

**Colorado State University – Pueblo**

**Academic Program Assessment Plan  
Minor: University Honors Program**

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Plan revised by David Volk, Director, University Honors Program, May 2020

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**\*\* 2019-2020 Updates to the University Honors Program Assessment Plan are highlighted in blue.**

The Center for Honors and Leadership (CHL) was established by the Provost in Spring/Summer 2019. Principal staff include:

- David Volk, CHL Director and Honors Academic Coordinator
- Shelly Moreschini, CHL Administrative Director and President’s Leadership Program (PLP) Director
- Trish Orman, PLP Academic Coordinator

Additional staff for 2019-2020 included:

- Christopher Piccici, Honors Fellow
- Derek Lopez, Shanna Farmer, and Steven Trujillo, Adjunct Instructors
- Matthew Hawkins, CSU-Pueblo AmeriCorps Member, K2H Civic Futures Project

Planning and conversations in 2019-2020 identified the need to develop an overarching mission, program goals, and common student learning outcomes that collectively govern both the Honors and Leadership Minors. These are presented as a “**work in progress**” in the 2019-2020 Assessment Plan.

***Center for Honors and Leadership Mission Statement***

*(DRAFT – will be finalized in 2020-21)* The Colorado State University – Pueblo Center for Honors and Leadership houses the Honors and Leadership Minors, bolstering the unique strengths and identify of each while maximizing synergies and opportunities that develop and enhance both programs. The Center facilitates experiential learning, service learning, community engagement, and training in ethics across both programs as well as life-long academic and professional planning for each student. The Center also services the University community at large in support of honors societies and other leadership and scholarly activities promoted to all students.

### ***Honors Program Mission Statement***

The University Honors Program at Colorado State University – Pueblo provides high-achieving students with enhanced learning opportunities to stimulate their engagement and development within an intellectual community of scholars, as citizens of the wider university community, and beyond. The Program provides students with special opportunities for close interaction with faculty in thought-provoking seminars and intensive guided research, as well as experiential and service/community-learning projects. The 21-credit minor course of study is predominantly designed to challenge and expand students' critical thinking skills across the four years of study.

### **Fulfillment of University Mission**

The National Collegiate Honors Council notes that: "The central goal of Honors education is academic enrichment; the ways to this goal are defined by the specific institutional context, the faculty teaching in the program, and the needs of the particular students. In general, Honors programs are based on the belief that superior students profit from close contact with faculty, small courses, seminars or one-on-one instruction, course work shared with other gifted students, individual research projects, internships, foreign study, and campus or community service."

"Colorado State University-Pueblo is committed to excellence, setting the standard for regional comprehensive universities in teaching, research and service by providing leadership and access for its region while maintaining its commitment to diversity." To those ends, the Board of Governors adopted a set of values that include excellence in teaching and research, innovation, opportunity and access, and civic responsibility.

The University Honors Program assists in fulfilling the mission of CSU-Pueblo on multiple levels. In terms of curriculum, it provides not only enriched coursework to engage high-achieving students, but also provides them with extended opportunities to participate with faculty in research projects. This not only gives students a competitive advantage for graduate education, but also increases the undergraduate research output of the university. Students also gain professional experience through service opportunities that promote civic responsibility and their ties to the broader Pueblo community, the region, and beyond.

Faculty benefit from student research assistance and also gain more opportunities to supervise student research, teach smaller and more intellectually stimulating seminar classes, and foster interdisciplinary teaching with colleagues in other disciplines.

The University Honors Program also enriches the intellectual and social environment of the institution thereby creating and fostering a culture of excellence associated with the whole university. Most current Honors students are also involved in a number of other curricular and extra-curricular campus activities.

Keeping high-achieving students engaged in both their classes and the university community increases the likelihood that they will remain at CSU-Pueblo and also makes it more likely that they will recommend the university as a worthwhile experience to friends still in high school, thereby increasing enrollment. Having students in interdisciplinary programs that encourage active learning also creates a stronger sense of campus community, and more top students in service or community-based learning means more ambassadors to increase the university presence in positive ways. A highly visible University Honors Program, therefore, should generate higher enrollment, a higher rate of retention and students who

finishes their degrees, and ultimately more alumni who can serve as career mentors, donors, and exemplars of the benefits of a CSU-Pueblo public education.

### Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

#### ***Center for Honors and Leadership Goals***

- To foster collaboration and natural synergies between the Honors and Leadership minors while sustaining the unique strengths and purpose of each program
- To promote experiential learning across both curricula.
- To assist each student in identifying lifelong academic and professional goals and mapping their CSU-Pueblo experiences toward the attainment of these goals.
- To ground the work of our students in community engagement and service to others.
- To embed the study and understanding of ethics in each CHL course.

#### ***Honors Program Goals***

- To provide opportunities for enriched work and personal growth for talented high-achieving students.
- To offer only small classes that permit challenging study of advanced material and increased interaction with faculty who serve as academic and pre-professional mentors.
- To provide students with an interdisciplinary approach to academic research through seminars and experiential learning, culminating in research projects supervised by faculty in a student's particular discipline or area of interest.
- To produce civic-minded and socially responsible citizens skilled at critical thinking with superior communication and leadership skills, technical expertise, and of strong character and integrity.

#### ***Expected Student Learning Outcomes in Honors***

Student learning outcomes are an essential and critical component for regularly assessing program efficacy and to enhance and maintain optimal program efficiency in achieving the goals listed above. This is achieved through evidence gathering and evaluation of what Honors students are learning in the various components of the Honors Program curriculum. To those ends, the Honors Program students should be able to demonstrate proficiency in the following four learning outcome areas:

1. Critical Thinking  
The ability to formulate and develop arguments with sufficient support, including reasoning, evidence, and persuasive appeals, and proper attribution as needed.
2. Interdisciplinary learning:  
Integrating knowledge from diverse perspectives, disciplines, and skill sets, both theoretical and applied, and honing them into arguments and/or strategies.
3. Independent research, creativity, and scholarship:  
The ability to apply discipline-specific as well as cross-discipline-based knowledge to design, execute, and report on a particular problem-solving strategy.

4. Ethics and social responsibility:

The ability to behave ethically as demonstrated in all performance categories, including classroom, extracurricular, community-based service-learning, and independent research areas.

NOTE: "Ethics and Social Responsibility" aligns with a similar student learning outcome long established in the President's Leadership Program. Moving forward, an "Ethics" Student Learning Outcome will be included as an overarching CHL SLO for both Minors (included below).

***Expected Student Learning Outcomes in the Center for Honors and Leadership***

1. Experiential education:

CHL Students will engage experientially in their learning, understanding the principles of experiential education pedagogy, including meaningful reflection on their learning experiences.

2. Community Engagement:

CHL students will actively connect their learning to the broader community off-campus.

3. Lifelong Academic and Professional planning:

CHL students will design their educational experiences at CSU-Pueblo to align with lifelong academic and professional goals.

4. Ethics and social responsibility:

CHL students will behave ethically as demonstrated in all performance categories, including classroom, extracurricular, community-based service-learning, and independent research areas.

**\*\* Performance criteria, assessment rubrics and a full CHL assessment plan will be developed in 2020-21.**

***Performance Criteria***

Standards for Honors courses or credit awarded are decided by individual departments and colleges with guidance from the Honors Program staff. Departments will determine appropriate metrics for student skills at an appropriate Honors level for offerings within their discipline, subject to approval by college curriculum boards. Metrics for HONOR core courses will be determined by the Program Director in consultation with the Honors Steering Committee of faculty and administrative representatives.

Performance in HONOR core courses, HONOR sections, or Honors thesis will be based upon (1) evaluation of comprehensive short assignments appropriate for 1 credit-hour courses/seminars; (2) site supervisor evaluations; (3) student journal and evaluation reports for the service or community-based learning components (also 1 credit-hour per semester); and (4) appropriate written content for a scholarly thesis project in concert with an appropriate public defense of the project. Owing to different coursework and assessments employed, rather than higher levels of competence in the same skills expected of non-Honors students, Honors students will be expected to demonstrate competence with advanced skills of critical thinking and scholarship as defined by their disciplinary major and demonstrated ability to apply these skills to experiential learning.

All Honor students shall demonstrate a basic proficiency in each learning outcome to receive a satisfactory grade. Because HONOR classes are sequential, individuals who are not successful or

inadequately prepared will not remain in the Program for the latter courses in the sequence. This is evaluated jointly by maintaining an overall cumulative grade point average of 3.5 and good standing in the program (i.e., no disciplinary or other documented problems).

