

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is an "Honors Student"?

For some students and their professors, traditional classroom experiences, interactions and grading systems are simply not enough. Stepping up to Honors means searching out one's own limits and finding new ways to cope with challenges and to extend one's "comfort zone." Honors students are as diverse as any average group of college students in every way possible - culture, economic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and age - but they share the many qualities. Honors students are inquisitive and goal-oriented, enthusiastic and supportive, skeptical and questioning, and eager to discover their potential. Above all, Honors students seek challenges and consistently strive to achieve excellence!

If you are that above-average, self-directed student, or feel that you have the potential to be, the Honors Program offers you the opportunity to put your abilities to the test and achieve at a higher level than you ever imagined. Still not sure? Remember that every journey worth taking begins with a willingness to succeed, and a single step in the right direction. Believe in yourself! Honors students are people just like you!

What is an "Honors Coordinator"?

Honors Coordinators are members of the college faculty who share a special dedication to maintaining the quality, rigor, excitement, challenge and benefits of the Honors Program. Honors Coordinators manage all of the administrative details of the Honors Program, including screening and approving future honors courses and core students, coordinating all honors program scheduling, promotion and special activities, maintaining contact with, and an updated database of, current and former honors students, facilitating the development and growth of Honors Contracts, as well as developing new program benefits such as the San Diego Scholarship Foundation Honors Book Award Scholarships. In spite of the breadth of their responsibilities, above all, Honors Coordinators always place students first.

Your campus coordinator is accessible and available to answer questions about the program, to give guidance and support, or to simply talk to you about your future goals. Honors Coordinators, as well as their administrative assistants, are the often unsung heroes of the Honors Program. Get to know them, not only to benefit from their valuable experience and assistance, but because they really care about your success!

What is an "Honors Counselor"?

Honors counselors are key members of the campus "honors team." City, Mesa and Miramar College each have a designated honors counselor on staff whose job it is to assist honors students with a variety of tasks including creating an Education Plan to guide them through their community college general education studies, selecting all of the necessary course work to facilitate transfer to their first-choice four-year institution, and to complete an A.A. degree if so desired. Honors Counselors are also the best on-campus resource for information about transfer requirements, transfer institutions, transfer seminars and campus visits by college and university recruiters.

The Honors Program strongly encourages students to meet with their designated Honors counselor on campus (City College: Edwin Hiel) as soon as possible after entering the Program to establish that important connection and begin a dialogue about their future interests and goals. It is equally important to keep your Honors Counselor apprised of any changes in your desired transfer institution or major since this could require significant alterations to your Education Plan and transfer time line.

Are honors classes harder or more competitive?

Most students describe Honors course work as more challenging and exciting, and more stimulating and thought-provoking than other classes. Honors classes emphasize student involvement, participation and performance. Honors students are encouraged to think analytically and creatively and are taught to communicate their thoughts effectively. Group projects are a component of nearly all Honors classes. In this setting, students pool their skills and benefit from each other's strengths rather than compete against each other. Although students will certainly find their honors course work challenging, those who enter the program with strong, well-organized study skills will find that they have very little trouble handling their honors workload.

What makes honors classes different from non-honors classes?

Honors courses emphasize seeing the interrelationships between topics and concepts. Students are encouraged to bring their personal knowledge and experience to bear on a question or issue and interact with others during class discussions and group projects. Instead of focusing on the quantity of the workload, honors courses increase the quality of the learning experience by exploring topics that range in historical, technical and cultural points of view. The emphasis on interactive classroom settings, critical thinking, library research, strong writing skills and group presentations and critiques is extraordinarily valuable to the student because it anticipates the rigor and intensity of the university experience. At the same time, the personal attention extended by committed and caring professors, counselors and classmates creates and sustains the "small and supportive" atmosphere that students come to love about the Honors Program.

How will my participation in the Honors Program benefit me?

