

HONORS COLLEGE

Southern Miss

THE HONORS COLLEGE HANDBOOK

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.

Table of Contents

- I. [History and Mission](#)
- II. [The Honor Code](#)
- III: [Honors College Staff](#)
- IV: [The Curriculum \(Requirements, Policies, Year-by-Year Guide\)](#)
- V: [Advisement](#)
- VI: [Academic Standing](#)
- VII: [Graduation Procedures](#)
- VIII: [Resources](#)

Office of Nationally Competitive Awards
The Honors College Leadership Council
Electronic Newsletter and Honors College Listserv
Social Media
The Honor House

SECTION I: HISTORY AND MISSION

Our History

The University of Southern Mississippi offered its first Honors classes in 1965. By 1976, 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 550 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 (usm.edu/institutional-policies/policy-acaf-pro-012) 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

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SECTION IV: THE CURRICULUM

IMPORTANT NOTE: Students admitted to the Honors College prior to the fall of 2017 will complete the curriculum that is laid out in the 2016-17 Undergraduate Bulletin, with the exception of HON 301 (see below). For specific questions about the current curriculum, please consult your Honors Adviser.

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 Core

Through course offerings and extra-curricular programming, the Honors College nurtures the habits of mind, spirit of curiosity, and sense of civic engagement that are at the heart of our mission. The curriculum is developmental and builds steadily toward the mature achievement of the Honors thesis. Students must maintain a 3.25 cumulative GPA to remain in good academic standing in the Honors College.

Honors Foundations (Freshmen and Sophomores) 16 hours

Freshman Year: Honors Colloquium (HON 111/112): 6 hours

Taught by specially chosen Honors Faculty Fellows, this two-semester course sequence will nurture students’ curiosity and their ability to ask, and answer, rich and complex questions. While a common theme and common assignments will unite all sections, each class will offer its own approach, depending on the interests and discipline of the faculty instructor. All sections will take an active learning trip during Fall Break in October. Class sizes are typically 15-18 students.

Sophomore Year: Honors Seminars (HON 303): 6 hours

Taught by the university's most innovative professors, these special topics classes will focus on the questions that are currently energizing scholarly and creative research across the disciplines. With a focus on interdisciplinary and cutting-edge exploration, these classes are designed to spark excitement and investigation. Examples of such classes include: "The History of Disease," "Music as Propaganda," and "An Oceanographic Approach to *Moby-Dick*." Multiple sections will be taught each semester, on varying topics; class sizes are typically 15-18 students.

Freshman and Sophomore Year: Honors Forum (HON 321), 4 hours

For over 40 years, the University Forum Lecture Series has been bringing some of the most respected and innovative cultural, scientific, and artistic voices in the world to Southern Miss. A one-credit hour class taught in association with this series, Honors Forum promotes engagement with the intellectual and cultural life of the University of Southern Mississippi.

Note: Additional Honors sections of other classes (e.g. ENG 101 and 102, CHE 255 and 256) will occasionally be offered; students are encouraged but not required to take advantage of these opportunities, which provide for smaller classes and a more focused learning environment. Enrichment points will be awarded for the completion of such classes, as indicated below.

Honors Keystone (5 hours)

Junior Year: Developing the Honors Thesis I and II (HON 300 and HON 301): 2 hours

Taught in sequence, these one-credit hour classes will provide students with the tools they need to lay the foundation of their Honors thesis and will shepherd them through the process of topic and proposal development. HON 300 is a prerequisite to HON 301 and cannot be waived. HON 301 will be offered only in this one-hour format, beginning in fall 2017.

Senior Year: Thesis Research/Comprehensive Exam

In the senior year, students must

- Complete a minimum of 3 research hours under the guidance of their chosen faculty adviser.
- Pass a comprehensive examination in their major field of study.
- Submit a completed and approved Honors Thesis.

Additional Requirements: Enrichment Points

The Honors College believes that students should be deeply and widely engaged in their educational experiences and in their campus and community. To that end, Honors Scholars are required to engage in point-earning enrichment activities throughout the academic year. Scholars must earn a minimum number of points per year to remain in good standing in the Honors College:

- Freshman Year: 5 points
- Sophomore Year: 7 points
- Junior Year: 7 points
- Senior Year: 5 points

For more information, including approved enrichment point activities/point values and required documentation, visit the Honors College web-site. Please note that these points are a required part of the Honors curriculum; therefore, failure to meet yearly point targets constitutes failure to progress in Honors and will affect Honors College standing.

