

HONORS PROGRAM HANDBOOK

2025-2026 Edition



University of San Diego®

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	3
Program Overview.....	3
Benefits of Participation for Honors Students.....	4
Program Learning Outcomes.....	7
Requirements for Completion of the Honors Program.....	8
Navigating the Honors Curriculum.....	9
• In student’s first year	
• In student’s second, third and fourth year	
• Honors course formats	
• Earning Honors Credit for Thesis Research	
• Contracting a Non-Honors course for Honors Units	
Priority Registration for Honors Students.....	13
Studying Abroad as an Honors Student.....	13
Honors Program Admission.....	14
Honors Administration.....	15
Honors Program Committee.....	16
• List of Committee members	
Student Leadership in Honors.....	17
• Honors Executive Board	
• Honors Club	
• Honors Circle Program	
• Honors Intern	
Faculty Opportunities in Honors.....	19
• Teaching	
• Advising	
• Faculty Liaisons	
Appendix A: Sample Pathway Through the Honors Curriculum.....	22
Appendix B: Units and Departments with Consistent Honors Offerings.....	23
Appendix C: Honors Option Contract Information Sheet.....	25
Appendix D: The Honors Thesis Project in Detail.....	26
• When to start & what needs to be completed	
• How and when to find a thesis advisor	
• Role of the thesis advisor	
• What to expect in Honors Thesis Seminar (HNRS 495)	
Appendix E: Honors Faculty Liaisons listing.....	29

PREFACE

This handbook has been developed as a resource for students, faculty and staff involved with the University of San Diego Honors Program. The handbook includes information on Honors Program benefits, requirements, curriculum, policies, personnel, and pathways. The USD Honors Program has been designed to incorporate principles from the National Collegiate Honors Council and best practices shared by directors of established honors programs across the nation. If you have any further questions, please visit the Honors website at www.sandiego.edu/honors, or contact honors@sandiego.edu.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Honors Program provides motivated, passionate and engaged students with opportunities that will support the achievement of their intellectual goals. The program emphasizes teaching excellence, small seminar-style classes and a curriculum of innovative courses. Honors students have numerous opportunities for interaction with faculty, specialized coursework, undergraduate research, and focused academic advising. This undergraduate program includes students in majors across the College of Arts and Sciences, the Knauss School of Business, and the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering.

The Honors Program was established in 1979 to promote interdisciplinary learning and undergraduate research, strengthen the intellectual climate of the campus, and maintain the vision of the liberal arts and sciences as central to the college experience. The hallmarks of the program—team-taught interdisciplinary seminars and a senior thesis project—continue to define the curricular experience and help nurture some of the best and brightest students at USD.

To progress through the Honors Program, students take approximately one Honors course per semester. Students have the freedom to select their Honors classes based on their own interests, requirements in the Core and their major(s), and course availability each semester. In their final year, all students must enroll in the Honors Thesis Seminar (HRNS 495) and complete an independent thesis project. Students who complete the Honors Program not only depart USD with a wealth of knowledge, skills, and meaningful relationships, but they also earn an Honors Diploma and receive their USD diploma first among all other graduates at Commencement. (See “Requirements for completion of the Honors Program” on page 8).

BENEFITS OF HONORS PARTICIPATION

Some of the many benefits of being part of the Honors Program include:

- Small, dynamic, and innovative classes
- Early priority registration
- Access to personalized and group advising
- Recognition and celebrations
- Community within the USD community
- Independent research opportunities
- Honors research grants

Small, Dynamic, and Innovative Courses:

Our enriching interdisciplinary curriculum prepares Honors students for meaningful careers, graduate school, and/or professional programs. Honors classes are small (typically capped at 20 students) and interactive, and the Honors faculty members are among the best on campus. Honors students develop close relationships with these faculty members, who instruct, mentor, and collaborate with students across their time at USD.

Early Priority Registration:

Honors students have access to early registration, based on the number of units they have completed. Priority registration allows students the advantage of registering ahead of their class cohort. This privilege was bestowed by the University with acknowledgement that Honors students sometimes face additional challenges in their effort to complete the requirements for both their major(s) and the Honors Program.

Personalized and Group Advising:

One-on-one advising is available on a drop-in basis with Honors Program staff, who can assist students with navigating the Honors requirements alongside other demands and priorities. This Honors-specific advising complements each student's academic faculty advisor from their own major (or via the LLC Program for students in their first year).

The Honors Program also hosts mandatory group advising meetings every semester with pertinent, timely information for each cohort, as well as smaller gatherings for Honors students in particular majors or tracks (e.g., pre-health, business, etc.).

Finally, Faculty Liaisons have been established for most departments and/or units. These liaisons can help students simultaneously navigate the requirements for their major and the Honors Program in a harmonious and meaningful way. A listing of Faculty liaisons for the academic year is available in [Appendix E](#). Students should feel free to contact these liaisons at any point, and to be on the lookout for correspondence from this department liaison.

Recognition and Celebrations:

Honors students who complete all requirements receive special recognition at Commencement by wearing golden stoles and receiving their diplomas ahead of all other undergraduate students. They are also recognized at the university's Honors Convocation ceremony and at the Honors Graduates Reception sponsored by the Deans, which is convened each spring to exclusively celebrate the Honors graduates and their thesis advisors. Honors students also receive an Honors Diploma, and all Honors courses are designated as such on official transcripts.

