

Honors Program

Missouri Western State University
Honors Program Student Handbook



2025-2026

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History of the Honors Program

In 1987, Missouri Western State University (then Missouri Western State College) established the Honors Program with administrative support, budgets, utilization of the most qualified faculty, and development of an interesting, innovative, challenging, and flexible curriculum with smaller class sizes. Dr. Gerald Zweerink became the first Honors Director, establishing the Insignis Scholarship (later known as the Golden Griffon Scholarship), Student Honors Organization, and affiliation with Alpha Chi. Since then, four honors directors Dr. David Bennett (1993-2005), Dr. Elizabeth Latosi-Sawin (2005-2012), Dr. Teddi Deka (2012-2021), and Dr. Joel Hyer (2021- present), along with the Honors Committee and support staff, developed innovative curriculum, and provided opportunities for research and travel.

Mission: The Honors Program at Missouri Western State University provides an enriched educational experience for the exceptional student. The program is designed for the student who enjoys learning, and whose personal goals emphasize the pursuit of understanding and knowledge. Ultimately, the program provides students with academic training and skills which will serve them well in both their chosen careers and their personal lives. Goals of the program are to foster the growth of intellectual inquiry, independence, and initiative in honors participants with an array of learning experiences including special courses, colloquia, and independent research and study. Each honors experience is simultaneously challenging, exciting, and enjoyable.

Honors Director, Committee, and Staff



Dr. Joel Hyer
Honors Program Director
2021- Present

*We personally support honors students in every academic discipline
from curriculum development to advising...*

Honors Committee:

Dr. Stacia Bensyl	Communication
Dr. Angela Haas	History
Dr. David McMahan	Communication
Dr. Mark Mills	Biology
Ms. Laura Nold	Nursing

Honors Office Staff:

Dana Markt	Administrative Assistant
Zaya Webb	Student Employee

Qualifications

All students applying for the Honors Program must be a full-time, degree-seeking student.

Incoming Freshmen

Incoming freshmen who qualify for the Honors Program should have an ACT score of 26 or higher and high school GPA of 3.5 or higher. Incoming freshmen with a high school GPA of 3.6 or higher do not need to have an ACT score. Incoming students apply for the Honors Program and are selected for admission from their applications.

Students who have taken AP and/or Dual Credit courses in high school may not be required to take as many Honors courses. Please see “Earning Honors Status” on page six for more details to see if you qualify.

Current and Transfer Students

Current students at MWSU, or transfer students can apply after 15 hours of college credit with an overall GPA of 3.5 or higher. If these students have more than 32 hours of college credit, they may only be able to pursue Majors Honors.

Juniors and Seniors

Current students wanting to complete Majors Honors must be considered and Junior or Senior. Students must have a faculty member within their major willing to support and guide the students through a research project. Students must have a college GPA of 3.5 or higher.

Applications for General Studies Honors are available at:
www.missouriwestern.edu/honors under “Forms”, or by scanning the QR code below.

Applications for Majors Honors are available in the A-Z Search under “Forms- Students” and searching “Majors Honors Approval Form”.



Earning Honors Status

MWSU offers two honors recognitions: General Studies Honors and Majors Honors. General Studies Honors encourages breadth of understanding, while Majors Honors encourages depth of understanding within the major.

"I know I would not be where I am today without the support of honors faculty at MWSU. I unknowingly was more than prepared for my graduate program."
– Makenna Snyder

General Studies Honors

Requirements:

- Complete 12 credit hours of General Studies Honors courses.
 - Students who have received an A in two dual credit courses (each course being at least three credit hours), or students who receive a score of 4 or higher on two separate AP tests exams will only be required to take 6 credit hours of General Studies Honors courses.
- Complete 4 credit hours of Honors Colloquia (HON 194 for 2 credits and HON 395 for 2 credits).
- Complete 2 credits of UNV 201 (Students sign up for this by going to the Center for Service in Eder Hall, room 202).
- Students must have a GPA of 3.25 or higher at the time of General Studies Honors completion.

