

# THE HONORS COLLEGE

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The Honors College offers highly motivated and high-achieving undergraduates a liberal arts college experience within the context of a large, urban, public research university. The Honors College is appealing to students from all majors who want to transcend disciplinary boundaries, be innovative and address big questions through classroom and, especially, experiential learning. With that in mind, the Honors College prepares students to be skilled communicators, critical thinkers and problems solvers. Further, students have opportunities to develop their understanding of language and culture locally and internationally, while also gaining a sense of social responsibility and a broad understanding of diversity and inclusion in the 21st century.

The center of activities for The Honors College is located at 701 W. Grace St., a living/learning, residential honors community. In this facility, students have meeting rooms, quiet study rooms, computers and recreational areas. This facility is open to honors students day and night for study.

## Graduation with University Honors

The Honors College at VCU cultivates renaissance thinkers for the 21st century while creating an innovative, real-world approach to community engagement.

The honors curriculum runs concurrently with a student's program of study or degree requirements. In addition, dedicated honors advisers assist students in selecting courses that will fulfill graduation requirements and match students' interests. Further, in consultation with honors advisers, the honors cohort coordinator will assist students with completing their culminating capstone experience.

While most honors students enter college with significant writing experiences, the Honors College wants to build on those skills, working toward a true understanding of the critical thinking and reflection that must be a part of writing targeted toward professional audiences. The first-year writing program consists of two courses (HONR 200 and HONR 250) that emphasize those goals. Additionally, the Honors College fosters a diverse and inclusive community where all people are valued and differences are recognized as assets. Honors students will enter VCU having been placed in diverse, multidisciplinary "cohorts," which will be guided along a four-year path of community-based experiential learning, culminating with collaborative capstone projects that will have lasting value for the diverse Richmond community.

College is a time for growth and exploration, but it can also be a time of intense pressure and stress. Therefore, HONR 150 is a required first-year course, designed to teach students skills such as mindfulness practices that will help them to flourish throughout college and beyond.

To graduate with the distinction of University Honors, entering freshmen must successfully complete 21 approved credits, including HONR 150, HONR 170, HONR 200, HONR 250, HONR 494 and courses

of intention (nine credits, approved by the honors adviser). All entering freshmen must successfully complete HONR 200 and HONR 250, regardless of AP/IB/dual enrollment credits.

Continuing students entering the Honors College with 12 or more credits and transfer students entering with 12-53 credits must successfully complete 21 approved credits, including HONR 494 and courses of intention (nine credits, approved by honors adviser), in order to graduate with University Honors.

Transfer students entering with 54 or more credits from their transfer institution must complete 14 honors credits, including HONR 170, HONR 494 and courses of intention (nine credits, approved by honors adviser), in order to graduate with University Honors.

Freshmen entering with an associate degree must complete 21 credits, including HONR 150, HONR 170, HONR 200, HONR 250, HONR 494 and course(s) of intention (nine credits, approved by honors adviser), in order to graduate with University Honors.

## Engagement points

In addition to their course work, students must earn 25 engagement points per academic year. Honors students are expected to be actively engaged in the Honors College, throughout the university and in the Richmond community. The Honors College provides many ideas about ways to engage, but students also have the opportunity to define their engagement experience. Not only is honors engagement a requirement for graduation with University Honors, but it is also the key to receiving the highest consideration for honors-designated scholarships, study abroad, internships, events with alumni, the Honors Summer Undergraduate Research Program and other special opportunities. Engagement is categorized into five main areas: experiential learning, professional development, leadership, community engagement, and diversity and inclusion. Students are responsible for truthfully recording their participation.

## The application process

Incoming first-year students with a combined minimum SAT score of 1330 (mathematics and critical reading) or a minimum ACT composite score of 29 and a minimum 3.5 unweighted high school GPA (4.0 scale) are eligible to apply. In addition to the VCU Common Application, prospective students must submit an Honors College application.

Current VCU students who have achieved a minimum 3.5 cumulative GPA in 12 to 53 semester hours of college credit are eligible to apply. Students with more than 53 credits may still apply, but they will need to provide a written explanation about how they plan to complete the curriculum. Transfer students who have earned 12 or more credits and have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.5 are also eligible to apply.

## Academic policies and requirements

- Students in the Honors College must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.5.
- Students must achieve a minimum grade point average of 3.2 in all honors course work, including courses of intention.
- Honors students should achieve a standard of excellence in general education as well as in their major field.

## Special opportunities

The Honors College offers a number of opportunities to its student members. Among these are:

**The Honors College Student Executive Board** – an organization of Honors College students who help determine the course of the Honors College, as well as host social, service and leadership activities for Honors College students

**The Honors College Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee** – seeks to provide an inclusive community for all members of the Honors College

**Honors College internships and independent studies** – honors-specific educational programs, often taught in conjunction with academic departments that introduce honors students to opportunities in their fields of interest and within the Richmond community

**The Berglund Seminar Series** – weekly discussions on topics pertinent to the wide-ranging interests of honors students. Discussions are led by outstanding guest speakers from the university faculty and administration, and a variety of community leaders.

The Honors College is committed to enriching the students' academic and personal endeavors. Additional resources and opportunities include:

- A well-being program
- Honors scholarships
- Special library privileges
- First-year honors housing
- Leadership opportunities
- Global learning experiences
- Undergraduate research opportunities
- Honors advising and priority registration
- Access to the National Scholarship Office
- First-year and alumni mentorship opportunities
- Preferred applicant track into select VCU professional and graduate programs