



University Scholars Program

Student Handbook

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About the University Scholars Program

Established in 2018, by Honors College Dean, Patricia Smith, and University President, Houston Davis and in conjunction with the University Honors Council, the University Scholars Program at UCA provides enhanced educational opportunities in a living/learning environment designed to develop socially responsible leaders. Admitted through a highly competitive application process, University Scholars benefit from a curriculum that emphasizes leadership, social responsibility, and disciplinary expertise. University Scholars are empowered to be leaders within the community and beyond by honing their skills in academic research and writing, developing a personal leadership identity, and practicing ethical decision making.

Vision

The Norbert O. Schedler Honors College strives to equip students from across disciplines with the tools and skills to promote individual growth and to confront the complex challenges of our modern world. We aim to build a community in which every person is valued and included in the conversation. We aspire to be known both locally and nationally for innovation and excellence in higher education.

Values Statement

We live in a world where the nature of the problems we face requires a variety of skills, approaches, experiences, and perspectives. To this end, the Honors College values **INTERDISCIPLINARITY**: the integration of knowledge that allows us to recognize bias, transcend disciplinary borders, and construct meaningful context. In order to promote human flourishing for all, we seek to create an **INCLUSIVE** environment in which we respect the similarities and differences in our community. We value **CURIOSITY**, through which we come alive to ourselves and what is around us; we take up the questions that are in the never-ending **CONVERSATION** among people past, present, and future, and shape them carefully so they point to routes of **INQUIRY**. This process demands of us persistence and **COURAGE** to take intellectual risks, to explore our discomfort, and to stay in the conversation. We value **EXCELLENCE**, striving to be our best selves, individually and collectively. These values nurture a community that encourages informed and responsible action.

Mission

The Norbert O. Schedler Honors College identifies highly motivated students, immerses them in a learning community where they can examine who they are and practice who they want to become, invites (challenges) them into (with) opportunities for growth, and develops them as conscientious citizen-scholars prepared to make a difference. The College creates a space where the community tries out ideas and practices that contribute to human flourishing.

Guiding Principles

Inclusion Statement: The University Scholars Program upholds that diversity fuels the scholarly advancement of knowledge. In order to foster excellence and prepare culturally competent leaders, we seek to create an environment of inclusiveness and respect for the similarities and differences in our community. Through thoughtful conversation about ethnicity, race, socio-economic class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, age, and ability, we expand our minds and move beyond raising awareness toward creating sustainable social change.

Leadership Statement: The University Scholars Program provides a constructive forum that fosters the cultivation of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that develop capacity to effectively communicate and interact with others in order to accomplish a goal in a manner that is as free as possible from prejudice and presupposition and that reflects high ethical standards and disciplinary expertise.

Goals for Student Development

The goal of the University Scholars Program is to develop socially responsible leaders, capable of carrying out research, and collaborating with others in order to be prepared to take action in their profession and community.

The following goals for student development guide this process:

- Social Responsibility—addressing social and environmental challenges and finding ethical solutions, a process that culminates in individual and collective interventions;
- Expertise—practicing communication and inquiry, a process that culminates in academic research, writing, and oral presentation; and
- Leadership—engaging as citizen-scholars exercising informed judgment and an ability to collaborate, a process that culminates in the capacity to guide social change for the common good.

Learning Objectives

The University Scholars Program is a learning laboratory, furthering our institutional mission by developing talented students with developmental yet challenging instructional techniques. Student success in contemplating important questions and in acquiring the fundamental skills of working with and generating knowledge requires innovative, skill-driven pedagogies. As such, the University Scholars Program has these Learning Objectives for its curriculum:

Social Responsibility Objectives

- Ethics: The ability to address real-world problems and find ethical solutions for individuals and society.
- Diversity: The ability to analyze familiar cultural assumptions in the context of the world's diverse values, traditions, and belief systems as well as to analyze the major ideas, techniques, and processes that inform creative works within different cultural and historical contexts.
- Personal and Social Responsibility: The ability to take informed and responsible action to address ethical, social, and environmental challenges and evaluate the local and broader consequences of individual and collective interventions.