Community:

Being part of the Honors community offers richness, engagement and support to all Honors students. Honors community is built in a number of ways, including:

- *Honors Illuminate LLC and residential experience.* In their first year at USD, Honors students join the Honors Illuminate Living Learning Community, where they are housed with and take one class with other Honors students. After the first year, students choose where and with whom they live, but frequently select roommates from the Honors Program because of the strong friendships they developed in their first year.
- *Honors Circle program:* Students in their first year are welcomed into the honors community by being placed in an Honors Circle, which includes a returning student and a small group of new students to meet for social gatherings and mentorship throughout the fall semester.
- *Programming.* Honors students enjoy many extracurricular opportunities such as cultural excursions, brown bag lunches with scholars and alumni, speaking engagements, student-faculty gatherings, and more. Some favorite social events include Tea with the USD President, Honors Holiday Party, Dinner with the Director, and small gatherings with USD faculty like Trivia Night and San Diego Walking Tours.
- *Honors Lounge and Study Space.* The Honors Program has taken up residence in the Learning Commons since August 2020. This beautiful space provides a designated lounge and classroom space exclusively for Honors students to hang out, study, meet with groups, and hold meetings or events. Free coffee, tea, and snacks are available.
- *Honors Student Board, Honors Club, and Honors Circle program.* Students who wish to get more involved in experiencing and shaping the Honors experience can join the Honors Club, serve as a leader on the Honors Student Board or as an Honors Circle captain to new incoming honors students. In these capacities, Honors students can meet other students, create and facilitate events and programs, innovate Honors programming, and advise the Director. (See Honors Club and Honors Student Board on page 17).
- *Honors Weekly Mail e-newsletter.* The Honors Program sends out a weekly correspondence to the Honors Community. This "Honors Weekly Mail" updates the community about upcoming deadlines, events, and opportunities both within and beyond the Honors Program. It also celebrates students within the Honors Program, such as graduating seniors and student leaders. Students are advised to read the Weekly Mail thoroughly each week.

Independent Research Opportunities:

As early as their first year, Honors students frequently link up with faculty on research projects in laboratories, at field sites, in the Humanities Center, and in other ways. Students interested to engage in research should talk to the faculty liaison for their department/unit, the Honors Director, as well as the Office of Undergraduate Research to learn more about opportunities on and off campus, as well as ways to search for internships and employment via proprietary databases (e.g., Student Opportunity Center, available free of charge to USD students).

All Honors students must develop and complete an Honors thesis project, which gives students the chance to focus on a topic of personal interest rooted in their major under the direction of a selected Faculty Thesis Advisor. Thesis projects may take the form of a scholarly paper, original writing (plays, poems, short stories), artistic composition or design, science experiment, a curricular module, or other project that meets academic standards for originality in a student's major discipline. (See "Honors Thesis Project Details" in [Appendix D](#). Students can earn up to 3 units of Honors credit for independent research (see "Earning Honors Credit for Thesis Research" on page 11).

Honors Research Grants:

Honors students who are working on independent research can apply for the Lawrence Hinman Honors Research Grant. These grants can help pay for expenses associated with collecting data, research materials and texts, poster printing for conference presentations, and travel to attend/present at a conference. The call for proposals is issued via the Honors Weekly Mail, with a priority deadline for each semester listed. Proposals will also be accepted on a rolling basis and considered as long as funds are available.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning Outcomes

The curriculum for the Honors Program was designed to achieve the following learning outcomes for all Honors graduates:

- *Interdisciplinary Learning*
 - Students will be able to independently create whole arguments out of multiple parts (synthesize) or draw conclusions by combining examples, facts or theories from more than one field of study or disciplinary perspective.
- *Critical Thinking*
 - Students will be able to consider held assumptions when investigating issues or problems, ask questions and formulate ideas in explaining issues or problems, use relevant and adequate support to reach consultations, and construct a clearly-articulated thesis.
- *Written Communication*
 - Students will be able to demonstrate mastery in written communication skills by producing long-form writing that analyzes a complex problem or addresses a significant research question with clarity, insight and imagination.
- *Information Literacy*
 - Students will be able to determine the appropriate scope and quality of information resources needed to produce an original and thoroughly researched thesis project that utilizes evidence in a convincing manner; synthesizes primary and secondary sources; and cites references appropriately.
- *Oral Communication*
 - Students will be able to construct and deliver an oral presentation describing their thesis project that is well-organized, effectively delivered, knowledgeable, and appropriate for a multi-disciplinary audience.

REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPLETION OF THE HONORS PROGRAM

To graduate with the Honors Diploma, students must:

- Complete a minimum of 24 Honors units.
 - *Note: The Honors Program may waive units for students who are admitted mid-year and/or those who study abroad for at least a semester.*
- Produce an Honors Thesis and participate in the Honors Senior Thesis Seminar.
- Complete at least two interdisciplinary Honors courses.
 - One of these courses must be a team-taught course; the other may be either a linked course or a team-taught course.

To remain in good standing in the Honors Program, students must maintain an overall GPA of 3.4 or above and demonstrate progression in the Honors Program. Progression in the Honors Program is defined as earning at least one Honors unit within two consecutive semesters. This unit requirement is waived for students who study abroad for a year or who take an official leave of absence.

Students who are not in good standing will be removed from the Honors Program. Exceptions may be granted with the consent of the Honors Program Director. We understand that circumstances may occur that cause a student to momentarily have a GPA lower than the 3.4 benchmark. If a student's cumulative GPA falls below 3.4, they are given another semester to improve and to meet with the Director to discuss any extenuating circumstances which led to a lowered GPA. Most students successfully raise their GPAs and complete the program in good standing.

NAVIGATING THE HONORS CURRICULUM

Honors courses are offered in a wide variety of disciplines, and span the College of Arts & Sciences, the Knauss School of Business, and the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering. Honors courses are typically offered in the Core, but they occasionally fulfill major requirements or prerequisites for a major or career (e.g., pre-health).

Students may enroll in Honors classes in any subject of their choosing. On average, students enroll in one Honors class per semester during their 4 years at USD. Given Honors course offerings and availability each semester, it is possible for a student to skip taking an Honors class one or possibly more semesters (e.g., if the student took 2 Honors courses a previous semester). So long as the student takes at least one Honors unit within that entire academic year and is moving successfully towards the total number of required units for graduation, this does not present a problem.

