



**WVU Honors College  
Honors Experiential and  
Community-Engaged  
Learning (EXCEL) Program  
Student Handbook  
2019-2021**



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## **Introduction**

### **Honors College Mission**

The Honors College enhances the undergraduate experience for high-achieving students at West Virginia University by building a community of scholars who enrich their education in the classroom and beyond.

### **Honors College Values**

#### **We lead.**

The Honors College teaches students to be leaders in their classrooms and in their communities, pursuing a spirit of innovative thinking, responsible and accountable conduct, and extraordinary achievement. We model that leadership by fostering innovative learning environments that are “test-beds” for excellent teaching across the curriculum, and by epitomizing the integrity that we expect in our students.

#### **We explore.**

The Honors College helps students cultivate a curiosity about the world around them; develop persistence and resilience in solving the academic and social problems they encounter and research; and pursue an adventurous spirit that embraces intellectual risks for the sake of personal, academic, and community growth.

#### **We build.**

The Honors College builds an environment that empowers its students to construct their own solutions to individual and collective problems; to work harder and more deeply in the scholarly, research, and experiential activities they undertake; and to forge connections with peers, mentors, and community partners to better share our knowledge.

### **We work together.**

The Honors College hosts an inclusive community of scholars by collaborating with faculty and staff across the entire campus; by facilitating connections among students through social and academic activities in both their living and learning environments; and by encouraging them to expand the scope of their work to include local, regional, and global contexts.

### **We are Mountaineers.**

As a prominent component of West Virginia's flagship institution, the Honors College cultivates an attitude of service to the Mountain State, our broader region, and the world. By combining a service mindset with the leader's stance, the explorer's vision, the builder's work ethic, and the community's collaboration, we embody and model the Mountaineer spirit.

## **Academic Overview**

### **Overview**

The Honors College Experiential and Community-Engaged Learning (EXCEL) program supports and enhances opportunities for WVU students in project-based learning. This may include: 1) discipline-specific research, 2) internships, 3) creative arts, innovation and design 4) global engagement, 5) community engagement or social action. All projects will combine scholarly work with service orientation and culminate in scholarly or creative work appropriate to the project. The Honors College will enable students' success through its mentoring, coursework and funding opportunities.

Through experiential learning, Honors EXCEL students exemplify the values of the Honors College. Students will:

- *Explore* an area of academic focus through projects they are passionate about
- *Work together* with their peers, mentors and communities

- *Build* new knowledge, products or processes
- *Lead* through action and service to generate ideas and solutions that benefit...
- *Mountaineers* in West Virginia and around the world.

Diving deeply into a project and communicating the work broadly builds and strengthens valuable skills, such as project management, time management, interpersonal skills, communication, leadership and collaborative scholarship. To complete your project, you will require mastery in your project area, discipline, persistence, flexibility and independent thought. You will be supported through a network of peers and professionals. Finally, we anticipate that your efforts will enact positive change locally, regionally and globally.

### **Program Requirements**

Students in the Honors EXCEL program will complete coursework and other requirements in 3-4 semesters. Student projects will be developed in HONR450 (Project Development), enhanced through out-of-class experiences (OCEs), implemented through six credits of experiential learning, and completed in HONR451 (Honors Capstone).

#### List of Program requirements

- Project Development Course (HONR450)
- Honors EXCEL Capstone Course (HONR451)
- 6-credits of experiential learning (2-3 semesters) in an academic discipline or in the Honors College
- Complete 5 out-of-class experiences (OCEs) each semester in the program

### **Requirements for Good Standing**

- In the first semester, students must have completed HONR450, the 5 required out-of-class experiences and have filed a strategic plan (developed in HONR 450) with the Honors EXCEL office.

