

## **Faculty Expectations/Responsibilities for Mentoring Honors Theses**

### **Goal: Assisting students so they can produce an excellent quality Honors thesis**

Prospective faculty mentors are asked to read over the other documents pertaining to the thesis for a description of the project, department documents describing the thesis, and more (see links on our website). Because the Honors Program and Undergraduate Research Program believe high quality mentoring is essential, we have tried to articulate a set of responsibilities and expectations. We believe that it is only possible to give this quality mentoring to a limited number of students. Therefore the limitation on the numbers of Honors theses that faculty can supervise is three over two years, and no more than two in the same cohort. Only full-time faculty on long-term contracts may be Honors mentors, and faculty must be able to mentor the student for the length of the thesis work. It is essential that faculty mentors plan the two years with the student, accounting for study abroad semesters, sabbaticals, and so forth. The mentor must be on campus in the spring semester of the student's senior year, in order to guide the final thesis production and defense meeting. Ideally, the mentor and student would both be on campus during both semesters of the senior year.

### **Faculty Benefits**

Mentoring students capable of this quality of work is gratifying. We encourage students to accept challenges, think deeply, ask difficult questions, and grapple with material in disciplines related to our own. It is satisfying to see them become accomplished, guide them, partner with them, watch them grow, and witness the creation of a capstone project. In addition to this primary benefit, in recognition of the time and work required, faculty will be compensated at a rate of 4:1 (that is, four student credit hours = 1 faculty load hour). This rate is significantly higher than supervising 499 research, and with that greater rate come important responsibilities and a substantial commitment on the part of faculty.

### **Faculty Responsibilities**

#### Responsibilities to the Honors Program:

- Comply with Honors Program expectations, policies, and deadlines, and communicate effectively with the Honors Program. In particular, there are semester contracts and short end-of-semester evaluations of student progress, in addition to the traditional reporting of mid-term and final grades.
- Attend mentoring workshops held by the Honors Program (see the workshop overview online).
- Help coordinate and conduct a thesis defense and serve on one additional thesis defense committee in the spring of the student's senior year.
- Help keep the Honors Directors up-to-date on any accolades the student receives as an undergraduate (e.g., presentations, publications) and after the student has graduated.

### Responsibilities to the student:

- Assist the student in developing a long-term realistic research plan and the skills necessary to accomplish it.

That means helping students navigate the key elements of the thesis process, including the proposal, research, production, and defense; helping them find and use appropriate resources; breaking their project into manageable units and holding them accountable for meeting deadlines in a semester contract ; guiding them in the work habits necessary for success (planning, flexibility, disciplined work patterns, etc.); encouraging the intellectual exploration and ability to adapt when the project goes in unexpected directions.

- Hold regular, substantive meetings with their students. For most mentors, this means meeting at least once a week for 1 to 2 hours, in addition to reviewing drafts of documents or other work outside of the meeting time.

For new mentors wondering what this entails: Faculty plan discussion questions, review the overall plan, plan for next meetings, etc. Sometimes faculty will be working alongside their students – helping them find a resource, reading a difficult source, checking out what’s happening in the lab, watching a rehearsal, etc. They should make sure students understand disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) standards in terms of ideas, methods, citations, institutional review board approval for research on human subjects, etc. Expectations for communication are for regular semesters – there is not an expectation that faculty work with students during Winter Term or breaks.

- Set high expectations and convey them clearly with respect to content, quality, substance of work, and also help the students understand what the experience will be like.
- Provide feedback that is extensive, constructive, clear, and prompt (preferably within a week); comment on multiple drafts/iterations of the final product and/or parts of the product.
- Grade the thesis work (each semester) and provide feedback/evaluative comments to the Honors Program using the appropriate forms; address problems clearly and promptly when the student’s work is not meeting the expected level, especially if the student is in danger of not passing the defense.
- Help students find and explore appropriate venues for presentation of their work and mentor students in preparing and rehearsing their presentations.