Total: 18 credit hours (12 credit hours if AP or Dual Credit exception occurs)

Majors Honors

Requirements:

- Complete a research project or creative work under the guidance of a professor within your major.
- Present the research somewhere OR submit for publication.
- Complete 6 credit hours of 300+ level honors coursework within the major.

- Students will complete an Honors-by-Contract to complete this (see Honors Courses for more information on Honors-by-Contract).
- Complete 2 credit hours of Honors Colloquia (HON 395 for 2 credits).
- Complete 1 credit of UNV 201(Students sign up for this by going to the Center for Service in Eder Hall, room 202) .
- Submit a Majors Honors Progress Report form. This form can be found on the Honors website under “Forms”. It can also be found by going to the A-Z Search and searching under “Forms- Students” and “Forms- Employees”. The submission of this form will automatically be sent to the Honors Program once it is filled out.
- Students must have a GPA of 3.5 or higher at the time of Majors Honors completion.

Total: 9 credit hours OR 24 credit hours if the student has already completed General Studies Honors.

Students must earn a grade of B or higher in all honors courses to be applied towards the Program requirements.

Remaining in Honors

GPA and Grades

Students must achieve a 3.25 or higher overall GPA to remain in good standing with the Honors Program (3.50 or higher for Majors Honors). The Honors Program checks GPA every semester. Students with GPAs below 3.25 will receive warning letters through their MWSU email.

We recommend that students seek advising and/or meet with the Honors Director if their GPA falls below the 3.25 requirement. It is possible that if the student does not raise their GPA, they will be removed from the Honors Program.

Students must achieve the GPA benchmark in order to achieve General Studies Honors.

Progress toward General Studies Honors

Students have all four years to complete the General Studies Honors requirements. However, Honors students must demonstrate progress toward General Studies Honors each semester. Students should take at least one General Studies Honors course, or one Colloquium, or be actively participating in UNV 201 each semester until completing the program.

Lapses of two semesters will be considered inadequate progress, and the student will need to meet with the director to establish a plan of action. Failure to meet with the director after a lapse of two semesters may result in removal from the Honors Program.

Honors Courses

General Studies Honors Courses

The Honors Program and other departments determine the General Studies rotation for the academic year. This rotation appears in the University Catalog and it is included on the following page. The rotation generally does not alter from year to year. However, sometimes changes occur due to student usage and faculty availability. Honors courses are designated by -80 through -89. For example, BIO 101-82 would be a BIO 101 course for Honors students. Some courses are designated as “always honors” (*) (see chart on next page).

Honors-By-Contract (HBC)

Occasionally, students may need to take a general studies course that is not currently being offered as an Honors course. In this event, students can find the class the wish to take and fill out an Honors-by-Contract. This form is available on the main Missouri Western website on the A-Z Search under “Forms-Students”. You can also find the form on the Honors Program website under “Forms” as the “Honors-by-Contract Application.” This form has faculty specify the additional coursework to be completed to achieve honors status. An Honors-by-Contract form must be completed and accepted the semester before the start date of the course. A professor, department chair, or the Honors Director, has the right to refuse an Honors-by-Contract form. Honors-by-Contract can only be granted for general studies courses that are typically offered with honors sections, and with the approval noted above. There are no Honors-by-Contract for colloquia courses (HON195, HON395). Honors-by-Contract are not available for incoming Freshmen.

Colloquia

Each academic year, the Honors Program Committee asks faculty to propose colloquia courses centered on special topics or themes. All colloquia encourage creative and critical thinking, enrichment within the topic, and camaraderie among Honors students. In the Fall semesters, the Honors Program offers both HON195 (incoming Freshmen only) and HON395 colloquia. In the Spring semesters, only HON395 colloquia are offered. Two to four colloquia are typically offered each semester.

