

Welcome to the University Honors Program's ***Contract and Practical Application Handbook***. The purpose of this handbook is to provide students, faculty mentors, and Departmental Honors Advisors with clear guidelines for how honors students can earn honors practical application (HPA) points, including information about Think Tank collaborative seminars, Honors Excel graduate credit, and various forms of honors contracts (research, work outside class, internships, study abroad). Students typically earn most of these points during their second and third years in the USU Honors Program.

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## What are Honors Practical Application Points?

HPA points are required to graduate with honors because they demonstrate a student's ability to apply classroom knowledge to existing or emerging situations and problems. Building upon the four pillars of the USU Honors Program, this requirement turns the theory of an honors education into practice: students are challenged to think critically, research independently, communicate across disciplines, and engage with their communities as they take their ideas beyond the classroom. While many undergraduates at USU gain some practical experience in their disciplines, honors students systematically build professional skills upon their academic knowledge, beginning with their practical application work and ending with their capstone projects. This process trains honors students to question ideas, take responsibility for their own learning, consider the relationships between radically different ideas, and seek practical ways to make the world a better place, skills that make them top recruits for jobs, graduate and professional programs, and nationally competitive scholarships and fellowships.

The Honors Program offers three pathways for earning the nine required HPA points, and students may choose to repeat or combine any of them: Think Tank collaborative seminars (three points each), Honors Excel graduate courses (three points each), and honors contracts (three points each). All HPA work 1) puts academic knowledge into practice, 2) involves independent and/or collaborative projects completed outside the classroom, 3) is supervised by a faculty or professional mentor, and 4) results in a tangible end product (poster, report, presentation, reflection, etc. *All contracts must conclude with a two-page reflection paper; many will have an additional final product*). See **Requirements** (pp. 3-4) for further details.

## **Requirements for Honors Practical Application Work**

*The defining feature of this work is that it allows students to put academic knowledge into practice in tangible ways. All HPA work must include:*

### **Academic Knowledge in Practice**

Whether students are enrolled in Honors Think Tank courses, taking graduate classes through Honors Excel, or designing their own contract experiences, they will put their academic knowledge into practice in tangible ways. In the Think Tanks, students from across disciplines collaborate to address specific local problems and issues; in Honors Excel courses, students gain professional experience in pursuing an academic career at the graduate level; in contracts, students bring their own academic expertise to bear on situations outside the classroom. Students have the freedom to shape their practical experiences, provided they demonstrate both the academic value and the time commitment of that work (minimum 20 hours per contract). They may find particularly useful work that prepares them for capstone projects (preliminary research or apprenticeship, laboratory or field work, creative practice or experimentation, related service or travel) or professional success (internships, study abroad, national scholarship applications, graduate coursework). The Honors Program office archives proposals and completion reports for outstanding contracts, as well as past Think Tank and graduate course syllabi, for student, mentor, and Departmental Honors Advisor reference.

### **Independent or Collaborative Projects**

All HPA work requires students to complete independent or collaborative projects that put their academic knowledge into practice. These projects might address specific problems, complete certain tasks, reflect upon particular experiences, or hone unique skills. In Think Tanks and graduate Honors Excel courses, projects will emerge from course content and requirements; for contracts, students will work with their mentors to define the parameters and value of their projects. The focus of projects will vary, but all will share a minimum workload (at least 20 hours per participant), an emphasis on putting academic knowledge into practice, a mentoring relationship, and a final product that can be shared with the Honors Program.

### **Mentoring**

Honors students choose faculty or professional mentors to oversee their HPA work and to approve the final products. The nature of the practical experience shapes the choice of mentor: in Think Tanks and Honors Excel graduate courses, the mentor is the professor(s); for academic contracts, the mentor is typically (although not always) a professor in the student's field; for experiential contracts (service, internship, study abroad), the mentor is often a community leader, professional, or program leader. Mentors are crucial in helping students to shape the practical value and outcomes of these honors projects. In most cases, faculty mentors will approve the student's final product and/or reflection; however, when necessary (particularly when mentors are not USU faculty members or when work occurs during the summer), the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student's home department and/or the Honors Program will approve the final product. Students must indicate both the mentor and the final approver on their contract forms. Please see ***Contract Responsibilities*** (pp. 13-17) for more details about faculty and student responsibilities. For Think Tanks and Honors Excel graduate courses, syllabi clearly define requirements; students will forfeit HPA points unless they earn a "B-" or better in these

courses. All students are responsible for securing mentors and/or enrolling in the appropriate classes, defining their projects and completing contract proposals (for contracts), meeting all agreed-upon deadlines, communicating regularly with the mentor, and submitting a reflection and/or final product on time for approval.

### **Reflection and/or Final Product**

Students earn HPA points only once they submit and gain approval for their reflections and any additional agreed-upon final products. Deadlines for Think Tank, Honors Excel, and contract final products are firm (see course syllabus for Think Tank and Honors Excel or **Contract Deadlines** for other contracted work [p. 18]). Future students and faculty will examine past reflections and final products as models for their own contracts, so the University Honors Program approves only those contract proposals and reflections/final products that demonstrate clearly and fully the value and possibilities of contracts.

**Reflection:** All honors contracts require students to write a two-page reflection on the experience, which clearly explains how the contract has met the following goals:

1. Required student to apply academic knowledge in practical ways outside of the classroom
2. Added to the student's overall education and/or future goals
3. Created a positive, meaningful mentor relationship
4. Deepened the student's research experience within his or her major
5. Demanded critical thinking about topics in that major
6. Broadened the student's experience across disciplines (sometime in more obvious ways than others, but students should always think broadly and across disciplines about the impact of their work)
7. Engaged the student in his or her local or global community (again, this engagement might be very obvious (in a study abroad) or less so (in a lab); in either case, students should reflect upon the broader impact of their work)

**Other Final Products:** In addition to the required reflection, contracts may include other final products such as posters, reports, literature reviews, essays, syllabi or lesson plans, presentations, events or performances with process analysis, or major grant or fellowship applications. Final products for contracts must be proposed and approved in the **Contract Proposal** (see pp. 10-11).

## **What is a Think Tank Collaborative Seminar?**

The University Honors Program offers one Honors Think Tank series each year. The Think Tank is comprised of three connected Honors General Education Depth courses that focus together on one important local issue or problem. Students may register for HONR 3010 (Life and Physical Sciences [QI]), 3020 (Humanities/Creative Arts [CI]), or 3030 (Social Sciences [CI or QI, depending on faculty expertise]), each of which fulfills one University Studies Depth requirement and either a CI (Communications Intensive) or QI (Quantitative Intensive) requirement. Honors selects top professors to teach these classes, and the Honors Think Tank professors then work together to coordinate field trips, projects, and collaborations across sections, creating a unique team-taught Think Tank. The Think Tanks also feature a service-learning designation, which means that students will not only apply their academic knowledge to local issues and problems, but also develop and implement practical solutions to those problems within the community.