Expertise Objectives

- Critical Inquiry: The ability to analyze new problems and situations to formulate informed opinions and conclusions.

- Information Literacy: The ability to communicate, organize, and synthesize information from diverse and appropriate sources to form a clear and articulate argument.
- Disciplinary Expertise: The ability to articulate a relevant research or creative agenda, to develop clear research questions or goals, and identify and demonstrate appropriate methodologies in a project of one's own design.

Leadership Objectives

- Collaboration: The ability to develop and present ideas logically and effectively in order to enhance collaboration with diverse individuals and groups.
- Written and Oral Communication: The ability to develop and present ideas logically and effectively in order to enhance communication with diverse individuals and groups.

University Scholars Program Course Descriptions

The curriculum for the University Scholars Program was developed by a team of faculty from across all academic colleges at UCA. University Scholars participate in a specially designed curriculum that focuses on developing skills in the areas of personal and social responsibility as well as disciplinary expertise and leadership. The University Scholars Program embraces both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to delivery of its curriculum. All students will participate in small-group classes that integrate the best practices used within higher education today.

University Scholars Core Program

Courses in the Honors Core offer students credits that satisfy university Core requirements. Students will enroll in four honors-sections of Core classes within their first two years at UCA. These classes will have smaller enrollments, be discussion-based, and will focus on developing a specialized skill set. The first of these classes is the gateway course, "Leading with Expertise." The remaining courses are chosen from a variety of disciplines, depending on student course needs.

Leading with Expertise (USCH 1300)

Taken in the fall semester of the freshman year, "Leading with Expertise" is a gateway course to the University Scholars Program. The goal of the course is to explore areas of leadership, social responsibility, and disciplinary expertise. Through an interdisciplinary approach, students learn how to read, write, and engage in intellectual discourse. Students will learn to identify and evaluate sources of information, and they develop a base of knowledge essential for engaging in conversations about contemporary social issues. This course draws on material from a variety of traditions and requires students to engage with challenging readings, frame arguments and provide evidence during in-class discussions, and participate in critical communication about current issues within and across disciplinary areas. Students may count the course as fulfilling the Responsible Living (RL) requirement for the lower division core. The course also satisfies the Freshmen Year Seminar (FYS) requirement and the Humanities (H) requirement.

University Scholars Seminars

For the completion of the University Scholars Core Program, students must complete three additional university courses with the University Scholars Seminar (USP) designation. These seminars are offered every semester and are offered in a variety of disciplines. These courses allow students opportunities to practice the skills that are introduced in the "Leading with Expertise" course throughout the remainder of the Core Program and move them toward proficiency of these skills while preparing them to undertake the University Scholars Capstone Project.

University Scholars Capstone Project

The goal of disciplinary expertise remains critical to the mission of the junior and senior curricula, through which students are able to complete an Honors Capstone Project within their major. They are required to complete two courses dedicated to the completion of the Capstone Project, during which a student completes a project of their own choosing rooted in undergraduate research or creative work.

Research Methods, USCH 3320

Research Methods fulfills the first of two required courses for completion of the Honors Capstone Project. It is designed to help students look critically at evidence, understand research ethics, develop research questions, try out arguments, and learn processes of scholarly inquiry. Research Methods should help students to not only synthesize information and respond critically to their sources, but also to master the facts and evidence upon which their responses are based. The course goal is for each student to develop a proposal and plan for their Capstone Project and to complete a substantial portion of the literature review before the end of the term. The student will identify a Capstone mentor with whom the student will meet weekly until the project is completed. Research Methods is taken in the spring semester of either the sophomore or junior year.

Research Methods satisfies both the Communication (C) and Critical Inquiry (I) requirements for the Upper Division (UD) Core.

Scholars Capstone, USCH 4320

Scholars Capstone is designed to support students as they develop, write, and present the Honors Capstone Project. Its most important function is to ensure that each student contributes new knowledge through completion of the project. The heart of the course will be the workshop, which will consist of writing, sharing, reading, and commenting on one another's work. By the conclusion of this course, students should demonstrate proficiency in integrative scholarship, written and oral communication, and critical inquiry and analysis. Scholars Capstone may be taken in fall or spring of the senior year.

