

**Colorado State University Pueblo  
Center for Honors and Leadership**

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

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Plan revised by David Volk, Director, University Honors Program, May 2022

Primary Contact for Assessment: David Volk, ext. 2435

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NOTE: 2021-2022 Updates are highlighted below in **BLUE**.

The President's Leadership Program staff long envisioned the possibility of combining efforts with the Honors Program under a shared administrative unit. The Center for Honors and Leadership (CHL) was established by the Provost in Spring/Summer 2019, bringing this vision to fruition.

Principal staff of the CHL 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 2021-2022 included:

- Derek Lopez, Shanna Farmer, and Steven Trujillo, Adjunct Instructors
- Adam Gaffen and Matthew Hawkins, CSU Pueblo AmeriCorps Members, 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 to govern the Honors and Leadership Minors collectively. Presented below, these were finalized in 2020-2021:

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

The Colorado State University Pueblo Center for Honors and Leadership (CHL) equips students to be purposeful in the design of their college experience. Our courses are experiential and focus academically on self-leadership, ethics, service learning, and community engagement. The CHL supports life-long academic and professional planning for each student.

Housing the University's Honors and Leadership Minors, the CHL bolsters the unique strengths and identity of each while maximizing synergies and opportunities that develop and enhance both programs. The CHL 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 finish

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

With the creation of the Center for Honors and Leadership and alignment of the Honors Program within that Center, additional focus has been added around long-range academic and professional planning for each student, an expressed commitment to experiential education pedagogy, as well as community engagement.

## Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

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

*(finalized 2020-21)*

- 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 help each student identify and plan the CSU Pueblo experiences that reveal and lead to lifelong academic and professional 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 the Center for Honors and Leadership***

*(Finalized 2020-21; initial assessment measures implemented and results reported in 2022)*

1. Experiential education:  
CHL Students will engage experientially in their learning, understanding the principles of experiential education pedagogy, and provide meaningful reflection on their learning experiences.
2. Community Engagement:  
CHL students will actively connect their learning to the broader community off-campus and provide meaningful reflection on the community impact of their work.
3. Lifelong Academic and Professional planning  
CHL students will design their educational experiences at CSU Pueblo to reveal and 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 and provide meaningful reflection on the ethical challenges they encounter.

### ***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 three** 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, **assess its impact, reflect on potential “next steps” for future exploration, and identify how the project aligns with the academic and professional goals of the student.**

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: Beginning 2021-22, this SLO shifts to the CHL SLOs).~~

### ***Performance Criteria***

In cycles since 2019, assessment has focused on student work demonstrated in the culminating Honors Senior Thesis/Project and the development of new rubrics to assess Honors SLOs. In addition to critical thinking, interdisciplinary learning, and independent research/creativity/scholarship, CHL staff and faculty determined the overall academic rigor of theses/projects, their community impact, and students' personal reflection on their work (a crucial component of experiential education pedagogy) also needed to be assessed. Academic rigor is now considered an added dimension of the Critical Thinking SLO; impact and personal reflection are considered added dimensions of the Independent Learning SLO. The Honors Senior Thesis/Project rubric was revised in 2021-22 to include these dimensions.

Beginning with the 2021-22 assessment cycle, Community Engagement was selected as the first of the recently finalized CHL SLOs to assess. A new Community Engagement rubric for was designed and implemented in 2021-22. Additional CHL SLOs will be assessed (with new rubrics developed) in the 2022-23 cycle. All rubrics used in the current assessment cycle are included at the end of this report.

At minimum, the intent for each Honors Senior Thesis or Project is to be persuasive; add an important contribution to the student's field; present independent conclusions; acknowledge, minimally, how

other disciplines inform the research, conclusions, and/or impact of the thesis or project; demonstrate an impact on the community in which the work is initiated; and include personal reflection in which the student identifies “next steps” for future exploration and acknowledges how the work aligns with their academic and professional goals.

### **Communication**

Regularly updated University Honor Program intended outcomes will be posted on the program website as well as in 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 CHL 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/Project.