Below, please find descriptions of typical coursework based on year at USD. For a sample pathway through the Honors Program, please consult [Appendix A](#).

Some departments and units offer Honors courses on a consistent basis annually, allowing students to plan ahead. See [Appendix B](#) for these courses and their schedule of offerings.

In students' first year:

In their first year, Honors students enroll in an Honors Fall LLC Course (3 units), followed by another Honors course within their LLC in the Spring semester (3 units). These LLC courses are offered within various departments across the university, and they all fulfill at least one Core requirement. For many students, these LLC courses also offer the chance to explore a major or field of study in which they are interested. The instructor for students' Fall LLC course serves as their academic advisor until they declare their major.

First-year students who enter the Honors Program in January may choose to take a Spring Honors LLC course if they wish, but are not required to do so. They should nonetheless enroll in at least one Honors course in the Spring semester; the Honors Program will help students to make these arrangements if necessary.

In students' second year:

In their second year, Honors students enroll in **Expedition: Inquiry – 2nd Year Seminar** (HNRS 295). This 1-unit, interactive course is offered in both the Fall and Spring semester, and aims to move 2nd-year students into active engagement with scholarly inquiry on a more personal level by considering the academic journey ahead through insight and inspiration guest speakers, dynamic discussions, proactive readings and/or interdisciplinary excursions.

Students will also earn Honors units by enrolling in courses as outlined in the next section:

In students' second, third and fourth year:

Honors students earn Honors units by enrolling in courses they select from available options each semester throughout their time in the Honors Program.

The Honors Program offers 4 different formats for how students may earn Honors units:

- A ***single instructor*** Honors course is taught by one instructor who teaches a course within their discipline. These courses vary from year to year, but typically include courses that meet Core requirements and that Honors students frequently need (e.g., Theology & Religious Studies, Philosophy, English).
- A ***team-taught*** Honors course is one in which two individual faculty members from different disciplines propose, develop and co-instruct a single Honors course, offering students an interdisciplinary understanding of a common topic or problem.
 - The Honors Program typically offers 4 team-taught courses each semester, all of which fulfill the Core requirement for Advanced Integration (CINT). Some team-taught courses also fulfill other Core or major requirements.
 - All Honors team-taught courses are upper-division, so students have typically earned at least 45 units to enroll. (Exceptions are possible; students should reach out to the Honors Director if interested in an upper-division Honors course but shy the requisite 45 units).
 - Students earn 4 units for completion of an Honors team-taught course. Students must enroll in the department section for which they wish to earn credit. Students can browse upcoming Honors team-taught courses on our website.
- A ***linked*** Honors course constitutes an individual Honors course, taught by a single instructor, that is linked with another Honors course(s) in a different discipline, based on a common theme or problem.
 - Linked courses are scheduled simultaneously so students in each linked Honors class might meet together for interdisciplinary group projects, joint discussions, guest speakers, and other common activities. (Students can browse upcoming Honors linked courses on our [website](#))
- ***Independent Study and/or capstone/research course*** in students' major. (See "Earning Honors Credit for Thesis Research" on page 12).

-continued on next page-

In students' final year:

To graduate from the Honors Program, all students must enroll in HNRS 495, the Honors Thesis Seminar. This seminar is designed to provide instruction, feedback, and community to support the completion and presentation of students' Honors Thesis Project. By promoting independent scholarship, peer engagement, and deep introspection, it is also designed to serve as a culminating experience at the end of one's Honors education at USD.

This course is offered in both the Fall and Spring semesters. Students may take the seminar for either 1, 2, or 3 Honors units; the course is the same class regardless of the number of units offered, and most students select the 3-unit version. We provide the 1-unit and 2-unit options for financial purposes, since some students are enrolled in many other units and wish to avoid paying overload fees.

By the end of the semester in which they are enrolled in HNRS 495, students will complete the Honors Thesis project, present it orally in a public forum known as the Honors Colloquium, and submit the final, tangible product to be archived with the Honors Program in perpetuity. (See [Appendix D](#) for "The Honors Thesis Project in Detail")

Earning Honors Credit for Thesis Research

Students can earn up to 3 additional Honors units for research supporting their Honors thesis project. *Before* enrolling in HNRS 495: Honors Thesis Seminar, students are encouraged (but not required) to enroll in either an [independent study \(499\)](#) or research course (496) in their major. Alternatively, some majors offer a senior project or capstone course that can serve as a springboard for their thesis work. Students should consult their advisor to determine the best path to begin their work.

- If enrolling in an independent study (499) with their thesis advisor, students should fill out the independent study form and submit it to the Executive Assistant (EA) for the Department in which they are completing the 499. The EA will route the form for approvals to the Honors Program and subsequently to other administrators. If the 499 is in ENGR or BUSN, students should electronically fill out the form and collect signatures from their advisor and department chair before sending it to Honors for our signature. They should copy everyone who signs the form when they email the final document to the Associate Dean (Engineering: Dr. Olson SMSEadvising@sandiego.edu; Business: Dr. Hayes, ksbstudentsuccess@sandiego.edu)
- If students are taking a 496 research course in their major - or a class in which they are conducting research for the Honors thesis (e.g., a capstone class) - they may be eligible for Honors research units. They should contact their Department Chair, faculty advisor, and the Honors Program to find out if this is possible, since not all classes are eligible. If it is possible to receive credit, the Honors Program will contact the registrar to make changes to their DegreeWorks audit. The earned research units will show after the semester has been completed.

Contracting a non-Honors Course for Honors Units

We strongly encourage students to enroll in the Honors classes available. However, sometimes students cannot fit an Honors class into their schedule despite needing additional Honors units that semester. This is when the [Honors Option Contract](#) can be valuable. The Honors Option Contract converts one regular 3-unit course at USD into an Honors course. In order to earn Honors units for the non-Honors contracted class, the professor works with the student to extend the course in a way that enriches the student's engagement with the material (e.g., the student creates an additional project or engages in additional experiences allowing for a deeper dive into the course material).

