

# Creighton University Honors Program

## Mentoring Handbook

### **Overview**

The goal of the Creighton Honors Program is the formation of undergraduate scholars in a community dedicated to the study of the liberal arts in the Jesuit, Catholic tradition. Its program of study is rigorous yet flexible, designed for dedicated students who are academically adventurous and thrive on experiential learning. For this reason, Honors mentoring is an essential element of the academic formation program for Honors students. Mentors will help students to carve out an individual regimen of study that integrates knowledge from various disciplines into a coherent intellectual program. In addition, Honors mentors will guide students toward academic experiences that will help to satisfy their individual life goals.

Honors mentoring should complement the distinctive Honors pedagogy. Honors courses are experiential, discussion oriented, and largely student-driven. Likewise, through informed discussion with their mentors, Honors students will come to see for themselves how to achieve their ideal program of study at Creighton and prepare for life after Creighton. Just as Honors students take increased responsibility for their learning inside the classroom, they also take increased responsibility in mentoring sessions by coming prepared to discuss their educational opportunities and experiences.

### **Student Responsibilities**

From the very first meeting with their RSP preceptors, Honors students should understand their responsibility as junior partners with their professors in the academic enterprise. Before meeting with mentors, students should be prepared to discuss their academic, professional, and life goals; in addition, they should have some idea of what courses, programs of study, and co-curricular activities would fulfill those goals. However, in keeping with the spirit of flexibility built into the Honors Program, students should be open to revising or refining aspects of their plans after thoughtful discussion with their mentors. Their goal should be to develop, in concert with their mentors, a coherent educational vision and a sense of their own vocation in life.

In addition to their official advising relationship with their mentors, Honors students are encouraged to develop fruitful mentoring relationships with a wide variety of faculty members. In turn, as they grow in the Program, students are encouraged to serve as student mentors to newer Honors students (by helping them to understand the right uses of the Program) and to students across the College. Helping other Creighton students to develop independent programs of research is a particularly important mentoring service that Honors students should feel called to perform.

### **Mentor Responsibilities**

All Honors mentors should help students to profit as much as possible from their Honors experience. Honors mentors should guide students toward increasingly fuller participation in the academic world. In addition, in the Ignatian tradition, they should treat mentoring sessions as an opportunity for formation, as a means of helping students to discern and work toward their professional and life goals. Therefore, mentors should come prepared to discuss not only

course selection, but also independent research projects, scholarships and fellowships, internships, opportunities for publication or presentation of research, study abroad, future professional opportunities, graduate and professional school applications, and co-curricular opportunities, all in the light of the students' current discernment of their academic and life goals. Mentors must also ensure that each student receives a rigorous liberal arts education in the Jesuit, Catholic tradition.

### **Mentor Selection**

Honors students are assigned their RSP 104 preceptors when they matriculate. Once they declare a major, they must select an Honors mentor according to the following procedure. First, they must fill out a Change of Mentor form (found on the Honors website), which lists all available Honors mentors. They must then obtain the approval of both the mentor and the Honors Program Director. A failure to secure a mentor and to meet each semester constitutes a failure to fulfill the Honors Program requirements.

## FAQs

Q. When do I choose an Honors mentor?

A. When you declare a major, your major department will assign you a major advisor. At that point, you officially leave the RSP Program and will meet regularly with your major advisor to discuss your major course work and get your registration pin. At that point you must also choose an Honors mentor.

Q. Does my Honors mentor have to be in my own discipline?

A. No. You may choose an Honors mentor from any discipline. What's most important in Honors mentoring is to select someone who will both support and challenge you.

Q. May I select my RSP preceptor as my mentor?

A. Yes, if your preceptor and the Honors Program Director agree. However, your preceptor will not automatically become your mentor after you declare a major. You must still fill out a Change of Mentor form.

Q. Why do I need an Honors mentor? I already have a major advisor who gives me my pin number.

A. Meetings with your Honors mentor should not be a redundancy. For one thing, your Honors mentor will help to ensure that the Honors Program is as fruitful as possible for you.

Your mentor should also be ready to help you make discernments about your academic career and life goals and may know of opportunities that your major advisor is unaware of. Finally, and on a very practical note, regular meetings with your Honors mentor will ensure that when you reach your senior year, you will not be surprised to find that you have not actually fulfilled the Honors requirements. Seniors who have not met with their mentors sometimes have unpleasant surprises in their last semester.

Q. Do I really need to see my Honors mentor every semester?

A. Yes, and perhaps more often, for several reasons. First, because Honors has a flexible curriculum, you and your advisor must meet regularly to ensure that you are meeting all relevant academic outcomes, that you are receiving a rigorous liberal arts education, and that you are benefiting from the distinctive Honors pedagogy. In addition, your Honors mentor will fill out a Record of Honors Advising Form, which will then be used to adjust your transcript so that the Honors Program and the College can keep track of your progress in Honors. The Honors Program and the College need this information to be updated regularly.