The Think Tanks allow students to earn HPA points by researching and discussing key issues in class so that they can more effectively put their ideas into practice around Cache Valley. Professors evaluate all student work, coordinate collaboration, and set project requirements. Students must complete all assignments on time and pass the class with at least a “B-” to earn HPA points. Students registered for Think Tanks do not need to complete Contract Proposal and Contract Completion forms to earn points; Honors will assign the HPA points at the end of the term to all students who successfully complete the class.

## **What is an Honors Excel Graduate Course?**

The Honors Excel program allows undergraduate USU honors students to earn HPA points by taking approved graduate-level courses because these courses take honors students beyond the usual undergraduate classroom experience. Honors Excel connects qualified undergraduates with faculty and departments offering graduate courses that can accommodate talented undergraduate students. These courses give honors students the opportunity to collaborate on cutting-edge research with USU's top faculty and graduate students—and to create research relationships that will continue to develop throughout the honors student's career at USU. Since over half of graduating honors students go on to enroll in graduate or professional programs each year, Honors Excel gives these students a sample of what that future experience might be like.

Honors Excel grants students HPA points because the program enables students to test their undergraduate knowledge by taking the next professional step in a possible academic career. Professors evaluate all honors student work, coordinate collaboration, and set project requirements. Students must complete all assignments on time and pass the class with at least a "B-" to earn HPA points. Students registered for Honors Excel classes must complete Contract Proposal and Contract Completion forms to earn points. Faculty and/or departments are under no obligation to admit honors students to graduate courses; this program simply allows the opportunity when and if the fit is good between course and student.

## What is an Honors Contract?

An honors contract is an agreement between a student and mentor to complete for HPA points an academic or professional project that extends learning beyond regular coursework. This work can take many different forms: it may be associated with a research or creative project, an upper-division course (3000-level or above), a paid or unpaid internship, a major grant/fellowship application, a community service project, study abroad, or other approved work. The student's mentor and the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student's and/or mentor's home department evaluate the student's proposed contract and sign if approved. For any contracts associated with a class, students must submit mentor-signed proposals (see **Contract Proposals** (pp. 10-11)) to the Departmental Honors Advisor by the end of the second week of classes in the contract term; they then submit their mentor- and DHA-signed proposals to the Honors office by the end of the third week of classes for final approval. All other contracts may be submitted at any time, provided they include a reasonable timeline to completion and a clear description of the final product; contracts are typically completed within 10-15 weeks. The mentor oversees the student's agreed-upon contract work and reports briefly on its completion at the end of the contract period.

All Honors contracts require:

- An approved Contract Proposal signed by the mentor and the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student's and/or mentor's home department, and then submitted to the Honors office (see deadlines above);
- At least 20 hours of work that enriches the student's academic experience beyond normal coursework (NOTE: Students may complete more than one contract for an extensive project, but each part of that longer project must be proposed, approved, and completed as its own contract);
- At least two meetings per month (or a minimum of six meetings) between the student and mentor (outside of class, if the contract is connected to a course) to discuss the project (students record mentor meetings and report on meetings at the end of the contract);
- A detailed two-page reflection on the contract experience and, in many cases, an additional final product, such as a poster, report, literature review, essay, syllabus or set of lesson plans, presentation, event or performance with process analysis, or major grant or fellowship application.
- Completion of work during the contract period: incompletes are not permitted.

As long as they meet those requirements, contracts may take any of the following forms:

- **Research, Scholarship, Creative, Service, and Other Project Contracts:** Students may choose to design contracts that explore their academic and professional interests. Students choose their own faculty mentors for these projects. Such contracts may prepare students for capstone work by allowing them to complete preliminary research or reading, to work as a research apprentice on a faculty project, to experiment creatively in a field of interest, or to engage in academically relevant local or global service. They may also fill a gap in knowledge not covered by coursework or investigate an area of academic interest outside a student's major. Please see **Examples of Outstanding Projects** (pp. 21-27) for ideas.
- **Course Contracts:** Contracts may be completed as an extension of an upper-division (3000-level or above) course. Such contracts must require an extra project, specific

research or reading, or other activity related to the course but not part of regular coursework. The instructor of the course will serve as the project mentor, and students and mentors must meet outside of class, according to the guidelines above. The final product must differ from required coursework. The contract is not graded and does not affect the course grade, but students must earn at least a “B-” in any class associated with a contract. Please see **Examples of Outstanding Projects** for ideas.

- **Internship Contracts:** Internships or field-related work experiences may be completed under contract for HPA points if they expand the student’s academic work with a unique professional apprenticeship. The mentor of an internship will typically be an on-site professional who supervises and guides the student’s work experience. In such cases, the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student’s home department and/or the Honors Program perform the on-campus mentoring, evaluating the student’s reflection and any final product to ensure that the experience was in line with other contract experiences. Students may apply for Honors Research Fund support for contract internships. Please see **Examples of Outstanding Projects** for ideas.
- **Study Abroad Contracts:** Study abroad may be completed under contract for HPA points if the experience expands the student’s academic work with a unique international experience. The mentor of a study abroad experience will typically be an on-site faculty member or trip leader who supervises and guides the student’s international experience. When the mentor is not a USU faculty member or when the experience occurs during the summer, the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student’s home department and/or the Honors Program perform the on-campus mentoring, evaluating the student’s reflection and any final product to ensure that the experience was in line with other contract experiences. Students may apply for Honors Study Abroad Fund support for international study. Please see **Examples of Outstanding Projects** for ideas.



## What Makes a Great Contract?

Great honors contracts prepare students for the future. Whether they focus on the near future (capstone preparation, exploration of academic interests, study abroad) or a long-term plan (national fellowship applications, internships, professional research), contracts allow students to follow their intellectual passions and to make the most of USU's many outstanding academic resources. Remembering that contracts are a stepping-stone toward future goals, students designing contracts should consider what they might usefully add to their honors educations. Many of our students find the following types of contracts to be particularly useful:

