

The purpose of this **Honors in Practice Contract Handbook** is to provide students, faculty mentors, and Departmental Faculty Honors Advisors clear guidelines for how honors students can achieve Honors in Practice milestones (and earn honors points). The handbook describes Honors Excel graduate work, Honors Book Labs, the Honors Alumni Mentoring Program, and honors contracts for work including research, community engagement, internships, and study abroad. Students typically meet these milestones during sophomore and junior years (see Honors Canvas Course).

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What are Honors in Practice Milestones?

Honors sets milestones for “Honors in Practice” (HIP) work on the path toward honors graduation because the ability to apply academic knowledge outside the classroom makes academic knowledge real and tangible. *HIP work is therefore NOT work done as a regular class assignment or as any part of a class, with the exceptions of Honors Excel graduate courses (see p. 6), internships, and some study abroad experiences (see p. 11).*

Students typically begin meeting HIP milestones in their second year, although they may begin this work any time. HIP work (**other than Honors Book Labs** (see p. 7), the **Alumni Mentoring Program (AMP)** (see p. 8), and the **Honors Student Advisory Board** (see p. 9)) is typically documented with a formal contract, a four-way formal agreement that students make with a faculty mentor, a Departmental Honors Advisor (DHA), and the Honors Program by submitting signed paperwork and proposals/completion documentation in the Honors Canvas course. Every contract involves at least 20 hours of work outside the classroom, and the completion paperwork must be signed/approved by the student, a faculty mentor, the DHA, and the Honors Program director. *Students earn between 1-3 HIP points to mark the achievement of each HIP milestone, and students typically complete 3-4 HIP experiences in sophomore year and 2-3 HIP experiences in junior year, for a total of 5-7 experiences (which can earn anywhere between 9-20 points). All final documentation work is uploaded and evaluated in the UHP Canvas course.*

The purpose of HIP points is both professional and personal. Students at this stage of their honors journey take a dare to think critically and practically, research independently and productively, communicate clearly across disciplines, and engage with their communities. Upon completion of each HIP milestone, students are required to reflect (in their contract completion documentation) on how they have applied knowledge and skills and to submit a final product documenting that work. While many undergraduates at USU gain some practical experience in their disciplines, honors students systematically build professional skills upon their academic knowledge, beginning with the HIP milestone experiences that often lay the groundwork for both capstone projects and future professional paths. Honors expects and trains 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. These skills make them top recruits for jobs, graduate and professional programs, and nationally competitive scholarships and fellowships.

The University Honors Program offers four pathways to earning the **recommended minimum of NINE HIP points**, and students may choose which ones they will pursue:

- Honors Excel graduate courses (three points per course/milestone)
- Honors Book Labs (one point per milestone)
- Honors Alumni Mentoring Program (three points for this milestone)
- Honors Student Advisory Board (three points for this milestone)
- Honors contracts (three points per milestone)

Requirements for Achieving Honors in Practice Milestones

The defining feature of this work is that it allows students to put academic knowledge into practice in tangible ways. All HIP work must: 1) put academic knowledge into practice, 2) involve independent and/or collaborative projects completed outside the classroom, 3) be supervised by a faculty or professional mentor, and 4) result in a tangible end product (poster, report, presentation, paper, work log, photo documentation, etc.) and a two-page reflection paper. The rationale for these requirements follows.

Academic Knowledge in Practice

HIP work allows students to put their academic knowledge into practice in tangible ways:

- In **Honors Excel courses**, students gain professional experience in pursuing an academic career at the graduate level.
- In **Honors Book Labs**, students read and converse across disciplines about topics of general concern.
- In the **Honors Alumni Mentoring Program**, students learn from honors alumni how to make the most of their time in college and set themselves up for professional success.
- As representatives on the **Honors Student Advisory Board**, students act as ambassadors for Honors and collaborate on specific projects with honors students, staff, and faculty.
- In **faculty-student contracts** (for all other work), 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 (>20 hours) of that work. 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). ***Keep in mind that while preliminary capstone work is acceptable, capstone work itself cannot be completed as an HIP milestone because that work is part of the final capstone milestone and earns points that way. Please ask if you have questions about this distinction.*** The University Honors Program prepares students for achieving HIP milestones with a self-paced Canvas course and also archives outstanding proposals and completion reports for student, mentor, and Departmental Honors Advisor reference.

