Honors Program Handbook

University of Colorado Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

2/20/12
Introduction

The Honors Program of the University of Colorado Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences (SSPPS) enriches the professional (doctor of pharmacy) curriculum by offering students the opportunity to design and execute a research-oriented project. In addition to fulfilling the normal coursework requirements of the PharmD curriculum, Honors Program students pursue special research interests with a high degree of individual attention from a faculty mentor. Designed for a small group of students of exceptional merit, the Honors Program provides a hands-on original research experience using contemporary scientific methodologies to develop advanced skills in modern techniques. It is an expectation of the Honors Program that many honors projects will lead to presentations at national meetings or publications in a professional or scientific journal. Students often find the Honors Program to be an avenue to expanded career opportunities. Students completing the Honors Program will be recognized on their transcript and diploma as having “graduated with honors.”

The general purpose of the Honors Program is to “expand the possibilities” open to students who have demonstrated strong academic abilities and motivation. The objectives of the program are to:

1. provide each eligible student an opportunity to pursue original research
2. foster analytical reasoning through applied research activities
3. develop applied research expertise
4. enhance verbal and written scientific communication skills
5. assist each student in developing an independent research project worthy of presentation at a national meeting or of publication in the professional literature
6. stimulate independent critical thinking and enrich leadership skills
7. provide individual mentorship for each student by a faculty member
8. provide a forum for students to discuss their research and other topics through Honors Program presentations and meetings
Program Administration

The program is administered by the Honors Program Committee of the SSPPS under the guidance of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Committee members include faculty members from the Departments of Clinical Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. The role of the committee is to administer the program, admit students to the program, advise students in the Honors Program, monitor progression of students in their research projects and in the PharmD curriculum, and authorize when a student has completed the requirements of the Honors Program.

Admission Requirements

Full-time pharmacy students having a GPA of 3.0 or greater in their professional courses are invited to apply for admission into the Honors Program during their P1 spring semester, P2 fall semester or P2 spring semester. Students in their P3 or P4 educational years are not eligible to enter the program. A student or Honors project may receive funding from merit-based fellowships or scholarships but a student may NOT receive personal remuneration for conducting an Honors project. Application deadlines for admission into the Honors Program are October 1 and March 1 at midnight. All applications should be submitted by e-mail to the chair of the Honors Program Committee (see the SSPPS website for identification of the current chair). The application must include:*  

- A 1-2 page double-spaced letter written by the student detailing reasons for desiring to enter the Honors Program and a timeline for project completion (the timeline should indicate quarterly milestones of project completion);  
- A 250-400 word abstract outlining the Honors project (must include descriptions of relevant background information, the purpose or hypothesis of the research; experimental methods to be used, anticipated results, and how the research will add to the body of knowledge);  
- Proposed dates of project commencement and completion;  
- A brief letter written and signed by the School of Pharmacy primary faculty mentor indicating a willingness to supervise the student for the specific Honors project and a
declaration confirming the availability of adequate resources for completion of the project and that the project can be reasonably completed in the time (dates) proposed by the student.

The Honors Program Committee will (i) verify from the Office of Student Services that the applicant’s cumulative professional GPA is at least 3.0, and (ii) assess the proposal/application for project feasibility. The chair will provide a written response to the student and mentor within four weeks of the application deadline. The response will indicate the status of the application as “approved”, “requires revision and/or response” (i.e., queries need to be addressed before full approval is granted -- queries may be related to the project or the need for additional information), or “denied.” For an application that receives a “requires revision and/or response”, the student must submit a revision or response to the queries to the chair of the Honors Program Committee within eight weeks of the initial application deadline. For an application that receives a “denied” decision, a revised form of that application will NOT be reconsidered.