- Capstone Preparation: Students often design contracts that prepare them to complete meaningful capstone projects. Such contracts can involve literature reviews or library research, creative experimentation, laboratory or fieldwork, courses or academic programs not offered by USU, or other forms of preparation. Reflections on these projects prepare students to articulate their skills and development in their fields, and other final products can become starting points for in-depth capstone work. By building understanding that will support capstone work, students prepare themselves to think critically about their own and others' work in their fields. Such reflective critical thinking is one of the four key skills that all Honors students master at USU.
- Research/Creative Apprenticeship: Students can design contracts focusing on research or creative work, whether or not that work is directly connected to a future capstone project. Independent research (defined, in a broad sense, as gathering and communicating knowledge) is another of the four key skills that all honors students master at USU. Acting as a research or creative apprentice in a professor's lab/studio or on his or her project trains students in important research/creative methods, and reflecting on that experience deepens understanding of one's place within a chosen research field.
- Academic Exploration: Some students may want to deepen and contextualize their academic knowledge by applying what they learn in class to an extracurricular project or by engaging in academic work outside their areas of expertise. Interdisciplinary learning is the third of four key skills that all honors students master at USU. Students interested in placing their academic knowledge in a broader context can design course contracts with faculty in or outside of their majors (provided the course is at the 3000-level or above); they may also choose to work outside the curriculum with faculty whose expertise might help to fill a gap in their knowledge. Reflecting on this experience puts one's major interests in context.
- Local/Global Engagement: Students can focus their contracts on local, national, or international service/humanitarian projects, international study or research, or internationally focused internships. Civic engagement is the fourth key skill that all honors students master at USU, and contracts may therefore put academic knowledge into practice in the local, national, or global community. Students who engage in this kind of HPA work may want to consider earning either a Global Engagement Scholar or Service-Learning Scholar [transcript designation](#), and their reflections show the broader relevance of their academic work.
- Professional Development: Contracts may also foster professional development by engaging students in internships, professional apprenticeships or shadowing, or professional research. Like capstone preparation contracts, professional development contracts teach students to think critically and practically about future plans and to reflect on their future goals.

## **Contract Proposal and Completion Forms**

### **Contract Proposal Form (see p. 11)**

Prior to completing a contract, honors students must submit an Honors Contract Proposal form. The form requires students to indicate the project title or course department/number/title, estimate the total number of work hours required for the contract (minimum 20), verify their understanding of contract requirements, and write a proposal answering three key questions:

1. What is the goal of the honors contract; what do you hope to learn?
2. What specific work will you do, and what is your timeline for completing each part of the project?
3. In addition to your final reflection, will you include any other end product of this honors contract; if so, will you please briefly describe its content and format?

The proposal must label clearly each of these three sections and answer all questions fully. Students should work closely with mentors in creating the proposal so that both parties agree upon the goal, workload and timeline, and the content of any project end product. Please note that all contracts must require a minimum 20-hour workload, a detailed reflection, and any other tangible final product that makes clear how the contract met its goals.

Once students have completed the form and attached the finished proposal, mentors review and sign, if approved. Students are encouraged to submit an electronic version of the proposal simultaneously to the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student's and/or mentor's home department to allow time for review. Students must submit a mentor-signed/approved form to the Departmental Honors Advisor by the end of the second week of classes in the contract term for course contracts or before the start date of any other contract. They then submit their mentor- and DHA-signed proposals to the Honors office by the end of the third week of classes (course contracts) or before the start date (other contracts) for final approval.

### **Contract Completion Form (see p. 12)**

Upon completing a contract, honors students submit an Honors Contract Completion form and get mentor approval of the work, reflection, and any other final product submitted for the project. The form asks students to list the dates of meetings between mentor and student (minimum of six meetings), to indicate the hours of work required to complete the contract (minimum of 20 hours), and to attach the project's reflection and any other final product (along with a brief summary of the content, form, and value of any additional final products). Students earn HPA points only if they submit this form, do the required work, and secure both mentor and Honors Program approval on the completed contract.



# Contract

An honors contract is an agreement between a student and mentor to complete for honors points an academic or professional project related to the student’s field that extends learning beyond regular coursework. This work can be associated with a research or creative project, an upper-division course (3000-level or above), a paid or unpaid internship, a grant/fellowship application, a community service project, study abroad, Honors Excel, or other approved work. **For course-related contracts, students submit typed, signed proposals to Departmental Honors Advisors in student’s and/or mentor’s department by the end of the second week and to Honors by the end of the third week of classes. All other contracts may be submitted at any time, provided they include a reasonable timeline to completion and a clear description of the final product; contracts are typically completed within 10-15 weeks.** Once a contract is approved, the mentor oversees the student’s work and reports briefly on its completion at the end of the contract period.

Student’s Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ A # \_\_\_\_\_

Expected Grad Sem/Yr \_\_\_\_\_ Contract Start/End Dates or Term \_\_\_\_\_ Student’s Signature (verifies understanding of contract requirements) \_\_\_\_\_

Project title (or course dept., #, and title) – Is this an internship  or study abroad ? \_\_\_\_\_ ESTIMATED TOTAL WORK HOURS \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor’s Name \_\_\_\_\_ Mentor’s Email \_\_\_\_\_ Mentor’s Dept. and UMC \_\_\_\_\_ Approver Name (if different): DHA  or Honors  \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Dept. Honors Advisor’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 \*\* or PRINT NAME ABOVE and attach email indicating approval \*\*

## REQUIREMENTS

- Contracts are for **honors students only** and are valid only if approved by mentor, Departmental Honors Advisor, and Honors.
- Contracts need not be connected to a course, but if they are, only **upper-division courses** are acceptable. Contract work is not graded and does not affect the course grade, but students must earn at least a “B-” in any class associated with a contract.
- All contracts must yield a two-page reflection; some will also yield another kind of final product: a poster, report, syllabus, PowerPoint presentation, event, etc.
- **“Incompletes” are not permitted**; students must finish and submit all work to Honors within the contracted time period.

## WORK

Contract work enriches the student’s academic experience beyond normal coursework. Each contract must demand a minimum of **20 hours** of work; students may complete more than one contract for an extensive project, but each part of that longer project must be proposed, approved, and completed as its own contract. The student and mentor must meet (outside of class, if the contract is connected to a course) **at least twice per month (minimum six times per semester)** to discuss the project. Students must keep a record of mentor meetings and report on those meetings at the end of the contract.

**PROPOSAL** (Please indicate if contract fulfills Honors Excel  or Honors “Service-Learning Scholar”  or “Global Engagement Scholar”  or “Undergraduate Research”  requirements – if so, explain how it does so under #1 below.)

Please attach a **typed** detailed description of the proposed honors contract, addressing the following **THREE** points: 1) What is the goal of the honors contract; what do you hope to learn? 2) What specific work will you do, and what is your timeline for completing each part of the project (including completion date)? 3) What will be the end product (**content, length, format**) of this Honors Contract (all contracts must end with a 2-page reflection; some will have an additional final product)?

**OFFICE:** The Honors Program has **approved / denied** (circle one) this contract for \_\_\_\_\_ (Semester and/or Year).

