

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

HONORS COLLEGE



Honors Program and Thesis Guide





What is Honors at VSU?

- Undergraduate Research
- Service and Community Engagement
- Leadership
- Global Experience

The Honors College encourages **meaningful connections** between disciplines, innovative and unusual approaches to subject matter, and reliance upon experiential learning and global awareness that are **fully integrated** into the course content and lead to **opportunities** for strong undergraduate research and creative endeavors. The Honors College also provides extracurricular opportunities for students to broaden their experience through lectures, service, and other activities related to their education.







Program of Study

The Honors College **Program of Study** prepares students with a **variety of courses and activities** embedded in students' degree programs. The wide range of special classes and interdisciplinary seminars is designed to help students realize their full intellectual potential. It is designed for the **best possible preparation for opportunities** upon graduation.

Honors College Program of Study

- **HONORS ORIENTATION**

INQR 1001H

- **HONORS RESEARCH**

(4) Honors Designated courses

Research or Capstone Presentation or Creative Performance

- **HONORS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

HONS 2990 Honors Service or Community Engagement

HONS 2990 Honors Leadership

HONS 2990 Honors Global Experience

- **HONORS PORTFOLIO**

HONS 4990 Senior Portfolio Workshop

Honors Thesis or Capstone submission

REQUIREMENTS AT A GLANCE

- INQR 1001H Intro Seminar - 3 credit hours
- HONS 2990 Honors Service and Community Engagement Activity - 0 credit hours
- HONS 2990 Honors Leadership Activity - 0 credit hours
- HONS 2990 Honors Global Experience - 0 credit hours
- Honors Designated Course (4 total) - 12 credit hours
- HONS 4990 Honors Portfolio Workshop - 0 credit hours
- Research or Creative Capstone Presentation - 0 credit hours
- Thesis or Capstone submission - 0 credit hours

Academic units may also offer Honors tracks for Honors Certification, with specific embedded departmental requirements within the Honors curriculum.



Honors Experiential Learning Requirements

Experiential projects are semester-long activities requiring at least 45 hours. Experiential projects may be substituted for a major requirement with the approval of the Dean of the Honors College.

Students in the Honors College must complete Honors Experiential Learning activities with an approved research activity, leadership activity, a service-learning assignment, or field experience. Experiential activities are a semester-long commitment that includes assignments and activities that engage students in problem-solving and real-world situations. These activities must be approved by the Honors College.

Experiential learning requires a semester-long commitment, with specified outcomes, a timeline of deliverables, and structured reflection. The Honors College assists students in establishing and formalizing structured experiential learning opportunities to meet Honors requirements in service/engagement, leadership, and global understanding. Honors experiential learning activities approved by the Honors College are listed as HONS 2990 on the official university transcript. Approved Honors College experiential activities include:

- **Community outreach**
- **Study-abroad or semester exchanges**
- **Career shadowing and mentoring**
- **Internships**
- **Undergraduate research or professional scholarship**
- **Leadership activities**
- **Creative activities and performances**



Honors Designated Courses (Honors Option Contracts)

Courses not listed as Honors are available for Honors credit through the Honors Option Contract. This option allows students to receive Honors credit while enrolled in regular courses by completing assignments approved in advance by the course instructor and the Honors College. Honors options must be approved no later than the last day of the second week of classes and should be considered as part of the program of study and with the academic advisor. Honors Option Contracts are mostly reserved for major courses to work on thesis development and research or scholarship in a student's area of interest.

Honors Portfolio Workshop

Students are required to complete HONS 4990 and submit a portfolio with evidence of learning for successful completion of the Honors certification. The portfolio also requires materials from experiential activities, including evidence of learning, academic artifacts, such as the Honors thesis or capstone, and structured reflections. Honors certification requires a final review and approval of the senior portfolio by the Honors College.

Honors Thesis or Capstone

The Honors thesis or capstone must be approved by the Honors College, no later than **three semesters** before graduation. Students must submit a proposal to be approved by the Honors College before the work is accepted.