Honors Course Rotation

Fall Semester Even Years BIO 101 BIO 105 CHE 111 COM 104 MAT 167* MUS 101 PHY 104	Fall Semester Odd Years BIO 101 BIO 105 CHE 101 CHE 111 COM 104 MAT 167* PHY 104
Spring Semester Even Years CHE 111 COM 104 HIS 210 or 230 PED 101 PHY 104	Spring Semester Odd Years CHE 101 CHE 111 HIS 150 PHL 230 PHY 104

* Always Honors

It is likely there will be more Honors courses offered each semester. This course rotation shows what each department can consistently offer each semester. To find out if a specific Honors course will be offered, please contact that department directly, or contact the Honors Program.

Mock Schedule

General Studies Honors

The Honors Program recommends taking two general studies honors classes and/or one colloquium every semester until completed. If following this recommendation, General Studies Honors would be completed in three semesters. Keep in mind that you must receive an A or B in each of these classes in order for it to count as honors credit. At minimum, the Honors Office recommends taking at least one class pertaining to General Studies Honors every semester until completed.

First Semester

Second Semester

Third Semester

HON 195 GSH Course GSH Course	HON 395 GSH Course GSH Course	UNV 201 (2 credits)
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Majors Honors

The Honors Program recommends choosing two semesters, either the Fall and Spring of senior year, or the Spring of junior year and the Fall of senior year, to complete the requirements and project. Please review the requirements for Majors Honors in the previous section. Plan your project in advance! Students wishing to pursue Majors Honors must have the support of a faculty sponsor to provide guidance for the project. You may find it beneficial to work with a faculty member on your research a semester or two before asking for sponsorship.

Spring of Junior Year/or Fall of Senior Year

Fall of Senior Year/or Spring of Senior Year

HON 395, Major Course (HBC), and Begin Thesis	UNV 201, Major Course (HBC), Complete Thesis, and Present/Submit for Publication
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Advising

Every student has an academic advisor at MWSU. You can find your advisor on your Goldlink account. Most students meet their advisor right before registration begins. Of course, you can meet your advisor beforehand anytime.

Pre-Advisement

Advisement period begins approximately 1-2 weeks before the registration period for the following semester. Make sure to sign up for advisement as soon as possible. You can do this by emailing your academic advisor and setting up an advising meeting. Make sure to do this during the early stages of advisement since you will be able to register at the same time as seniors. During advisement, you will generally receive a PIN number that is required in order to register for classes. Make sure your advisor knows you are an honors student. You will use that PIN to register for your next semester classes.

Check the list of available General Studies Honors courses and Colloquia courses that is posted on the Honors Program Canvas page. You can also find a list of Honors course offerings by going to the A-Z search, finding “Class Schedule Search”, and then selecting the semester which you are enrolling in. From there, leave the “Subject” and “Course Number” blank. In the “Title” field, type “%honors%” and click search.

We advise that Honors students try to register for two General Studies Honors courses and/or one Colloquium until you meet the program requirements. At minimum, try for at least one General Studies Honors course or at least one Colloquium class per semester until you achieve General Studies Honors. Don’t forget to enroll in UNV 201. You have to enroll for this in person at the Center for Service Office in Eder Hall 202.

Make sure you and your advisor keep track of your progress in honors by examining the General Studies Honors block on your Griffon GPS. If you have questions regarding your progress in the Honors Program, please contact us via email at honors@missouriwestern.edu.

Supplemental Advisement

If you would like supplemental advisement, contact the Honors Office and you can make a supplemental advisement appointment with the Honors Director. Please note that you will still need to visit your assigned advisor.

