

Getting Started: Mentor and Project Selection

If you are eligible to participate, the first thing to do is identify a faculty mentor. You will work closely with him/her to complete the College Honors Application (Form A) and develop the College Honors Thesis Proposal for review by the College Honors Advisory Committee. The courses you select for College Honors may be influenced by the thesis topic. The College Honors Advisory Committee will review proposals from all applicants to ensure rigor across the disciplines.

Submit the College Honors Application (Form A) as soon as you have made the decision to participate in the CASNR Honors Program. Since Form A requires signatures, you will need to submit a hard copy with signatures to the Office of the Dean, 126 Morgan Hall.

You may also request funding. Available funding is limited; therefore, understand that you can complete the CASNR Honors program without receiving this funding. Your project will be relevant to one or more of the missions of land grant institutions: research, extension and/or instruction. Projects must be creative in nature. Participation in and, especially, presentation of the project results at a regional or national meeting in your field is encouraged.

The College Honors Advisory Committee member in your department and your academic advisor can help you identify a faculty member with whom to work. Also, check the College Honors web site for a list of faculty members willing to mentor College Honors Scholars theses.

Information about the proposal is given in the section Selecting a Thesis Topic. Co-mentors from the same department or different departments are allowed.

Faculty Mentor Responsibilities in Helping College Honors Students

Faculty mentors should guide you in identifying a thesis project and writing the College Honors Thesis Proposal. The faculty mentors are expected to meet regularly with you to help guide progress of the project. In the ideal situation, you will become a member of the faculty person's regular team or lab meetings and interact with technicians, post-doctoral students, and graduate students. As work continues on the project, s/he should guide you when writing the final thesis and making the thesis presentation.

Selecting a Thesis Topic

Select a faculty mentor and thesis topic by talking with faculty and doing some research.

Read course descriptions provided by each department to get a feel for subject matter that catches your interest. Check the timetable to find out who teaches the course and then speak with the instructor. Better yet, talk to the teachers whose courses excited you!

Check the web for helpful information about faculty research, extension and/or teaching programs. Many include a statement of faculty research interests, current research projects, extension program descriptions, course information/assignments, and a list of recent publications.

Read articles written by the professors whose research, extension or teaching programs interest you. This can both help you decide which professors to meet with and demonstrates to the faculty member your interest in the field.

Your academic advisor is a good source of information regarding the activities in the department and, perhaps, in other departments and units as well. S/he can often steer you toward the people whose work matches your interests or make you aware of possibilities not previously considered.

Attend departmental seminars that focus on faculty programs. Notices of such events are commonly posted on bulletin boards in the various departments or on departmental web sites.

Preparing the Thesis Proposal Application

Once you settle on a faculty mentor, and a thesis topic or project, you will complete a College Honors Thesis Proposal and submit it to the College Honors Advisory Committee for approval. Submitting a grant proposal prepared by the faculty member for a federal, state or private agency is not acceptable.

The thesis proposal should be prepared in Word. Double-space the text and use a 12-point font with left justification and one-inch margins. The thesis proposal should include:

1) Thesis project description

- Abstract
- Literature review
- Research objectives
- Justification (place the project in the context of existing research literature, extension programming or teaching pedagogy)
- Materials and methods for research, or appropriate procedures for extension, teaching or other scholarly work
- Literature cited using style appropriate to the discipline

2) Timetable towards project completion

The thesis proposal should be submitted by the completion of 60 credit hours, or as soon as possible thereafter. Completed thesis proposal applications will be reviewed twice a year. Submission deadlines are October 1 and February 15. A complete application consists of

1. College Honors Thesis Proposal Application: Title and Endorsement Page (Form B)
2. The thesis proposal

Email the Title and Endorsement Page (Form B) and the thesis proposal to casnr@utk.edu, both in Word document format, and include "College Honors Thesis Proposal" in the subject line of the email.

Since the Title and Endorsement Page (Form B) requires signatures, you will also need to submit a hard copy with signatures to the Office of the Dean, 126 Morgan Hall.

There is an additional step if you wish to receive modest funding to support the work (see The Application for Thesis Funding).

The Application for Thesis Funding

You may request up to \$1,000 to help with the costs of the project. The award may be used for the purchase of minor equipment, software, travel, copying costs, mailing costs, expendable laboratory supplies, plant or animal production supplies, etc. Hourly wages for the student may not be requested and will not be honored. The budget is developed in consultation with the faculty mentor.

Should funds be awarded for your thesis proposal, you will be charging expenses to an account approved by your faculty mentor. Once the amount of the funding award is expended, the department bookkeeper will initiate the process to obtain reimbursement. The department bookkeeper will work with the Office of the Dean bookkeeper to process the reimbursement.

Upon successful completion of the thesis, oral presentation and submission of thesis and presentation files, the Faculty mentor(s) will also receive \$500 for use in his/her research, extension, or teaching programs.

Applications include the Title and Endorsement Page (Form B), the Budget Request Form (Form C) and the thesis proposal. Submit all, as Word document files, to casnr@utk.edu and include "College Honors Thesis Proposal and Funding Request" in the subject line of the email.

Detailed Instructions for the Funding Request

The thesis proposal should be prepared in Word. Double-space the text and use a 12-point font with left justification and one-inch margins. The thesis proposal should include:

- 1) Thesis project description (see above information)
- 2) Timetable towards project completion
- 3) Budget justification (provide an explanation for items contained on the Budget Request Form)

Make sure the objectives of the thesis proposal are clear and you provide an adequate description of the methods that will be used (e.g., a survey will be developed and distributed to... or, an experiment will be conducted with the following treatments ...).

Your faculty mentor will need to assist you with the proposal's budget. On the Budget Request Form (Form C), indicate all sources of funding; this demonstrates to the College Honors Advisory Committee that you have the support needed to complete the work.

A major reason that a project might be deemed unfundable is if the College Honors Advisory Committee cannot reconcile the objectives with the methods and the budget and timeline. Since members of the College Honors Advisory Committee have varied backgrounds, proposals should be written without using the "jargon" of a particular field of study.

If you received funds previously for the College Honors Scholars thesis project, provide date and amount, on the Budget Request Form (Form C).

The thesis proposal should be submitted by the completion of 60 credit hours, or as soon as possible thereafter. Completed thesis proposal funding applications will be reviewed twice a year. Submission deadlines are October 1 and February 15. A complete application consists of

1. College Honors Thesis Proposal Application: Title and Endorsement Page (Form B)
2. College Honors Thesis Proposal Application: Budget Request Form (Form C)
3. The thesis proposal

If the first study day falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the symposium will be held on Monday. Should there not be enough study days built into the schedule; the symposium will be held on the last day of the semester.

Both forms and the proposal should be submitted to casnr@utk.edu as Word documents and include "College Honors Thesis Proposal and Funding Request" in the subject line of the email. Since Forms B and C require signatures, you will also need to submit a hard copy of each with signatures to the Office of the Dean, 126 Morgan Hall.

During the review process, on occasion, the College Honors Advisory Committee may have questions. In these cases, you will be contacted to provide clarification. After all reviews are completed by the College Honors Advisory Committee, notification of approval or disapproval of funding will be sent to you and your faculty mentor.

Just because your proposal is not funded does not mean you cannot participate. You may still participate in and complete the requirements to be named a College Honors Scholar. The College Honors Advisory Committee recommends approval of proposals for the College Honors program and for funding. These are two separate decisions.