**END OF CONTRACT:** Please sign upon contract completion and return to the Honors office, UMC 0400.

Mentor’s/Approver’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



# Honors Contract Completion

Your honors contract is complete only once you sign and submit this form and your mentor approves your work. The Honors office will send your contract to the mentor for approval and signature. **You will not receive honors credit or points for your contract if we do not receive both this form and mentor approval.**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ A#: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Contract Start/End Dates or Term: \_\_\_\_\_

Project title or course dept., #, and title: \_\_\_\_\_ Credits (for courses only): \_\_\_\_\_

Was this an Honors Excel contract?  YES  NO If you answered “yes,” please skip to #3 below.

1. List the dates you met with your mentor outside of class (minimum 6 times; mentor must approve):

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2. How many hours did your contract take to complete? \_\_\_\_\_ hours

*\*NOTE: 20-hour minimum; contracts may be extended by working with Honors Program staff.*

3. Please **attach the required two-page reflective essay on the contract experience.** The reflection must clearly explain 1) the work completed for the contract (highlighting how that work added to the student’s overall education and/or future goals, deepened research experience within the major and demanded critical thinking about topics in the major, broadened the student’s experience across disciplines, and engaged the student in his or her local or global community; 2) the relationship with the mentor (highlighting its value and/or difficulties); and 3) how the contract represents a practical application of academic knowledge (the aim of all Honors contracts).

\* NOTE: For Honors Excel graduate courses, please indicate how the class and assignments have deepened your understanding of graduate-level work and helped to shape your future plans (please cover topics above).

4. If the project includes any other final product, please briefly summarize here the content, format, and value to you of that final product; attach the final product to this form.

*By signing below, I attest on my honor that I completed the honors contract work and met with my mentor as described above.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Contract Responsibilities**

Every contract pairs an honors student with a mentor and requires approval from the mentor, the Departmental Honors Advisor, and the Honors Program. Mentoring an honors contract takes time, and students should therefore make every effort to develop contracts that will interest and engage their chosen mentors. The best way to secure a mentor is to build positive working relationships with faculty and other professionals: students can begin to shape those relationships in classes, through research or service projects, and within clubs and other academic or professional organizations. Mentors are much more likely to help students whom they know 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 mentor, the Departmental Honors Advisor, and the Honors Program. In general, students are responsible for selecting and working with a mentor to write a contract proposal, securing all required signatures and submitting the proposal on time, conferring regularly with the mentor, meeting all deadlines, and completing a high quality final product that fulfills the contract. In turn, the mentor is responsible for helping the student to define and focus the project, mentoring the contract work and the construction of a meaningful reflection and any appropriate final product, and ensuring high quality work within the discipline. The Departmental Honors Advisor acts as a liaison between the mentor and the Honors Program, making sure that proposed contracts meet both honors requirements and disciplinary standards; students may therefore submit contracts to DHAs in their own and/or their mentor's home department, if that department differs from their own. The University Honors Program supports students and faculty and ensures that all contracts meet minimum honors standards and deadlines and thus merit the award of HPA points.

## *Student Responsibilities*

### PROPOSAL:

- Working with mentor, complete a contract proposal (form available at <http://honors.usu.edu>) following the required format, including a clear description of project goal, proposed work, reasonable timeline, and final product;
- Send an electronic copy of the proposal to the appropriate Departmental Honors Advisor as early as possible;
- For course-related contracts, submit a mentor-signed/approved proposal to Departmental Honors Advisor by end of second week of classes in contract term and a mentor- and DHA-signed/approved proposal to Honors by end of third week of classes;
- For all other contracts, submit to Honors once proposal is approved and signed by both faculty mentor and appropriate DHA; contracts are typically completed within 10-15 weeks.

### CONTRACT WORK:

- Schedule, hold, and document regular (minimum six) mentor meetings;
- Work with the mentor to decide how the meeting time will be used effectively, and complete any agreed-upon work prior to meetings;
- Finish all agreed-upon work in a professional and timely manner, according to proposed timeline;
- Discuss immediately with your mentor and/or the Honors office any questions about your responsibilities and/or work.

### FINAL PRODUCT and CONTRACT COMPLETION:

- Present a draft of the required reflection and any other final product to mentor at least one week before the final day of the contract (one week before last day of classes for course-related contracts);
- Carefully craft and/or edit final product, responding to mentor feedback as necessary;
- Submit approved (by mentor and/or approver) final product and Contract Completion Form (available at <http://honors.usu.edu>) to the Honors office by the last day of classes in the contract term (course contracts) or by the contract completion date (all other contracts).

## ***Mentor Responsibilities***

### PROPOSAL:

- Work with student to draft a contract proposal (form available at <http://honors.usu.edu>) following the required format, including a clear description of project goal, proposed work and timeline, and any appropriate final product;
- Sign proposal when approved;
- Please note that students should send the appropriate Departmental Honors Advisor an electronic draft of the proposal prior to your approval and then a final copy for signature once you have approved the proposal;
- Course-related contracts must be signed and submitted to DHAs by the end of the second week of classes in the contract term and to the Honors office by the end of the third week of classes. All other contracts are accepted on a rolling basis; contracts are typically completed within 10-15 weeks. You may remind students of these deadlines, but it is their responsibility to secure all signatures and to submit the forms on time.
- By signing a student's contract proposal, the faculty mentor indicates approval of the project plan, timeline, and proposed final product. Please keep in mind that all contracts require students to complete a two-page experiential reflection (See **Requirements**, p. 4).

### CONTRACT WORK:

- Hold regular meetings with the student (minimum **six**) and ensure that the meetings are pedagogically useful (the student's responsibilities here include scheduling these meetings, working with you to create a structure for the meetings, and completing any agreed-upon work prior to the meetings);
- Guide the student in completing the agreed-upon work in a professional and timely manner, according to the proposed timeline;
- Discuss immediately with the student and/or the Honors office any questions about your responsibilities and/or the student's progress on contract work.

### REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT, and CONTRACT COMPLETION:

- Require a draft of the reflection and any other final product at least one week before the final day of the contract (one week before the last day of classes for course-related contracts);
- Offer feedback in a timely manner and ensure that the reflection and final product meet the terms of the contract and describe/represent useful and competent work in the student's discipline;
- Please note that students must submit the Contract Completion Form and a mentor-approved copy of the reflection and any final product to the Honors office by the last day of classes in the contract term (course-related contracts) or by the contract completion date (all other contracts).
- Sign and return Contract Completion form when you receive it from Honors. If the student has not completed the contract to your satisfaction, please communicate with Honors promptly.