You can also ask for honors advice pertaining to your major by visiting one of these contacts:

Biology:

Dr. Mark Mills

mmills3@missouriwestern.edu

Chemistry:

Dr. Shauna Hiley

hiley@missouriwestern.edu

Communication:

Dr. Stacia Bensyl

bensyl@missouriwestern.edu

Computer Science, Math, and Physics:

Dr. Brian Bucklein

bbucklein@missouriwestern.edu

Craig School of Business:

Dr. Sel Dibooglu

sdibooglu@missouriwestern.edu

Criminal Justice and Legal Studies:

Dr. David Marble

dmarble@missouriwestern.edu

Education:

Dr. Adrienne Johnson

ajohnson76@missouriwestern.edu

Engineering Technology:

Professor Dennis Merritt

dmerritt1@missouriwestern.edu

Health Information Management:

Dr. Fiona Sansone

fsansone@missouriwestern.edu

Health, Sport, and Exercise Science:

Dr. William Russell

wrussell@missouriwestern.edu

Military Science/ ROTC:

Contact the Department at rotc@missouriwestern.edu or 816-271-4541

Nursing:

Ms. Laura Nold

lnold2@missouriwestern.edu

Physical Therapist Assistant:

Dr. William Russell

wrussell@missouriwestern.edu

Population Health management:

Dr. Fiona Sansone

fsansone@missouriwestern.edu

Psychology:

Dr. Kelly Henry

henry@missouriwestern.edu

School of Fine Arts:

Dr. Edwin Taylor

etaylor8@missouriwestern.edu

Social Sciences and Humanities:

Dr. Angela Haas

ahaas1@missouriwestern.edu

Social Work:

Dr. Fiona Sansone

fsansone@missouriwestern.edu

Appeals

Remaining in the Honors Program

Appeals to remain in the Honors Program due to low GPA and/or lack of progress should be made directly to the Honors Director, in writing. The appeal will be discussed in the next monthly committee meeting and voted upon by its members.

Requirements and Awarding of General Studies Honors or Majors Honors

Appeals for awarding General Studies or Majors Honors should be made directly to the Honors Director, in writing. The appeal will be discussed in the next monthly committee meeting and voted upon by its members. After receiving the committee's decision, the student can further appeal to Admissions and the Graduation Committee.

Grades in Colloquia (HON 195, HON 395) Classes

The Honors Program follows the requirements outlined in the Student Handbook. For specific information on the appeals process, contact the Honors Director at jhyer@missouriwestern.edu or 816-271-4510.

Grades in General Studies Honors Classes

Appeals regarding classes other than Honors (HON) classes must go through the offering department. All departments have appeal procedures available by contacting the department's Chairperson.

Travel Funding

The Honors Program encourages students to present their research or projects at regional and national conferences. There are several funding sources available for students. Consult the Honors Program Director for more information if you plan to present your research or project.

Applied Learning Fund

If you have an applied learning opportunity in need of funding, please contact the office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs to discuss the availability of funds that the MWSU Foundation has allocated to the University for applied learning opportunities.

Blake K. Scanlon Grant

Up to \$1,000 to present a refereed paper or poster presentation in national or international venues. The funds shall be used to cover travel, lodging, and meal expenses associated with their role in these venues. For fall requests, applications should be submitted no later than the third Friday in October. For spring requests, applications should be submitted no later than the third Friday in February. Go to <https://foundation.missouriwestern.edu/blake-scanlon/> for more information.

Student Government Association Funding

No specific cap to funding. Go to <https://www.missouriwestern.edu/student-life/student-government-association/funding/> for more information.

Honors Program General Funding

For faculty members to accompany students in group honors travel, or provide additional funding on a case-by-case scenario. Meet with the Honors Program Director for more information. Deadline is one month prior to travel date.

Clubs and Organizations

"Take advantage of the opportunities provided by this program—it will help build your skills, your resume, and you meet lots of new people!" – Madyson Lytton, Honors Student

Student Honors Organization (SHO)

Student Honors Organization (SHO) is a social club open to all honors students. SHO provides friendship, leadership opportunities, and community involvement along with exciting activities! In the past, SHO has sponsored movie nights, museum tours, and even a trip to the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Nebraska. Students may join by contacting the Honors Office at honors@missouriwestern.edu.