In addition to contracting one non-Honors course on campus to convert it to an Honors course, students may also contract one short-term study abroad experience (e.g., Intersession, Summer) if the 3-unit course is taught by a USD faculty member.

To contract a class, students must submit the Honors Option Contract to the Honors Program before the end of drop/add period. The Honors Contract is available on the Honors [website](#) under "Resources." Once a student completes the form in consultation with their instructor, the electronic form will be sent to the relevant faculty member for approval, and then to the Honors Director for final approval.

All Honors Contracts must be submitted and approved electronically by the professor before the end of the add/drop period for the semester in which the contract will be exercised. Late contracts will not be accepted. The "H" attribute will be added to the course at the end of the semester, after the final grade is posted.

See [Appendix C](#) for more detailed information about the Honors Option Contract.

PRIORITY REGISTRATION FOR HONORS STUDENTS

Honors students have access to early registration, which is based on the number of units students have completed (not including units in progress).

In general, senior Honors students register before other seniors, junior Honors students register before other juniors, etc. However, some students might have earned enough units to register ahead of their class level. For instance, a second-year student might be considered a 'junior' based on units earned.

Students who are .5 units shy of the minimum unit required for a particular registration date are not able to "round up" their total units to allow them to register earlier.

The Honors Program posts the early registration chart for Honors students in the weekly e-newsletter Honors Weekly Mail, so that students know exactly which time/day to register for courses. Students can also look at the Registration Timetable and take note of the "priority registration" dates to register.

STUDYING ABROAD AS AN HONORS STUDENT

The Honors Program values international and intercultural engagement. Accordingly, we encourage students to study abroad by waiving units (either 3 or 4 units, depending on students' catalog years) from Honors Program graduation requirements for students who participate in semester-long study abroad programs. Please note that because these units are *waived*, not earned, they do not count towards the 124 required units to graduate from USD. We simply reduce the number of *Honors* units that students must complete to graduate from the Honors Program. When students enroll in HNRS 495: *Honors Thesis Seminar*, the Honors Program conducts a DegreeWorks audit. At that time, we adjust students' unit requirements to reflect students' study abroad experience.

Rather than study abroad for a full semester, many students take a course over Intersession or Summer. The Honors Program allows students to receive Honors credit for one short-term study abroad class taught by a USD faculty if the student petitions to contract that course. (This option is only available once during a student's time at USD). The "H" attribute is added to the course at the end of the course, after the final grade is posted.

HONORS PROGRAM ADMISSION

The Honors Program seeks to admit motivated, compassionate, and intellectually curious students who will benefit from a liberal arts-grounded, interdisciplinary-focused Honors curriculum. The best candidates for the Honors Program are those with a strong desire to grow through self-reflection, intellectual risk-taking, and engagement with diverse people and ideas both inside and outside of the classroom. Involvement in community, school, and leadership activities and evidence of a sustained desire to do excellent academic work are important indicators of a potential Honors student's ability to succeed in the program.

Incoming First-Year Students

High school seniors who have been accepted to the University of San Diego are eligible to apply in the Spring prior to entering USD. Students receiving the Alcalá Merit award will receive an invitation to apply. All other students interested to apply to the program should send a brief email to honors@sandiego.edu to request the application. The deadline for admission is typically in late March or early April. (See the [Honors website](#) for deadlines)

Current USD students

Students already at USD may apply to the Honors Program, typically in December of their first year. Students who wish to apply after their first year must meet with Honor Program staff to determine viability of completing all Honors requirements by their intended graduation term. The Honors Program reviews the applicant's Honors application, most recent cumulative GPA at USD, and a faculty recommendation form submitted by a USD faculty member. Students interested in applying to the Honors Program should email honors@sandiego.edu to request the application and schedule a meeting to review their candidacy.

For students accepted in mid-year in the Honors Program, the main difference between joining mid-year versus at the start of a student's first year is that students admitted mid-year live in a different LLC their first year; (we do not disrupt housing arrangements/roommate assignments). Regardless of LLC, newly admitted Honors students are invited to participate in all Honors events and activities.

Transfer Students

Transfer students follow the procedure for current USD students described above. It's especially helpful if transfer students bring Honors credits from their previous school. A maximum of 12 Honors units taken at another college or university may be counted toward the USD Honors curriculum requirements. Students who are transferring to USD and wish to apply for the Honors Program should email honors@sandiego.edu to learn more and request an application. Depending on the year a student enters, some honors units may be waived.

HONORS ADMINISTRATION

The Honors Program is currently staffed by two administrators, the Director and the Assistant Director.

The Honors Director, in addition to fulfilling teaching and service duties in their home department, is charged with overseeing the Honors Program curriculum, faculty, staff and students. The Director advocates for and provides strategic vision for the Honors Program, collaborates with various administrators, groups and offices on and off campus to build and promote the Honors Program, and leads Honors Program admissions and program assessment. The Director also advises Honors students and instructs the *Honors Senior Thesis Seminar* (HNRS 495), as well as oversees the Honors Program Committee, the Honors Student Board and Honors Club, the Honors Program LLC Faculty Director, and the Honors Assistant Director. The Honors Program Director reports to the Dean for the College of Arts and Sciences.

The Honors Assistant Director is responsible for assisting the Honors Program Director in all aspects of the Honors Program, including admissions, curricular advising, and program assessment. The Assistant Director performs detailed, complex administrative work for the program, coordinates events, manages interns and office student staff, and advises students, parents, faculty and staff about the Honors Program. The Assistant Director reports to the Honors Director.