Independent or Collaborative Projects

Every HIP milestone involves puts this academic knowledge into practice with an independent or collaborative project. These projects might address specific problems, complete certain tasks, reflect upon particular experiences, or hone critical skills. In graduate Honors Excel courses, Honors Book Labs, the Honors Alumni Mentoring Program, and the Honors Student Advisory Board, projects emerge from course, program, or committee content and requirements; for faculty-student contracts, students work with their mentors to define the parameters and value of their projects, provided this work goes beyond the content of any class in which the student has enrolled. The focus of each project varies, but all should develop the student's academic experience in clear and practical ways.

Mentoring

Honors students choose faculty or professional mentors to oversee their HIP milestone work and to approve the final products. The nature of the practical experience shapes the choice of mentor: in Honors Excel graduate courses, Book Labs, and the Honors Student Advisory Board, the mentor is the professor(s) in charge; 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 Alumni Mentoring Program), the mentor is often a

community leader, professional, or program leader. Mentors are crucial in helping students shape the practical value and outcomes of these honors milestones. In most cases, faculty mentors and Departmental Honors Advisors will approve the student's final product and reflection; however, when necessary (particularly in Book Labs, the Alumni Mentoring Program, the Honors Student Advisory Board, and when contract 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 University Honors Program will provide formal approval of the final product. Students must indicate both the mentor and the final approver on their contract forms, as appropriate. Please see *Contract Responsibilities* (pp. 16-20) for more details about faculty and student responsibilities.

For Honors Excel graduate courses, syllabi clearly define requirements; students will forfeit HIP points and fail to achieve this milestone unless they earn a "B-" or better in these courses. All students are responsible for 1) securing mentors and/or enrolling in the appropriate classes, 2) defining their projects and completing contract proposals (for all experiences EXCEPT Honors Book Labs, the Alumni Mentoring Program, and the Honors Student Advisory Board), 3) meeting all agreed-upon deadlines, 4) communicating regularly with their mentors, 5) submitting a final product and reflection along with a completion form to mentor and DHA for approval signatures, and 6) uploading all completion documents (signed form, final product, and reflection) in the University Honors Program Canvas course for approval and award of points marking the milestone achievement.

Final Product and Reflection

Students earn HIP points documenting milestone achievement only once they 1) present agreed-upon final products and reflections (with completion forms) first to mentors and DHAs for approval signatures, and 2) upload all these documents under the appropriate assignment in the Honors Canvas course for Honors approval. The final product and reflection differ, depending on the kind of HIP experience; please see the appropriate section of the handbook for more specific details.

What is an Honors Excel Graduate Course?

The Honors Excel program allows undergraduate USU honors students to earn HIP points by taking approved graduate-level courses because these courses take honors students beyond the usual undergraduate classroom experience. The aim is to empower students to test their undergraduate knowledge by taking the next professional step in a possible academic career. Over half of graduating honors students go on to enroll in graduate or professional programs each year; this HIP option gives these students a sample of what that future might look like. 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 and/or learn about advanced topics in the discipline with USU's top faculty and graduate students—and to create mentoring relationships that will continue to develop throughout the honors student's career at USU.

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 HIP 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; the Honors Excel option simply allows the opportunity when and if the fit is good between course and student. The final product for Honors Excel can be a course project; students must also submit a reflection on the experience with their contract completion forms.

What is an Honors Book Lab?

Honors Book Labs offer honors students an engaging interdisciplinary way to meet HIP milestones and earn HIP points. Each Book Lab consists of four meetings, beginning in the second week of classes each semester (May, September, and January). Faculty from a range of academic areas propose books to discuss with honors students, and the University Honors Program creates a schedule of Book Labs each term, organizes registration and waitlists (limit of five students per lab), and buys all books for students and faculty. Students may repeat the Honors Book Lab milestone each term and continue earning one point per Book Lab completed, provided they meet all milestone requirements.

