Why Commonwealth Honors "College"?

In 1996, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education decided to institute a new "public honors college" that would serve top high school graduates from across the Commonwealth. This new college would be located on the Amherst campus and would replace the University's long-established honors "program." It would be called "Commonwealth College."

Like other colleges within the larger University, Commonwealth Honors College has a dean, instead of a program director. Though most honors courses are still taught within regular academic departments, Honors College faculty now direct and teach specially designed interdisciplinary honors courses. Finally, as a college, ours offers students the opportunity to truly live in a community of scholars in the new Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community.

Primarily, though, Commonwealth Honors College is distinguished by 1) the depth and breadth of its course offerings, 2) its greatly expanded advising and support services, covering such areas as national scholarships, research opportunities, and local, national as well as international exchange, and 3) the involvement of students in all aspects of college operations and governance through the highly respected Student Advisory Board.
Does it cost more to be a member of Commonwealth Honors College?

In July of 2010, the University President's Office, with the approval of the University Board of Trustees, established an additional semester fee for members of Commonwealth Honors College. The fee is used to provide enriched academic opportunities for students. The fee helps fund additional faculty, maintain small classes, and provide the experiences which distinguish the College, such as visiting authors and other special programs. The fee will be taken into consideration in the determination of need-based financial aid packages.

Can I graduate with honors from UMass Amherst and not be a member of Commonwealth Honors College?

Yes, students may receive Latin honors (cum laude, magna cum laude or summa cum laude) based upon their final cumulative GPA and college/school class rank. Please see the UG Registrar's site for further details.

I'm a newly accepted transfer student at UMass Amherst. Can I join Commonwealth Honors College?

Please see "Joining CHC as a Transfer Student" web page.

CHC PATHS

What is PATHS?

CHC PATHS is a tool for the Commonwealth Honors College community. Honors students can use CHC PATHS to set up contracts for independent courses, such as an independent study honors (ISH) or an Honors Thesis/Project (499Y/T/P). Faculty members and honors thesis committee members use CHC PATHS to review and authorize these contracts.

What happens once I click ‘Submit’?

Once you hit submit, your proposal is final and cannot be edited. Automated emails will go out in sequence to the following people:

- Chair of committee/faculty overseeing your work
- Second committee member (if Honors Thesis or Project)
- Honors Program Director - in student’s major area
- Honors Program Director - in major area in which the course is being registered
- CHC Academic Standards Committee
- **If this review and approval process is completed BEFORE the add/drop deadline:** CHC will enroll you in the course via SPIRE
- **If this review and approval process is completed AFTER the add/drop deadline:** approval of your proposal will continue offline and then go to: (1) your academic dean for approval and (2) Registrar’s Office for enrollment
How do I know the status of my contract?

You can view the status of your contract(s) by logging into PATHS and looking under the status column. You will also receive automated emails providing you with information at every step of the process.

How do I know when my contract has been approved?

You will get an email from us!

I can't find my committee member in the list on CHC PATHS.

CHC PATHS uses a smart search feature to help students find their faculty member in the list. Trying searching by the faculty member's last name or first name or email address. All UMass Amherst and Five College faculty should be in the list already. If your committee member's name does not appear in the system, complete the rest of the contract and select ‘SAVE’ to save your work. Then contact Roland Packard (Course Registrar) at rpackard@honors.umass.edu or (413) 545-0136 to provide the committee member's name and email and to request that they are added to the list.

What happens when a faculty reviewer rejects the proposal or requests significant revisions before approving it?

To request that the student make revisions, the faculty reviewer enters comments and clicks ‘Return to Student.’ The student is then expected to make the requested changes in consultation with the chairperson. The student then resubmits the same contract (with revisions) and the approval process restarts.

What do I do if the faculty member has not reviewed or approved my contract in a timely manner?

Automated reminders are sent to the faculty member, but students are encouraged to respectfully remind committee members to read and approve contracts. As part of the contract, students should be in regular communication with the faculty member.

What should I do if one of my committee members has lost or not received an email about approving a contract via PATHS?

The faculty member can login to CHC PATHS at any time and review all contracts associated with their account. Remind the faculty member than an email prompt is not required to read and approve a contract.