Q. Can my major advisor also serve as my Honors mentor?

A. Yes, as long as your major advisor is trained as an Honors mentor.

Q. What are the Honors Suggested Guidelines?

A. Fine arts (3 credits); natural science (7 credits); math (3 credits); foreign language (3 credits); history (6 credits); literature (6 credits); social science (6 credits); philosophy (6 credits); theology (6 credits).

Q. Honors courses are often interdisciplinary. How can I tell what "counts" as fulfilling elements of my guidelines?

A. As of Spring 2012, Honors instructors are required to state on their syllabus what guidelines the course may be used to satisfy. The course instructor and the Honors Director have the joint responsibility of determining what a course counts for.

Q. Can I fulfill any of my guidelines without taking a course?

A. It is generally but not always required that you take a course. Nevertheless, there are other legitimate ways of fulfilling a guideline. For instance, if you can demonstrate a fluency in a foreign language, that may satisfy your foreign language guideline. If you participate in an orchestra (not pep band) or community theater, that may satisfy your fine arts guideline. If you are part of a research group in the social sciences, that may count toward fulfilling your social science guideline. However, you must clear any such substitutions with the Honors Director.

Q. What if I am too busy for Honors mentoring/advising?

A. Mentoring/advising is essential to Honors pedagogy and there is no excuse for failing to see your mentor/advisor at least once each term.

Q. Can I double dip?

A. You cannot count one course as satisfying more than one of the distribution guidelines. For instance, if your HRS 200 course was interdisciplinary and can count as either literature or history, you can count it as *either* but not *both*. You can double dip in other respects, however. Each of your HRS SAM and Foundational Sequence courses might satisfy one of your Honors guidelines, and so might your SRP course. In addition, with the permission of your major (or minor) department, you can count an HRS course toward your major (or minor).

Q. Does Communications count toward fulfilling my fine arts requirement?

A. No. The confusion arises because both studio art classes and COM 152 count toward fulfilling the Core Program skills requirement (Core Category E); but this Core Program Category is not the same as the Honors Fine Arts category.

Q. Does ENG 150 count toward my literature guideline?

A. No. ENG 150 is a composition class.

Q. Do my foreign language classes count toward my literature guideline?

A. If they are courses on literature then they do.

Q. How can I count my art history or music history class?

A. It may count either toward your fine art or your history guideline, but not both.

Q. What is the Honors Portfolio?

A. The portfolio is a student's own record of his or her progress in meeting the goals of the Honors Program. This program was designed so that students could, together with their advisors, take charge of their own education. Honors students have considerable freedom to exercise their judgment about how that education should unfold. However, that freedom comes with the responsibility of accounting for progress. The portfolio is one major vehicle for that accountability.

However, the portfolio is also a pedagogical tool. Honors students are generally intent on looking ahead to the next challenge. The portfolio offers students an opportunity to look *back* on what they have accomplished. This sort of reflection will help students to construct a meaningful narrative of their academic life and is essential for self-understanding.

The practical advice: Be prepared to talk about the portfolio in mentoring sessions and do not put off doing it until the semester you graduate.

Q. What goes into the Honors portfolio?

A. The College of Arts and Sciences has established seven learning outcomes for all students:

- Communicate clearly and effectively in written, spoken, mathematical, and artistic languages;
- Think critically about information, assumptions, and arguments found in multiple forms of academic and cultural discourse;
- Integrate broad and diverse learning with at least one individually chosen academic discipline or professional field;
- Appreciate the Christian, Catholic, and Jesuit intellectual traditions in the context of historical, cultural and spiritual concerns;
- Apply a reasoned approach to effective decision-making according to sound and coherent ethical principles;
- Demonstrate an active engagement with [and enduring commitment to] Jesuit values of service and social justice;
- Demonstrate a historical or contemporary understanding of diverse human identities and cultures in the United States and around the world.

Each of these outcomes corresponds to a tab in the portfolio. Honors students need to insert artifacts that establish that they have made progress in achieving these goals. Note: Students admitted to the Honors Program before the 2011-2012 academic year are not required to satisfy the seventh learning outcome.

Q. What *sort* of artifacts go into the portfolio?

A. There is no one sort of artifact that's needed. For instance, for learning outcome 1, a recording of a recital could establish progress in effective artistic communication, while an analytical paper would be ideal for the second learning outcome. For the sixth outcome, a one-page reflection on the value of a service trip would be just what's needed.

The practical advice: If you include an artifact, you should help your advisor or the Honors Board to recognize that it really does show progress toward the relevant outcome. For example, a graded assignment with the professor's (positive!) comments would establish that you are progressing toward the relevant outcome. This sort evaluation may not be possible for some artifacts (as with reflections on the life of service).

Q. Where do I place my artifacts?

A. On Blueline II, there is a module that serves as a repository for your artifacts. You can find detailed instructions for uploading artifacts on Blueline II.