### Curriculum Map

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

I = Introduce

R = Reinforce

M = Mastery

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

<p><b>SLO 1</b></p> <p>Students will be able to formulate and develop arguments with sufficient support, include reasoning, evidence, persuasive appeals, and proper attribution. (Critical Thinking)</p>	<p>Direct measure: Rubrics used to evaluate student senior theses/projects.</p>	<p>Assessed every year</p>
<p><b>SLO 2</b></p> <p>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)</p>	<p>Direct measure: Rubrics used to evaluate student senior theses/projects.</p> <p><i>(In the past, this SLO was assessed with rubrics used to evaluate HONOR 201 final papers. This was reconsidered beginning 2020-21)</i></p>	<p>Assessed every year</p>
<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/projects.</p>	<p>Assessed every year</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 initially developed in Spring 2020 for assessment Honors Senior Theses/Projects.

This rubric was revised by the Honors Steering Committee in 2020-2021 to include specific assessment of academic rigor, community impact, and personal reflection.

NOTE: the rubric is designed not only to codify minimum standards for the Honors Senior Thesis/Project, but also to define and identify exemplary work when students exceed (and potentially far exceed) minimum expectations. As a result, the minimum scores desired for assessment purposes may appear comparatively low.

### HONORS SENIOR THESIS/PROJECT 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. **(Desired outcome, at minimum)**
  - 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. **(Desired outcome, at minimum)**
  - 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.
- Interdisciplinary Learning
  - 0: Absent. The work is not interdisciplinary
  - 1: Minimal: The work draws principally on one discipline with implied relationships to other disciplines.
  - 2: Acceptable: The work draws principally on one discipline, but the student acknowledges how other disciplines inform the research, conclusions, and/or impact. **(Desired outcome, at minimum)**
  - 3: Exceeds Expectations: The work actively engages an interdisciplinary approach which the student acknowledges and describes in the work itself.
  - 4: Exemplary work: The work is recognized independently for the impact it has across multiple disciplines.



- Independent research/creativity/scholarship
  - 0: Absent. The work summarizes the work of others without presenting independent research/creativity/scholarship.
  - 1: Minimal: The work principally provides some independent analysis or application that builds on the work others.
  - 2: Acceptable: Drawing inspiration or direction from the work of others, the student provides independent conclusions or original creative work that is an independent contribution to the field. **(Desired outcome, at minimum)**
  - 3: Exceeds Expectations: The work is recognized in the immediate community in which it is created (i.e., on-campus conference presentation or other recognition) for the independent contribution it makes in the field.
  - 4: Exemplary work: The student is recognized beyond the immediate community in which it is created (i.e., off-campus conference presentation or other recognition) for the independent contribution it makes in 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 and/or immediate community in which the work was accomplished.
  - 2: Acceptable: The work demonstrates an impact and importance within the campus and/or immediate community in which the work was accomplished. **(Desired outcome, at minimum)**
  - 3: Exceeds Expectations: The work demonstrates an impact and importance beyond the campus community and/or immediate community in which the work was accomplished.
  - 4: Exemplary work: The work is recognized independently for its impact and importance beyond the campus and/ immediate community in which the work was accomplished.
- Personal Reflection (this may be provided as a separate statement from the work itself or portion of the thesis/project presentation)
  - 0: None. The student provides no reflection on the work that connects the endeavor to their larger academic and/or professional/personal goals.
  - 1: Minimal: The student provides minimal description of how the work connects to their larger academic and/or professional/personal 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. **(Desired outcome, at minimum)**
  - 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."

The following **Community Engagement Rubric** was designed and used in 2021-22 to assess the first of the CHL SLOs finalized in 2021-22:

- 1 (lowest) From CHL classes and programs attended, students identify community engagement opportunities related to their academic and professional goals. (Supported in HONR 101)
- 2 Students initiate research into the community engagement opportunities they would like to pursue related to their academic and professional goals, and/or complete interviews with appropriate contacts they have identified. (Initiated in HONR 201)
- 3 Students participate in a community engagement experience led by a campus or community organization. (Supported in HONR 380)
- 4\* Students initiate a community engagement experience, taking a leadership role with a campus or community organization. (Supported in HONR 310 and HONR 481)
- 5 (highest) Students reflect upon the community engagement experience they led, analyzing its impact toward their academic and professional goals as well as the impact on the community and long-term sustainability. (Supported in HONR 481)

\* desired outcome, at minimum