Honors courses offer motivated, goal-oriented students an opportunity to learn in an energetic, academic environment that enables students and instructors to explore subjects at a greater depth than would ordinarily be possible in a non-honors course. An Honors designation automatically enhances the impact of a student's transcript on a potential transfer institution because it shows a student's dedication to academic challenge and excellence. For students who complete about 15 units of transferable honors work there are special transfer agreements which offer:

- ⇒ guaranteed priority consideration for admission as a junior to UCLA, Cal Berkeley, UC Irvine, UC Riverside, Pomona College, Chapman University, Pitzer College and Whitman College.
- ⇒ entrance as a junior into the San Diego State University Honors Program
- ⇒ expedited transfer to many other universities who tend to give higher consideration to applicants based on "academic rigor of program completed";
- ⇒ personalized academic and career planning with a designated honors counselor;
- ⇒ opportunities for special honors scholarships, both at the community college level and at transfer universities;
- ⇒ guidance in writing college admission essays and personal letters of recommendation from honors faculty or coordinators.

What is the Honors General Core (CORE) Curriculum?

The City College Honors Program has linked several university-transferable courses together around the theme "A World of Ideas," and encourages students to progress through the sequence together. IN this way the relationship of complex ideas can be explored over an extended period of time, academic skill-building can be reinforced, and a stronger sense of community can be developed among all participants in the program.

The G.E. core experience is certainly recommended as an excellent way to position one's self for the use of our honors transfer agreements (see above). Applications may be submitted to the Honors office in A-1-N, and must include a transcript of earlier work, a piece of writing based on an assigned reading, and possibly a follow up interview. Maintaining good standing, as in the general Honors Program, requires a cumulative 3.25 GPA.

What is an "Honors Contract"?

An Honors Contract gives both students and faculty in a non-honors section the exciting opportunity to do honors work. In principle, a contract could be designed for almost any college course, whether for vocational enhancement or for transfer. It is an agreement that specifies the honors level objectives and tasks to be completed by the student in addition to those of the normal class. The contract also includes the methods of evaluation, a syllabus for the non-honors course appropriately amended with the honors components, and a signature sheet, indicating acceptance by the student and instructor. Contracts are made at the discretion of the professor and with the assistance of campus honors coordinators. Honors contract requirements may include additional readings, writing, as well as special projects. The biggest advantage of honors contracts is that they allow students to explore their favorite subjects in greater depth while compiling the honors units that they need to transfer within the boundaries of their own personal schedule. A course must be on-campus, 16-weeks, and 100 level course or higher in order to qualify for an honors contract.

How do I turn my non-honors class into an Honors Contract?

Once you decide which course you would like to convert to "honors," approach the professor on or before the first day of class if possible to ask if he or she is willing to do an Honors Contract. If the professor agrees, you must pick up Honors Contract forms from the Honors office located in A-1N as soon as possible in order to complete the Honors Contract process within the first two weeks of school. After completing the contract application, it is necessary to obtain signatures from the course instructor before returning the form to A-1-N. As a general guideline, you may anticipate an investment of one-quarter to one-third more effort in earning honors credit, remember that performance expectations are higher in Honors contracts! An administrative process is used to move you into honors standing, and your formal transcript will reflect your completion of an Honors course.

What if a professor is unfamiliar with an Honors contract?

If you are confronted with this situation, contact your campus Honors Program as soon as possible for assistance. While offering Honors Contracts is voluntary, many professors who are unfamiliar with this program elect to participate once they are fully informed about the process and the benefits to students.

Can my participation in the Honors Program qualify me for any special Honors Scholarships?

Yes! All full and part-time students who enroll in an honors course or via Contracts and receive the Board of Governor's Waiver (BOG-W), are eligible to apply for an Honors Book Award Scholarship. These awards, sponsored by the San Diego Scholarship Foundation, are available each semester and may be renewable for students who continue to enroll in at least one honors class per semester and maintain an acceptable honors-level GPA. Awards can be as much as \$250 per semester for full-time students and \$125 for part-time students. For additional information call the Honors office at (619) 388-3512.

Honors CORE students are also eligible for the Presidential Honors scholarship offered every Spring semester. Please see the Honors office staff for additional information.