### **Communication**

Regularly updated University Honor Program intended outcomes will be posted on the program website as well as on documents on the shared (I) drive for community and university employees. They will be provided to all incoming participants in the program in the form of a Student Handbook for students and parents.

In order to inform the public and the university community at large, written accounts of current program goals, expected student outcomes, and assessment activities are published in the Colorado State University – Pueblo annual catalog.

Copies of University Honors student projects will be maintained in the LARC and open-access scholarly journal for the benefit of the campus community and the public, respectively.

### **Curriculum**

The University Honors Program curriculum is intended to provide an enriching and challenging experience to students of diverse interests and backgrounds while minimizing the need to take additional credits or to delay the completion of major degree requirements and professional training programs. It is intended that all Honors students will complete their degree requirements within four years. This is also the duration of the award packages that they received. Most program requirements will be fulfilled by Honors sections. Moreover, Honors students may enroll in an additional course per semester for three of four years to fulfill Program requirements.

The purpose of the mini-seminar sequence is a shared learning experience for all students in the program regardless of major. Currently, the Honors seminars offer an interdisciplinary approach to the question of effective and appropriate scholarship and are intended to assist students in preparing to undertake independent research projects in upper division courses. Seminars may offer guest lectures by diverse faculty across the university, professional and non-professional individuals from the community at large, together with periodic recitations between speakers. Course content will therefore vary by semester, but each will be organized around a central theme connected in a progressive sequence leading first from the acquisition of knowledge, next to major problems and approaches in diverse fields, then to how ideas and data should be evaluated, and finally to the creation of an appropriate and feasible research agenda.

Upon completion of the Honors seminar sequence, students are responsible for earning two credit hours of service or community-based learning experience prior to graduation. Many university honors programs incorporate these so that students can observe the impact of their academic field upon the wider community, gain valuable career and leadership experience, and more effectively serve as ambassadors of the university while giving back to their host communities. Students may work jointly with a community-based organization to “learn by doing” in an area relevant to their major to enhance learning and build civic responsibility, or they may select a suitable on-campus project with the approval of the Director. The term community shall be broadly defined.

Honors student must complete a three credit hour thesis project in the area of their Major under the supervised direction of a faculty member or the Honors Director. Existing departmental offerings may be appropriate, but should also specifically relate to the goals of the University Honors Program.

Some degree programs at the university require that students complete some form of capstone project (not the same as a capstone course) relevant to the discipline. Honors students who are already required to complete a capstone project will not be asked to undertake an additional one as well, but those in programs without capstones will be asked to complete one under appropriate faculty supervision. The capstone project (HONOR 481) will be presented as an Honors Thesis.

### ***Assessment Method and Results***

The National Collegiate Honors Council does not provide any type of accreditation standards or specific metrics for identifying the success of Honors programs. CSU-Pueblo is therefore free to develop appropriate metrics using best practices for the effective implementation of student learning outcomes. Presently, based on the input from an all-faculty meeting on the subject of Honors course curriculum development, assessment for the seminars is based on short research paper projects each semester involving the use of academic resources. Additional multi-method assessment tools may be developed in the future in consultation with college curriculum boards overseeing Honors courses in their disciplines and through the Honors Steering Committee.

The faculty Honors Steering Committee will meet at least once every fall semester for evaluation of Program results. The Committee will examine the program to determine what if any changes would produce a more effective program, including curriculum design, program and scholarship budgets, and college standards for Honors offerings. Committee reports and curricular materials pertaining to the previous year will be available in the Honors folder on the university commons.

Assessment for Honors seminars is based on short research papers each semester involving the use of academic resources and material covered by seminar speakers. Assessment of service and community-based learning experiences will be based on journals submitted by students and on evaluations provided by site supervisors and mentors. Assessment of Honors courses and supervised research will be conducted by the faculty supervisor in the appropriate academic department.