Students are responsible for reading the books by the agreed-upon deadlines (set by faculty), attending all four scheduled Book Lab meetings, contributing to the discussions at those meetings, and submitting the required reflection (see directions below). Demand is high, and Honors wants to accommodate as many students as possible. Enrolled students must attend or return the book to remain in good standing with the University Honors Program. Students who fail to meet the requirements for Book Labs in which they enroll (attendance, participation, reflection) will not be eligible for Book Labs in the following term and may jeopardize their honors privileges.

Honors Book Lab Reflection: These reflections should not just summarize plot or content; they should report on how the Book Lab gave students a particular kind of HIP milestone experience (see below). Reflections must be at least two pages (about 600 words) long, should be submitted in the UHP Canvas course within two weeks of the final Book Lab meeting, and must address the following points:

1. Articulate one new idea or set of ideas that the student discovered through reading and discussion
2. Give an example of how the reading and discussion led the student to think critically about a particular issue or problem
3. Describe the value of discussing this issue or problem across disciplines with fellow students and professor(s)
4. Discuss how the Book Lab experience might lead the student to engage with the community or world in a new way.

What is the Honors Alumni Mentoring Program?

The Honors Alumni Mentoring Program offers honors students a unique professionalizing way to achieve an HIP milestone. The program fosters meaningful relationships between current honors students and alumni with similar professional and/or academic interests. Students and mentors connect with each other monthly via email, phone, video conference, or even in person, as circumstances allow. Honors has created a curriculum covering four basic areas—Professionalism; Applications; Professional Networking, Development, and Organizations; and Gratitude and Appreciation—to help focus these monthly student-mentor interactions. Students apply for the program and select mentors from a web listing of available mentor bios, in the fall, and the program requires participation for the entire academic year. Meeting this milestone results in three HIP points, and students may only meet this particular milestone once during their time in the University Honors Program. We hope that students who enjoy the help of an alumni mentor will consider mentoring a student themselves after they graduate and begin their professional lives.

Students are responsible for contacting the mentor each month and completing the assignment in the honors curriculum by suggested deadlines, thanking their mentor at the end of the program (May), attending a final mentor-student event in spring term, and submitting in the University Honors Program Canvas course a **final portfolio**, including select email correspondence and documentation of each of the program's four stages AND a **two-page reflection** on the mentoring experience. Reflections and portfolios must be uploaded within two weeks of program completion (end of academic year) to earn points. *Students who fail to thank their mentors will not earn points, even if they submit a portfolio and reflection. Students must complete the entire program or communicate early and clearly with honors staff about extenuating circumstances in order to remain in good standing with the University Honors Program.*

Honors Alumni Mentoring Program Reflection: These two-page reflections should describe not the general feeling between mentor and mentee, but how the AMP gave the student an HIP milestone experience. The reflection must include a clear description of the following:

1. The **relationship** that developed between student and mentor
2. **What the student learned** through that mentoring relationship
3. **How the experience shaped** (or will shape) the rest of the student's undergraduate experience

Students are welcome and encouraged to share reflections with mentors, as appropriate.

What is the Honors Student Advisory Board?

The Honors Student Advisory Board offers outstanding honors students a unique way both to give back to the Honors Program and to achieve an HIP milestone. The board consists of one student representative from each college, and the group meets monthly. Members also agree to represent Honors at recruiting events and answer student questions, to participate in Honors-specific programming for students, and to take part in the review of incoming student applications to Honors. Students apply for these appointed positions and serve for a minimum term of one academic year. Meeting this milestone results in three HIP points, and the milestone is repeatable for 1.5 points for an additional year. We hope that students who enjoy helping to shape the University Honors Program while they are here on campus will consider volunteering for our external advisory board of alumni and stakeholders after they graduate and begin their professional lives.

