

College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Honors Program

Guidelines

The CASNR Honors Program provides you the opportunity to challenge yourself in the classroom and to work one-on-one with a faculty member on a thesis. You get to develop further your problem solving and critical thinking skills by applying them to the thesis topic. Therefore, the overall purposes of the CASNR Honors Program are:

- for you to be challenged academically
- to enrich your college experience
- to stimulate your interest in advanced education, research and creative achievement.

CASNR Honors is achieved by

- Maintaining a minimum grade point average of 3.50 in the major and a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.25 (with no grades of D+, D, D- or F in any course completed at UT¹)
- Completing 12 credit hours of
 - courses numbered 300 or higher in the major by enrolling in the honors section or via honors-by-contract and earning a minimum grade of a 3.00 in each course or
 - courses number at the 500-level, taken for undergraduate credit, and earning a minimum grade of 3.00 in each course or
 - a combination of 300- or 400-level honors courses, honors-by-contract courses or 500-level courses taken for undergraduate credit and earning a minimum grade of 3.00 in each course

Internship and independent study courses are excluded from these 12 credit hours of coursework.

In addition to the above 12 credit hours, you are required to earn a minimum of 3 credit hours in Agriculture and Natural Resources 497 Honors Research and one (1) credit hour of Agriculture and Natural Resources 498 Honors Thesis.

¹ Academic Second Opportunity (ASO) students may be considered for College Honors once their ASO-application is approved by the ASO Committee.

To receive this distinction, you must complete the College Honors application before the end of your fifth semester (see Form A).

CASNR Honors Thesis is a substantial written report that represents some aspect of

- research (i.e., laboratory or field experimentation, survey research or qualitative research),
- scholarship (i.e., a comprehensive literature review of the original research reports related to a specific aspect of agriculture and natural resources that leads to educational materials for teaching or Extension programs) or
- creative achievement (i.e., a comprehensive analysis of an ecosystem or landscape and plan for preservation, conservation, restoration, or utilization).

The thesis is completed under the supervision of a faculty mentor with an appointment in the University of Tennessee, Institute of Agriculture.

- enroll in Agriculture and Natural Resources 497 Honors Research when you are working on the project
- enroll in Agriculture and Natural Resources 498 Honors Thesis the semester you are writing the thesis and make the thesis presentation
- enter the thesis work in the Exhibition of Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement held during the spring semester

Graduating seniors, who meet the College Honors requirements, will be recognized at the annual CASNR Scholarship and Awards Dinner held each April. Your participation will be noted on your University Transcript. The theses will be bound and kept in the University Library and archived on the CASNR web site.

Getting Started: Mentor and Project Selection

If you are eligible to participate, the first thing to do is identify a faculty mentor. You will work closely with him/her to complete the College Honors Application (Form A) and develop the College Honors Thesis Proposal for review by the College Honors Advisory Committee. The courses you select for College Honors may be influenced by the thesis topic. The College Honors Advisory Committee will review proposals from all applicants to ensure rigor across the disciplines.

Submit the College Honors Application (Form A) as soon as you have made the decision to participate in the CASNR Honors Program. Since Form A requires signatures, you will need to submit a hard copy with signatures to the Office of the Dean, 126 Morgan Hall.

You may also request funding. Available funding is limited; therefore, understand that **you can complete the CASNR Honors program without receiving this funding**. Your project will be relevant to one or more of the missions of land grant institutions: research, extension and/or instruction. Projects must be creative in nature. Participation in and, especially, presentation of the project results at a regional or national meeting in your field is encouraged.

The College Honors Advisory Committee member in your department and your academic advisor can help you identify a faculty member with whom to work. Also, check the College Honors web site for a list of faculty members willing to mentor College Honors Scholars theses.

Information about the proposal is given in the section *Selecting a Thesis Topic*. Co-mentors from the same department or different departments are allowed.

Faculty Mentor Responsibilities in Helping College Honors Students

Faculty mentors should guide you in identifying a thesis project and writing the College Honors Thesis Proposal. The faculty mentors are expected to meet regularly with you to help guide progress of the project. In the ideal situation, you will become a member of the faculty person's regular team or lab meetings and interact with technicians, post-doctoral students, and graduate students. As work continues on the project, s/he should guide you when writing the final thesis and making the thesis presentation.

Selecting a Thesis Topic

Select a faculty mentor and thesis topic by talking with faculty and doing some research.

- Read course descriptions provided by each department to get a feel for subject matter that catches your interest. Check the timetable to find out who teaches the course and then speak with the instructor. Better yet, talk to the teachers whose courses excited you!
- Check the web for helpful information about faculty research, extension and/or teaching programs. Many include a statement of faculty research interests, current research projects, extension program descriptions, course information/assignments, and a list of recent publications.
- Read articles written by the professors whose research, extension or teaching programs interest you. This can both help you decide which professors to meet with and demonstrates to the faculty member your interest in the field.
- Your academic advisor is a good source of information regarding the activities in the department and, perhaps, in other departments and units as well. S/he can often steer you toward the people whose work matches your interests or make you aware of possibilities not previously considered.
- Attend departmental seminars that focus on faculty programs. Notices of such events are commonly posted on bulletin boards in the various departments or on departmental web sites.