Contact information:

Honors Director:

Jonathan Bowman, PhD
Professor, Communication
LC 201B
bowman@sandiego.edu

Assistant Director:

Devon Moraes
619-260-7905
LC 201C
dmoraes@sandiego.edu

Executive Assistant:

Ian Lambrecht
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HONORS PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The Honors Program Committee (HPC) advises the Director regarding policy and curriculum for the Honors Program, including determining criteria for Honors credits and courses, selecting and evaluating Honors courses, reviewing research grant proposals, and approving changes to requirements. The HPC also assists the Director with program assessment and faculty members are expected to host a gathering or small event for Honors students each year.

The Honors Program Committee (HPC) consists of faculty members from each of the three undergraduate academic units and two student representatives. The Chair of the HPC is the Honors Director. The College of Arts and Sciences Academic Assembly elects two faculty from Humanities/Arts, one from Social Sciences, one from Natural Sciences/Math, and two At Large members bi-annually. No more than one member from any single department may serve concurrently. Faculty members from the Knauss School of Business and the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering are appointed by the Honors Director based on involvement with and interest in the Honors Program.

2025-2026 Honors Program Committee

Jonathan Bowman (HNRS/COMM)	Honors Director	Chair
Richard Clarke (BUSN)	At Large	School of Business Representative
Colin Fisher (HIST)	Humanities/Arts	New Member
Edwin Galvan Robledo, '27	At Large	Student Representative
Hannah Hentz, '26	At Large	Student Representative
Frank Jacobitz (MENG)	At Large	School of Engineering Representative
David Miller (HIST)	Honors Faculty Fellow	Continuing Member
Odilka Santiago (SOCI)	Social Sciences	New Member
Susannah Stern (COMM)	At Large	New Member
Yi Sun (HIST)	At Large	New Member
Cawa Tran (BIOL)	Natural Sciences/Math	New Member
Adriana Vamosiu (ECON)	At Large	School of Business Representative
Allison Wiese (AA+AH)	Humanities/Arts	Continuing Member

STUDENT LEADERSHIP IN HONORS

Honors Student Board

The Honors Student Board (HSB) was established in 2002 (and restructured in 2019) with the purpose of enhancing student participation in the Honors Program and promoting student interaction with the Honors Director and Assistant Director. The Board provides advice about the Honors curriculum, voices student views about the structure of the program, plans social and philanthropic activities, and works to draw prospective students. The Board also provides oversight to the Honors Club.

Honors Student Board leaders include: President, Treasurer, Social Media/Communications Chair, Executive Chair, Academic Chair, Physical Wellness Chair, Mental Wellness Chair, and a general student representative from the first-year class. Students who wish to serve on HSB should join the Honors Club and reach out to HSB leaders for opportunities to become involved.

2025-2026 Honors Student Board Leaders

President	Hannah Hentz	hhentz@sandiego.edu
Treasurer	Edwin Galvan Robledo	egalvanrobledo@sandiego.edu
Social Chair Media/Communications Chair	Charlotte Storrs	cstorrs@sandiego.edu
Executive Chair	Hailey Power	hpower@sandiego.edu
Academic Chair	Katherine Figueroa Lopez	kfigueroalopez@sandiego.edu
Physical Wellness Chair	Kyleigh McAloon	kmcaloon@sandiego.edu
Mental Wellness Chair	Gavin Emerzian	gemerzian@sandiego.edu
First Year General Representative	Isaiah Razavi	irazavi@sandiego.edu
First Year General Representative	Italia Bowles	ibowles@sandiego.edu

Honors Club

The Honors Club is designed to welcome Honors students into a community focused on extracurricular programming, social events, and service/volunteering. Anyone in the Honors Program is free to join the Honors Club. Being a member of the Honors Club involves meeting to share ideas, host events, and serve as an ambassador to prospective Honors students.

Honors Circle Program

The Honors Circle Program is designed to link incoming honors students with returning honors students to provide a welcoming entry to college and an introduction to the Honors Program. Honors Circles meet together across the fall semester for shared social and extracurricular experiences. Each Honors Circle includes a handful of new students and a returning student “Captain.” Captains serve as ambassadors for the Honors Program, as well as a resource, mentor, and friend to their Honors Circle members. They foster relationships with their Circle by inviting conversations and interactions at various points throughout the semester, and work to provide a meaningful, safe, and inclusive network within the program.

Honors Graduate Assistant

This paid position is funded through Federal Work Study (FWS) via the Student Employment Center at 20 hours per week under supervision of the Assistant Director. This role is filled by a graduate student currently enrolled in a graduate program at USD. The main responsibilities for the role include supporting Honors staff in the following activities: organizing, maintaining and auditing confidential student data and records for internal use; coordinating arrangements and logistics for Honors events, meetings and travel; creating promotional materials including drafting, editing and collaborating on written articles and news spotlights; admission-related activities and events; and other office duties as assigned.

Honors Undergraduate Student Assistant

This paid position is funded through Federal Work Study (FWS) via the Student Employment Center at 10 hours per week under supervision of the Assistant Director. The main responsibilities for the role involve marketing, communication (both digital and in person), social media activities, and event coordination, as well as other office duties as assigned.

Honors Intern

This position encompasses a wide range of roles, including: designing promotional materials; planning and serving as day-of-event coordinator for the Honors Colloquium; filming and photographing events. Internships can last 1 or 2 semesters, and students may be able to receive a unit of HNRS 497 when appropriate. Students interested in this role should contact the Honors Assistant Director.

FACULTY OPPORTUNITIES IN HONORS

All faculty at USD are welcome and encouraged to teach and advise in the Honors Program. Interested faculty should reach out to the Honors Director to discuss their interest. In general, the process for engaging in Honors opportunities is detailed below:

Teaching a Team-Taught course:

Honors team-taught courses are interdisciplinary courses offered at the upper-division level by faculty from two different departments who teach in the same classroom at the same time for the duration of the semester. Faculty from two different colleges/schools may propose a course, as may members from within an individual college/school. Honors team-taught courses can be about any topic, issue or problem. To maximize the value of having two instructors, readings, assignments and class time should be cohesive and integrated.