Students are responsible for attending monthly meetings, engaging in the admissions process for incoming honors students (early spring term), and participating in at least three additional activities representing Honors over the course of an academic year. They submit in the University Honors Program Canvas course (by the end of the summer following their participation year) a **final portfolio**, including an **activity log** documenting the name, date, and hours of each activity, plus a brief summary of tasks completed on behalf of the University Honors Program (excluding required board meetings and admissions work) AND a **two-page reflection**. Reflections and portfolios must be uploaded by the end of the summer term following board membership to earn points, and students can earn a maximum of 4.5 points for this milestone (over two years). *Students must complete their year-long commitment to the advisory board or communicate early and clearly with honors staff about extenuating circumstances in order to remain in good standing with the University Honors Program.*

Honors Student Advisory Board Reflection: These two-page reflections should describe not the student's general feeling about the board, but how this form of engagement gave the student an HIP milestone experience. The reflection should include a clear description of the following:

1. The **relationships** that developed among students on the board and between the student and the Honors Program director and other staff members
2. **What the student learned** through the advisory board experience
3. **How the experience shaped** (or will shape) the rest of the student's undergraduate experience
4. How the **experience might shape the student's future**

What is an Honors Contract?

An honors contract is called a “contract” because it is a formal agreement between a student, a mentor, the Departmental Honors Advisor, and the Honors Program to complete an HIP milestone experience. Each contract proposes—and then documents how the student completed—an academic or professional project that extends learning beyond regular coursework. This work can take many different forms: it may involve a research or creative project, an extension of ideas from an upper-division course (3000-level or above), a paid or unpaid internship, a major grant/fellowship application, a community service project, a study abroad experience, 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 course, students must submit mentor-signed proposals (see **Contract Proposals** above) to the Departmental Honors Advisor by the end of the second week of classes in the contract term; they then upload their mentor- and DHA-signed proposals to the University Honors Program Canvas site by the end of the third week of classes for final approval. All other contract proposals may be uploaded (with signed form) in the UHP Canvas course under the contract assignments at any time, provided they include a reasonable timeline to completion and a clear description of the final product(s). Once the Honors Program approves a proposal, students can work toward completion; they then upload completion documentation (signed form, reflection, and final contract) in the assignment that they initially uploaded the proposal. Contracts are typically completed within 10-15 weeks. The mentor oversees the student’s agreed-upon contract work, and both the mentor and the Departmental Honors Advisor must see the final product and reflection and sign the Contract Completion form before the student uploads this work in Canvas at the end of the specified contract period. **Approved contracts do not earn points until the Honors Program approves completion documentation in Canvas.**

Contract Milestone Markers: *Requirements for All Honors Contracts*

All honors contracts must include the following:

- A completed Honors Contract Proposal form signed by the mentor and the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student's and/or mentor's home department, and then uploaded in the UHP Canvas course (see deadlines above)
- Completion of work during the contract period or follow-up by student with faculty and Honors to renegotiate the terms of the contract
- 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 keep a record of mentor meetings and report on those meetings at the end of the contract, but for study abroad or internship projects that require regular daily interaction between student and mentor, no additional documentation is necessary)
- A concrete final product that demonstrates the work done in the contract, such as a poster, report, literature review, essay, syllabus or set of lesson plans, presentation, event or performance with process analysis, work logs, photo documentation, or a major grant or fellowship application
- A detailed two-page reflection on the contract 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 (sometimes 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)