## ***Departmental Faculty Honors Advisor Responsibilities***

*The Departmental Honors Advisor oversees not the individual contract work itself, but the process within the department. For this reason, DHAs may be responsible for contracts of students and/or faculty mentors in their home departments; please remember that students may choose to complete contracts outside of their home departments. Acting as a liaison between the student/mentor team and the Honors Program, the DHA ensures that projects meet minimum requirements both for Honors and within the discipline.*

### **PROPOSAL:**

- Help honors students in your department to find appropriate mentors for their proposed contract work and share sample contracts with students, as appropriate (see “Final Product and Contract Completion” below). DHAs should become increasingly well educated in what makes a strong contract as they build a collection of successful projects.
- **PLEASE NOTE:** Electronic drafts of **course-related contract proposals** are still due to DHAs during the first or second week of classes (for review) and for signature by the end of the second week of classes in each contract term. **All other (non-course) contracts are now accepted by Honors on a rolling basis and should be reviewed, signed, and returned to the student promptly.** Your responsibility is to review these contracts to ensure that their timelines are reasonable (**contracts are typically completed within 10-15 weeks**) and that they meet minimum honors requirements (at least 20 hours of work that expands a student’s academic experience in practical ways with the expectation of regular mentor meetings and a final product) and standards in your discipline.
- For contracts that meet these requirements, sign each approved form and return it to the student promptly. Please remember that students must submit signed course-related contracts to the Honors office by the end of the third week of classes.
- For contracts that do not meet these requirements, communicate promptly and clearly with students and mentors about why the contract cannot be approved; the electronic submission of the proposal before approval by mentor is designed to facilitate this process. Work with students and faculty, if possible, to revise and resubmit contracts in a timely fashion (course-related contracts are due with all signatures to Honors by the end of the third week of classes).

### **CONTRACT WORK:**

- DHAs are not responsible for overseeing contract work, but please make time to answer any questions about honors requirements.

### **REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT, and CONTRACT COMPLETION:**

- DHAs are not responsible for overseeing contract completion unless they are the final approver of an internship, work experience, or study abroad experience, but they will receive copies of all completed contracts for their records and for the purpose of future advising. All contracts require a two-page reflection on the experience (see **Requirements**, p. 4), and many will include another relevant final product.
- Contracts will be completed by the last day of classes in each contract term (course contracts) or by the contract completion date (all other contracts).



## ***University Honors Program and Director Responsibilities***

*The Honors Program reviews each contract proposal and final product/completion form to ensure that the project meets honors requirements. Honors Program responsibilities include:*

### **PROPOSAL:**

- Regularly and consistently remind students and Departmental Honors Advisors of contract proposal deadlines and requirements;
- Collect and review all contract proposals, ensuring that they are signed by both mentor and DHA and that they include clear descriptions of project goals, proposed work and timelines, and any final products in addition to the reflection;
- Communicate immediately with any students and mentors whose contract proposals do not meet minimum requirements, and work with them as necessary to revise and resubmit the proposals.

### **CONTRACT WORK:**

- Meet annually with DHAs and hold annual and contract showcases for faculty and students;
- Distribute the *Contract and Practical Application Handbook* to all mentors and students who have entered into contracts and to students and faculty considering contracts, upon request;
- Answer any questions about contract goals, requirements, and responsibilities;
- Support faculty, Departmental Honors Advisors, and students in the contract process.

### **REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT and CONTRACT COMPLETION:**

- Remind students to submit a draft of their reflection and any additional final product to mentors at least one week prior to the contract completion date (one week prior to the last day of classes for course-related contracts);
- Remind mentors and students of contract requirements and deadlines as necessary: the reflection and any additional final product of the contract should be carefully crafted and/or edited, and they must be submitted to the Honors office, along with a Contract Completion Form (available at <http://honors.usu.edu>), by the contract completion date (last day of classes for course-related contracts);
- Review all contract final products and completion forms, ensuring that all work meets honors requirements for HPA points;
- Grant students the earned HPA points for each contract;
- Send copies of completed contracts to Departmental Honors Advisors so they can see outcomes and use them for future advising;
- Create an archive of outstanding contracts for student and faculty reference.

## Contract Deadlines

- CONTACT MENTOR – *The earlier students contact mentors, the more time they have to craft outstanding contracts together. Ideally, students talk to potential contract mentors in the term before the desired contract is set to begin.*
  - *Course-related contracts require mentor contact no later than the first week of the contract term.*
- SUBMIT MENTOR-APPROVED CONTRACT PROPOSAL TO DEPARTMENTAL HONORS ADVISOR – *Mentor and student complete proposal, Departmental Honors Advisor reviews simultaneously, mentor signs, and DHA has one week to give final approval before proposals are due to the Honors office. Proposals must be approved and submitted to Honors before the official start date of contract work; contracts are typically completed within 10-15 weeks.*
  - *Course-related contracts require students to submit the mentor-approved contract proposal to DHA by the end of the second week of classes in the contract term.*
- SUBMIT MENTOR AND DHA-APPROVED HONORS CONTRACT PROPOSAL TO HONORS OFFICE – *Mentor and Departmental Honors Advisor must have signed the form; Honors verifies that contract proposes to meet minimum honors requirements.*
  - *Course-related contracts require students to submit the mentor- and DHA-approved contract proposal to Honors by the end of third week of classes in the contract term.*
- DRAFT OF REFLECTION AND ANY OTHER FINAL PRODUCT TO MENTOR – *one week before the final day of contract: Mentor has time to offer feedback before final deadline to Honors.*
  - *Course-related contracts require students to submit this draft of the reflection and any other final product to the mentor one week before the last day of classes in the contract term.*
- REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT, AND CONTRACT COMPLETION FORM DUE TO HONORS – *by 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the contract.*
  - *Course-related contracts require students to submit reflection, any additional final product, and completion form to Honors by 5:00 p.m. on the last day of classes in the contract term.*

## Resources and Assistance

**Funding:** Please see <http://honors.usu.edu/scholarships> for application materials.

- Many honors students earning practical application points are eligible for **Honors Research/Study Abroad Funds**. These awards typically range from \$50-\$1000 and support student research, study abroad, conference participation, and other scholarly or creative activity. Honors accepts applications on a rolling basis.
- Students may also apply for **Undergraduate Research and Creative Opportunities (URCO) grants** to support research-focused contracts. URCO deadlines are October 15 and February 15; more information is available at <https://urco.usu.edu/about-the-urco/>.
- Students should check with their departments and colleges about funding resources for undergraduate work.

**Facilities and Computing:** *Honors students are welcome to make use of the student lounge in the Honors office (LLC Building A, Room 112). We have a desktop computer and a laptop available for checkout during business hours. Honors also offers...*

- **Honors Contract Archives:** The Honors office houses and indexes copies of all honors contracts.
- **Computer facilities/study room:** All honors students have access to the Joyce Kinhead Honors Study Room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Merrill-Cazier library. The computer facilities in the study room are available during regular library hours. We encourage all honors students to use this resource.