- Each semester, students will submit a short report that reflects on how the project is progressing relative to the strategic plan completed in HONR 450. Importantly, the requirement here is the process of reflection rather than project progress itself. While you are not beholden to your original goals, you will need to justify changes and verify that you are making progress each semester.
- To complete the program, students will: complete HONR451. Specific requirements will be given in the syllabus and will include: submit the final written portion of the project, provide evidence of public presentation, submit a final portfolio of out-of-class experiences, submit a series of reflections on their learning and growth through this program.
- Students who do not maintain at least a 3.0 institutional GPA at the end of each regular term or who do not complete program requirements will be suspended from the program. Suspension includes the loss of all privileges associated with being an Honors student. Note that suspensions from the Honors College are not recorded on university transcripts.

### **Program Benefits**

- Opportunities to deeply pursue projects of academic and personal interest
- Curricular and financial support for student projects
- Mentorship from faculty in the discipline and from the Honors College program affiliates
- Connections with a community of Honors students
- Priority registration for classes before general population students
- Recognition at graduation, on the transcript and on the diploma

### **Program Assessment**

#### *Program's Assessment of Students*

Students will be assessed on the basis of:

- 1) academic achievement in individual courses;

- 2) the ability to reflect on the processes of project development, implementation and completion; and
- 3) engagement with external audiences, including the scholarly, professional and community.

More information is given below.

### *Students' Assessment of the Program*

Students are invited to participate in the long-term success of the program by providing feedback in their semesterly progress reports and in the final exit interview, which will occur in HONR451.

## **Honors College Policies**

### **Honors Student Code of Conduct**

As an Honors student, you will be held to a high-level level of academic integrity and your academic performance is subject to the academic integrity requirements set forth in the University Catalog:

<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecreditstermsclassification/#text>.

Failure to adhere to these principles may lead to action at the discretion of the Dean and subject to the West Virginia University Student Code of Conduct, which can be found here:

<https://studentconduct.wvu.edu/campus-student-code>.

### **Causes for Dismissal**

Causes for dismissal from the Honors College include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Academic Dishonesty
- Theft and/or destruction of University and/or Honors College Property

- Criminal Offense
- Other Violations of the WVU Student Code of Conduct

All dismissal matters are at the discretion of the Dean. For an explanation of the appeals process, please see the Student Code of Conduct at Student Life.

### **Leaving the Honors College**

Students wishing to leave the Honors College for any reason are asked to alert the Honors College office. You must send an email to [honors@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:honors@mail.wvu.edu) from your University MIX account stating that you wish to withdraw your membership from the Honors College effective immediately and include your full name. We WILL NOT accept an email from any other account. If you cannot access your MIX account, you will need to come into the office and provide us with a written notice.

### **Honors EXCEL Project Guidelines**

Honors EXCEL projects are as ambitious as they are diverse. The projects span a wide range of academic disciplines, scholarly formats and community impacts. Our students work in the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences and engineering, and the creative arts. They work on-campus, in Morgantown and West Virginia, and around the world.

Honors EXCEL projects have a few common requirements. An Honors EXCEL project should:

- represent an identifiable enhancement of a knowledge base or set of skills already being developed or pursued by the student, either via coursework or extracurricular activity;

- build on prior work, research or scholarship and propose appropriate methodologies, processes or practices to answer a question, solve a problem, or create something new;
- generate a positive impact to a community (defined broadly) beyond the benefits to the student alone.

You will define the scope and goals of your project in HONR450 (Project Development). That said, we recognize that ambitious projects are rarely straightforward or linear. The Honors EXCEL program is designed flexibly to allow you to make adjustments as you learn new information or identify new constraints. We encourage you to participate in regular reflection to recognize when such changes are necessary.

With that in mind, we anticipate that experiential learning will encourage your personal growth as you:

- explore open-ended questions and arguments
- invite and seriously consider feedback from mentors and stakeholders
- develop and practice cultural awareness
- engage and participate in a community of scholars and creators
- demonstrate flexibility, adaptability and persistence
- acknowledge small failures as necessary for ultimate success
- recognize changes to personal identity and social roles that result from sustained intellectual endeavors

Ultimately, you will define success for your project and your academic path and apply your skills in a variety of spaces as you envision and prepare for your future career(s).