Student and Project Mentor Responsibilities

Each student is responsible for identifying a SSPPS faculty mentor prior to applying to the program. Interested students should review faculty profiles on our SSPPS website to help identify a faculty mentor in their desired area of research. Any faculty member with a primary appointment in the School of Pharmacy may serve as an Honors Program project mentor. The Honors project may be in the disciplines of translational sciences, clinical sciences or practice, outcomes research, public health, healthcare administration, social sciences, or educational research. Interested students may seek assistance from the Honors Program Committee in selection of a mentor should difficulties in identifying an appropriate mentor arises. In this case, the student should contact the committee well in advance of the anticipated date of application to the program. The primary responsibility of identifying a mentor remains with the student, and requesting assistance with identifying prospective mentors does not guarantee that a successful match will result.
Once the student has identified a project mentor, the student and mentor must jointly develop an Honors research project idea and plan for its completion. The student must submit the idea as an abstract to the Honors Program Committee for their approval as a component of the student’s admission application into the Honors Program (please see admission requirements listed above). The student and mentor are responsible for ensuring adequate progress and eventual completion of the Honors project.

The project is equivalent to 10 hours of work per week for two semesters, i.e., \( \approx 300 \) hours. The Honors Program Committee requires in-person verbal progress updates every fall and spring semesters. To aid in the completion of projects, students may apply two elective credit hours to their Honors project by enrolling into an Honors Thesis Study Course (when available), use one of their P4 rotation electives as a research elective, or utilize both options. When available, the Honors Thesis Study Course will be administered by the Honors Program Committee.

Students will be expected to formally present their completed Honors project prior to graduation (please see Honors Program Retention and Completion Requirements). A written report is also required (please see Honors Program Retention and Completion Requirements). The Honors Program Committee will liaise with the Office of Student Services to ensure students are maintaining good academic and professional standings. The student or mentor should immediately contact the chair of the Honors Program Committee should an issue arise that jeopardizes the completion of the project.

**Honors Program Retention and Completion Requirements**

The requirements for *retention* of students in the Honors Program include:

1. Academic and professional standings meriting continuation in the professional program,
2. Enrollment in the professional program during each in-session semester,
3. Regular attendance at the Honors Program meetings and presentations (except during the fourth professional year),
4. Evidence of timely progress in the Honors Program project (as judged by the faculty mentor and/or Honors Program Committee).
NOTE: Students may be dismissed from the program if they fail to meet all of the above-mentioned criteria. Students placed on probation or suspension by the Scholastic Appeals and Advancement Committee may be asked to withdraw from the Honors Program. Students who are dismissed from the Honors Program will not be allowed to enroll again.

The Honors Program Committee is responsible for designating that a student has successfully completed the requirements of the program. The requirements for completion of the Honors Program include:

1. A minimum GPA in the professional program of 3.0 at graduation,
2. Completion of an Honors Program research project as approved in writing by the primary faculty mentor and authorized by the Honors Program Committee,
3. Submission of a written report to the chair of the Honors Program Committee at least four weeks before the student verbally presents to the Honors Program Committee. The report should be in the format of a research manuscript that would be suitable for journal submission,
4. Presentation of the completed Honors project to the Honors Program Committee at least eight weeks before the date of the student’s graduation from the professional program. The presentation should reflect the report and consist of background, purpose or hypothesis, methods, results, interpretation, and conclusion (e.g., how the research has added to the body of knowledge).

NOTE: Students are encouraged to submit and present their Honors project results at local or national meetings.
P1S, P2F or P2S student

≥ 3.0 professional GPA

review SOP faculty research interests

identify faculty mentor

develop project in collaboration with mentor

apply and present project to HPC for approval

start project

≈ 300 hrs

maintain good academic & professional standards
enrolled in professional program
attend all HP meetings
maintain progress in project

finish project

written report to HPC for approval

≥ 4 wks

oral presentation of research

≥ 8 wks

≥ 3.0 professional GPA

graduation with honors

qualification

project development

project evaluation

verbal progress report to HPC every spring and fall semester

Figure 1: Schematic representation of the Honors Program. HPC = Honors Program Committee.