Preparing the Thesis Proposal Application

Once you settle on a faculty mentor, and a thesis topic or project, you will complete a College Honors Thesis Proposal and submit it to the College Honors Advisory Committee

for approval. Submitting a grant proposal prepared by the faculty member for a federal, state or private agency is not acceptable.

The thesis proposal should be prepared in Word. Double-space the text and use a 12-point font with left justification and one-inch margins. The thesis proposal should include:

- 1) Thesis project description
 - a) Abstract
 - b) Literature review
 - c) Research objectives
 - d) Justification (place the project in the context of existing research literature, extension programming or teaching pedagogy)
 - e) Materials and methods for research, or appropriate procedures for extension, teaching or other scholarly work
 - f) Literature cited using style appropriate to the discipline
- 2) Timetable towards project completion

The thesis proposal should be submitted by the completion of 60 credit hours, or as soon as possible thereafter. Completed thesis proposal applications will be reviewed twice a year. Submission deadlines are October 1 and February 15. A complete application consists of

1. College Honors Thesis Proposal Application: Title and Endorsement Page (Form B)
2. The thesis proposal

Email the Title and Endorsement Page (Form B) and the thesis proposal to casnr@utk.edu, both in Word document format, and include "College Honors Thesis Proposal" in the subject line of the email.

Since the Title and Endorsement Page (Form B) requires signatures, you will also need to submit a hard copy with signatures to the Office of the Dean, 126 Morgan Hall.

There is an additional step if you wish to receive modest funding to support the work (see *The Application for Thesis Funding*).

The Application for Thesis Funding

You may request up to \$1,000 to help with the costs of the project. The award may be used for the purchase of minor equipment, software, travel, copying costs, mailing costs, expendable laboratory supplies, plant or animal production supplies, etc. Hourly wages for the student may not be requested and will not be honored. The budget is developed in consultation with the faculty mentor.

Should funds be awarded for your thesis proposal, you will be charging expenses to an account approved by your faculty mentor. Once the amount of the funding award is

expended, the department bookkeeper will initiate the process to obtain reimbursement. The department bookkeeper will work with the Office of the Dean bookkeeper to process the reimbursement.

Upon successful completion of the thesis, oral presentation and submission of thesis and presentation files, the Faculty mentor(s) will also receive \$500 for use in his/her research, extension, or teaching programs.

Applications include the Title and Endorsement Page (Form B), the Budget Request Form (Form C) and the thesis proposal. Submit all, as Word document files, to casnr@utk.edu and include "College Honors Thesis Proposal and Funding Request" in the subject line of the email.

Detailed Instructions for the Funding Request

The thesis proposal should be prepared in Word. Double-space the text and use a 12-point font with left justification and one-inch margins. The thesis proposal should include:

- 1) Thesis project description (see above information)
- 2) Timetable towards project completion
- 3) Budget justification (provide an explanation for items contained on the Budget Request Form)

Make sure the objectives of the thesis proposal are clear and you provide an adequate description of the methods that will be used (e.g., a survey will be developed and distributed to... or, an experiment will be conducted with the following treatments ...).

Your faculty mentor will need to assist you with the proposal's budget. On the Budget Request Form (Form C), indicate all sources of funding; this demonstrates to the College Honors Advisory Committee that you have the support needed to complete the work.

A major reason that a project might be deemed unfundable is if the College Honors Advisory Committee cannot reconcile the objectives with the methods and the budget and timeline. Since members of the College Honors Advisory Committee have varied backgrounds, proposals should be written without using the "jargon" of a particular field of study.

If you received funds previously for the College Honors Scholars thesis project, provide date and amount, on the Budget Request Form (Form C).

The thesis proposal should be submitted by the completion of 60 credit hours, or as soon as possible thereafter. Completed thesis proposal funding applications will be reviewed twice a year. Submission deadlines are October 1 and February 15. A complete application consists of

1. College Honors Thesis Proposal Application: Title and Endorsement Page (Form B)
2. College Honors Thesis Proposal Application: Budget Request Form (Form C)
3. The thesis proposal

Both forms and the proposal should be submitted to casnr@utk.edu as Word documents and include "College Honors Thesis Proposal and Funding Request" in the subject line of the email. Since Forms B and C require signatures, you will also need to submit a hard copy of each with signatures to the Office of the Dean, 126 Morgan Hall.

During the review process, on occasion, the College Honors Advisory Committee may have questions. In these cases, you will be contacted to provide clarification. After all reviews are completed by the College Honors Advisory Committee, notification of approval or disapproval of funding will be sent to you and your faculty mentor.

Just because your proposal is not funded does not mean you cannot participate. You may still participate in and complete the requirements to be named a College Honors Scholar. The College Honors Advisory Committee recommends approval of proposals for the College Honors program and for funding. These are two separate decisions.

Your Honors Thesis Proposal Is Accepted. Now what?

