UNIVERSITY HONORS SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Academic Research Fellowships

Program Guide
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Program Guidelines and Expectations

Purpose
• To recognize, reward, and support the University Honors Program’s most outstanding students.
• To enable academically distinguished students to complete a University Honors Capstone project during their senior year of such quality and distinction as to make them eligible for gainful employment or admission into the nation’s most competitive graduate programs.
• To highlight independent research and artistry undertaken by University Honors students at NIU.

Benefits
Paid Research allows students to put 100% of their focus into research.

• Each scholar receives a $4,500 stipend for nine full-time weeks of summer pre-University Honors Capstone research or artistry.
• An additional $500 in salary, conference support, or commodities is given to the student’s faculty mentor in exchange for their extra work in supporting a University Honors student during the summer months.
• Student holds the prestigious title “University Honors Scholar” until graduation.

Eligibility
• Must be a current University Honors student – in good standing – at the time of application.
• Must be a full-time, degree-seeking undergraduate student (12 credit hours or more per semester) at the time of application.
• Must be a full-time, degree-seeking undergraduate student (12 credit hours or more per semester) during the academic year.
• Must have reached at least junior level status (60 credit hours earned) at the time of application and hold senior level status (90 credit hours earned) by fall.
• Must demonstrate high academic achievement through cumulative GPA. Applicants must have at least a 3.5 cumulative grade point average to be considered. Preference will be given to students with outstanding grade point averages. (Greatest attention will be placed on the GPA at NIU. However, a student’s full academic record will be considered.)
• Must submit a completed University Honors Scholar application by the specified deadline.

**Student Responsibilities and Outcomes**

• The student commits to engaging in nine weeks (at least 35 hours per week) of intensive, pre-Honors Capstone summer research or artistry. This endeavor should be considered equivalent to a significant summer job in which the student is essentially earning $500 per week. **It is very important that students take this serious expectation into consideration.** For instance, it is not likely a student studying abroad or completing a demanding paid internship will have the time to complete the amount of work expected of a University Honors Scholar.

• If the summer project involves human subjects in research, it will be necessary to secure Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval during the spring semester. For further information, consult NIU’s Research Compliance Coordinator (815-753-8588).

• Each Scholar must develop a work plan in consultation with the faculty mentor and based on sound standards from the student’s discipline area of study. The work plan must be realistic and yet based on a standard of excellence and high achievement.

• The student agrees to have his or her name, photograph, project title, and project blogs appear on the websites, social media, and videos of the University Honors Program and Northern Illinois University. Similarly, the student agrees to have such information included in printed university materials.

• By the first day of classes in the fall semester, the student must submit two completed items in hard copy form to the Associate Director of Scholarships, Programming, and Assessment of University Honors.

1. A fully completed, faculty-approved Honors Capstone proposal that contains the elements and meets the requirements as set forth by the University Honors Program for all students pursuing the Capstone. This proposal is to be approved by the faculty mentor before it is submitted.

2. A five-page, double-spaced, one-inch margin report that reflects thoughtfully on the summer research and artistry experience, clearly details what was accomplished during the nine-week period, and explains how the summer work has advanced the Honors Capstone to be completed during the academic year. This report is to be approved by the faculty mentor before it is submitted.

The approval of the submitted proposal and report by the Director for University Honors activates the title “University Honors Scholar” for the academic year.

• It is expected that the student will complete an Honors Capstone related to the focus of the University Honors Scholar research and artistry project. The Capstone is to be completed by the end of the student’s senior year. The student must follow
the deadlines and procedures established by the University Honors Program for the Capstone.
• It is expected that the student be in good academic standing at NIU and in the University Honors Program during the year of the award.

**Presentation**

• Honors Scholars are expected to disseminate their Honors Capstone research or artistry project in a public forum during the subsequent academic year. Some examples of acceptable forums are NIU’s annual Undergraduate Research & Artistry Day, NIU’s Summer Research Symposium, conferences in the students’ field, and/or at regional or national honors association conferences.

**Faculty Mentor Expectations and Responsibilities**

The faculty mentor is the student’s primary source of expertise, advice, guidance, inspiration, and moral support during the summer experience. It is expected that the faculty mentor will become the student’s University Honors Capstone advisor in the forthcoming academic year. Therefore, the faculty mentor should work in the discipline in which the student intends to complete the Capstone.

• The faculty mentor helps ensure the student selects and completes a summer research and artistry project or activity that will lay fruitful groundwork for an outstanding University Honors Capstone in the senior year. The advisor also ensures the summer research and artistry work and the resulting Capstone reflects the standards of the academic discipline. Providing advice on whether the project can be feasibly completed is another important contribution of the faculty mentor.
• The faculty member should seek to cultivate a personalized mentoring experience as well as help provide academic focus and direction. At minimum, the faculty member should meet with the student at least three times during summer to discuss the project’s progress.
• If the summer project involves the use of human subjects, the faculty member should ensure the student secures the necessary institutional review board (IRB) approval in the spring – before this proposal submission of a University Honors Scholars application OR before the commencement of the experience in the summer.
• The faculty mentor reviews and approves the student’s final summer research and artistry report.
A Student’s Guide to Faculty Mentors

How to Select a Faculty Mentor

The mentor/mentee relationship is a key factor of your success in this program. The end product will depend on the strength of the relationship that you have with your faculty mentor. Once you decide what you are interested in researching, you must identify a mentor. We recommend that you make your request in a face-to-face meeting where you can share your ideas, receive feedback, and gauge how well you and he or she may work together.

Working with Your Mentor

1. Remember, when you have identified a potential mentor, it is necessary to provide a brief rationale of why they should invest the additional time and resources to mentor you. Be sure to share your research interests, past research projects, résumé / CV, or any other relevant information they may need.

2. Provide your mentor with a copy of the expectations of an Honors Scholar mentor from this manual.

3. Choose a mentor that you are comfortable working with and speaking with on a regular basis.

4. Know the professor’s expectations for quality of work, meeting times, preferred method of communication, work style, and workload. Awareness of prior time commitments will help you assess the amount of time your mentor may have available to guide you.

5. Show up for any and all meetings on time and prepared.

6. Follow the advice your mentor gives even if it makes you explain findings that are contrary to your study.
Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Can I get academic credit for the summer experience? Yes. If the major department and faculty mentor approve, the student may receive academic credit for the University Honors Scholars research and artistry project through an independent study course. This decision would be made by the student’s academic department or school. The student is responsible for the cost of tuition associated with any such course.

2. Can I get an Engage Plus notation for the experience? Yes. If a student elects not to pursue academic credit for the University Honors Scholars research and artistry project, he/she can apply for an Engage Plus notation through the Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning.

3. Is it acceptable to pursue a collaborative research and artistry project involving a team of people, which might include students who are not members of the University Honors Program? Yes, it is possible. The only caveat is that an individual student’s Honors Capstone must meet the requirements and standards set forth by the University Honors Program. In other words, it is recognized that in some disciplines, such as the sciences, engineering and some performing arts, students work in teams. In a team setting, the University Honors Scholars award remains $4,500 and belongs exclusively to the one designated recipient. The student will have to clearly demonstrate their significant contributions to the project.


5. Must my nine weeks coincide with summer school? No. In terms of meeting the nine-week work obligation, the student may select any nine weeks between the end of spring classes and the start of fall classes.