What do I do if I need the thesis or independent study credit in order to reach 12 credits?

If, on the contract form, a student indicates that the course credits are needed to reach full-time status (12 credits), then the course will receive prioritized enrollment after it is approved. Students who have already submitted a contract but did not indicate that
they need to reach 12 credits should login to CHC PATHS, click the ‘Contact Us’ link, and follow the directions to report the issue.

**How do I change the number of credits?**

Faculty members can login to CHC PATHS, click the 'Contact Us' link, and follow the directions to request that the CHC PATHS system administrator change the number of credits associated with a course contract.

**What should I do if I get a ‘Form Available’ error message?**

If you receive an error message login to CHC PATHS, click the 'Contact Us' link, and follow the directions to report the issue.

**DEPARTMENTAL HONORS (DH)**

**Where do I start for Departmental Honors?**

Consult the Departmental Honors section of our web site for information about DH tracks. You must have a declared major before you may declare a DH track.

**HONORS THESIS/PROJECT: GETTING STARTED**

**What's the difference between an Honors Thesis/Project Seminar and an Independent Honors Thesis/Project?**

An Honors Thesis/Project Seminar is faculty-initiated and offers a structured classroom environment with a defined syllabus and topic taught by an instructor. Research is conducted in a group environment based upon the instructor's topic and guidance. Honors Thesis/Project Seminars and registration instructions can be found listed in our on-line Honors Course Guide.

An Independent Honors Thesis/Project is student-initiated and offers the flexibility of an independent study approach, with the student selecting and negotiating a topic with a guidance committee comprised of two faculty members. Independent Honors Thesis/Project experiences are registered using the Independent Honors Thesis/Project contract forms on our Forms web page.

Students in both options produce a manuscript (either a thesis or project manuscript) which details the goals, methodology and outcomes of their research. For more details, see the Honors Thesis/Project section of our web site.

**How do I go about finding a topic for an Independent Honors Thesis/Project?**
Consider doing research on a topic you are curious or passionate about. Or assess your preparation for grad school or a career and consider doing research in an area you are weak in. Another option is to assist a professor with his/her own professional research.

We further encourage you to consider research which may benefit others as well as yourself, such as a community engaged research project.

**How do I find faculty to serve on my Independent Honors Thesis/Project guidance committee?**

A good place to start is to speak to professors you may have had for other coursework and who have an interest or expertise in your topic area. You could also consult various Honors Program Directors for assistance identifying appropriate faculty.

**Can I choose anyone to serve on my guidance committee or must I have faculty from my major and the Commonwealth Honors College office?**

Please read the Capstone Guidance Committee section on our web site for details regarding committee member criteria.

**Can I do my Honors Thesis/Project during a summer/winter session or all in one semester?**

Yes, if it is an Independent Honors Thesis/Project and your guidance committee approves your time frame. Be advised that Continuing Education registration fees will apply for summer and winter session enrollment.

Honors Thesis/Project Seminars are generally not available during summer/winter sessions.

**I'm going abroad in my senior year; what are my Honors Thesis/Project options?**

If you are studying abroad for a full year, plan to complete your Honors Thesis/Project in your Junior year. If you will be gone only one semester, you may complete it during your Junior year or negotiate a one-semester 6-credit Honors Thesis/Project in your Senior year for the semester you will be on the UMass campus.

**What's the latest I can hand in my contract and proposal for registration for an Independent Honors Thesis/Project?**

You may submit your contract and proposal through the end of the Add/Drop period for the semester in which you wish to be enrolled.
If I'm already working in a lab, and wish to continue the research as my Independent Honors Thesis/Project, what do I have to do?

You must complete the Independent Honors Thesis/Project Contract (on our Forms web page) and attach a proposal for the six credits of additional research you intend to do. You must also secure a faculty guidance committee according to the guidelines in the Honors Thesis/Project section of our web site.

Can I use my summer lab research for an Independent Honors Thesis/Project if it was not conducted at UMass Amherst?

If your research was not supervised and graded by a UMass Amherst faculty member, then the likelihood is no. But you should discuss your particular situation with a Commonwealth Honors College advisor.