Alpha Chi Honors Society

The Alpha Chi Honors Society is a national college honor society, inviting juniors, seniors, and graduate students in the top 10% of their class to join. Alpha Chi Honors Society involves its members in all aspects of its operations, including local events, scholarly programs, and regional/national conventions. Contact Dr. Teddi Deka at deka@missouriwestern.edu for more information and how to join.

Honors Program Pledge of Conduct

As a member of the MWSU Honors Program, I acknowledge that my membership is a privilege that I have worked hard to attain. I will behave with honesty and integrity toward faculty, staff, administrators and fellow students. This expectation extends to my behavior both on and off campus.

I will read and abide by MWSU's Student Code of Conduct, found on the Student Affairs website. The MWSU Student Code of Conduct discusses repercussions to violating the Student Code of Conduct. If I am found liable for a violation, I may no longer retain my honors status pending review by the Honors Committee.

I will be a role model to other students, an active and congenial member of the MWSU community, and an outstanding representative of the MWSU community.

Additionally, I acknowledge that acting in ways unbecoming to an honors student may lead to review of my membership in the Honors Program by the Honors Committee and potential dismissal from the program.

Other Important Information

- ✓ Check your email at least once per week. All Honors Program communications come through your MWSU email.
- ✓ Beware of honors societies that contact you online. Make sure that the honors society is a recognized student organization at MWSU. If you question the authenticity of an organization that has contacted, please reach out to the Honors Program Office.
- ✓ Visit us in the Honors Office! The Honors Office is located in Eder Hall 220. We have a microwave, refrigerator, drinks available to purchase, computers, printers, and other resources. Students can eat their lunch, study, or just hang out. Check the sign on the front door for current hours.
- ✓ Benefits of the Honors Program:
 - Early Registration (register for classes the same time seniors do)
 - Use of the Honors Office
 - Special Topic classes offered only to Honors students (Colloquia)
 - Smaller in-depth classes for active learning
 - Dedicated Honors Committee and staff to help you succeed and graduate
 - Retreats and Conferences
 - Honors designation on your official transcript
 - Graduation medal
 - Opportunity to engage in Independent Research
 - Optional Membership to the Student Honors Organization (SHO)
 - Opportunity for Membership in Alpha Chi
 - Housing on the Honors Academic Achievement Floor
 - Opportunity to travel abroad
 - Opportunity to travel/present research at conferences across the country

Expectations From High School to College

Before you begin your freshman year in college, prepare yourself to be challenged by hard work, more work, and work that must be completed in a shorter period of time. You should begin to change your educational work ethic because you will be doing most of your work outside of the classroom, and you will be expected to learn the majority of your assigned material on your own, rather than relying on your teachers to teach it to you. You should also begin preparing yourself to learn in a less-structured classroom atmosphere in which your teachers will no longer remind you about what you are supposed to do, will hold you responsible for completing your assignments in the correct and timely manner described in the course syllabus they give you on the first day of class, and will be less likely to bend the rules or allow you to earn extra credit if your work is late or if you perform poorly. You may also discover that college professors are less available than high school teachers and that some prefer to maintain a more formal relationship with their students than high school teachers.

Time management can be a challenge for some freshmen. Learning does not end when the class day ends in college. In fact, learning often begins when classes end because so much learning takes place outside the classroom. This abrupt cultural change is particularly challenging for students who are accustomed to going to high school for seven hours and then having the remaining 17 hours of the day to eat, sleep, relax, shop, play video games, watch television, listen to music, and hang out with friends. One of the purposes of higher education is to prepare you to become a person who is capable of mastering large amounts of difficult material in a short period of time and performing this work in a responsible and independent manner without having to be reminded to do it. In other words, one of the objectives of a college education is to transform teenagers into adults. The following comment from a former student puts this objective into sharp perspective: "It's time for me to step out of the purgatory between my teenage years and adulthood and take some responsibility for my life."

Contact Us

Eder 220
Phone: 816-271-4535
Email: honors@missouriwestern.edu
Web: www.missouriwestern.edu/honors



Missouri Western State University
4525 Downs Drive
Saint Joseph, MO 64503