**Writing and Editing:** *Honors hires our own writing tutors from the USU Writing Center. These tutors hold regular office hours and are trained to help students improve writing at any level. Honors Writing Tutors can help you learn to proofread and edit effectively; please make use of this resource.*

**Practical Application Support on Canvas:** *Honors also creates and maintains a Canvas support page for all students working toward graduation with honors. Students may chat with peers, ask Honors Program staff specific questions, and find information about upcoming deadlines and opportunities on this page.*

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### ***Can students get paid for the work they do for their honors contracts?***

Yes. There are many opportunities for paid internships, laboratory jobs, or fieldwork. Additionally, student may apply for Undergraduate Research or Creative Opportunity (URCO) grants that allow for student remuneration. Honors points will be granted as long as proper paperwork is filed with the Honors office.

### ***Can students count required class work for honors contract points?***

No. Contract work must be distinct from required coursework. While contract work often advances or extends the themes in the course, the work and final product for a contract must not overlap with regular, required coursework. Contract work is not graded and does not affect a student's grade.

### ***Can students complete contracts outside of their main field of study?***

Yes. Contract work can deepen and contextualize honors students' academic knowledge by allowing them to engage in significant academic work outside their majors. This kind of work is particularly useful for students whose capstone projects or professional interests might involve interdisciplinary work.

### ***Can an honors contract be part of a student's honors capstone project?***

Yes. Contract work can absolutely feed into a student's honors capstone project. The University Honors Program encourages students to perform literature reviews or research, engage in field or lab work, and apprentice themselves on faculty projects in preparation for their own capstone projects. This work can become part of the capstone, with the faculty mentor's approval.

### ***What happens if I cannot complete my honors contract?***

If for whatever reason a student is unable to complete a contract, he or she must communicate with both the contract mentor and the Honors Program. Students must explain why they did not finish the project, summarize the work that they did complete on the contract, and articulate specifically what they will do differently in future contracts. Honors students with two consecutive incomplete contracts must meet with the Honors Program Director before proposing further contracts.

## Examples of Outstanding Projects

### College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences

#### *Animal, Dairy, and Veterinary Sciences*

- Lauren Brubaker: visited equine facility to take feed samples and offered analysis and dietary recommendations to owners.
- Courtney Buchanan: completed a research project and presentation titled “Determining Horse Age by Teeth.”
- Nicole Elbert: shadowed a large animal veterinarian for a semester and kept a formal journal of her experiences.

#### *Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning*

- Pamela Blackmore: did a literature review and analysis paper of two specific sub-watersheds in the Daybreak community in South Jordan, UT.
- Nicholas Decker: performed and documented site work for his future sculpture.
- Matt Durkovich: created a master plan for public art in Logan city.

#### *Nutrition and Food Sciences*

- Alyssa Aguilar: completed a nutrition science research project in which she took skin carotenoid readings with a Bio Photonic Scanner and then educated participants about their scores and future improvement.
- Amanda Spackman: created a handout for farmer’s markets (“EBT at Farmers’ Markets is a SNAP! A guide to implementing SNAP [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program] at your Farmer’s Market”).
- Krista Viau: designed a research project and made a presentation titled “Impact of Regular Carbonated Soft Drinks and Energy Drinks on Calcium and Vitamin D Intake in College Students.”

#### *Plant Science*

- Kylie Christensen: created a homeowner’s guide to landscaping with fruit crops.
- Kevin Cope: designed experimental protocol for researching soil nutrient content.
- Britney Hunter: completed a research project on high-tunnel profitability in vegetable production.

### Caine College of the Arts

#### *Art*

- Madison Bradford: created two study paintings and researched the realistic rendering of dog fur.
- Stevie Dutson: created a book describing the different painting mediums in Renaissance times.
- Tiffany Torrey: completed a documentary photography project titled “A Sense of Place Switzerland” while studying abroad.

#### *Interior Design*

- Megan Cook: completed a research project titled “Writing in the Disciplines: Relationships in Writing, Holistic Scoring, and Design.”

- Holly Murdock: completed a research project titled “Sustainability and Spirituality: Applying The Green Guide for Health Care to the Design of a Kidney Dialysis Center.”
- Laura Taylor: performed graphic materiality research while studying abroad in Rome, Florence, Venice, Paris, and London.

### *Music*

- Andrea Decker: created a collection of vocalizations with instructions and explanations for teachers and students of classical singing.
- Leah Kennedy: completed her sophomore vocal recital.
- Trevor Vincent: arranged and orchestrated a piece of music that the USU Symphony Orchestra played during one of their rehearsals.

### *Music Therapy*

- Marti Bowles: made an audio recording of African drumming pieces for use in therapy.
- Sarah Conner: wrote a paper titled “Alzheimer’s Disease & Music Therapy: An Exploration of Effects.”

### *Theatre*

- Scott Bean: worked as a stage manager for the production of *James and the Giant Peach*, keeping a detailed production-management journal.
- Andrea Thomas: completed an IRB proposal, developed a survey, and did a literature review for her research project titled “Stakeholder Perceptions of High School Theatre Programs.”
- Mackenzie Van Engelenhoven: wrote, coordinated, and directed a performance in the style of “Theatre of the Oppressed.”

## **College of Business**

### *Accounting*

- Kaila Dunn: researched inventory methods and how they affect accounting ratios.
- Jake Lewis: performed an audit of USU Residential Facilities, wrote an audit report, and discussed findings with USU Facilities directors.
- Carson Young: prepared tax returns using Lacerte Tax Preparation software to compare the tax treatment of different entities with the same financial data and wrote a paper on his findings.

### *Business Administration*

- Grant Keaton: performed a literature review about brand-loyal behavior of mature consumers.
- Josh Kerkmann: created an emergency evacuation plan for Cache County administration office building and historic courthouse.
- John Sielatycki: completed a detailed analysis of a medical supply company, focusing on a valuation of the firm.

### *Economics*

- Austin Bowles: completed a research paper titled “How the Housing Bubble Burst and Spread to the Goods Market.”

- Dallin Hansen: completed a research paper titled “When Change is Too Hard: a Study of Suicide and Economic Transition in former Soviet Russia.”
- Lance Larsen: completed a research paper titled “Models of Marriage: Biological, Religious, Economic, and Legal.”

### *Management*

- Jason Ellis and Sean Miller: surveyed 100 students across campus about the possibility of implementing a bike, board, and scooter lane and presented the results and proposal to USU Facilities directors.
- Rachel Rawlings: created a business strategy plan for a non-profit organization.
- Darcy Stewart: assisted in the development of the curriculum for the classroom/education component of the Small Enterprise Education Development (SEED) internship program.

## **College of Education and Human Services**

### *Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education*

- Kalley Ellis: completed a research paper titled “Poverty's Effect on Language Acquisition.”
- Sara Hegsted: performed hearing tests on USU Musicians and shared results with them.
- Katherine Pike: worked as a senior clinician in the USU Speech and Hearing Clinic and developed several case studies relating to auditory verbal therapy and children with hearing loss.