**Curriculum Map**

University Honors Program	101	101L	201	310/380	481
Identify interdisciplinary approaches to problems of data collection and epistemology	I	E	R		M
Analyze how diverse disciplines develop significant research agendas		I	E		
Critical thinking skills to evaluate design and testing			I	R	
Formulate independent research projects					M
Describe impact of field on wider community				I	M
Apply Leadership Skills				I	

I = Introduce

E = Expand

R = Reinforce

M = Mastery

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

<b>SLO 1</b>  Students will be able to formulate and develop arguments with sufficient support, include reasoning, evidence, persuasive appeals, and proper attribution. (Critical Thinking)	Direct measure: Rubrics used to evaluate student senior theses.	2 year cycle: odd academic years (e.g., 2019-2020)
<b>SLO 2</b>  Students will be able to integrate knowledge from diverse perspectives, disciplines, and skill sets, both theoretical and applied, and hone them into arguments and/or strategies. (Interdisciplinary Learning)	Direct measure: Rubrics used to evaluate HONOR 201 final papers	2 year cycle: even academic years, (e.g., 2020-2021)

<p><b>SLO 3</b></p> <p>Students will be able to apply discipline-specific as well as cross discipline-based knowledge to design, execute, and communicate a specific problem-solving strategy. (Independent Research, Creativity, and Scholarship)</p>	<p>Direct measure: Rubric used to evaluate student senior theses.</p>	<p>Annual review</p>
<p><b>SLO 4</b></p> <p>Students will demonstrate ethical behavior in all performance categories, including classroom, extracurricular, community-based service-learning and independent research areas. (Ethics and Social Responsibility)</p>	<p>Direct measure: Rubric used to evaluate liaison comments.</p>	<p>2 year cycle: even academic years (e.g., 2020-2021)</p>
<p><b>Expected level of student proficiency (definition and percentage)</b></p> <p>100% of students completing the Honors minor should be <i>Proficient</i> or better in each SLO.</p> <p>Performance criteria for <i>proficiency</i> vary by SLO. See rubrics for details.</p>		



The following rubric was developed for assessment of Spring 2020 Honors Senior Theses. This rubric will be evaluated and developed further by the Honors Steering Committee in 2020-2021.

### HONORS SENIOR THESIS RUBRIC

- Academic Rigor/Quality
  - 0: Poor. The impact of the work is negated by errors in judgment, grammar, presentation, methodology, structure, execution, etc.
  - 1: Fair: The work is generally persuasive, but undermined by errors in judgment, grammar, presentation, methodology, structure, execution, etc.
  - 2: Good: The work is persuasive and any errors in judgment, grammar, presentation, methodology, structure, execution, etc., are minimal and insignificant to the overall impact of the work.
  - 3: Excellent: The work is persuasive, adding an important contribution to the field recognized in the faculty review.
  - 4: Exemplary: The work is persuasive, adding an important contribution to the field recognized by an independent, off-campus entity.
- Critical Thinking (including recognition of Ethics and Interdisciplinary Learning as appropriate)
  - 0: Absent. Principally reporting on the scholarship of others, the work provides little or no assessment, reflection upon, or independent conclusions.
  - 1: Minimal: Principally reporting on the scholarship of others, the conclusions presented are principally reporting those of others as well.
  - 2: Acceptable: The student provides independent conclusions and reflection on the scholarship considered.
  - 3: Exceeds Expectations: The student not only draws independent conclusions from the scholarship considered, but outlines (or presents) 'next steps' for further query/exploration.
  - 4: Exemplary work: An independent, off-campus entity recognizes 'next steps' for further query/exploration based on the student's original contribution to the field.
- Impact
  - 0: Little or none. The scope of the work is limited to the student's classroom experience.
  - 1: Minimal: The work is acknowledged within the campus community.
  - 2: Acceptable: The work demonstrates an impact and importance within the campus community.
  - 3: Exceeds Expectations: The work demonstrates an impact and importance beyond the campus community.
  - 4: Exemplary work: The work is recognized independently for its impact and importance beyond the campus community.
- Personal Reflection (this may be provided as a separate statement from the work itself)
  - 0: None. The student provides no reflection on the work that connects the endeavor to their larger academic and/or professional goals.
  - 1: Minimal: The student provides minimal description of how the work connects to their larger academic and/or professional goals.
  - 2: Sufficient: The student describes the impact and potential of the work (including list of "next steps") as part of their lifelong academic and/or professional goals.
  - 3: Exceeds Expectations: The student describes plans *underway* for continuation of "next steps"
  - 4: Exemplary Work: The work has been recognized independently outside of the classroom experience by an entity that is planned to collaborate with the student on continuing "next steps."