## **Honors EXCEL Curricular Guidelines**

### **HONR 450 – Project Development**

This 1-credit course is taught in mixed mode. You will work through materials online, apply concepts to your own projects and meet monthly with your assigned instructor, often called Honors EXCEL program affiliates. Through the modules, you will develop the scholarly and service aspects of your project. You will also identify mentors and stakeholders. At the end of the semester, you will have a complete strategic plan that will guide your work in future semesters of the program.

### **HONR 451 – Summative Experience**

This 1-credit course is also taught in mixed mode. In this course, you will work to complete your experiential learning projects develop tools and products for scholarly communication and complete a reflective portfolio of the experiences that enabled or enhanced your project.

### **Experiential Learning Credits**

Students must complete six credits of experiential learning in at least two semesters. These credits are intended to be a space where students complete the bulk of their experiential learning, whether in research, internships, study abroad, creative arts/design or service.

Experiential learning is generally defined as learning that occurs outside a traditional course structure, such as in a laboratory, internship or community organization. Typically, 1 credit hour is defined as 3 hours per week for 15 weeks in a normal semester (45 hours total). More information about university policy can be found here:

[http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/programs\\_courses\\_enrollment/#Definition](http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/programs_courses_enrollment/#Definition).

In the Honors EXCEL program, experiential learning credits can be fulfilled by any course that integrates academic content or skills with your overall goals and provides time and space to

work specifically on your project for credit. Here “work” includes both the physical work of doing or creating something and the intellectual work of reading, asking questions, collaborating and thinking deeply. In general, these courses should include academic work that documents your evolving thought process, and your project progress, which may include changes in directions you’ve made in response to new information or constraints.

To satisfy the experiential learning requirement, a course should include:

- 1) a required minimum number of hours spent on the project,
- 2) a supervisor review from your course instructor or a relevant project mentor,
- 3) a reflective writing that documents the process of completing the project,
- 4) a portfolio of documents or data produced, and
- 5) a summative report that documents the work completed and integrates that work into its academic or scholarly context.

Course numbers 491, 495, 497 and 498 from any department can be used with an approved syllabus; suggested syllabi can be found here:

<https://www.honors.wvu.edu/academics/honors-excel-program/resources>.

Other courses can be approved by submitting the syllabus and justification using the online form here: <https://www.honors.wvu.edu/academics/honors-excel-program/resources/exp-learning-credits>.

In some cases, students may prefer to use the same course number more than once (HONR 497, for example) over several semesters. In other cases, students should choose courses that will provide a curricular framework that supports the intellectual through-line of the project.

In some cases, students can use experiential learning credits toward both the Honors EXCEL program requirements and their major requirements. Whether this is possible will be at the

discretion of the major department. Please speak to the Honors EXCEL director *and* your academic advisor to assist you as you plan your courses.

### **Out-of-Class Experiences**

Students must complete 5 out-of-class experiences (OCEs) each semester they are enrolled in the program. These are intended to encourage and acknowledge student participation in workshops, colloquia, meetings, etc. that move their project forward or provide new perspective. Students may use any opportunity (>50 minutes) that has a clear benefit to the project and is not required for the student's major or minor. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Meeting with campus resources such as librarians, the Launch Lab, the Center for Service & Learning, The Writing Center, the Public Speaking Consultants, the Career Center, Language Tables, Cultural offices and organizations, etc.
- Learning a new skill in a workshop, such as information literacy, data analysis, communication skills, how to use equipment or facilities, etc.
- Attending relevant seminars, colloquia, community meetings or performances (note that you may only count the same seminar series once per semester)
- Attending a professional conference or other event (with or without presentation)
- Meeting with key stakeholders, if they are not regular mentors of the project

Ultimately, students, in collaboration with their project mentor, will determine what activities and opportunities are useful for their project. If there is a need that is not provided at WVU or locally, the Honors College will work with local partners to develop it.

OCEs will be tracked in real-time and at the end of the semester. When you complete an OCE, you should complete the form here within 72 hours of the event:

<https://www.honors.wvu.edu/academics/honors-excel-program/resources/out-of-class-experience>.