To secure approval to teach an Honors team-taught class, faculty should:

1. Together with a co-instructor, design the course. Carefully consult the guidelines for Core attribute requirements.
2. Complete the proposal cover page, which requires each instructors' Department vote of approval and Chair approval for both instructors.
3. Submit all documents to the Honors Program. Those that meet the semester deadline will be prioritized, but proposals are welcome on a rolling basis. Proposals will be reviewed by the Honors Program Committee for consideration. Revisions may be requested.

Teaching a Linked course:

A linked Honors course constitutes an individual Honors course, taught by a single instructor, that is linked together with another Honors course based on a common theme, concept, or problem. The linkage between the classes can be substantive, methodological, thematic, or otherwise, so long as they offer interdisciplinary perspective. Linked classes ideally involve two courses that fulfill Core requirements for students. Linked Honors courses are scheduled simultaneously so that students in each linked course might feasibly meet together for group projects, joint discussions, guest speakers, and other common activities.

Linked Honors courses can be structured in various ways but should include, at minimum:

- 4 cross-class gatherings/events
- An assignment within each class, or a cross-class assignment, in which student synthesize and apply knowledge and/or skills from the multiple disciplines or perspectives represented by each of the linked courses

To secure approval to teach a Linked class, follow the instructions above for a team-taught class, using the Linked Course Cover Page (distributed twice a year to all faculty, and available upon request from the Honors Program anytime).

Teaching a single-instructor course:

The Honors Program relies on departments and faculty to offer Honors sections of their course offerings every semester. These courses not only allow students to earn Honors units, but more importantly, they offer students an intimate and engaging course experience with other Honors participants. Departments that offer Honors classes are more likely to capture Honors students as majors or minors, and they also allow faculty to identify student researchers and collaborators that can enrich a faculty member's own research agenda.

Faculty interested in teaching an Honors section of a course should contact the Honors Program Director to discuss interest, as well as consult with their Department Chair about the ability to teach an Honors section of a course. The Honors Program will work with the faculty member and department to discuss scheduling and promote the course.

Honors Faculty Fellow

The Honors Faculty Fellow will instruct 3 units in the Honors Program each semester (either HNRS 295, or HNRS 495, or some combination). The Fellow serves as a member of the Honors Program Committee, is expected to participate in Honors programming and strategic planning, and travel with honors students to the National Collegiate Honors Consortium (NCHC) annual conference in the Fall. The position will ideally be for a 2-year appointment. Faculty interested in applying for the role should consult the Honors Program Director.

Advising an Honors Thesis:

Advising an Honors Thesis offers a unique opportunity for a full-time faculty member to work one-on-one with an Honors student. These young scholars benefit from faculty mentorship, and they produce sophisticated and innovative research. Students select their own Thesis Advisors, so faculty will be approached by students individually to request the relationship. In a student's final year, the Faculty Advisor and the student will both sign the Senior Thesis Contract that lays out the specific expectations for each. Faculty should not serve as an advisor if they will be on sabbatical or leave for the final semester of the student's thesis project.

In brief, the role of the Honors Thesis Advisor is to:

- Meet with advisee on a consistent basis to provide guidance throughout the thesis process
- Guide advisee to appropriate resources for their project, potentially including research grant opportunities.
- Instruct advisee about the standards of the discipline
- Provide feedback on thesis drafts

For more information and details about the Honors Thesis Project, see [Appendix D](#).

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Honors Faculty Liaisons

Honors Faculty Liaisons serve as a source of support for Honors students within individual departments. With assistance and guidance from the Honors Program, liaisons will:

- Reach out to Honors majors/minors in their department each semester to identify themselves as a liaison open to conversation and support
- Create avenues for Honors students in their major to learn about opportunities for involvement in the field; clarify research or capstone project expectations within the department, and how/whether they align with the Honors thesis project; help students meet other Honors students in the department.

Faculty interested in this role should contact the Honors Director.

*See Appendix E for a list of current Honors Faculty Liaisons.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE PATHWAY THROUGH THE HONORS CURRICULUM

There are MANY possible variations for achieving required Honors units. A typical student might complete the Honors curriculum by the following sample path (among many possible paths). Please note that deviations from this sample path will necessarily occur for students who enter the Honors Program after the fall semester of their first year (thus missing the LLC Honors course) and for students who study abroad for a semester or longer (for whom 3/4 Honors units are waived depending on the student's catalog year).

Semester	Courses
<u>1st year</u>	
Fall Semester	Honors Fall LLC Course (3 units)
Spring Semester	Honors Spring LLC Course (3 units)
<u>2nd year</u>	
Fall Semester	HNRS 295 (1 unit, to be taken either fall or spring) Single-taught, single-discipline course (3 units)
Spring Semester	Team-taught or Linked course (3-4 units) <i>or</i> Single-taught, single-discipline course (3 units)
<u>3rd year</u>	
Fall Semester	Team-taught or Linked course (3-4 units) <i>or</i> Single instructor, single-discipline course (3 units)
Spring Semester	Same as fall semester.
<u>4th year</u>	
Fall Semester	Independent Study in major field (1-3 units) or Capstone/Research Course in major field (3 units)
Spring Semester	HNRS 495: Honors Thesis Seminar* (3 units, also offered during Fall semester)

APPENDIX B: UNITS & DEPARTMENTS WITH CONSISTENT HONORS OFFERINGS

Some departments and units provide a consistent set of Honors offerings annually, allowing students to plan ahead. Currently, these include:

Knauss School of Business

- Economics
 - ECON 101H (LLC) or BUSN 101 in Fall
 - ECON 102H in Spring
- Management
 - MGMT 300H in Fall (students not required to have 45 units completed to register)
- Marketing
 - MKTG 300H in Spring

College of Arts & Sciences

- Biology
 - BIOL 300H (Genetics) offered annually in the spring semester
- English
 - Typically, one Honors lower-division course that fulfills the ELTI core requirement per semester
- Philosophy
 - Typically, one Honors lower-division course and one Honors upper-division course that fulfills the FPHI (Philosophical Inquiry) or FETI (Ethical Inquiry) core requirement per semester
- Theology & Religious Studies
 - Typically, one Honors lower division course and one Honors upper division course that fulfills the FTRI (Theological and Religious Inquiry) core requirement per semester

**All listed classes are subject to change. This list identifies intentions but we cannot guarantee course offerings.*

APPENDIX C: HONORS OPTION CONTRACT INFORMATION SHEET

We strongly encourage students to enroll in the Honors classes available. However, sometimes students cannot fit an Honors class into their schedule. This is when the Honors Option Contract can be valuable. The Honors Option Contract converts one regular 3-unit course at USD into Honors. In order to make the class Honors, the professor assigns additional work for the student to complete

What does the extra work entail?

