What is an Honors Project?

The Honors Project provides a capstone research, scholarly and creative experience for students completing the Honors Program. It offers talented and motivated undergraduate students the opportunity for independent, distinguished research and creative work that is oftentimes not available until graduate studies. This project is done under the guidance of a faculty sponsor and culminates in a presentation at the annual Honors Project Conference.

How can I learn more and get started?

Each semester several Honors Project Info Sessions are held in Lippitt. These are announced through social media, including the Honors website, and via email to those on the Honors list serve. Honors Project Info Sessions are meant to comprehensively introduce students to information needed to get started. Everyone is invited, and everyone who plans to complete HPR 401/402 must attend once. No RSVP required. Prof. Carolyn Hames, Associate Director, oversees all Honors Projects. After you have attended an Honors Project Info Session, you may meet with her at your discretion to discuss your individual learning outcomes and project ideas.

Who is eligible?

Any junior or senior who has an overall GPA of 3.3 or higher may complete an Honors Project. [Students who entered URI in the Fall of 2015 or later must maintain a cumulative 3.40 or higher GPA] Projects are required for those students expecting to complete the Honors Program and graduate with honors designation on their URI transcripts. Exceptions may be made to the class standing requirement in unusual circumstances or when there is a time conflict, such as may occur with study abroad, requirements of a particular major program of study, or distinguished early opportunities for independent work. Rare exceptions may also be made to the GPA requirement when warranted. All exceptions are granted solely by the Director or Associate Director of the Honors Program.

What is an acceptable topic?

There is no formula for or limit to the focus of your project. Above all, it should be one that challenges you creatively and cognitively, that captures your heart and mind, and is your original work. Ideally it will focus your attention on a topic of your own selection about which you feel passionate.

In selecting your topic, think about what you want to learn, how you want to be different, what skill sets you want to attain. Talk to as many people as possible, including faculty who are familiar with the subject matter you have chosen to learn about. Make an appointment with people in the field of study who may be able to offer ideas and support. Review the Honors Project abstracts and summaries from previous years on Digital Commons (http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/srhonorsprog/).
When should I start?

Start to think about your project as early as possible. As you are taking classes during your first few years, be alert to the ones that especially intrigue you. Get to know the professor and find out what research and creative work he or she is doing. Cultivate academic relationships with potential faculty sponsors early and keep those relationships alive.

Should I do a 3-credit or 6-credit project?

This will depend on the needs and possibilities of your own program of studies, and on the scope of the project you undertake. Your faculty sponsor and the Honors Program staff can give you guidance. When you undertake a 3-credit project, you register for HPR 401. When a project is substantial enough and the time commitment warrants it, the project may be done for 6 credits, and you will sign up for both HPR 401 and HPR 402. Frequently, 6-credit Honors Projects are done over the course of two semesters. Registration for HPR 401/402 can occur in J-term and summer semesters as well as during the fall and spring semesters. Most students complete 3-credit projects. Think of this as about 10 hours of focused work per week during a typical semester (thus 6 credits would be 20 hours per week).

Should I do a project in my major and, if I do, may I receive major credit?

You may do your Honors Project in your major, your minor, or any other area of interest. For example, a Biological Sciences major has done a project in photography, and a Marine Affairs major has done a project in philosophy. The norm, however, is for students to propose topics within their major or minor field of study. Some students request that the Honors Project credits also count for credit towards their major/minor degree. Approval for this is at the discretion of the Department Chair of your academic major/minor, and his or her signature on your Honors Project Proposal and Application will indicate approval for such. If you are granted major/minor credit, it may also be necessary to submit a "Curriculum Modification" form to the College from which you are graduating. Check with the Department Chair about this.

What is the role of the faculty sponsor?

Your faculty sponsor is key to the success of your project. The Honors Project is an independent study. Your faculty sponsor will help you shape and refine your topic, give you advice and guidance as you proceed, set up a schedule of times to meet with you to discuss your progress, and evaluate and grade your final work. Even when your project is interdisciplinary, it is wise to select one professor to serve as your primary sponsor. Professors from the same or different departments who are interested in your work may serve as additional advisors or consultants as you need them and as they are willing, but one professor needs to be responsible for your final evaluation and grade.

All full-time continuing faculty at the University are eligible to sponsor Honors Projects. This is not a requirement of their workload, but a voluntary privilege they will undertake with you based on your talent, preparation, persuasion and long-term academic relationship. By perusing the abstracts and project summaries on Digital Commons you can see which faculty have sponsored projects in the past in your area of interest. On occasion the person best suited to help you may not be a full-time faculty member. Exceptions may be made in such circumstances if someone different is the best person to help you meet your learning outcomes.
What is the role of the Honors Program staff?

