

**UMASS DARTMOUTH HONORS PROGRAM
INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS
2009-2010 Academic Year**

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I. General Information about the Honors Program

The mission of the University Honors Program is to promote a lifetime love of learning and creative activity; to encourage the spirit of community responsibility; and to enable students to undertake original research or creative work in their chosen field, so that they will be well prepared for graduate study and/or professional employment.

The University Honors Program is part of the statewide Commonwealth Honors Program. The Honors Program is open to qualified undergraduate students from every college and academic department. It is not a separate college, major, or minor. There are approximately 400 students in the UMass Dartmouth Honors Program.

Students who fulfill the requirements of the Honors Program graduate as Commonwealth Scholars, a statewide recognition of exceptional academic achievement. The Commonwealth Scholar honor is bestowed upon graduating seniors at the annual Honors Convocation ceremony in May, and is inscribed on the student's diploma and transcript.

In order to graduate as a Commonwealth Scholar, a student must:

- maintain an overall university GPA of 3.2 or higher;
- complete at least 15 credits of Honors course work with a grade of B or higher in each course;
- complete an original thesis or artistic composition under faculty supervision, for which the student earns at least three credits; and
- publicly present his or her Honors project in an appropriate venue, such as a thesis defense, artistic performance, or conference poster presentation.

Students who joined the Honors Program in or after May 2009 must also complete at least one semester of the Honors 301/302 thesis preparation sequence in the junior year.

Please note that UMD also offers a merit scholarship called the "Commonwealth Scholarship." The two are not connected.

II. Benefits of Membership

In addition to graduation as a Commonwealth Scholar, membership in the Honors Program has the following benefits:

- **Honors courses.** Honors courses are designed to help highly motivated students to fulfill some of their college requirements in a smaller, more interactive, and more stimulating setting. This allows Honors instructors to devote individualized attention to each student, and to undertake special activities related to the course topic. Honors students normally take one or two Honors courses per semester during their first and second years at the university. Unlike many high school honors programs, Honors courses at the university level are not graded or weighted differently.
- **\$300 Honors Program Bookstore Award.** Beginning with the Fall 2009 entering class, every member of the Honors Program in good standing receives \$300 for the purchase of books and supplies at the UMass Dartmouth Campus Bookstore. This award, which takes the form of an account at the Campus Bookstore, is available only to students in the Honors Program.
- **Honors Housing.** One wing of Chestnut Hall, one of the first-year student residence halls, is set aside for Honors students. This allows first-year Honors students to get to know other Honors students quickly, and to enjoy a residential environment that promotes academic success as well as a lively social life.
- **Early course registration.** Honors students register early for *all* of their courses, Honors and non-Honors. Only graduating seniors register earlier. This means that Honors students are much more likely than their counterparts to get into the courses they want, and at the times of day that they most prefer.
- **Honors Student Association.** The Honors Student Association is a student-run organization that hosts a variety of activities and field trips throughout the academic year. All Honors students are members and are free to participate in these activities as their schedules and interests permit.
- **Conference presentations.** Honors students are encouraged to present their work at research conferences both on and off campus. They are particularly encouraged to present their work at the statewide Undergraduate Research Conference, held in Amherst every May. The Honors Program provides financial support for conference travel and preparation.

The Honors Program involves no additional financial cost. Honors courses and Honors Housing cost exactly the same as non-Honors courses and non-Honors Housing.

III. Honors Courses and Contracts

All students in the Honors Program are required to take Honors courses. Honors courses are capped at 15 to 25 students and are open only to students in the Honors Program. These courses are designed to help our students meet the general education requirements that all students must fulfill before graduation.

Honors courses carry the same number of credit hours as equivalent non-Honors courses and are graded according to the same 4-point scale. This is different from common practice at the high school level, where Honors courses often "count more" towards a student's GPA. Each Honors course carries the notation "Honors" in the student's transcript.

What makes a course an "Honors" course? Students often assume that Honors courses are structured just like non-Honors courses, but that they are "harder"—e.g., that they "cover more chapters in the textbook," "require more homework," or "are graded according to more demanding standards." Any or all of these may be true in a given instance, but to define an Honors course in this way misses the most important differences between Honors and non-Honors courses.

So what are the most important differences?

- **Honors courses are more interactive.** By virtue of their smaller size and higher standards for enrollment, Honors courses encourage discussion, debate, and student leadership rather than the passive absorption of information. Of course, not every class can be dedicated to freewheeling discussion, and not all courses are equally amenable to a discussion-and-debate format. Nevertheless, to the fullest extent possible, Honors courses encourage students to actively participate in the learning process.
- **Honors courses are more challenging.** The Honors setting allows the instructor to expose the students to more advanced material, and to assess student learning in more interesting ways. The goal is not to make the students' lives more difficult by making the course "harder," but to intrigue them, to capture their attention, and to bring out the best of their abilities. Honors students often report that they spend more time on their Honors courses as opposed to their non-Honors courses, but that they don't mind the additional time because the topics and assignments are more interesting. This is exactly the response that we are striving to achieve.
- **Honors courses involve special activities.** Ideally, every Honors course should incorporate special opportunities for learning that would not be practical in a larger course. Honors courses routinely involve field trips, special experiments or group activities, and guest speakers. Honors instructors are encouraged to seek funding from the Honors Program for special activities that involve additional expenses.

Honors Contracts. An Honors contract is a negotiated agreement between a student, a course instructor, and the Honors Director that enables the student to take a non-Honors course for Honors credit. The Honors contract is a useful alternative to regular Honors courses for students with particularly inflexible schedules and/or few elective courses. The contract also enables the student to undertake more advanced study than the constraints of the course normally allow. For more information, see the "Honors Contracts" page on the Honors website.