### *TEAL*

- Jessica Billingsley: created lesson plans for a study unit with different activities for diverse learners.
- Geri Dominguez: compiled an annotated bibliography of diverse children’s literature.
- Michelle Pfof: performed observations of various ESL school programs and kept a detailed observation journal.
- Janika Wright: researched and documented elementary peer mentoring programs.

### *Family, Consumer, and Human Development*

- Tasha Falslev: compiled an annotated bibliography about the benefits of paternity leave and wrote letters to her congress members, urging them to create a policy that would subsidize paternity leave.
- Jeneille Larsen: planned and executed a small preschool art lesson to determine if open-ended art projects or modeled art projects are better for children.
- Janae Serrine: researched and compiled analysis of emotional child abuse and current obstacles in reporting.

### *Human Movement Science*

- James Gardner: apprenticed with a professor on an underwater treadmill osteoarthritic intervention research project.
- Dustin Nash: developed pilot testing for high-speed motion analysis and vibration.
- Hannah Thompson: researched various motor learning techniques and theories and analyzed their adaptation to a variety of dance styles.

### *Psychology*

- Brent Gage: participated and completed all work for the Honors Psychology Book Club.
- Kerianne Ludeman: completed a research project examining the role of social media in undergraduate coping skills.
- Kandice Olson: volunteered at a mental health institution in Sri Lanka and created a blog documenting her research before the trip, experiences abroad, and reflections upon return.

## **College of Engineering**

### *Biological Engineering*

- Sean Bedingfield: cultured neuroendocrine tumor cells and tested damage done by zinc oxide nanoparticles bound to human serum albumin on cells.
- Candace N. Clark: completed a research paper and presentation on commercial chocolate and candy production.
- Stephanie Lawanto: completed research titled “A small-scale production of cheese as proof of concept of unit operations in bioprocessing.”

### *Civil Engineering*

- Mitchell Dabling: was team captain for USU’s Concrete Canoe team.
- Kirk Jackson: researched and analyzed effectiveness of the RSL method for forecasting pavement deterioration.

### *Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering*

- Brit Colgan: wrote a Fortran program that calculates life expectancy for a steel part using the stress-life method.
- Benjamin Shurtz: created a lab exercise to give students hands-on experience working with a programmable logic controller (PLC).
- Nathan Stacey: completed an internship with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) working with dams and hydropower plants.

### *Computer Science*

- Amy Hansen: created a software application for mobile devices, including a requirements document and user guide.
- Nelson Miller: worked on MyShake project, handling massive data using cloud-computing infrastructures.
- Samuel Schwartz: created checkout system and inventory software for local church library.

## **Colleges of Humanities and Social Sciences**

### *Anthropology*

- Joshua Clementz: developed an annotated bibliography looking at death customs across cultures.
- Martin Welker: wrote an etymological discussion of English words associated with agriculture and animal husbandry.

### *English*

- Richard Pack: wrote a short story anthology.



- Rachel Telfer: created promotional videos describing how the USU Writing Center works so that students can make effective use of this service.
- Amele Welliver: watched selected Alfred Hitchcock and discussed different cinematic choices in the film with professor.

### *History*

- Shelley Johnson: completed a research paper titled “Buddhism Behind Barbed Wire: An Analysis of Japanese-American Buddhist Practice in the WWII Internment Camps.”
- Rebecca Richards: researched and compared Homer’s *Iliad* to other literary epics, including the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, *Paradise Lost*, and *The Faerie Queene*.

### *Journalism and Communication*

- Brianna Bodily: recorded several stories focused on education for Utah Public Radio.
- Brenna Kelly: Wrote, produced, and delivered the Aggie Radio Morning Show.
- Nathan Laursen: researched and analyzed the relationship between the First Amendment and the Internet.

### *Languages*

- Christen Allen: completed a research paper titled “Searching for Identity in African Francophone Films.”
- Chaise Housley: created a puppet show for the Niño’s at El Centro de la Familia and adapted that show with simplified entremes for preschoolers.
- Adam Stewart: completed weekly Skype sessions with a high school class in Taiwan as they read and discussed Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

### *Philosophy*

- Christopher Blythe,: researched and reported on the official position concerning evolution in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.
- Benjamin Harman: completed a research paper titled “Kierkegaard’s Leap.”
- Bradley Zynda: created a guide to understanding the philosophical idea of the natural law.

### *Political Science*

- Briana Bowen: created a website ([springofdemocracy.wordpress.com](http://springofdemocracy.wordpress.com)) compiling her research on the Arab Spring.
- Marc Neilsen: completed a research paper titled “The Role of Culture in a Successful Counterinsurgency.”
- Kayla Woodring: wrote a research paper titled “Strategies for U.S. Policy Success in Combating Mexican Drug Trafficking and Cartel Violence.”

### *Sociology*

- Luz Maria Carreno: completed research on and analysis of the criminalization of mental illness.
- Dallen Hansen: researched and analyzed corporations and social deviance.
- Rachel Jaggi: completed an internship with the Organization for Refuge, Asylum, and Migration (ORAM).

### *Social Work*

- Jylisa Doney: completed spirituality and social work research titled “The Effect of Prayer on Health.”
- Jorri Falslev: performed a needs assessment report for a local refugee group.
- Michelle Jones: compiled a reflective journal on a practicum group working with adolescents.

## **College of Natural Resources**

### *Conservation and Restoration Ecology*

- Kelly Sivy: participated in a small discussion-based graduate course that reviewed literature relevant to human dimensions and social science research in natural resources.

### *Environmental Studies*

- Natalie Gibson: completed a research project on food sustainability and students at USU.
- Jessica Ivy Harvey: built solar ovens and a water filter, creating accompanying handouts for publication by the USU Extension Office.
- Sara Hunt: created an annotated bibliography on the topic of “Innovation and Diffusion of Agricultural Technologies in Latin America.”

### *Wildlife Science*

- Samantha Beirne: completed DNA barcoding of fish samples from local restaurants to determine accurate advertising of species.
- Dakota Reed and Heather Ship: worked as summer volunteers for ARCHELON, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece.
- Jamie Reynolds: performed research and analysis on moose population dynamics in Utah.

### *Watershed Science*

- Katie Fisher: performed Great Salt Lake wetland water quality research.
- Hesper Kohler: studied abroad in Fiji, where she researched the chloroform filtering capability of Mangrove forests.

## **College of Science**

### *Biology*

- Maria Goller: performed a qualitative assessment of bird distribution and population trends of bird species on the USU campus.
- Morgan Homan: researched the genetics behind sexual orientation in humans.
- Alysha Waters: formed a discussion group to read together articles related to developmental biology.