Scholars Capstone satisfies the UD Core Capstone (Z) requirement.

Learning Environment

Student Commitments

As a participant in the University Scholars Program, you are asked to commit to:

- Co-creating a learning community that supports its members in their growth and action;
- Openly examining values, beliefs, and assumptions you hold about yourself and others;
- Engaging as a scholar, expanding your imagination by conversing with others and integrating diverse knowledge, perspectives, and skills;
- Participating in reflective civic action, gaining skills to solve real-world problems; and
- Growing as a responsible leader, working with others for the common good.

Guidelines for Class Discussions

Our primary commitment is to learn from each other. We acknowledge differences amongst us in backgrounds, skills, interests, and values, but we realize that these differences will increase our awareness and understanding. To facilitate discussion in the small group setting, we observe the following guidelines:

1. Be courteous. Don't interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking. Keep confidential any personal information that comes up in class. Be aware of the fact that tone of voice and body language are powerful communicators. While some postures or facial expressions (e.g., crossed arms, eye rolls, loud sighs) can silence, provoke, or intimidate, others (e.g., facing and looking at the speaker, staying quiet, nodding) can show you are listening respectfully.
2. Listen. Pay careful attention to what others are saying even when you disagree with what is being said. Comments that you make (asking for clarification, sharing critiques, expanding on a point, etc.) should reflect that you have paid attention to the speaker.
3. Challenge the idea and not the person. Respect others' rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own. If you wish to challenge something that has been said, challenge the idea or the practice referred to, not the individual sharing it.

4. Support your statements. Use evidence and provide a rationale for your points. Share briefly from your own experiences when appropriate, rather than simply your positions.
5. Step Up, Step Back. Allow everyone the chance to talk. If you have much to say, try to hold back a bit; if you are hesitant to speak, look for opportunities to contribute to the discussion and empower yourself to speak up.
6. Speak your discomfort. If you are offended by something or think someone else might be, speak up and don't leave it for someone else to respond to it.

Co-Curricular Programming

First Year Student Summer Reader

The purpose of the summer reader is to create a common intellectual experience for incoming honors students and introduce them to the academic values, expectations, and learning outcomes of the University Scholars Program. Traditionally non-fiction, the summer reader also serves to connect the values and learning outcomes to the University Scholars Program directly to Challenge Week in an effort to strengthen the connections between curricular and co-curricular activities..

Community Service Hours

All University Scholars are required to dedicate three hours each semester to service projects organized by the University Scholars Program. These service projects are intentionally chosen to advance the Program objectives related to Social Responsibility:

- **Ethics:** The ability to address real-world problems and find ethical solutions for individuals and society.
- **Personal and Social Responsibility:** The ability to take informed and responsible action to address ethical, social, and environmental challenges and evaluate the local and broader consequences of individual and collective interventions.

One hour each semester may be earned through supporting the Bear Essentials Food Pantry by donating ten (10) items or \$10 for the pasta/pasta sauce shelf, which the University Scholars Program has committed to sponsoring. Students must provide documentation of their donation.

Other service projects will vary from semester to semester, but will always include a variety of options – inside and outside, as well as different days and times – to accommodate student schedules. Students will document their service hours in GivePulse.

Failure to complete the required service hours will result in being placed on probation for the next semester. Failure to complete the required service hours during the probation semester will result in dismissal from the University Scholars Program.

Challenge Week

Challenge Week is a weeklong event each Fall that brings to campus nationally known thinkers to engage the community in a reflective interchange of ideas. Speakers present compelling arguments to UCA students, faculty and staff, and to the broader community, in an effort to inform, educate, and thoughtfully address contemporary problems and concerns. All events take place on the UCA campus and are free and open to the public. Challenge Week serves as an opportunity for the Honors College to engage the larger community in issues that impact our society.

Issues in the Public Square

Issues in the Public Square is a symposium-style event held each Spring to provide an opportunity for students, faculty and staff, and the broader community to share research that impacts our society. As scholars, students in the Honors College are encouraged to submit proposals to share their research in order to begin a meaningful dialogue and to help advance our understanding of issues of public concern. Each year a theme and keynote speaker is selected to represent a critical issue being faced at present within our society.

