WVU Honors College
Honors Experiential and Community-Engaged Learning (EXCEL) Program
Student Handbook
2020-2022
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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 innovating thinking, responsible and accountable conduct, and extraordinary achievement. We model that leadership by fostering innovative learning environments that are the “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 enables 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.

Who are Honors EXCEL students?
The Honors EXCEL program caters to undergraduate juniors and seniors from every corner of West Virginia University, regardless of participation in the Honors Foundations program. The 2020 cohort represents 9 colleges and 45 majors, with projects that span those disciplines and apply coursework to local and global issues. You have been selected for the Honors EXCEL program because you are driven, creative, and passionate learners, and we believe you are ready to step into independent scholarship. Your peers can be some of your best teachers and cheerleaders, so take some time to get to know your outstanding cohort and support each other throughout your journey.
Program Goals
Through coursework and experiential learning, our curriculum encourages 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

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 Requirements
Students in the Honors EXCEL program will complete coursework and other requirements in 3-4 semesters. Student projects will be developed in HONR 450 (Project Development), enhanced through out-of-class experiences (OCEs), implemented through six credits of experiential learning, and completed in HONR 451 (Honors Capstone).

List of Program Requirements

- Project Development Course (HONR 450)
- Honors EXCEL Capstone Course (HONR 451)
- 6-credits of experiential learning (2-3 semesters) in your 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 HONR 450, the 5 required out-of-class experiences and have filed a project prospectus (also called a strategic plan, developed in HONR 450) with the Honors EXCEL office.
• Students with GPAs below 3.0 at the time of admittance will be required to complete a course plan for the first year demonstrating how they will remain in good standing after Year 1.
• In each semester between HONR 450 and HONR 451, students will submit a short report that reflects on how the project is progressing relative to the project prospectus completed in HONR 450. Importantly, the requirement here is the process of reflection rather than project progress itself. While you are not held 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 HONR 451. 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 report to key stakeholders.
• 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 removed from the program. This includes the loss of all privileges associated with being an Honors Student. Note that removal from the Honors College is not recorded on university transcripts.

Program extensions
Students may apply to extend enrollment in the program for up to two additional semesters in order to complete the requirements. Students applying for extension must have at least a 3.0 institutional GPA, completed HONR 450 and at least two experiential learning credits, and must propose a plan to complete the program requirements. Students who have otherwise completed their graduation requirements are discouraged from applying for extension.

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 HONR 451.
Honors College Policies

Honors Student Code of Conduct
As an Honors Student, you will be held to a high level of academic integrity and your academic performance is subject to the academic integrity requirements set forth by the Office of the Provost.

Students are expected to adhere to the academic standards set forth by West Virginia University, and to avoid academic dishonesty in all its forms, including but not limited to plagiarism, cheating, fabrication or falsification, or the facilitation of these or other forms of academic dishonesty.

The full Academic Integrity Policy is available on the Office of the Provost website: https://provost.wvu.edu/governance/academic-standards-resources/academic-integrity-policy

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

Students who have been found responsible for violating WVU's Policy on Student Academic Integrity will be dismissed from the Honors College at the end of the semester in which the violation occurred and will be permanently prohibited from being readmitted to the Honors College.

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 from your University MIX account.
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 HONR 450 (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.

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 designed to help you develop a project that is innovative and impactful. In your weekly class sessions, you will learn from a multidisciplinary group of your peers and our outstanding faculty, called Honors EXCEL program affiliates. Through four modules, you will develop the scholarly and service aspects of your project and set goals both for your project and your personal growth as a scholar. You will also identify mentors and stakeholders. At the end of the semester, you will have a complete project prospectus that will guide your work in future semesters of the program.

HONR 451—Summative Experience
This 1-Credit course concludes the Honors EXCEL program by providing an opportunity for you to communicate your work in professional and scholarly contexts. In weekly class sessions led by a program affiliate, you will develop tools and products for scholarly communication, and communicate your work to your key stakeholders. If your EXCEL work is related to your major-specific capstone, you will adapt your products to be distinct for the Honors EXCEL program.

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, a performance, an internship, or with a 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

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 your 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.

In some cases, students may prefer to use the same course number more than once (HONR 495, 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 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 adviser to assist you as you plan your courses.