Enroll in three credit hours of ANR 497 Honors Research the semester you start the work. You may enroll in an additional three credit hours during one other subsequent semester while actively working on the Honors Thesis. Grading in this course is S/NC (Satisfactory or No Credit).

Completion of the College Honors Program occurs when you make your oral presentation in ANR 498 Honors Thesis, 1 credit, and submit the thesis as a Word document file or Acrobat pdf file. See information given under "Guidelines for ANR 498 Honors Thesis."

Guidelines for ANR 498 Honors Thesis

The semester you are ready to present your seminar, enroll in ANR 498 Honors Thesis for 1 credit hour. Grading in this course is S/NC (Satisfactory or No Credit). You must complete ANR 498 to receive the notation of College Honors Scholar on your transcript. You do not need to wait for your final semester of course work (the semester you plan on graduating) to enroll in ANR 498; you may enroll as soon as your project is completed or nearly completed. However, it is most common that enrollment will occur in your last semester.

The College Honors Advisory Committee chair serves as the instructor for ANR 498. The course does not have regularly scheduled meetings, and there are only two requirements that must be met to receive credit: completion of the Honors Presentation and the Honors Thesis.

Honors Presentation

The presentations are scheduled for the first study day² after the semester ends so all participants present in a "symposium" or "conference" setting. The College Honors Advisory Committee chair will schedule the room and time slots for each presentation. The

² If the first study day falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the symposium will be held on Monday. Should there not be enough study days built into the schedule, the symposium will be held on the last day of the semester.

schedule will be announced via email and the CASNR web site. The presentations are open to all students, staff, faculty and guests. Faculty mentors are expected to attend.

You should work with your faculty mentor in developing your presentation. In general, the format should follow that of presenting at a professional meeting. The schedule will allow 15 minutes for the presentation and 5 minutes for questions.

As a member of the College Honors Program, you are expected to participate in the University of Tennessee's Exhibition of Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement held typically the first week in April at the University Center. It provides an opportunity for all students engaged in original and creative work to exhibit their works and compete in discipline-based divisions. More information about the Exhibition can be found under Undergraduate Research on the UT Office of Research web site under Quick Links.

Honors Thesis

In addition to the presentation, as part of ANR 498, you are required to submit as a Word document file or an Acrobat pdf file your final thesis and as a PowerPoint (or other appropriate format) your final presentation. The Office of the Dean will print the thesis on the appropriate archival paper, have the theses bound, and place in the Pendergrass Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine Library. Each thesis and presentation will be posted to the CASNR Honors website. Your signature on the College Honors Program Application, Form A serves as the release form that will allow the University Libraries and the College to post your thesis on the web. The format of the thesis will vary depending upon the nature of the project. General guidelines for research, extension and teaching projects follow. See Form D for the layout of the title page.

Research

The thesis should contain 1) an abstract, 2) introduction with a literature review and clearly stated objectives, 3) materials and methods (regardless whether the work was qualitative or quantitative research), 4) results and discussion, 5) conclusions, and 6) properly formatted Cited Literature. Data should be presented in tables and figures. Ideally, the thesis should be written in a style suitable for the field; journal style is acceptable.

Creative Achievement

The thesis for a creative achievement (i.e., a comprehensive analysis of an ecosystem or landscape and plan for preservation, conservation, restoration, or utilization) should contain 1) an abstract, 2) introduction of the topic and a literature review, 3) statement and significance of the problem, 4) analysis, 5) recommendations, 6) conclusions, and 7) properly formatted Cited Literature. Since the "creative achievement" category is not traditional research consisting of experimentation, the format will vary with the discipline.

Extension and Teaching

The thesis should contain 1) an abstract, 2) introduction with a literature review and clearly stated objectives, 3) procedures used to develop materials, 4) discussion of use of the

teaching materials developed, 5) discussion of how effectiveness was tested, 6) assessment of effectiveness, 6) appropriate conclusions, and 7) properly formatted Cited Literature. Data should be presented in tables and figures. If appropriate, the thesis should be written in a style suitable for the field. Additionally, if extension or teaching material is developed, an electronic copy should be included as an appendix of the thesis or submitted as a separate pdf file.

What to avoid

The project, thesis and presentation cannot be something created for any other course, internship, or independent study as part of your undergraduate experience.

Providing a copy of the materials used for the presentation does not constitute an acceptable thesis.

The thesis should be of sufficient quality so that a reasonably competent person could read the thesis, repeat the project, and fully understand the data/materials developed and the student's interpretation of the data.

Special Notes

Sometimes projects or experiments do not work out as intended or simply do not work at all. Failure of a project does not mean that you cannot complete the requirements for College Honors recognition. If you made an honest effort to complete the project but results were problematic, you may still enroll in ANR 498 and obtain the full benefits of the program. The presentation and the thesis should reflect the efforts and the results of those efforts and suggest the causes and possible remedies for the problems that were encountered. Often times the discussions generated by these situations are valuable learning experiences for you. Keep in mind these two quotes from Thomas Edison; they really put research, invention, and discovery into perspective!

Just because something doesn't do what you planned it to do doesn't mean it's useless.

Results! Why, man, I have gotten lots of results. I know several thousand things that won't work.

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