When you submit the form above, you will receive a copy of your responses by email. At the end of each semester you will use these responses to write short summary and reflection of each OCE and how it contributed to your project. This will be submitted with your progress report.

### **Using Project Development Money**

Each student accepted into the Honors EXCEL program is awarded \$1000 to support and enhance their project. This funding is intended to provide supplies or travel support. This funding cannot be used to pay students for work. Students will complete a predicted budget in HONR 450.

To use this funding, students must submit a request using this form:

<https://www.honors.wvu.edu/academics/honors-excel-program/resources/funding-request>.

Upon approval, money will be transferred from the Honors College to your project mentor or another departmental representative who can help you purchase items or reimburse your expenses. The Honors College will not transfer money directly to students. Please speak to your project mentor *and* the Honors EXCEL director before you spend money to ensure that the funding transfer has been approved and completed.

## Honors College Community

### Honors College Resources

The Honors College EXCEL program supports student projects through its mentorship, curriculum, and funding. Mentorship is provided by the Honors College staff, the Honors College EXCEL director, your program affiliate and your project mentor.

#### **/ The Honors College**

West Virginia University  
(304) 293-2100 office  
[honors@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:honors@mail.wvu.edu)

#### **/ Dr. Dana Huebert Lima**

Director of Honors College EXCEL Program  
(304) 293-3645 office  
[HonorsExcel@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:HonorsExcel@mail.wvu.edu)

### **/ 2019-2021 Program Affiliates**

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## **Additional Ways to Engage**

Students are encouraged to be full, participating members of the Honors College community. This includes becoming involved in tutoring through the testWELL center, residential life as an RA and in student governance through the Honors Student Association. More information is given below and a full list of resources can be found here:

<https://www.honors.wvu.edu/academics/resources>.

## **Social and Academic enrichment**

Honors College events are advertised through the Honors Weekly email newsletter and our social media pages. You can find us on Facebook: @WVUHonorsCollege, Twitter: @HonorsCollege and Instagram: @wvuhonorscollege.

## **Honors Student Association**

The Honors Student Association (HSA) provides opportunities for Honors College students to engage with one another, serve the community, enrich their academic experiences, and also to serve as a source of information and fellowship for students. To get involved, email [honors@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:honors@mail.wvu.edu) or check the Honors calendar for meeting times.

## **Honors testWELL Tutoring**

Students are encouraged to both take advantage of the tutoring services offered by the testWELL center and become tutors themselves. Accepted tutors receive training and become certified by the National Tutoring Association. Applications are open in the fall of each semester and tutors are required to take HONR 201: Peer Tutoring in the spring semester.

## **Honors EXCEL Timeline**

### **First Semester**

- Enroll in HONR 450
- Complete 5 OCEs
- Begin your project by reading background information and learning techniques
- Check the Honors College social media and read the Honors Weekly email newsletter
- Meet regularly with your project mentor
- Schedule an appointment with your academic advisor to discuss the integration of the Honors EXCEL requirements and your degree requirements.
- Come in and meet everyone in the Honors Office

### **Second Semester**

- Continue your project and enroll in an experiential learning course
- Check out the Honors College social media and read the Honors Weekly emails
- Complete 5 OCEs
- Meet regularly with your project mentor
- Schedule an appointment with your Honors advisor and check in with your Honors EXCEL program affiliate
- Submit your semesterly progress report

### **Third Semester**

- Continue your project and enroll in an experiential learning course
- Check out the Honors College social media and read the Honors Weekly emails
- Complete 5 OCEs
- Meet regularly with your project mentor
- Schedule an appointment with your Honors advisor and check in with your Honors EXCEL program affiliate

- Submit your semesterly progress report

#### **Fourth Semester**

- Enroll in HONR 451
- Check out the Honors College social media and read the Honors Weekly emails
- Finish your project and enroll in an experiential learning course
- Complete 5 OCEs
- Meet regularly with your project mentor
- Submit your final written work and your OCE portfolio
- Prepare for graduation and the Honors College recognition ceremony

For students graduating in three semesters, please work with the Honors EXCEL director to devise an acceptable alternative schedule to complete the program.

