**Academic Program Assessment Plan**

**Minor: University Honors Program**

**Department of History and Political Science**

**College of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Colorado State University-Pueblo**

Plan developed by David Malet, Director, of University Honors Program

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**Program Mission**

*Mission Statement*

The University Honors Program at CSU-Pueblo provides high-achieving students with enhanced learning opportunities to stimulate their engagement and development, both within an intellectual community of scholars, and as citizens of the wider university community and the world. The Program provides students with special opportunities for interaction with faculty in thought-provoking seminars and intensive guided research, as well as experiential and service-learning projects.

*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.

The CSU-Pueblo University Honors Program therefore strives to meet these goals in fashion consistent with the institutional and community interests of the university and of our particular student population.

“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.” In furtherance of the university mission, 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 in various ways. 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 again professional experience through service opportunities that promote civic responsibility and their ties to the broader Pueblo community.

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

It also enriches the intellectual and social environment of the institution. Most current Honors students are also involved in a number of other campus activities including athletics, music programs, and President’s Leadership Program. Half of current honors students live in a theme residence on-campus, and many of the off-campus students have also joined events held this semester including dinner and breakfasts for Honors students, an evening at the Sangre de Cristo Arts Center, and a Ropes Challenge course.

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, increasing enrollment. Having students in interdisciplinary programs that encourage active learning also creates a stronger feeling of campus community, and more top students in service learning means more ambassadors to increase the university profile in a positive fashion. A visible University Honors Program therefore can be expected to generate higher enrollment, a greater percentage of 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 education.

Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

*Program Goals*

* To provide opportunities for enriched work for high-achieving students
* To offer small classes that permit challenging study of advanced material and increased interaction with faculty who will serve as academic and pre-professional mentors.
* To provide students with an interdisciplinary approach to academic research through seminars and experiential learning, culminating in individual projects supervised by faculty.

*Expected Student Learning Outcomes*

 Honor Program students should be able to:

(Demonstrated in HONOR 101-202 research papers and class participation)

* Identify interdisciplinary approaches to problems of data collection and epistemology.
* Analyze how diverse disciplines develop significant research agendas.
* Employ critical thinking skills to evaluate academic and professional approaches to design and testing.
* Formulate independent research projects.

(Demonstrated in HONOR 380 journals and reports by site supervisors)

* Describe the impact of their academic field upon the wider community through practicum.
* Apply leadership skills in service-learning experiences.

The Program is intended to prepare students to engage in significant experiential faculty-supervised and independent research projects, enhancing our undergraduate community of scholars. It will also maximize opportunities for interested faculty to supervise research and engage in intensive teaching. By exposing students, beginning in the first year at the university and building throughout their time in the program, to the research design process, they will be better prepared to engage in advanced and independent studies and to produce outputs for conferences and similar venues, enhancing the profile of the university as the regional education leader. Additionally, students are expected to repay the benefits of their Honors experience through service learning to the community, which both lends them maturity and practical experience and further promotes the benefits of the CSU-Pueblo educational experience and the institution’s mission of civic engagement.

*Performance Criteria*

Standards for Honors courses or credit awarded are already being decided by individual departments and colleges. 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 Committee of faculty and administrative representatives.

Performance in HONOR core courses will be based upon evaluation of comprehensive short assignments appropriate for 1 credit-hour courses for the seminars and upon site supervisor evaluations and student journal and evaluation reports for the service learning components (also 1 credit-hour per semester). 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 adequate competence with advanced skills of critical thinking, research ability, and demonstrated ability to apply learned skills to experiential learning.

All Honors students are expected to demonstrate a basic proficiency in each learning outcomes to receive a satisfactory grade. As HONOR classes are sequential, those who do not do so will not remain in the Program for the latter courses in the sequence.

*Communication*

Regularly updated University Honors Program intended outcomes will be posted on the program website as well as on documents on the shared (I) drive for the community and for university employees. They will be provided to incoming students in a program handbook for students and parents.

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 Catalog.

Copies of University Honors student projects will be maintained in the LARC for the benefit of the campus community and the public.

**Curriculum**

The University Honors Program curriculum is intended to provide an enriching and challenging experience to students of diverse interests 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, and that is the duration of the award packages that they received. Most program requirements will be fulfilled by Honors sections or special assignments in existing courses that would normally be taken as part of General Education or major program requirements. Most Honors students will enroll in in only one additional credit hour per semester for three of four years to fulfill Program requirements.

The purpose of the seminar sequence is a shared learning experience for all students in the program regardless of major. The four 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 will be comprised primarily of guest lectures by diverse faculty across the university, and 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, next to how ideas and data should be evaluated, and finally to the creation of appropriate and feasible research agenda.

Upon completion of the Honors seminar sequence, students are responsible for earning 2 credit hours of service-learning experience prior to graduation. Many university honors programs incorporate service-learning so that students can observe the impact of their academic field upon the wider community, gain valuable career and leadership experience, and serve as ambassadors of the university while giving back to their host communities. Students will work with a community-based organization to “learn by doing” in an area relevant to their major to enhance learning and build civic responsibility.

Honors students must complete a 3 credit hour independent project in the area of their Major under the supervised direction of a faculty member. Existing departmental offerings may be appropriate but should also specifically relate to the goals of the University Honors Program.

Many programs at the university require that students complete some form of capstone project 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.

**Assessment Methods 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 for the effective implementation of student learning outcomes. Presently, based on the input from an all-faculty meeting on the subject of Honors 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 Committee.

All Honors students will be provided with hard copy evaluation forms at the end of each semester based upon those used in assessment by other Honors programs, including but not limited to the George Washington University Honors Program. The student Peer Mentor who is provided with housing on the Honors Floor on campus is also valuable resource for soliciting student feedback about whether their perceived academic needs are being met. Continuing student feedback is essential to developing interdisciplinary HONOR offerings that are useful and relevant to students’ focus within their discipline, provide professional development opportunities, provide positive social, extracurricular and co-curricular activities that reinforce their experience at CSU-Pueblo as one of a nurturing learning environment and that increase the likelihood of student retention.

Upper division (300 and 400 level) student projects for HONOR should be displayed in or archived by the university library to provide the university and broader community with the opportunity to observe and evaluate the contributions of Honors students.

The faculty Honors Committee will meet at least every Fall semester for evaluation of Program results. (It will also be tasked with meeting in the Spring to determine selection of incoming students for the next academic year.) The Committee will examine both instructor assessments of students as well as student assessments of Honors courses and 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 learning experiences is based on journals submitted by students and on evaluations provided by site supervisors. Assessment of Honors courses and supervised research will be conducted by the faculty supervisor in the appropriate academic department.

**Curriculum Map**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| University Honors | 101 | 102 | 201 | 202 | 380 |
| Identify interdisciplinary approaches to problems of data collection and epistemology. | I | E | R | R |  |
| Analyze how diverse disciplines develop significant research agendas. |  | I | E |  |  |
| Critical thinking skills to evaluate design and testing. |  |  | I | E | R |
| Formulate independent research projects |  |  |  | I |  |
| Describe impact of field on wider community. |  |  |  |  | I |
| Apply leadership skills |  |  |  |  | I |

I = Introduce

E = Expand

R= Reinforce