Types of Honors Contracts

- **Research, Scholarship, Creative, Service, and Other Project Contracts:** Students may design contracts that explore their academic and professional interests. Students choose their own faculty mentors for these projects and thus develop meaningful professional relationships. 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. These contracts may also fill a gap in knowledge not covered by coursework, investigate an area of academic interest outside a student's major, or open up future possibilities with a major grant or scholarship application. Please see **Examples of Outstanding Projects** (pp. 26-32) for ideas.
- **Course Contracts:** Contracts may be completed as extensions of or deeper explorations within upper-division (3000-level or above) coursework. Such contracts are never part of regular coursework; instead, they offer students and professors together the option of looking beyond or delving deeper into the limits of the course itself. Such contracts require additional work on behalf of both parties, but that work can be structured to enrich the course experience of both parties: the contract can thus involve an extra project in an area of mutual interest, specific agreed-upon research or reading and discussion between student and mentor, pedagogical work on the part of the honors student that benefits both the professor and other students in the class, student leadership on a project that helps other students to explore beyond the limits of the class, or any other activity related to the course that the professor and student feel would enrich the course experience. The professor serves as the project mentor, and students and mentors must meet outside of class, according to the guidelines above. Students may not submit any required coursework as part of a contract. 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 as HIP milestones 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 final product to ensure that the experience meets criteria for contracts. Daily contact with the on-site internship mentor meets the requirement for mentor-student meetings and can be noted on the contract completion form. Please see **Examples of Outstanding Projects** for ideas.
- **Study Abroad Contracts:** Study abroad may be completed under contract as an HIP milestone if the study expands the student's academic work with a unique international experience. The mentor of a study abroad will typically be an on-site faculty member or trip leader who supervises and guides the student's international experience. As with internships, the daily contact with the on-site mentor meets the requirement for mentor-student meetings and can be noted on the contract completion form. 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 meets the criteria for honors contracts. Students may apply for Honors Study Abroad Funding to support international study. Please see **Examples of Outstanding Projects** for ideas.

What Makes an Honors Contract Great?

The best 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), these contracts allow students to follow their intellectual passions and to make the most of USU's many outstanding academic resources. Remembering that contracts are milestones on the path toward future goals, students designing contracts should consider what they might add to an honors education. Many of our students find the following types of contracts to be particularly useful:

- Capstone Preparation: Although contracts cannot be part of the capstone itself, students often design contracts that prepare them for their capstones and set them up for success. 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 contracts prepare students to articulate their skills and development in their fields, and their final products often become starting points for more intensive and 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 or creative 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 another of the 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, research, or internships. Civic engagement is one of the four key skills that all honors students master at USU, and contracts may therefore put academic knowledge into practice in the local, national, or global communities. Students who pursue these kinds of HIP milestones will necessarily reflect on the broader relevance of their academic work, and they may also decide to pursue USU's Global Engagement Scholar or Community Engaged Scholar [transcript designations](#).
- Professional Development: Contracts may also foster professional development by engaging students in (inter)national fellowship applications, internships, or professional exploration. Like capstone preparation contracts, professional development contracts teach students to think critically and practically about future plans and to reflect on their professional goals.

What Does Not Count as an Honors Contract?

Honors contracts are designed to be flexible, but they must add clear, distinct, and documented value to an honors education. Honors requires approval of proposals and completed contracts by mentors, Departmental Honors Advisors, and the Honors Program director because these faculty experts can assess that added value within a specific area of study, the discipline as a whole, and across disciplinary boundaries. When in doubt about a specific kind of experience, please seek the input of the University Honors Program Advisor or your Departmental Honors Advisor.

- Work Required for a Course: Students may not earn honors points for regular coursework, just as they may not, according to USU's academic honesty/integrity code, submit the same work for credit in different courses. Honors contracts ask students to apply their knowledge beyond the classroom, and using coursework for that milestone experience defeats the purpose. One exception to this rule is for experiential credits, such as those earned for internships and study abroad programs. Because of the experiential, non-evaluative nature of the work done for these experiences, students may propose contracts that include substantial final products and reflections on the experiences, even when students take them for credit.
- Capstone Project Work: Although contracts may prepare students for capstone projects, they cannot be a direct part of the final capstone project. Students earn distinct honors points for HIP milestones and for the capstone milestone, and completing the same work for these two distinct parts of the honors curriculum does not meet the goals of the program. The rationale here is therefore the same as for work required in a course.
- USU Scholarship or Grant Applications: Honors recognizes the importance of student applications for department, college, honors, or university scholarships or grants (including URCO, Honors Research and Study Abroad Fund, USUSA funding, etc.). Only major (inter)national grant and scholarship/fellowship applications can be proposed as contracts, however, because they require much more extensive self-assessment, mentoring, revision, and research to complete. Any national fellowship application submitted as a contract must be proposed and completed in the same way as other contracts.
- Conferences, Trainings, or Other Brief, Unmentored Professional Experiences: Honors also recognizes the importance of student professionalization activities, such as conference presentations or attendance, or professional training events in their fields, and supports these experiences through Honors Research Funding opportunities. However, only those experiences that include a sustained mentoring relationship, a clear, concrete final product, and at least 20 hours of experiential work outside the classroom qualify as HIP contract milestones.