Fall Retreat

Fall Retreat is an event held for incoming students each year (typically on move-in weekend) where the faculty and student leaders join all incoming students for a retreat dedicated to team building and academic preparation for the upcoming semester.

Schedler Scholars in Residence

The Norbert and Carol Schedler Scholars in Residence program supports bringing noted scholars to the UCA campus to provide a public lecture and spend time with students in formal and informal settings. This program is co-hosted by the Schedler Honors College and the Department of Philosophy and Religion.

Soapboxes

Soapbox is an informal Honors student, faculty, and alumni forum for the dissemination and exchange of ideas on a wide variety of topics. Most soapboxes take place on Friday afternoons at 3 PM in the Honors Forum in Farris Hall. Digital projectors are provided to those who want to utilize visual aids. And of course there are snacks -- lots and lots of snacks. UCA students, faculty, and the public are welcome to join us at Soapbox.

Experiential Learning

The express purpose of our experiential learning programs is to enlarge the scope of the undergraduate experience, to better prepare Norbert O. Schedler Honors College Scholars for post-baccalaureate training, and to make tangible international contact that has begun to characterize the globalization of intellectual labor. These programs have a corollary benefit in that they enable many Norbert O. Schedler Honors College students to participate in programs, internships, and research projects across the campus, thereby benefiting faculty and programs in other UCA colleges and disciplines.

Eligibility to Apply for Funding

To be eligible to apply for funding, students must meet the following criteria:

- be a Norbert O. Schedler (NOS) Honors College student in good standing at the Sophomore level or higher, having completed a minimum of at least one course prior to being awarded
- have a cumulative UCA grade point average of 3.500 or higher
- have at least one semester of university and Honors coursework remaining upon the completion of the proposed experience.

Application

In order to apply for funding, students complete an application that is available within the Honors student portal at <http://honors.uca.edu/student>. The application requires the student to write a proposal that includes a rationale stating the educational benefits, a budget, an itinerary or study plans, and whether course credit is sought. Winter and Spring proposals must be submitted by October 15th, and Summer proposals by November 15th. Fall proposals are available as needed.

Travel Abroad Grants (TAG)

The NOS Honors College supports students who seek to study abroad. Scholarships are awarded under the auspices of the Travel Abroad Grant Program (TAG). Through TAG, the NOS Honors College supports students interested in participating in trips organized by UCA's study abroad office, spending a semester abroad at one of UCA's many partner schools, or designing their own unique adventure. Awards are competitive; TAG Applications are reviewed by the Honors College administration and funds are granted based on the quality of the proposal.

Undergraduate Research Grants for Education (URGE)

The NOS Honors College has Undergraduate Research Grants for Education (URGE) funds available to support students who wish to pursue undergraduate research through a research assistantship or independent research. URGE funds may also be used as funding support for research conference participation. Awards are competitive; the Honors College administration reviews proposals and awards grants based on the quality of the proposal.

Experiential Learning Funds (ELF)

The NOS Honors College offers Experiential Learning Funds to support opportunities to participate in internships, creative endeavors, or service projects. These experiences allow students to gain practical understanding in order to prepare them to engage in real-world issues. Awards are competitive; the Honors College administration reviews proposals and awards grants based on the quality of the proposal.

Living and Learning Community

Jefferson D. Farris, Jr. Honors Hall

Since 1993 the Honors College has maintained residential space, and today it is located in Jefferson D. Farris Jr. Honors Hall. Students there form a unique living-and-learning community, housed in private rooms arranged in two-, three-, or four-bedroom suites. Suite-style living features private rooms, a shared bathroom, access to a community kitchen and a community area on the first floor for student activities. The University Scholars Program awards a private-room upgrade scholarship to pay for the additional cost of single rooms for its eligible students residing in Farris Honors Hall. Additional private bedroom honors housing options are available to upper-class honors students.