Students may complete a significant project or paper at the end, or various short assignments throughout the course (e.g., papers, oral presentations, readings). The extra work should challenge the student to think critically, delve deeper on a topic, and/or examine an issue from an interdisciplinary perspective. Please reference the [“What is an Honors Course” handout](#) for guidance.

What kinds of projects can be completed for a contract?

Appropriate contracts vary by discipline, but here are just a few ideas:

- Conduct an individual research project or assist with faculty research
- Create, test, and/or evaluate a software program
- Prepare and present a class lecture
- Complete a small group project with other Honors students
- Produce a research paper
- Choreograph a dance
- Create an exhibit
- Extend course knowledge to community outreach
- Design and test a lab project

Before approaching faculty, we recommend that students brainstorm a few ideas for the extra work.

Does the contract have to be for a class inside my major?

No, Honors Contracts can be completed in any discipline, no matter your major. However, this can be an excellent opportunity to connect with faculty and network within your department. Oftentimes, contracts can become great starting points for the thesis project.

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How do I submit an Honors Option Contract?

You must first ask the professor if she or he is willing to contract. Faculty do not have to do it. We understand it creates extra work for them, and unfortunately, we do not provide additional compensation for the faculty member. However, many professors are eager to work with Honors students!

Together, you would fill out the electronic form: <https://usd.tfaforms.net/218208>

When you submit the form, the professor receives a copy. They have one week to electronically sign. Next, the Honors Program Director reviews and electronically signs.

When do I submit a contract?

You must submit your contract prior to or at the beginning of the semester/term. Your professor needs to electronically approve the contract before the end of the add/drop period. Late contracts will not be accepted!

When do I see the “H” attribute added to the contracted course?

The Honors Program will reach out to your Professor to ensure that the agreed-upon contract was fulfilled. The “H” gets added to the course at the end of the term, after the final grade is posted.

Can I contract a course when I study abroad?

In addition to using the Honors Contract on campus, students may also set up an Honors Contract *once* during a short-term study abroad experience (e.g., Intersession, Summer) *if* the 3-unit course is taught by a USD faculty member.

APPENDIX D: THE HONORS THESIS PROJECT IN DETAIL

Honors thesis projects offer students the chance to focus on a particular topic of interest, passion, or conviction. These projects may take the form of a scholarly paper, original writing (plays, poems, short stories), artistic composition or design, science experiment, a curricular module, or other project that meets academic standards for originality in a student's major discipline. Many students build on projects they began in other classes, in a lab or field experience, or choose a topic in which they are personally or intellectually invested.

Each student selects a formal Thesis Advisor to help guide them as they design, execute and write up their thesis projects.

All thesis projects are formally completed in the semester in which students enroll in HNRS 495 Honors Thesis Seminar, and they are publicly presented at the Honors Colloquium (held twice a year in December and May).

The thesis project will vary in length and style, depending on the project and the discipline. Students are encouraged to check out former students' work both by reading past theses and attending the Honors Colloquium, where projects are presented orally each semester. We have printed copies of Honors theses, organized by year and discipline, in the Honors Office, as well as abstracts from past Colloquia. Students can also browse Copley's online catalog, Digital USD, where Honors graduates can publish their work.

When to start the thesis project:

Because students are expected to complete the Honors thesis project in either fall or spring of their senior year, starting the research process early is strongly encouraged, and typically yields higher-quality work. Some students conceptualize their projects as early as their first or second year at USD while in a lab or class. Others formalize their projects after engaging more deeply in their major course work over their sophomore and junior year.

In all cases, working on the Honors thesis project at least by the summer preceding the senior year is highly advised. The goal is to make significant progress on thesis research before enrolling in the HNRS 495 seminar.

What needs to happen to complete the Honors Thesis Project requirement for graduation?

To complete the thesis, students must:

- Identify a topic of interest and develop a project within that area
- Select a thesis advisor (typically Junior year)
- Outline research intentions in the [Research Action Plan](#) (typically the semester prior to enrolling in HNRS 495)
- Enroll in HNRS 495: Honors Thesis Seminar
- Complete the thesis project and present it orally (within the HNRS 495 course)

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How to find a thesis advisor:

Students are free to select a full-time faculty member of their choice, as long as that person is not on sabbatical or leave during the student's final semester. Sometimes the fit is obvious because a student is already working with a faculty member in a lab, in the field, or on a project. Other times, a student might identify a potential thesis advisor based on their academic work and approach them to discuss the thesis project.

It's a good idea to start by reading the biographies for the faculty in your discipline (available on each department's individual web page under "Faculty/Staff"). Eligible faculty members typically have the title "Professor", "Associate Professor", "Assistant Professor", or "Professor of Practice". You might also reach out to faculty whose courses you have taken - and to your academic advisor - to ask for suggestions of faculty who might be interested to advise a thesis on your selected topic. Faculty can make great recommendations about other potential faculty advisors, and are also often willing to make an introduction (e.g., via email). Finally, feel free to reach out to the Honors Director, who is happy to help you figure out who might be a good fit for you, either because of experience working with thesis advisors across the university, or by reaching out to connections across the units.

