All upper division University Honors students must complete an independent study experience called the Honors Capstone. It is an opportunity for a student to explore in-depth a topic within his or her major area of study, or a closely related area. The student selects a professor to serve as his or her Honors Capstone adviser. The final product of the Honors Capstone experience may be a senior thesis, a computer program, a video, or another type of artistic or technical creation. The Honors Capstone will frequently fulfill departmental or college honors requirements in addition to those of the University Honors Program.

Outcomes. A key aspect of the Honors Capstone is that it is not like a typical 300- or 400-level undergraduate course. It is intended to be a deeper, more challenging, more open-ended learning experience. By the end of the experience, a student should exhibit the following outcomes:

1. Student is able to plan a research, design, or artistry project of significance. This capacity includes, for example, posing appropriate research questions/hypotheses, formulating a plan to achieve the goal(s), estimating effort and resources required, and conducting appropriate background work before starting the project.

2. Student is able to engage in an independent research, design or artistry project of significance under the direction of a professor who serves as the Honors Capstone adviser. Student shows a degree of self-directedness, inventiveness, and professionalism appropriate for an advanced undergraduate.

3. Student is able to create a final research, design, or artistry product that documents the result of the Honors Capstone experience. The product conveys a thoughtful and enriching independent study experience.

Exploring Stage. Students are encouraged to begin exploring potential independent study projects early in their junior year. While searching for ideas, students are encouraged to talk with different professors as well as Dr. Cisneros at the University Honors Center. Dr. Cisneros can direct students to examples of previous projects. For the Honors Capstone, a student may continue with a project that he or she has already started or may begin an entirely new one.

Planning Stage. With your guidance, the student is to plan the Honors Capstone activities. He or she is to perform a background investigation, formulate research questions, and develop a plan to achieve the project goals. As an expert in the field, you have the ability to provide the student important feedback. For example, you can help the student refine the project goals or suggest changing the scope, so that it fits within a time frame of one semester, as is typical of Honors Capstone projects. If the project will require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for human subjects research, encourage the student to begin the process. The planning stage is normally completed in the semester before the Honors Capstone experience is taken for credit.

Capstone Proposal. The student is to write a formal Honors Capstone proposal. A copy of the proposal guidelines is attached for your reference. The proposal must be submitted to the
University Honors Center (Campus Life Building, room 110) no later than the last day of the second week of the semester in which the capstone is taken for credit. By signing the capstone proposal, you indicate that you have read the proposal and believe that it has the potential to achieve the outcomes of the Honors Capstone (as specified in this document).

Research Stage. It is the student’s responsibility to complete the work. The student is encouraged to provide you updates on his or her progress and to seek your advice when questions arise. You may wish to establish a clear set of deadlines and set regular meeting times with your student.

Submitting Results. As part of the Honors Capstone, the student is required to produce a report, a thesis, or some other tangible product originating from the experience. Depending on the anticipated completion date, a rough draft or preliminary report is due by the end of the first week in November or April. A copy of the completed work or documentation of the completed project must be filed with the University Honors Program no later than the Friday before finals week of the semester. As the student’s adviser, you must approve the final submission.
Compose a word-processed statement that contains the elements listed below. Organize your proposal into numbered sections.

1. Indicate the proposed title of the project/thesis. – one to two lines

2. Describe in detail the focus of the work you propose. For example, is there a specific hypothesis you are advancing? Is there a problem you are solving? Why is your topic of interest? Why is your topic important? – one half to one page

3. Briefly describe the methodology of your proposed study. Describe your research design, if any. Is the study qualitative or quantitative? Is it performance art? Are you using primary or secondary sources as your data source? Are you working in a specific creative genre? – one half to one page

4. List a minimum of five (and a maximum of 20) reference sources dealing with your topic using the manual of style appropriate for your discipline (e.g., APA, MLA, The Chicago Manual of Style, etc.). – one half to one page

5. In consultation with your faculty capstone adviser describe each phase or step of your project as specifically as possible. Include estimated completion dates for each phase or step. Include any deadlines that you must meet external to the Honors Program, such as those associated with Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, funding sources, or prize competitions. – one half to one page

6. List the courses you have taken, expertise, and experiences or activities you have completed that provide a background for this study – one quarter to one page