General Requirements and Policies

- Students are expected to complete all 4 hours of HON 321 (“Honors Forum”) in their freshman and sophomore years. In rare cases, students are granted permission to complete the HON 321 requirement in their junior year. Such exceptions must be approved by the Honors adviser and the Dean of the College. Students may enroll in HON 321 up to eight (8) hours.
- Advisement in Honors is required each semester and supplements advising in the 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.
- If a student wishes to retake and replace a grade in an Honors class, s/he must do so with another Honors section (e.g. a grade in ENG 203H may only be replaced by a new grade in ENG 203H section; a grade in ENG 203H cannot be replaced by a grade in ENG 203).
- Honors Scholars who elect to study abroad during a regular academic semester and who thus are unable to complete required Honors classes must discuss waivers/substitutions with their Honors adviser. Such waivers and substitutions must be approved by the adviser and the Dean in advance of the semester in question.
- A grade lower than a B in HON 300, HON 301 or 492H (or equivalent) may trigger Honors College review to ensure that the student is on track to successfully complete the Honors thesis.
- Upon completion of HON 301, students must be continuously enrolled in 492H (or equivalent) hours until the thesis is submitted and approved.
- The Honors Thesis is generally completed in the student’s major department; exceptions must be approved by the appropriate department chairs and the Honors College.

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 111 (fall)
- HON 112 (spring)
- HON 321 (both fall and spring term)
- Earn 5 enrichment points
- A minimum 3.25 cumulative GPA each term
- Academic advisement with Honors Foundations Adviser

Honors Foundations, Year Two (Sophomores)

- HON 303 (fall)
- HON 303 (spring)
- HON 321 (both fall and spring term)
- Earn 7 enrichment points
- 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

Honors Keystone, Year One (Juniors)

- HON 300 (fall), including all required elements of the Research Portfolio (RP)
- HON 301 (spring), including all required elements of the RP
- Submit the following RP documents to the Honors College
 - Adviser Selection and Agreement form (signed by student, adviser, and department chair)
 - IRB/IACUC Requirement Form (signed by student and adviser)
 - Thesis Timeline (signed by student and adviser)
- Earn 7 enrichment points
- A minimum 3.25 cumulative GPA each term
- Academic advisement with Honors Keystone Adviser in both fall and spring semesters

NOTE: HON 300 will be offered in the fall, on the Hattiesburg and the GP campuses; HON 301 will be offered in the spring, on the Hattiesburg and the GP campuses. HON 300 and 301 will also be offered in the summer, enrollments permitting. Summer sections are for students who, because of other academic considerations (e.g. study abroad, internships, student teaching) cannot complete one or both of these courses as regularly offered.

Honors Keystone, Year Two (Seniors)

- Complete 3 thesis hours (XXX492H or equivalent), divided over two semesters, in thesis adviser's department;
- Submit graduation application one semester prior to anticipated graduation; for more information, see Section VII: Graduation Procedures.
- Stay on track with your agreed upon Thesis Timeline
- Submit your **final, revised thesis, approved by both your adviser and the chair of your department**, to HC for final approval by the following date:
 - 11/15 for December graduation
 - 4/15 for May graduation
 - 7/15 for August graduation

- Pass comprehensive exam in major field of study; major department schedules exam and determines what it will entail
- Earn 5 enrichment points
- A minimum 3.25 cumulative GPA each term
- Academic advisement with Honors Keystone Adviser in both fall and spring semesters
- Complete HC Aquila Research Taxonomy after final thesis is approved
- Complete HC Exit Survey after all HC requirements are complete and approved

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 portal, available at our web-site, 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 our on-line booking portal, available at our web-site.

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;
- Attend Honors advisement every semester.