Honors Contract Proposal and Completion Forms (see <http://honors.usu.edu/current-students/contracts>)

Honors Contract Proposal Form

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, what concrete end product will you produce for this honors contract? Please briefly describe its content, format, and value in documenting your honors experience in the contract.

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, the workload and timeline, and the content of any project end product.

Once students have completed the form and attached the finished proposal, mentors review and sign, if approved. Students should 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 upload their mentor- and DHA-signed proposals to the University Honors Program Canvas course by the end of the third week of classes (course contracts) or before the start date (other contracts) for final Honors Program approval.

Contract Completion Form

Upon completing a contract, honors students submit a signed (by student, mentor, and DHA) Honors Contract Completion form, which indicates approval of the work, reflection, and final product for the project. The form asks students to list the dates of meetings between mentor and student (minimum of six meetings) or to verify daily contact with an internship or study-abroad mentor, to indicate the hours of work required to complete the contract (minimum of 20 hours), and to attach the project's reflection and final product(s), along with a brief summary of the content, form, and value of the final product(s). Students earn three HIP points to mark the milestone of completing each contract, provided they 1) complete the required work to the satisfaction of the mentor and DHA, 2) get signatures indicating this approval on the form, and 3) submit in Canvas and secure Honors Program approval of the signed, completed form, reflection, and final product upon fulfillment of the contract.

Honors Contract Responsibilities

Every contract asks an honors student to find a faculty mentor and to get approval for the contract 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 find mentors is to work on building 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 their fields.

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 promptly submitting the proposal in the University Honors Program's Canvas course, conferring regularly with the mentor, meeting all deadlines, and completing a high quality final product (along with a reflection) 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 final product and reflection, and ensuring high quality work within the discipline. The Departmental Honors Advisor acts as a liaison between the mentor and the Honors Program, ensuring 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 honors standards and deadlines for this milestone and thus merit the award of HIP points documenting that milestone.

DHAs play no role in Honors Book Labs completed by students in their departments, and faculty leading Book Labs are not responsible for signing any forms or evaluating any work. DHAs also play no role in the Honors Alumni Mentoring Program or the Honors Student Advisory Board.

Student Responsibilities

PROPOSAL:

- Work with mentor to 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 upload a mentor- and DHA-signed/approved form and proposal to the UHP Canvas course by end of third week of classes;
- For all other contracts, upload form and proposal (merged into a single PDF) to UHP Canvas course 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 (for study abroad and internships, such meetings may occur daily and may be noted as such on the completion form);
- 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, DHA, and/or honors staff any questions about your responsibilities and/or work.

FINAL PRODUCT and CONTRACT COMPLETION:

- Present a draft of the required final product and reflection 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;
- Send completed final product and reflection to mentor and DHA, giving them time to review, and then get their approval signatures on a completed Honors Contract Completion form (faculty must see all information completed on this form, as they are verifying its accuracy with their signatures).
- Upload approved final product and reflection, along with a signed Honors Contract Completion form (available at <http://honors.usu.edu>) indicating faculty approval to the UHP Canvas course by the last day of classes in the contract term (course contracts) or by the contract completion date (all other contracts). Please merge all documents as one PDF (see directions in Canvas).

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 an appropriate final product that demonstrates work completed;
- 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 uploaded (by students) to the UHP Canvas course 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 upload the form and proposal 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** above).

CONTRACT WORK:

- Hold regular meetings with the student (minimum **six** meetings outside of the classroom—study abroad faculty or internship supervisors who meet with students daily need not schedule additional meetings) 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, the DHA, and/or honors staff 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 final product and reflection 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 final product and reflection meet the terms of the contract and represent useful and competent work in the student's discipline;
- Sign and return the student's completed (student must complete form fully before asking for signature) Honors Contract Completion form indicating approval of both project and reflection. If the student has not completed the contract to your satisfaction, please communicate with Honors promptly.
- Please note that students must also submit final product and reflection to the Departmental Honors Advisor, once you as the mentor have approved, and then they upload the signed Honors Contract Completion form (indicating faculty approval of contract), final product, and reflection to the UHP Canvas course by the last day of classes in the contract term (course-related contracts) or by the contract completion date (all other contracts).