Ways to earn Honors EXCEL experiential learning credit:

- Course numbers 491, 495, 497 and 498 from any department can be used with an approved syllabus. Sample syllabi can be found in Appendix A or at the Honors College website: [https://www.honors.wvu.edu/academics/honors-excel-program/resources](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](https://www.honors.wvu.edu/academics/honors-excel-program/resources/exp-learning-credits)
- Courses that are not inherently experiential can be used by adding an Honors contract or Honors add-on. In these cases, students will complete work outside the original syllabus to apply course content and ideas directly to their project. To use this option, students should begin by submitting the syllabus using the form above.

**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 that has a clear benefit to the project and is not a requirement of another course or curriculum. 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, Career Services, 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 of 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 can 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 OCE form within 72 hours of the event. You can find the form here: https://www.honors.wvu.edu/academics/honors-excel-program/resources.

When you submit the form, you will receive a copy of your responses by email. At the end of each semester you will use these responses to write a 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 can apply for up to $1,000 to support and enhance their project. This funding is intended to provide supplies or travel support. This funding must be used in accordance with university policies and therefore can not be used to pay students, purchase gift cards, or make other purchases outside university and state guidelines. Students will complete a projected budget in HONR 450 and funds will be available to students after this budget is submitted. Any non-consumable equipment or supplies are the property of the university and must be returned to the college upon completion of the program.

To use this funding, students must submit a request using this form: https://honorswvu.wufoo.com/forms/r1dl2msn0jvqvph/.

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

/ Dr. Damien Clement
Associate Dean
(304) 293-2100 office
damien.clement@mail.wvu.edu

/ Honors EXCEL Program
(304) 293-2100 office
HonorsEXCEL@mail.wvu.edu

2020-2022 Program Affiliates
Honors EXCEL program affiliates are outstanding faculty who represent the diverse interests of Honors EXCEL students. Program affiliates teach the required Honors 450 and 451 courses. The 2020-2022 program affiliates are listed below:

Gerald Angle, PhD
Fundamentals of Engineering
Statler College of Engineering & Mineral Resources
Gerald.Angle@mail.wvu.edu

Nancy Caronia, PhD
English
Eberly College of Arts & Sciences
Nancy.Caronia@mail.wvu.edu

Elizabeth Claydon, PhD
Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Public Health
Elizabeth.Claydon@hsc.wvu.edu

Annie Cui, PhD
Marketing
Chambers College of Business & Economics
Annie.Cui@mail.wvu.edu

Lupe Davidson, PhD
Women’s and Gender Studies
Eberly College of Arts & Sciences
Lupe.Davidson@mail.wvu.edu

Shan Jiang, PhD
Landscape Architecture
Davis College of Ag., Nat. Resources & Design
Shan.Jiang@mail.wvu.edu

Kristen Matak, PhD
Animal and Nutritional Sciences
Davis College of Ag., Nat. Resources, & Design
Kristen.Matak@mail.wvu.edu

Louis Slimak, PhD
Asst. Provost for Curriculum & Assessment
Office of the Provost
Louis.Slimak@mail.wvu.edu
**Project Mentors**

Your project mentor will be key to your success in the Honors EXCEL program. Distinct from your program affiliate who instructs your Honors 450 and 451 courses, your project mentor is a one-on-one resource. They will provide the disciplinary expertise to help you develop your project by determining the scope of your work and the appropriate methodologies, practices, and processes for your project. They will also be responsible for ensuring that you receive all required safety and ethics training associated with your project. In most cases, your mentor will serve as your instructor of record for your experiential learning courses (491, 495, 497, etc.).

We encourage you to meet regularly with your project mentor to discuss your progress in the program. Building a strong relationship with your mentor can help you both academically and professionally.

New project mentors must sign our Mentor Confirmation Form, available in your application or on the Honors EXCEL website:
https://www.honors.wvu.edu/academics/honors-excel-program/information-for-faculty-mentors

**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

*Honors EXCEL Weekly Seminar Series*

The Honors EXCEL team has organized a weekly seminar series in Fall 2020. Inspired by student feedback, the seminar series aims to connect you with your peers and provide opportunities to share your work in progress and build skills to succeed in your projects and lives. Seminars are OCE-eligible.

Seminars will alternate between student presentations and skill-building workshops. Check the Honors EXCEL weekly newsletter and the Honors calendar for the full schedule. Students who wish to present their work can sign up here:
https://honorswvu.wufoo.com/forms/s127dko00r5os0r/

Priority will be given to students currently enrolled in experiential learning.