Remember, too, that you don't have to find a Thesis Advisor who studies exactly what you want to study. You simply need to find an adviser who can guide you with your project (e.g., understands the methods you plan to use, supports the product you want to produce, and who can suggest resources and offer feedback). You also want someone with whom you are comfortable working.

It's perfectly appropriate to email potential faculty to request a brief conversation about your project. Think of it as an informal interview -- you're trying to get a sense of whether the faculty member would be a good fit for you, and at the same time, practicing talking about your project and seeking advice and resources.

You can share this "[Tasks for Thesis Advisors](#)" [handout](#) with potential advisors so they can see what is involved.

When to identify a thesis advisor:

Students should solidify their advisor-advisee relationship with their Honors thesis advisors no later than the spring semester of their junior year. The advisor will electronically sign the [Senior Thesis Contract](#) when the student enters the thesis seminar (HNRS 495). When filling out the advisor information on the contract e-form, it's very important for the student to include the professor's accurate USD email address. The advisor will have one week to electronically sign the contract.

When the project is complete, the advisor will be the main evaluator of the quality of the completed Thesis Project, and will signal approval of the final work by signing the thesis signature page.

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What is the role of the thesis advisor?

The major tasks of an Honors thesis advisor include:

- Guiding students to an appropriate topic/research question that can be accomplished within a year-long project
- Pointing students to appropriate resources for project, including grant opportunities
- Instructing student about the guidelines of their discipline (e.g., writing style, discipline specific requirements for a research paper)
- Meeting with student regularly, providing advice and guidance throughout the process
- Providing feedback on thesis drafts
- Helping students prepare an oral presentation for a general audience
- Attending the presentation or reviewing a recording of the presentation
- Advising and evaluating 496 or 499 credit (if applicable)

Many students complete interdisciplinary projects for the Honors thesis, or they work with researchers at other schools or institutions. In these situations, students can work with more than one faculty advisor. However, they must select one USD faculty member to be their primary advisor, who will sign off on the final project.

What to expect in the Honors Thesis Seminar (HNRS 495) and at the Honors Colloquium:

In order to graduate from the Honors Program, students must complete HNRS 495: Honors Thesis Seminar. This course is offered in both the Fall and Spring semesters. Students may take the seminar for either 1, 2, or 3 Honors units; the course is the same class regardless of the number of units offered. We provide the 1-unit and 2-unit options mostly for purposes of flexibility or finances, since some students are enrolled in many other units and/or don't want to pay additional tuition for enrollment over 18 total units per semester.

The seminar aims to facilitate students' progress on, and ultimately the completion of their Thesis Project. It also provides instruction on and opportunities for public presentation of the thesis project at Creative Collaborations and the Honors Colloquium.

The Honors Colloquium takes place at the end of the 495 class in which they have enrolled, offered both in the Fall and Spring semesters. At the Colloquium, students enrolled in HNRS 495 offer a 15-minute presentation on their thesis. They develop the presentation so that it is comprehensible and accessible to a general (educated but non-expert) audience comprised of Honors Program students, faculty, and guests. Students may have to spend time educating the audience on background material or the jargon of the field before discussing the heart of their research. Thesis advisors can help students determine how to organize their presentation and determine what is most important to share.

APPENDIX E: HONORS FACULTY LIAISONS

Honors Program staff continues to work to identify faculty across units to serve as liaisons. Students who do not have a liaison identified should contact the Honors Program directly for assistance and guidance at honors@sandiego.edu.

2025-2026 Honors Faculty Liaisons

College of Arts & Sciences

Anthropology	Jennifer Parkinson	jparkinson@sandiego.edu
Art, Architecture & Art History	Can Bilsel	cbilsel@sandiego.edu
Biology	Adam Haberman	ahaberman@sandiego.edu
Chemistry and Biochemistry	Eleanor Gillette	egillette@sandiego.edu
Communication	Susannah Stern	susannahstern@sandiego.edu
English	Koonyong Kim	kykim@sandiego.edu
Environmental and Ocean Science	Suzanné Walther	swalther@sandiego.edu
Ethnic Studies	Jessica Tjiu	jtjiu@sandiego.edu
History	Thomas Barton	barton@sandiego.edu
Languages, Culture and Literature	Alejandro Meter	ameter@sandiego.edu
Liberal Studies	Margaret (Peggy) Daley	mdaley@sandiego.edu
Mathematics	Cameron Parker	cparker@sandiego.edu
Music	Charissa Noble	cnoble@sandiego.edu
Neuroscience, Cognition, & Behavior	Jena Hales	jhales@sandiego.edu
Philosophy	Matt Zwolinski	mzwolinski@sandiego.edu
Physics and Biophysics	Maren Mossman	mmossman@sandiego.edu
Political Science & Intl. Relations	Andy Tirrell	atirrell@sandiego.edu
Psychological Sciences	Veronica Galvan	vgalvan@sandiego.edu
Sociology	Odilka Santiago	osantiago@sandiego.edu

Theater	Nate Pardee	nparde@sandiego.edu
Theology & Religious Studies	Mary Doak	mdoak@sandiego.edu

Knauss School of Business

Economics, Business Economics, Business Analytics	Adriana Vamosiu	adriana_vamosiu@sandiego.edu
Finance	William Beggs	wbeggs@sandiego.edu
Management, International Business	Eileen Daspro	edaspro@sandiego.edu
Marketing	Andrea Flynn	andreaflynn@sandiego.edu

Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering

General Engineering, Integrated Engineering, Electrical Engineering	Susan Lord	slord@sandiego.edu
Mechanical Engineering	Frank Jacobitz	jacobitz@sandiego.edu

Note: Students in majors in KSB and SMSE who do not see faculty liaisons listed for their particular major are nonetheless encouraged to reach out to the listed faculty from their school. These faculty members are happy to assist all students in their school, regardless of their major.