Departmental Honors Advisor Responsibilities

The Departmental Honors Advisor oversees not the individual contract work itself, but the process within the department. For this reason, faculty 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 University Honors Program, the DHA ensures that projects meet minimum requirements both within the discipline and for Honors.

PROPOSAL:

- Help honors students find appropriate mentors in your department for their proposed contract work and share sample contract ideas with students, as appropriate. DHAs should become increasingly well educated in what makes a strong contract as they become more experienced; if you need examples, please contact the University Honors Program at any time.
- **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 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 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 Honors Contract Proposal form and return it to the student promptly. Please remember that students must upload signed forms and proposals to the UHP Canvas course promptly (for course-related contracts, 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 you cannot approve the contract; the electronic submission of the proposal to you before the student secures final approval of the 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 for student upload with all signatures in the UHP Canvas course by the end of the third week of classes).

CONTRACT WORK:

- DHAs are **not** responsible for overseeing contract work, although they do review outcomes and approve if the work has been completed as proposed (see below). Please make time to answer any questions about honors requirements.

REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT, and CONTRACT COMPLETION:

- DHAs are responsible for reviewing final products and reflections and signing Honors Contract Completion forms to ensure that projects meet honors requirements (see **Requirements** above) and that faculty and students understand those requirements. In some instances, DHAs act as the final approver of an internship, work experience, or study abroad experience (if there is no faculty mentor); they may also, in some cases, serve as both DHA and mentor, in which case they can indicate that fact on the form.
- Contracts must 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

In order to ensure that the project meets this honors milestone, the University Honors Program reviews and approves/denies each contract proposal and then approves/denies the contract for honors points upon submission in Canvas of the student's final product, reflection, and Honors Contract Completion form. Honors Program responsibilities include:

PROPOSAL:

- Regularly and consistently remind students and DHAs of contract proposal deadlines and requirements;
- Promptly review all contract proposals once students upload them in the UHP Canvas course, ensuring that all proposal forms are signed by both mentor and DHA and that they include clear descriptions of project goals, proposed work and timelines, and final product(s), in addition to the required reflection;
- Communicate immediately with any students, mentors, and DHAs 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 contract showcases for faculty and students;
- Build and maintain a self-paced Honors in Practice Canvas course that teaches students, faculty, and other interested parties about HIP milestones and offers examples of outstanding student work;
- Ensure that students complete this self-paced HIP Canvas course by the beginning of sophomore year, if possible;
- Make the *"Honors in Practice" Contract Handbook* available on the honors website and distribute, upon request, to all mentors and students who have entered into (or are considering) contracts;
- Answer any questions about contract goals, requirements, and responsibilities;
- Support faculty, DHAs, and students in the contract process.

REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT and CONTRACT COMPLETION:

- Advise students about the contract process and ensure that they receive information about contracts and HIP milestones annually;
- Remind mentors and students of contract requirements and deadlines as necessary: the reflection and final product of the contract should be carefully crafted and/or edited, and they must be uploaded to the UHP Canvas course, along with a completed and signed Contract Completion form (available at <http://honors.usu.edu>), by the contract completion date (last day of classes for course-related contracts);
- Promptly review and approve/deny all contract completion uploads (including final products, reflections, and Honors Contract Completion forms), ensuring that all work meets honors requirements for HIP milestones;
- Grant students the HIP points marking the completion of each contract milestone;
- Archive all completed contracts and make them available to DHAs, upon request, so they can see outcomes and use them for future advising;
- Create an archive of outstanding contracts for student and faculty reference and as part of the HIP Canvas course.