The role of the Honors Program staff is both academic and administrative. Proposals are submitted to them, and they give approval for all Honors Projects. The Honors Program staff also serve as a resource and sounding board for the creation of Honors Project topics, as a resource for finding a possible faculty sponsor, and for encouragement, advice, and trouble-shooting as the Project develops. Program staff are fully responsible for organizing and sponsoring the annual Honors Project Conference.

What is the deadline for getting an Honors Proposal approved?

One hard copy of your formal written Honors Project Proposal and Application is due to the Honors Program Office in a timely fashion the semester before you intend to complete the project. Don’t procrastinate! Ideally, we would like to be talking with you about your project no later than mid-semester of the semester before you will be doing the project. Come see us! The last day to submit a proposal is the first day of classes for the semester in which you plan to enroll in HPR 401/402.

Registration for the Honors Project classes, both HPR 401 and HPR 402, occur by permission number only. Once the Honors Project Proposal and Application is given final approval by the Honors Program staff, you will receive a permission number for entrance into the course(s).

Will I be required to present my final project?

The Honors Program sponsors an Honors Project Conference on the second reading day of each Spring semester. Each Honors student presents his or her final project to a public audience of interested listeners including other students, faculty, family, and friends. Presentations may be made by way of readings, speeches, posters, photographs, videos, computer displays, theatrical presentations or a combination of these, as well as any other effective means of summary and communication. This is not a time of examination or defense, as required with a graduate degree, but a time of sharing what you learned and celebrating the excellence of your achievements. It is highly recommended that you attend the conference the year before you do your project so that you have a better understanding of what this entails. Dates and details can be found on the Honors Program website, through our social media, or by contacting the Honors Program Office. For those graduating in December, special arrangements for presentation will be made.

What will become of my Project?

An electronic copy of your final project, including a one-page abstract, must be submitted as part of completion of the Honors program. Guidelines for completing these will be explained once you are enrolled in HPR 401/402. Abstracts and summaries of all Honors Projects can be viewed on the University’s Digital Commons website.

Is financial support available for Honors Projects?

In the fall semester of each year, the University’s Research Office in conjunction with the Office of the Provost make available on a competitive basis Undergraduate Research Awards to defray costs incurred in undergraduate research and creative work. Discuss this with your sponsor and watch for the call for proposals around the middle of the fall semester. Applications for these awards require a statement of support from the faculty sponsor.
In addition, the Honors Program is fortunate to have special funds for student projects from various memorial scholarships and the Office of the Provost. Information about these, the Honors Opportunity Funds, are available on the Honors Program website.

**Are there special considerations if I do human or animal research?**

Undergraduate research projects that involve human subjects will need to get approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at URI. The IRB ensures that research is conducted ethically and that the rights of human subjects are respected. Human subject research does not just refer to medical experiments; behavioral and social science research is also considered human subject research. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Surveys of URI undergraduates or other groups of individuals, including the use of online survey programs such as Survey Monkey.
- Oral histories.

The URI Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) is responsible for overseeing the provisions for the care and well-being of animals used for research and educational purposes at the University and serves the public by ensuring compliance with all legal and ethical standards regarding the use of vertebrate animals in research and teaching at URI.

Applications for review and approval of research involving human and vertebrate animal subjects require a faculty member to act as the Principal Investigator of record and assume responsibility for the quality of the application for approval as well as the responsible and ethical conduct of the student's research activities. Safeguarding the rights and welfare of subjects involved in any research, development, or related activity is the responsibility of the University. In order to provide for the adequate discharge of this responsibility, it is the policy of the University that no research activity involving human or vertebrate animal subjects be undertaken until those activities have been reviewed and approved by the University IRB or IACUC.

For more information, please see:

http://www.web.uri.edu/researchcondev/office-of-research-integrity/

http://web.uri.edu/researchcondev/office-of-research-integrity/human-subjects-protections/

http://web.uri.edu/researchcondev/office-of-research-integrity/compliance-training/

http://web.uri.edu/researchcondev/office-of-research-integrity/animal-subjects-protections/

http://web.uri.edu/researchcondev/office-of-research-integrity/animal-subjects-protections/animalsubjects-research-training/

NOTE: please be aware that it may take considerable time to have your request reviewed and approved by the IRB. There is a handout on the Honors website (same place you obtained the proposal application) to help you get started. Don’t procrastination.