Honors College Thesis and Capstone Guidelines

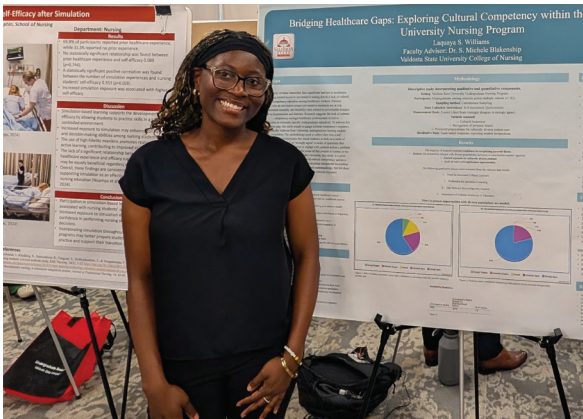
A **THESIS** is an original research project based on a student’s program of study, approximately 40 to 100 pages in length. The purpose of a thesis is to engage in a deeper study with a faculty mentor for the expansion of knowledge in the field of study.

A **CAPSTONE** is a culminating project from an academic program. “Capstone experiences aim to facilitate students’ sense-making of their growth and development across their major or general educational studies... (Levine 1998)” (elon.edu, Center for Engaged Learning). A capstone requires application, synthesis, and demonstration of accumulated knowledge through research, creative, or experiential learning.

What is the difference between a **THESIS** and a **CAPSTONE** experience?

Capstone experiences are generally practical and application-based for professional and career-oriented skills. The thesis is an extensive body of research that contributes to scholarship in a field of study. The student and faculty mentor should consult to discuss which type of research project, a thesis or a capstone, is most appropriate for the academic discipline.

FEATURE	HONORS THESIS	HONORS CAPSTONE
Focus	Original research	Applied/practical project
Length/Depth	Long, in-depth	Shorter, more flexible
Structure	Formal academic paper	Varies (project, report, etc.)
Goal	Contribute new knowledge	Demonstrate learning
Best for	Grad school/academia	Career prep/hands-on fields



Goals

Bloom's Taxonomy is a framework to categorize learning outcomes. At the foundation, Bloom characterizes basic knowledge in terms of retention and recall. Bloom notes that the creation of new knowledge from existing knowledge is the highest level of learning. Thesis and Capstone development are the highest order of learning and demonstrate one's ability to engage in multiple approaches of learning. Thesis and capstone projects also allow students to work with faculty mentors to apply what they have learned and demonstrate an understanding of their field of study. These projects are the culmination of higher learning and represent achievement in Honors.

Proposal Process

Students must select a faculty mentor (project committee chair) for preliminary discussions and project framing. The project should be developed as part of the Honors program of study in the Honors-designated courses. Before proceeding with development of the project, students and their faculty mentors should review the proposal submission on the Honors website at www.valdosta.edu/honors.

Timeline

The Honors program of study requires four Honors-designated courses. The first Honors major course should be devoted to framing the topic and preliminary investigations of the research/creative activity. Students should submit the project proposal at the successful conclusion of this course.

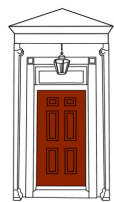
After the proposal is approved, students should begin taking the next two Honors major courses to conduct the research/project. This work should be guided by the faculty mentor and other faculty members involved in the project's development. All Honors option courses are assessed to ensure that the work meets program requirements. If a student receives an unsatisfactory evaluation for the course, students are recommended to repeat the work from that semester. It is also recommended that students begin the proposal process and thesis/capstone development in their sophomore year, particularly if IRB approval is required.

In the final year in Honors, it is optimal for students to complete the thesis/capstone in the first semester. This allows students to secure all sign-offs and have book binding completed. It also provides an opportunity for any last needed revisions or modifications.

Evaluation and Committee Oversight

At the end of the process, students should coordinate with the faculty for a thesis defense or exhibition/performance of the capstone work. The final stage of the process is an evaluation form that states the submission has faculty approval and fulfills the requirements for Honors. Honors-designated courses will be assessed by the Honors College to ensure that progress is made towards the completion of a faculty-supervised thesis or capstone.





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