IV. Admission to the Honors Program

Eligible students may join the UMass Dartmouth Honors Program in one of three ways.

- **Incoming first-year students** with a high school GPA of 3.2 or higher AND combined math and verbal SAT scores of 1200 or higher are automatically slated for membership in the Honors Program. Students in this category are added to the Honors Program as soon as they are identified by Admissions or the Honors Director. Students not wishing to participate in the Honors Program may opt out by informing the Honors Director.
- **Incoming transfer students** are admitted on a case-by-case basis. Preference is given to those students who have participated in the Commonwealth Honors Program at other Massachusetts public colleges and universities, and to those who earned very high GPAs at their previous colleges or universities. Admission is limited to those students with 40 or fewer transfer credits.
- **Students who have already completed one or two semesters** at UMass Dartmouth may apply to join on the basis of their UMD grades. Students in this category must complete a brief application form, secure the signature of their academic advisor, and submit the form to the Honors Director BEFORE the end of their first or second semester. Only those students who have accumulated 40 or fewer university credits, including transfer credits, AP test credits, and credits earned during the current semester, may join the Honors Program. There are only a very limited number of spaces available, so application does not guarantee acceptance.

V. Requirements for Good Standing in the Honors Program

In order to remain in good standing in the Honors Program, students must maintain a cumulative UMD GPA of 3.2 or higher, AND meet the following minimum requirements. The requirements differ, depending upon (a) the date of a student's admission into the Honors Program, and (b) the student's home college within the university.

Please note:

- 1) Honors course credits must be completed with **a grade of B or better** in order to count toward the minimum requirements.

- 2) No more than six credits of "Honors contract" coursework may be applied to the minimum requirements listed below.

If you were admitted to the Honors Program...	...in or after May 2009		...before May 2009	
And you are a student in the College of ...	Business or Arts & Sciences	Nursing, Engineering, or Visual & Performing Arts	Business or Arts & Sciences	Nursing, Engineering, or Visual & Performing Arts
Then by the time you have completed...	You must complete...		You must complete...	
15 total credits (including transfer and AP credits), or one semester at UMD, whichever comes first	At least three Honors credits	At least three Honors credits	No specific requirement	No specific requirement
30 credits, or two semesters at UMD, whichever comes first	At least six Honors credits	At least six Honors credits	At least six Honors credits	No specific requirement
60 credits, or four semesters at UMD, whichever comes first	At least twelve Honors credits	At least nine Honors credits	At least twelve Honors credits	At least six Honors credits
90 credits, or six semesters at UMD, whichever comes first	At least fifteen Honors credits, including at least one semester of the Honors 301/302 sequence, and submission of thesis/project proposal	At least twelve Honors credits, including at least one semester of the Honors 301/302 sequence, and submission of thesis/project proposal	At least twelve Honors credits	At least six Honors credits
Your final semester	All Commonwealth Scholar	All Commonwealth Scholar	All Commonwealth Scholar	All Commonwealth Scholar

	graduation requirements	graduation requirements	graduation requirements	graduation requirements
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Important Notes:

- 1) Students admitted into the Honors Program before May 2009, but who successfully applied for the Honors Program Bookstore Award in May 2009, must meet the newer standards in order to continue to receive the award.
- 2) First-semester freshmen who enter UMass Dartmouth with 12 or more AP or transfer credits must take at least six credits of Honors coursework in the first semester in order to remain on track. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Honors Director.
- 3) Transfer students are normally expected to come into compliance with the minimum requirements **BY THE END OF THEIR FIRST SEMESTER** at UMass Dartmouth. Failure to do so will result in disqualification for the Bookstore Award. Exceptions may be made in advance with the explicit permission of the Honors Director.
- 4) Students who join the Honors Program after their first or second semester at UMD are normally expected to come into compliance with the minimum requirements **BY THE END OF THEIR FIRST SEMESTER IN THE HONORS PROGRAM**. Failure to do so will result in loss of the Bookstore Award. Exceptions may be made in advance with the explicit permission of the Honors Director.

V. Dismissal, Probation, and Withdrawal

Students who fail to maintain good standing will be dismissed from the Honors Program or placed on Honors probation.

Dismissal. If a student's cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 at any time, the student will be immediately dismissed from the Honors Program. Dismissal from the Honors Program is not reflected on the student's transcript.

Probation. If a student's cumulative GPA falls between 3.0 and 3.2, and/or the student fails to meet the minimum Honors course credit requirements for good standing, then the student will be placed on Honors probation for one semester. Honors probation is not reflected on the student's transcript.

During the probationary semester, the student will not receive the Honors Program Bookstore Award, but will retain all of the other benefits of membership in the Honors Program, including early registration.

If, at the end of the probationary semester, the student meets the minimum standards for good standing, then the student will be released from probation and will once again receive the Bookstore Award.

If, at the end of the probationary semester, the student still falls below the minimum standards for good standing, then the student will be dismissed from the Honors Program.

Withdrawal. Students may withdraw from the Honors Program at any time, simply by asking the Honors Director to be removed from the program. Withdrawal from the Honors Program is not reflected on the student's transcript.

VI. Honors Center and Program Staff

Director: Professor Robert Darst, Department of Political Science

Associate Director: Professor Jennifer Mulnix, Department of Philosophy

Administrative Assistant: Cindy Pisapia

The Honors Center is located on the fourth floor of the University Library in Room 402, just to your left as you exit the elevator.