Preface

The University of Southern Mississippi Honors College Student Handbook was created as a guide for current Honors Scholars. The Handbook serves not only as an informational resource for students with regard to expectations and requirements, but also as a guiding policy document for the College, its students, and its staff. Changes in policy will be updated in the Handbook, and kept current on the web-site.

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SECTION I: HISTORY AND MISSION

Our History:
The University of Southern Mississippi offered its first Honors classes in 1965. By 1975, the program had evolved into a formalized Honors College, making it the sixth oldest public honors college in the nation and the oldest Honors College in the state of Mississippi. Appropriate to its historic role at the university, the home of the Honors College is the Honor House, one of the original buildings on the Southern Miss campus. Built in 1912, the Honor House was given its current name when it was a dormitory for women who were put “on their honor” to respect curfew and other campus policies. Today, the Honors College is comprised of more than 600 curious, imaginative, and aspiring scholars who strive for excellence, thrive on academic challenge, and serve and lead both on campus and in the community.

Our Mission:
The Honors College at the University of Southern Mississippi fosters a deep, communal engagement with ideas and an atmosphere of personal connection and achievement by providing students with small classes, opportunities for active learning, and research experiences. We create a supportive and challenging intellectual community, promote attentive mentoring, and expose our students to cutting-edge scholars and artists. Above all, we encourage our students to seize opportunities and boldly determine their own paths—both at the university and beyond. Upon graduation, our students will have the independence and confidence to pursue their passions, the knowledge and tools with which to chart a fulfilling future course, and a lifelong commitment to using their capacities for the public good.
SECTION II: THE HONOR CODE

We expect all Honors College Scholars to recognize and take seriously the many implications of “honor.” We hold Honors Scholars to high standards not only with regard to academic performance and integrity, but also with regard to civility and tolerance. We value the diversity of the Southern Miss campus and expect our students to respect one another and honor and learn from differing viewpoints, cultural experiences, faith systems, and interests.

Upon accepting admission into the College, all Scholars are governed not only by the Southern Miss Academic Integrity Policy (http://www.usm.edu/sites/default/files/groups/institutional-policies/pdf/acaf-pro-012_-_academic_integrity_policy.pdf) but also by the Honors College Code, which reflects our mission and our fundamental commitment to rigorous standards of excellence:

As a member of the University of Southern Mississippi Honors College, I commit myself to serve as a leader and role model in the university community, maintaining high standards of academic integrity, personal conduct, and campus citizenship. I understand that my actions reflect not only upon me, but also upon my fellow Honors Scholars, the Honors College, and the University of Southern Mississippi. I will be a committed class member, submit timely, original assignments and exert a sustained effort to succeed in my academic work and I will work to be an exemplary campus citizen. It is my responsibility to uphold this code and to encourage others in their efforts to do so.
SECTION III: HONORS COLLEGE STAFF

Dean:

Dr. Ellen Weinauer, Associate Professor of English
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Director of University Forum:

Dr. Andrew Haley, Associate Professor of History
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Staff:

Jessica Brown, Honors Keystone Administrative Assistant
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Robyn Curtis, M.A., National Scholarship Officer
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paula.mathis@usm.edu

Kaycee McMullan, Assistant to the Dean for Academic Services
kaycee.mcmullan@usm.edu

Stacey Ready, M.Ed., Assistant to the Dean and Coordinator of Honors Foundations
stacey.ready@usm.edu

Graduate Assistants:

Elizabeth Hunt (2015-16)
Elizabeth Hutchinson (2015-16)
SECTION IV: THE CURRICULUM

Overview:
The Southern Miss Honors curriculum is divided into two phases—Honors Foundations (for freshmen and sophomores) and Honors Keystone (for juniors and seniors). Those who enter the College as freshmen are expected to complete the four-year curriculum; upon completion of Honors Foundations requirements, these students will transition automatically into the Keystone curriculum. Students may also enter the Honors College as rising juniors and complete the Keystone curriculum only. Scholars MUST complete Honors Keystone in good standing in order to graduate with Latin Distinction.

All students who complete Honors Keystone requirements with 3.25 or higher cumulative USM GPA* will graduate with Latin Distinction, as specified:

- *cum laude* (3.25-3.49)
- *magna cum laude* (3.5-3.79)
- *summa cum laude* (3.8 or higher)

Graduating students will be given an Honors College Medallion, which they may wear with their robes during commencement proceedings.

*No student with a registered “F” in an Honors course (whether Foundations or Keystone) will be allowed to graduate with Latin Distinction.