Honors College Probation

Honors College students may be placed on probation in the College for the following reasons:

- Cumulative GPA below 3.25;
- Failure to Progress in the Honors curriculum. Failure to progress includes such matters as: not completing Honors requirements in a timely fashion; failing to meet yearly enrichment point targets; receiving an incomplete (I) grade in a required Honors course; failing to work effectively with thesis adviser and/or respond to outreach and communication from the adviser and/or the Honors College.
- A failing grade in one or more Honors classes (including thesis hours); a “no pass” grade in HON 321.
- Violation of the Honors College Honor Code, the USM Student Code of Conduct, and/or the University of Southern Mississippi Academic Integrity Policy; committing acts of academic dishonesty.

Students will be informed of their probation by electronic mail to their @usm.edu account. 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.

Note on summer coursework and probationary standing: Students who are placed on probation/probation continued at the end of spring semester and who choose to take summer coursework are required to meet with the Dean to implement a Plan for Academic Improvement (PAI) that will include appropriate benchmarks for the summer semester. Students who fail to do so may be suspended from the Honors 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 Honors curriculum.* Failure to progress includes such matters as: not completing Honors requirements in a timely fashion; failing to meet yearly enrichment point targets; receiving an incomplete (I) grade in a required Honors course; failing to work effectively with thesis adviser and/or respond to outreach and communication from the adviser and/or the Honors College.
- A failing grade in one or more Honors classes (including thesis hours); a “no pass” grade in 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 Honors College Honor Code, the USM Student Code of Conduct, and/or the University of Southern Mississippi Academic Integrity Policy; committing acts of academic dishonesty.*

*In determining whether a student’s record warrants suspension, the Honors College will consider the previous record, the extent of the violation, and/or the extent to which the student can remediate the situation in a timely manner and without delaying degree progress.

Students will be informed of their suspension by electronic mail to their @usm.edu account. Students who wish to appeal their suspension may do so by completing a Suspension Appeal Form. All appeals will be considered by the Honors College Appeals Committee.

Note on Academic Standing for Presidential and Discovery Scholars: Students with Presidential and Discovery Scholarships must maintain good standing in the Honors College and complete all requirements, including the thesis. The Honors College will carefully monitor the progress of all students with these scholarships; in cases where a student appears at risk of failing to complete Honors requirements, the HC may hold and/or delay disbursement of the scholarship until such time as the student has demonstrated substantial progress. Note that any Presidential or Discovery Scholar who is suspended from the Honors College will lose his/her scholarship.

Withdrawing from the Honors College

Students may indicate their intention to withdraw from the College by completing the HC Withdrawal form available here <https://forms.usm.edu/honors/view.php?id=11604> or on our website. All students seeking to withdraw will be required to meet with the dean. Further, we encourage any student contemplating withdrawal to meet with an HC Adviser and/or the dean in order to discuss whether withdrawal is appropriate or advisable. Note that students who withdraw from the College may be asked to drop Honors sections of classes in which they are currently enrolled.

SECTION VII: GRADUATION PROCEDURES

As per guidelines from the Office of the Registrar, students should print their graduation application one semester prior to graduation. The third page of this document, the Honors College Degree Application, should be signed by the student ONLY and submitted to the Honors College.

The Honors College recognizes all students who have successfully completed HC requirements with a ceremony and an Honors College medallion. Medallions will be distributed upon completion of all requirements, including an approved thesis.

Students who determine in the semester of their anticipated graduation that they need more time to complete degree or Honors requirements should fill out the appropriate deferment (“rollover”) paperwork with the department/college of their major by the following dates:

- December 1 (for those deferring from fall to spring)
- May 1 (for those deferring from spring to summer)
- July 1 (for those deferring from summer to fall).

A new graduation application must be submitted to the department/college as well as to the Honors College.

Students who defer graduation will attend the Honors recognition ceremony in the semester of their actual graduation, with the exception of those students who defer graduation from spring to the summer.

SECTION VIII: RESOURCES

Office of Nationally Competitive Awards (ONCA)

Housed in the Honors College and serving all Southern Miss students, ONCA 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 Director of the Office of Nationally Competitive Awards (robyn.curtis@usm.edu; 601.266.4533), or visit the Office of Nationally Competitive Awards on our website.

The Honors College Student Leadership Council

The Honors College Student Leadership Council is the student leadership wing of the Honors College. The council is made of five committees: Ambassador, Academic, Community Life, First-Year Mentor, and Philanthropy. These branches are involved in recruitment and retention as well as the development of community initiatives, service, etc, that will enhance the HC student experience. 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
- **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 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!