### *Chemistry & Biochemistry*

- Jamie Kingsford: completed a research project titled “A Review of T3SS ATPase Purification and Analysis.”
- Brooke Siler: completed a research project titled “Investigating the Importance of the N-terminal Negative Residues in Human PRMT1.”
- Autumn Slade: volunteered as a chemistry tutor for CHEM 1210 students.

*Mathematics*

- Elise Holt: conducted and presented research on Pythagorean triples.
- Kristina Sorenson: modeled flute acoustics using partial differential equations.
- Ryan Wallentine: wrote a research paper titled “Peano's Axioms.”

*Physics*

- Sydney Chamberlin: engaged in research on the topic of “Algebraic Computing, Energy-Momentum Tensors and Solutions to the Einstein Field Equations.”
- David Griffin: completed the Goldwater Scholarship application process.
- Jennifer Roth: engaged in research on “Electron Tunneling: Science and Application.”

## **Advice from Past Honors Students:**

### **1. Develop relationships with your professors.**

- ***Samantha Beirne – Wildlife Science***

“After several attempts to get started on other projects, I realized I was not excited about any of the topics, and decided to find a professor who would fit my research interests. I contacted Dr. Karen Beard after learning about her interest in amphibians and conservation biology. She suggested a [contract] project I would be interested in and I was excited to get started. Once I had found a research project I was passionate about, it became a lot easier to write my thesis.”

- ***Nickelle Hunsaker – Human Movement Science***

“Schedule meetings regularly and a few days in advance. Be prepared for your meetings – have something to present. Don’t be afraid to ask questions when you have them. You’ll learn more.”

- ***Katherine Shakespeare – English***

“An Honors contract is a valuable and unique opportunity to have insightful one-on-one conversations with a professor. It is the perfect setting for the type of mentoring conversations that let you pick an expert’s brain, seek advice for your own academic goals, and form the relationships that result in excellent letters of recommendation.”

### **2. Get practical experience with field research.**

- ***Morgan Hughes – Wildlife Science***

“When in a classroom or a hypothetical situation, it is easy to design studies with perfect sample set up. In the field, however, I have come to realize that plans never go as expected. As a result, I have learned to collect all possible data. This method of planning big would have allowed more conclusions to be drawn and assured that at least one project would go as planned.”

- ***Austin Spence – Biology***

“Because I persisted in working and volunteering in [the] lab, I got a field technician job ... to catch lizards throughout the Arizona, Utah, and western Oregon. This job is what started my first independent research project.”

- ***Marilize Van der Walt – Biology***

“I know that when things get rough in the field, it is best to remain positive because the truth is that you really couldn’t do much better than field work. There is always something beautiful, or something to be proud of. I learned that even if I am sure I will remember something, I should write it down. Any future research projects I conduct will be meticulously recorded in a lab journal or diary.”

### **3. Explore and refine possible capstone topics.**

- ***Brandi Allred – Anthropology***

“Starting early on finding a project was key; by the time I realized that I had to realign my [capstone] research, I was already so deep into the literature on the topic that it really was no problem. Had I waited until my last semester at school to even start thinking about what I would do for my Honors thesis, I would [have been] in a world of trouble ... . I would suggest starting to mull over your ideas long before you actually start the thesis. With a well-formulated topic and question, the rest will come easily.”

- ***J. Daniel O Bray – Psychology***  
 “One of the most important things I learned is the value of starting to read early and continuing to read. I don’t think that it is possible to have read too much or to be too prepared to write a [capstone] paper. Additionally, reviews are useful tools. Reviews are a great way to get an idea of what has already been researched within a given field, and [they] also give an idea of what the most important research topics are moving forward. They will help to focus future reading and to give structure.”
- ***David Youd – Religious Studies***  
 “Footnotes and bibliographies are the principal and invaluable guide in research... . Many of the ideas you may spend much time developing from older works may have already been pointed out by more recent scholarship .... Start at the very end of the discussion: find the most recent works ... [that] contain a bibliography, and trace the development of issues back from the footnotes of the latest publications. This is the sort of thing which students would do well to understand before starting [a capstone project], and I would advise any student to take up issues of approach and the research process with their advisor and experienced faculty members before beginning [your capstone].”

#### **4. Seek out an internship or study abroad.**

- ***Andrew Izatt – Economics***  
 “My internship at Orrin Hatch’s office was a life-changing experience. More than anything else in my undergraduate career, it helped me to realize what I do and do not want to do. I enjoyed the time I spent there. I met amazing, hard-working, driven people with a real passion for politics. I saw the inner workings of a high-profile Senate office and what work on the Hill entails. I have been interested in healthcare policy for a while and the debate surrounding it. Thanks to my internship and my project, I was able to dive headfirst into the material and begin to get my head around the complex and bewildering world of healthcare in America.”
- ***Jacob Blotter – Biology***  
*Humanitarian Medical Trip to Guatemala:* “The ... trip was amazing. I was able to learn a lot about the people of Guatemala and to connect with them as patients and human beings. I had the opportunity of shadowing medical professionals the entire trip and learning about diseases and treatments. The relationships I built with the people on the trip will have an effect on my career as a doctor, as I received advice and words of wisdom for most of them. ... My experience brought my premedical education to life, and it has fueled my desire to help those in need once I have completed my goal to become a doctor.”
- ***Darianne Willey – Watershed and Earth Systems***  
*Engineers Without Borders trip to Mexico:* “These experiences are truly unique and memorable. I bore people all the time with “In Mexico...” stories, but I can’t stop thinking about it. The work was hard. We had to wash more than 100 gallons of river sand just for [water] filter filling. We hiked to families that lived outside of the community up in the hills; we packed sand in ripping burlap bags all over the valley. But it was worth it. Community members getting the filters would join us in building and washing, and during that time we got to know them. They really appreciated our interest in their way of life, and especially loved all of the bad Spanish.”

#### **5. Present your work if possible.**

- ***Gracie Arnold – Marketing***  
 “I was fortunate to have found the SRS [Student Research Symposium] ... conference on USU campus that occurs each spring. Being involved with this conference was a huge success, and I

won an award for my abilities as an oral presenter. I highly suggest taking this opportunity to any student. This conference refined my skills and gave me an excellent forum to present my findings and research design.”

- ***Trinity Smith – Wildlife Science***

“Overall the most valuable part of this project was articulating my research to peers. I was able to attend the Utah Chapter of the Wildlife Society Annual meeting (UTTWS), as well as the USU Student Research Symposium and National Conference for Undergraduate Research (NCUR)... I gained valuable insight from peers about the implications of my research and was able to use this feedback for my [capstone] manuscript.”

- ***Laura Taylor – Interior Design***

“The Student Research Symposium was my favorite part of the capstone process. It was so fantastic to stand alongside other researchers and talk with them about their research journeys. ... I would recommend it to anyone, and I wish I had participated in it earlier as a contract researcher.”