Honors Foundations (Freshmen and Sophomores)

Designed to provide enhanced educational opportunities across the curriculum, Honors Foundations requires 18 hours of honors-designated core classes and 2 hours of University Forum, a lecture series that brings leading scholars, performers, and public intellectuals to campus.

Many classes in the Foundations curriculum provide experiential, or active, learning opportunities, with activities outside the classroom and travel to such places as New Orleans, Atlanta, or the Gulf Coast. With its emphasis on acquiring knowledge across the disciplines, Honors Foundations prepares students to embark on original research (the senior thesis) in Honors Keystone.

Requirements and Policies, Honors Foundations:

- Students should enroll in 4-6 Honors Hours per semester and must take at least one Honors course (not including HON 321 or 322) per semester to be considered “progressing in the curriculum.”
- Freshmen are required to enroll in HON 321 (“University Forum”) in each of the fall and spring semesters. Any exception must be approved by the Honors Foundations Coordinator and the Dean of the College.
• Students may enroll in HON 321 up to eight (8) hours.
• Some Honors Foundations courses are taught in the active learning (AL) format. Students must be in good academic standing in the College (i.e. not on probation or probation continued) in order to enroll in these courses; students may enroll in only one AL course per semester. To enroll in an AL section, you must be advised and be put on the “permission to register” list. AL courses are, except with rare exception, approved for Foundations students only.
• Students are strongly encouraged (and in some cases required) to take a minimum of 16 hours per semester.
• Students are encouraged to take Honors courses within their field of study if possible or if advised to do so by your major department.
• Advisement with the Honors Foundations Coordinator is required each semester and supplements in a student’s home department. Such “doubled” advising is a benefit of College membership and will facilitate students’ academic progress and success at Southern Miss. For more about advisement, see below.
• Students may replace grades in Honors classes with Honors sections only (e.g. a grade in ENG 203H may only be replaced by a grade in another ENG 203H section; a grade in ENG 203H cannot be replaced by a grade in ENG 203).
• Honors Foundation Scholars who bring in AP or IB credit will be granted 3 Honors hours (maximum/total) to satisfy Honors requirements. Ordinarily, these hours will be for a core class from which their AP/IB credit exempts them.
• In rare circumstances, sophomore Foundations Scholars may, with the approval of the Foundations Coordinator and the Dean, elect to complete an Honors Community Service Project for a maximum of three (3) Honors hours. The project must be approved in advance and must be with an approved agency; for each credit hour earned, students must complete 32 service hours. Students will also be required to complete a service report.
• Foundations Scholars who elect to study abroad for the duration of a fall or spring semester (and who therefore have fewer opportunities to earn Honors hours on campus) will be awarded a limited number of honors hours (maximum 6) for their study abroad coursework. Students will be notified by the Foundations Coordinator of that award early in their study abroad term, in time for next-term advisement. In most cases, students participating in semester long residential and exchange programs will be granted 6 honors hours.

Honors Keystone (Juniors and Seniors)

As a scholar in the Keystone curriculum, you have the exciting opportunity to chart your own course through the design and completion of an original research project—the senior Honors Thesis. Working with Honors faculty and with a faculty adviser in your chosen discipline, you will move through a 7-hour course sequence, distributed across four semesters, that guides you through the thesis experience. Each step in the Keystone curriculum provides you with knowledge, skills, and aptitudes that prepare you for successful completion of the thesis project and the achievement of Latin Distinction.
Requirements and Policies, Honors Keystone:

Students must complete the following courses and associated requirements in sequence:

- HON 300 (Research Forum): 1 hour. P/F, typically taken in the first semester in Honors Keystone
- HON 301 (Prospectus Writing): 3 hours. B or higher grade required, typically taken in the second semester in Honors Keystone
- 492H (Honors Research), or course equivalent, in thesis adviser’s department (e.g., ENG 492H or BSC 492H); 3 hours divided over two semesters, typically 1 in the fall and 2 in the spring of the senior year. B or higher grade required
- Scholars must pass a comprehensive examination in their major field of study.
- Advisement with the Honors Keystone Coordinator is required each semester and supplements advisement in a student’s home department. Such “doubled” advising is a benefit of College membership and will facilitate students’ academic progress and success at Southern Miss. For more about advisement, see below.
- Submission of a completed and approved Honors Thesis.

Year-by-Year Guide for Southern Miss Honors Scholars

The following is based on a student earning a bachelor’s degree in four years (8 semesters) and is a general guide only. The program of study will be different for students who study abroad, complete internships off-campus, take summer school, etc. Advisement throughout each student’s academic career will ensure that s/he is making appropriate progress in the curriculum.