Weekly seminars are tailored to you, and we welcome your ideas. If you would like to propose a future seminar topic, email us at HonorsEXCEL@mail.wvu.edu.
Social and Academic enrichment
Honors College events are advertised through the Honors Weekly and Honors EXCEL newsletters 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 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 year 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 and Honors EXCEL email newsletters
- 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 and Honors EXCEL email newsletters
- 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 and Honors EXCEL email newsletters
- 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 and Honors EXCEL email newsletters
- 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
This is one likely path through the program. Individual paths may vary according to students’ graduation timelines and disciplinary requirements. Please work with the Honors EXCEL director to determine an acceptable alternative schedule to complete the program.
Appendix A: Sample Experiential Learning Syllabus

Honors EXCEL – Experiential Learning
HONR 495 – Spring 2020

Course Coordinator: Dr. Dana Huebert Lima
Office: LSB - 4208
Phone: 293-3645
djhuebertlima@mail.wvu.edu

This course provides students with an opportunity to develop as a scholar through independent study, research or field experience. Students can earn 1, 2, or 3 credits by completing 45, 90, or 135 hours toward their Honors EXCEL project and completing the academic components of this course. This course can be repeated in subsequent semesters, but the supplemental syllabus must be updated to reflect the updated project and learning goals each time.

Class Sessions: This course will not meet regularly. Instead, students are invited to student hours (above) or to make an appointment periodically throughout the semester. Your supplemental syllabus will include regular meetings with your project mentor.

Pre-requisites: This course is only available to students in the Honors EXCEL program. No other pre-requisite courses are required.

Required materials: There are no required textbooks or other materials. Students must have a supplemental syllabus on file with the Honors EXCEL program coordinator that addresses the following requirements of the course.

1) Project Goals: Please describe the work that you will do this semester toward your EXCEL project. Here, work is defined as reading, writing, thinking, doing or creating. Include an estimate of how much time each task will take, either weekly or over the course of the semester. Note that for 1CR, you should work 3 hours a week on your project, or ~45 hours over the semester.

2) Learning Objectives: Please describe what you hope to learn from this course. This may include new background information, theories or frameworks, skills, or personal traits that you hope to develop.

3) Class meetings: Please describe how often and how long you will meet with the instructor of this course to discuss your progress. While there is no maximum number of meetings, plan to meet once a month at a minimum. If your instructor is not your project mentor, please explain how you will communicate with your mentor and instructor separately.
4) The Honors EXCEL program requires each of the following in a course that is used for experiential learning. These assignments are intended to build connections between the students’ Honors EXCEL project and the knowledge and skills developed in and around academic settings. Please describe how you will complete these requirements.

a. Reflective writing – reflective writing can be the home to a variety of ways of thinking through your experience, but the common thread is that writing is a way of thinking in that it encourages you to flesh out your basic thoughts into sentences and paragraphs. You may use this space to reflect on your experience, evaluate your own performance, think through new issues or document the things you encounter through your experience. It is important to remember that this is a professional journal that will be read by others: keep the tone comparatively formal and the content professional.

b. Portfolio of documents or data – Your portfolio will be a unique creation, just as each project is a unique experience. Your portfolio is created for your use. It may include samples of your work or prototypical ideas for a new design. It may be a research notebook where you note your processes and collect data. Your portfolio should demonstrate your knowledge and skills, as well as provide evidence of the work that you have done toward your EXCEL project.

c. Summative report – Your summative report can take many formats, including a thorough literature review, a progress report, a technical report, or a research paper. The summative report is distinct from your portfolio of documents in that it should put your documents or data into a scholarly context. While there is no maximum length for this report, the minimum length is five substantive pages (~1500 words). You may substitute the summative report with a formal presentation of at least 20 minutes to an audience appropriate to your project.

5) Supervisor review – Project mentors should provide both a narrative review and a final grade. In some cases, mentors or community partners may provide that information to the instructor who will enter the grade. Please outline how each piece above will be assessed and how those pieces will contribute to your final grade. When in doubt, give as many details as necessary to clearly explain how the final grade will be determined. If needed, please attach another page.

Additional policies and procedures: Work completed in this course is subject to the rules and regulations set forth by West Virginia University. For information regarding Academic Integrity, Academic Dishonesty, Accessibility, Inclusivity and other relevant policies, please see the website here: https://tlcommons.wvu.edu/syllabus-policies-and-statements.