class for my major, but my mentor told me early to take as many statistics classes as possible. With this advice, I took four more stats classes, and I can already see how helpful it is.”

Laura Taylor – Interior Design
“I would recommend [that] future students … find some support at the peer level so that they are not always relying on support from their faculty advisor alone.”

Karen Tew – Biology
“My most important piece of advice to future honors students is this: go get started. It isn’t fun to have “write my thesis” on your to-do list for an entire semester, hanging over you and constantly being in the back of your
mind. Trust me – if you start with a good format and outline, work on the main writing portion a little bit each week, continue reading related papers, and ask for other people to proofread it often, your thesis will be done quickly and with minimal stress.”

**Marilize Van der Walt – Biology**

“This study [is] what made my experience at Utah State University so fantastic. I will always remember the things I learned, the wonderful adventures I was a part of, and my accomplishments in my time here. This capstone project will be with me for the rest of my career!”

**Matthew Wright – English**

“Immerse yourself in the project. Extracurricular, unsolicited, non-required research sets you miles ahead of the competition for grad school and job placement. And how else are you gonna fill the hours? Think about it: you're already a nerd.”

**Robert Wright – Psychology**

“The reason I was accepted into my graduate Ph.D. program was due to the fact that I completed an honors thesis. I wish I would have known about it earlier. … The honors thesis is a great instrument for furthering our education and I think more people should take advantage of it.”