By the end of each year, students should/should have completed the following:

**Honors Foundations, Year One (Freshmen):**

- HON 321 (both fall and spring term)
- At least 10 honors hours
- A minimum 3.25 cumulative GPA each term
- Academic advisement with Honors Foundations Adviser and academic department both fall and spring semesters
- Enroll in a minimum of 16 hours each semester

**Honors Foundations, Year Two (Sophomores):**

- At least 20 honors hours by end of year – i.e. successful completion of Honors Foundations courses
- Begin researching thesis opportunities in the major department
- A minimum 3.25 cumulative GPA each term
- Academic advisement with Honors Foundations Adviser fall semester
- Academic advisement with Honors Keystone Adviser during spring semester
- Completion of GEC coursework as appropriate to major
- Identify a major (and a minor, if required)
Honors Keystone, Year One (Juniors):

- HON 300
- HON 301
- Academic advisement with Honors Keystone Adviser in both fall and spring semesters
- A minimum 3.25 cumulative GPA each term

Honors Keystone, Year Two (Seniors):

- 492H (Honors Research), or course equivalent, in thesis adviser’s department (e.g., ENG 492H or BSC 492H); 3 hours divided over two semesters
- Submit progress reports to thesis adviser by prescribed fall semester deadline
- Submit thesis draft to thesis adviser by prescribed spring semester deadline
- Academic advisement with Honors Keystone Adviser in both fall and spring semesters
- Print (from SOAR), complete, and submit University Degree Application to major department one semester prior to graduation
- Print (from SOAR), complete, and submit Honors College Degree Application (page 3 of University Degree App) to Honors College one semester prior to graduation
- Complete and submit Comprehensive Exam Letter to Department Head (request for scheduling of comprehensive exam) one semester prior to graduation
- Complete Honors College Aquila Research Taxonomy
- Complete Honors College Exit Survey
- A minimum 3.25 cumulative GPA each term
SECTION V: HONORS COLLEGE ADVISEMENT

What is Advisement?

One of the major benefits of Honors College membership is the careful attention and guidance provided to HC students. Honors College advisers will assist you by:

- Guiding course selection;
- Discussing AP, IB and transfer credit;
- Exploring class availability and options when scheduling difficulties arise;
- Helping you formulate a plan for your research/thesis project (including adviser selection, appropriate timelines for completion, and trouble-shooting when difficulties arise);
- Connecting you with resources on the Southern Miss campus and in the community;
- Providing guidance with regard to plans for graduate/law/medical/professional school and/or careers;
- Guiding you through academic or other difficulties;
- Celebrating your achievements with you.

Note that Advisement in Honors supplements (but does not replace) advisement within a student’s major program.

Advising Information/Policies

- Honors College students are required to meet with an HC Adviser each semester during regular advising periods. You may, however, request Honors advisement as needed at any time during the semester by appointment; please use our on-line booking system at https://southernmisshonorscollege.youcanbook.me/ or call the HC office at 601-266-4533 to make an appointment for advising outside of regular advisement periods.
- Regular HC Advisement will typically take place during late September/October (for spring classes) and late February/March (for summer and fall classes). Appointments can be made through https://southernmisshonorscollege.youcanbook.me/.
- All students who have not yet declared a major should be advised by their Honors adviser to plan their curriculum of study.
- Honors Foundations students will be advised by either Stacey Ready or Kaycee McMullan; Honors Keystone students will be advised by either Paula Mathis or Kaycee McMullan.
SECTION VI: ACADEMIC STANDING

Students in the Honors College must maintain a 3.25 cumulative GPA in order to remain in good standing. We are invested in our students’ success and are committed to providing guidance when and where it is necessary in order to ensure that a student is making good academic progress. To that end, we monitor student grades and progress at both midterm and at the end of each semester. So that we can intervene early and offer assistance, those who do not meet our GPA criteria or who appear to be experiencing academic difficulties at midterm will be contacted and may be asked to meet with an HC Adviser or with the Dean to establish a plan for improvement. At the end of each semester, we review the grades and progress of all Scholars in order to assess academic standing in the Honors College.

Good Standing

In order to remain in good standing in the Honors College, students must:

- Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or higher;
- Make successful progress toward degree and the completion of Honors requirements, as laid out in Section IV, above;
- Schedule and attend Honors advisement every semester.

Honors College Probation

- Cumulative GPA below 3.25;
- Failure to Progress in the Curriculum, as laid out in requirements, above. Note that an incomplete (I) grade in one of the required Honors Keystone classes (HON 300, HON 301) constitutes Failure to Progress;
- A failing grade in one or more classes (including HON 321).