Honors students are highly encouraged to live in Farris Honors Hall during their freshman year, and residing in one place makes possible significant first-year enrichment programs. These programs include Freshman Mentors, Peer Coaches, and Pedagogical Assistants.

Citizenship Contract

Members of the University Scholars Program must agree to make positive academic, social, and civic contributions that reflect their commitment to intellectual and educational inquiry, their willingness to foster a living/learning environment of inclusiveness, and their pledge to respect others' ideas and lives. As such, the University Scholars Program requires all students to sign a citizenship contract upholding these values and agree that the University Scholars Program and the Department of Housing and Residence Life hold the right to remove the student from the Honors Living/Learning environment if it is deemed that their presence causes a disruption to that learning environment.

Student Leadership Programs

Freshman Mentor Program

University Scholars Mentors live with the freshmen in Farris Hall. All mentors are carefully selected for their leadership skills and act as academic and civic role models to each incoming class of students. Mentors also work with Resident Assistants to conduct

programs designed to build community. Mentors are trained in a variety of areas in order to become familiar with student needs, satisfaction, and retention. They serve as advocates for student issues and foster a spirit of open communication, honesty, trust, and mutual respect among all students.

Each year new mentors are sought to develop and lead community-building events, academic and technical programs, and public scholarship activities. The selection process includes an application, faculty recommendation, group interview, and individual interview. Mentors must attend training and regular coordinated meetings with the faculty supervisors of the program.

Peer Coaches

Peer Coaches hold regular hours in Farris Hall in order to be available to students who may need to talk about the typical stressors of college life. Their purpose is to provide honors students with an affirming and welcoming environment through which they can receive information and skills related to holistic wellness. Peer Coaches offer support and guidance in order to help Honors College students adjust to the academic rigors of campus life at UCA. The Peer Coach program is offered in partnership with the UCA Office of Student Success. The process of being selected to serve as a Peer Coach requires an application, faculty recommendation, and interview. Peer Coaches must attend weekly meetings with Peer Coach faculty advisor, hold weekly office hours, and collaborate with other Peer Coaches on hosting Active Hours for the Honors College community.

Leading with Expertise Pedagogical Assistants

The aims of this program are to provide upper-division students with teaching opportunities and mentoring from a faculty member and to increase the amount of instructional contact for first-year students. The role of a PA might include leading occasional discussions, reading and responding to journals/discussion boards, or providing feedback on papers. Instructors work out the PA's duties in consultation with the particular PA every semester, as part of the mentoring process that seeks to provide the PA with experience that will be valuable to him or her. PAs may receive Special Topics course credit or receive an experiential learning stipend. Students must complete

an application in order to be eligible to serve. PAs are selected by the *Leading with Expertise* in the spring semester for the following fall. PAs will meet weekly with their instructor, who will provide them ongoing development, and they must also attend *Leading with Expertise* class meetings.

University Scholars Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is the elected student council of the University Scholars Program and holds Recognized Student Organization (RSO) status on the UCA campus. The purposes and objectives of the Advisory Council are:

- to organize and promote curricular and co-curricular activities among members,
- to work with the Honors College faculty and staff in the organization and implementation of University Scholars events,
- to coordinate with faculty and staff in the development and the enforcement of policies regarding the use of the McAlister Honors Center and other Honors community facilities,
- and to work with the Honors College administration, faculty and staff in advising curricular development and the borrowing of exceptional faculty from other departments.

Honors Ambassador Program

The UCA Honors Ambassador Program's goal is to recruit prospective students for the Schedler Honors College and University Scholars Program and assist these students with their interests in the programs of the Honors College.

The program consists of members from the Schedler Honors College and University Scholars Program who complete the Honors Ambassador application and are selected by the Honors Administration Team.

Ambassadors assist with recruiting prospective students through the following ways:

- Send letters and Honors College brochures to the high schools throughout the state, including those from which they graduated.
- Attend College Fairs hosted around the state.
- Attend Distinguished Scholars Day and Bear Facts days.

- Assist on I-Squared Days when applicants are on campus.
- Send postcards to students who have started applications encouraging them to complete their applications by the application deadline.
- Meet with prospective students visiting campus.