Honors 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, DHA reviews simultaneously, mentor signs, and DHA has one week to give final approval (with signature) before students must upload proposals in the UHP Canvas course. Proposals must be uploaded and approved by all parties (student, mentor, DHA, 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.*
- UPLOAD MENTOR AND DHA-APPROVED HONORS CONTRACT PROPOSAL TO UHP CANVAS COURSE – *Student, mentor, and DHA must have signed the form; Honors verifies that contract proposes to meet the HIP milestone requirements and approves/denies proposal in Canvas.*
 - *Course-related contracts require students to upload the mentor- and DHA-approved contract proposal to the UHP Canvas course by the end of third week of classes in the contract term.*
- DRAFT OF REFLECTION AND FINAL PRODUCT TO MENTOR AND DHA – *one week before the final day of contract: Mentor has time to offer feedback before final deadline to Honors, and DHA has time to identify any problems with meeting honors requirements.*
 - *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 SIGNED CONTRACT COMPLETION FORM UPLOADED TO HONORS CONTRACT COURSE – *by 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the contract.*
 - *Course-related contracts require students to upload reflection, final product, and completion form to UHP Canvas course 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 meeting Honors in Practice milestones are eligible for **Honors Research and Study Abroad Funds**. These awards typically range from \$50-\$1000 and support student research, study abroad, unpaid internships, 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 June 15, October 15, and February 15; more information is available at <https://urco.usu.edu/about-the-urco/>. The HRSAF (above) can act as an URCO match for honors students.
- Students should check with their departments, colleges, and USUSA 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 laptop available for checkout during business hours, as well as regular writing and math tutor hours, which are listed at the end of each weekly email from Honors. All honors students also have access to the Joyce Kinkead Honors Study Room in 334H 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. Current honors students can contact honors@usu.edu for the access code to the study room.

Writing, Editing, and Math: Honors hires our own writing tutor from the USU Writing Center, as well as a math tutor. Tutors hold regular office hours and can help students improve and edit writing at any level or complete calculations or statistical analysis in a project. Honors tutors can help you learn to proofread, edit, and analyze data effectively; please make use of this resource.

Honors in Practice Canvas Training: Honors maintains a self-paced, hands-on HIP Canvas course for all students working toward graduation with honors. Students learn about HIP milestones, examine outstanding examples of the work submitted to meet them, and complete short assignments verifying their understanding of the process. Students typically take this self-paced non-credit course at their own pace in the summer between their first and second years. They may also use this course to chat with peers, meet with a librarian about areas of interest, ask honors staff or peer advisors specific questions, and find information about upcoming deadlines and opportunities.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can students get paid for the work they do for Honors in Practice milestones?

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 stipends. Honors awards points signaling milestone completion as long as students submit documentation of outstanding work with appropriate approval in the UHP Canvas course.

Can students count required class work as an Honors in Practice milestone?

No, with the exception of approved Honors Excel courses. Contract work must be distinct from required regular coursework (see **What Does Not Count as an Honors Contract** above). While contract work often advances or extends the themes in courses, 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 GPA or any course grade. Honors Excel courses are always counted as HIP milestones if they are contracted with the professor and Honors.

Can students complete Honors in Practice milestones outside of their main fields of study?

Yes. Contract work can deepen and contextualize honors students' academic knowledge by allowing them to engage in significant and practical 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 connected to a student's honors capstone project?

Yes, with restrictions. Contract work can absolutely feed into a student's honors capstone project, but completing part of the capstone as a contract is not allowed (see **What Does Not Count as an Honors Contract** above). Honors 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 lay a foundation for the capstone, with the faculty mentor's approval.

What happens if I cannot complete an Honors in Practice milestone that I proposed?

If for whatever reason a student is unable to complete a contract or other Honors in Practice milestone, he or she must communicate in writing (and preferably also in person) with the mentor/professor, DHA, and Honors Program as soon as possible. Students must explain why they did not finish the project, summarize the work that they did complete, and articulate specifically what they will do differently in meeting future HIP milestones. Honors students with two consecutive incomplete contracts or HIP milestones must meet with the Honors Program Director to remain in good standing with Honors.

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: completed 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 Pfost: 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 films 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 entremés 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) 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 Obray – 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.”

- ***Darriane 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.”