Students will be informed of their probation by letter. Students on probation will be required to complete an Honors College Probation form and to meet with the Dean of the College to establish a Plan for Academic Improvement (PAI). The PAI, which remains internal to the Honors College, will be used to guide further action with regard to standing in the College. A student on probation who fails to meet with the Dean and/or who fails to meet the requirements of the PAI by the end of the following term will be suspended from the College.

Honors College students are allowed only one probationary semester; in rare cases, and only with approval of the dean, a student will be granted one semester of “Probation Continued.” Students will not be allowed more than two semesters of probation in total.
**Honors College Suspension**

Honors College students may be suspended from the College for the following reasons:

- Cumulative GPA below 3.25 for two consecutive terms;
- Cumulative GPA below a 2.5 in any given semester;
- Failure to Progress in the Curriculum, as laid out in requirements, above;
- A failing grade in one or more classes (including HON 321);
- Failure to meet with the Dean as required and/or failure to meet the terms of the Plan for Academic Improvement, if a student has been placed on probation;
- Violation of the Honor Code and/or the University of Southern Mississippi Academic Integrity Policy; committing acts of academic dishonesty.

Students will be informed of their suspension by letter. Students who wish to appeal their suspension may do so by completing a Suspension Appeal Form and scheduling a meeting with the Dean.

Note that Presidential Scholars have the same Probation and Suspension requirements as all Honors Scholars. Honors College membership is a requirement of the Presidential Scholarship; therefore, Presidential Scholars who are suspended from the Honors College will lose their scholarship.

**Withdrawing from the Honors College**

Students seeking to withdraw from the College for any reason must complete the [HC Withdrawal Request Form](#) and meet with the Dean to discuss whether withdrawal is appropriate/ advisable and will be approved. Note that students who withdraw from the College may be asked to drop Honors sections of classes in which they are currently enrolled. Students may schedule an appointment with the Dean by calling 601.266.4533.
SECTION VIII: RESOURCES

Office of National Scholarships

Housed in the Honors College and serving all Southern Miss students, the Office of National Scholarships assists students in strategically developing a strong career throughout their time at Southern Miss with an eye toward helping to prepare the strongest application possible for such national scholarship opportunities as the Truman, Marshall, Goldwater, Rhodes, Phi Kappa Phi, and others. Other scholarships are available to support study abroad, undergraduate research, graduate study, and (in some cases) undergraduate study.

For information and assistance, contact Robyn Curtis, the National Scholarship Officer (robyn.curtis@usm.edu; 601.266.4533), or visit the Office of National Scholarship link on the HC web page (http://www.usm.edu/honors/office-national-scholarships).

The Honors College Ambassadors

The Honors College Ambassadors are the student leadership wing of the Honors College. Ambassadors are involved in both recruitment (assisting the Dean and administrators at Honors College events, meeting with prospective students, phone banking during recruitment season, etc) and in retention (mentoring Honors Scholars, creating programming for current students, etc). Membership is selective and is limited to Honors College students who have completed at least one semester at USM, have a minimum GPA of 3.25, and will not graduate for at least one year. Selection is based on an application and interview process and takes place in the spring of each year.

Electronic Newsletter and Honors College listserv:

Sent to all HC students on both the Hattiesburg and the Gulf Park campuses on a weekly basis, the electronic Newsletter is designed to keep students abreast of important Honors College, campus, and community information. Digested and compiled in an effort to limit the number of emails you receive from us, the newsletter will typically contain information on important topics such as: job, scholarship, internship, and study abroad opportunities, visiting lecturers, upcoming deadlines and advisement schedules, HC policies, parties or events hosted by the HC, student achievements, residence life information, and class information.

All HC students are also automatically placed on the Honors College listserv, which we use to communicate vital information. As with the newsletter, we expect you to read it and be responsible for any information contained therein.
Social Media

Stay apprised of HC information, fun facts, alumni news, student achievements, and upcoming events by liking us on Facebook and following us on Instagram and Twitter!

- **Facebook:** Southern Miss Honors College, Southern Miss Honors College at Gulf Park, Southern Miss Honors College Alumni
- **Twitter:** HC_SouthernMiss (#hcusm)
- **Instagram:** @HC_SouthernMiss (#hcusm)

The Honor House

As a Southern Miss Honors Scholar, you have privileges at the Honor House. Using your student ID, you have 24-7 access to the student lounge, which has a coffee maker, a popcorn popper, and games/comfy chairs, and the computer room, which houses several computers and a printer. During the daytime, you may request paper (up to five sheets) from the Graduate Assistant, for printing purposes; however, at night or on the weekends, we ask that you provide your own paper.

Please be courteous of your fellow students and the HC staff and clean up after yourself in both rooms. We want the Honor House to be a comfortable place for all!