Ambassadors are encouraged to dedicate at least ten (10) hours per semester to the above activities and submit their hours regularly through the Honors Ambassador Work Form. Ambassadors will earn incentive prizes based on a tiered system of 10 hours, 20 hours, and 30+ hours per year. Ambassadors who return for multiple years of service can roll their hours from year to year to earn additional incentives.

Retention Requirements

Annual Renewal Requirements

Each academic year, students must achieve a cumulative grade point average of 3.250 or better to remain in good standing and to have their scholarship renewed for the following year. Students are required to enroll in 15 hours each semester, including the fall and spring of the freshman year, but the scholarship will be renewed if students complete at least 27 credit hours in the freshman year and 30 credit hours each subsequent academic year (Fall semester through Summer I). May intersession, 8-week Summer Session, and Summer I classes can be used to raise the annual GPA or total hours to this minimum. Scholarship renewal requirements are based on UCA credit hours. In order to have the scholarship continued from the first fall semester to the following spring semester, a student must earn 12 credit hours or above with a 2.50 cumulative GPA. For any following semester, a student must earn a 3.25 cumulative GPA and be in good academic standing.

Additionally, maintaining good standing in the University Scholars Program requires:

- Attendance at a minimum of 2 Challenge Week Events

- Earning at least three (3) service hours through participation in University Scholars Program service projects

Matriculation Eligibility

During the semester students are enrolled in Research Methods, USCH 3320, students wishing to continue to the University Scholars Program must successfully complete a sophomore lecture based on their capstone project proposal. The student must have completed 60 hours of course credit and meet a 3.25 overall cumulative GPA requirement as well as a 3.50 GPA in their honors courses to continue in the University Scholars Program.

Sophomore Check-In

In the fall of the sophomore year, students will attend a Sophomore Check-In session conducted by the Honors College Undergraduate Research Coordinator. The Check-In session will explain the University Scholars Program capstone process, what students need to do to be prepared to take Research Methods, and what is expected of students between completing Research Methods and taking Scholars Capstone, USCH 4320.

Sophomore Lecture

Sophomore lectures are usually delivered on a Saturday in the Spring semester. Sophomore lectures are typically no more than 10 minutes long and are attended only by the other students assigned to that moderator. Students will be provided with a rubric prior to the lecture. Students will receive a pass/fail ranking. Students who fail will be given an opportunity to re-present their lecture.

In-Between Meeting

In the fall semester following completion of Research Methods, students will meet with the Undergraduate Research Coordinator. The purpose of this meeting is to reiterate the program completion guidelines and the timeline for students' capstone projects. In the senior year, if students are not currently enrolled in Scholars Capstone, they will attend the In-Between Meeting to make sure they are on track for completing their capstone the next semester. Ultimately, the goal of these meetings is to remind students

of the support resources available to them both within the NOS Honors College and across the university.

Graduation Requirements and Traditions

Applying for Graduation

Prospective graduates must meet the university deadlines to apply for graduation. The graduation checklist is provided on the Registrar's Office webpage. Graduation applications may be submitted once a student has completed 90 hours and students will receive email updates on their graduation status from the Registrar's Office.

University Scholars Program Capstone Requirements

To complete the University Scholars Program, students must take Research Methods, USCH 3320, and Scholars Capstone, USCH 4320.

Capstone Presentations

Capstone students will be assigned a time for their presentation on Capstone Presentation Day, which takes place on Study Day, the Friday of the week before final exams, during the semester they are enrolled in Scholars Capstone. See the University Scholars Capstone Handbook for additional information.

Class Photo

The graduating class gathers with faculty and staff for an official class photo on the last day of the Spring semester. 8x10 copies of the photo, suitable for framing, are mailed to all members of the graduating class.

Senior Banquet

The final event is the Senior Banquet also held on the last day of the Spring semester. Graduating seniors, their families and guests, and University Scholars faculty and staff come together for this celebration of the graduates' years in the program. Graduates are awarded their official certificates and given a medallion to wear at the University commencement ceremony the following day. Seniors selected by the faculty give student addresses and serve as masters of ceremony.