How will my Honors Thesis/Project be graded if it's a two-semester sequence?

Please review our CE Grading web page for the grading options for Seminar and Independent options. (Note: the web page information is directed to faculty).

HONORS THESIS/PROJECT: FINISHING UP

Do I have to submit an Honors Thesis/Project manuscript to the Commonwealth Honors College office?

Only if you are seeking honors "with distinction" upon graduation. In addition to submitting the manuscript you must also:

- Satisfactorily complete of all Commonwealth Honors College requirements
- Have a minimum 3.400 cumulative GPA
- Have a minimum B+ grade for each of your Honors Thesis/Project courses
- Have a minimum B+ grade for the final course assignment if you chose the Seminar option

If you receive less than a B+ for any of the grades, you do NOT need to submit an Honors Thesis/Project manuscript to the Commonwealth Honors College office.

How long must my Honors Thesis/Project manuscript be?

Manuscripts will vary in length based upon the topic, content, and expectations of your guidance committee. For content guidelines please see our Manuscript and Formatting web page.

My Honors Thesis/Project was a film project. What do I submit for
archiving in the W.E.B DuBois library?

You are required to submit any "artifact" such as a video, CD, or screenplay along with your manuscript if the artifact was the goal of your Honors Thesis/Project experience.

Artifacts must be accompanied by a manuscript of at least 5-10 pages. Refer to our Manuscript and Formatting web page. How do I format the title page and abstract?

The title and abstract pages must be formatted according to the Commonwealth College formatting guidelines.

Where do I start the page numbering?

Do not number the title or abstract pages. Begin your numbering on whatever page comes after the abstract page. Consult your software program for tips on creating section breaks and suppressing page numbers.

How do I format charts/page numbers/citations/etc. in the main body of my manuscript?

If your department has a preferred style (MLA, Chicago, Latex, etc.) you may use those guidelines. Alternately our web site describes general formatting guidelines which should be followed for the body of your manuscript.

Am I supposed to have an oral defense?

If you are enrolled in an Independent Honors Thesis/Project we expect that your committee will require some kind of oral defense. Your committee members should discuss this with you; it may be formal or informal at their discretion. Students enrolled in an Honors Thesis/Project Seminar will generally be expected to give a formal presentation to their classmates at the conclusion of their research.

My Honors Thesis/Project instructor, chairperson or committee member is unavailable to evaluate my work/sign my paperwork. What should I do?

You should have a discussion with your instructor, chairperson or committee member to negotiate an acceptable solution. In emergency situations, faculty who are not available to sign the title page upon completion of the evaluation and oral defense may email the Honors College office (signatures@honors.umass.edu) authorizing us to sign on their behalf.

I can't complete my Honors Thesis/Project coursework by the final grade deadline. What should I do?

Discuss your situation with your instructor or chairperson & committee member, and alert the Commonwealth Honors College office so we can note it in your file. In extenuating circumstances your professor may grant an INC. If so, we encourage you to provide the Honors College office with a signed "INC" contract which should include:
• Clear description of remaining requirements
• Timeline/deadline for completion of work
• Notation of current grade status prior to completion of work
• Signature of instructor or committee chair & member and student, with the date

See our Manuscript Submission web page for additional options and details.

**Do I have to submit my Honors Thesis/Project manuscript and Completion form in person? Can I have my instructor or friend deliver them? Or mail them?**

We recommend that you deliver your materials in person since we can immediately review your materials and alert you to any problems that need your attention prior to your leaving campus. We also recommend that you email yourself a copy of your manuscript prior to submitting your materials to our office. This will facilitate easy retrieval/revision/reprinting here in the office in the event we do discover problems. See our Manuscript Submission web page for additional options and details.

**I won't be able to submit my Honors Thesis/Project materials by the Honors College deadline. Can I turn them in late and still graduate with my class?**

Possibly, depending upon the date of submission. See our Manuscript Submission web page for details regarding late submissions and considerations.

**After I've submitted my Honors Thesis/Project materials what happens next?**

After final grades have been posted on SPIRE we review your file for honors clearance and notify you and the UG Records office of your honors clearance status. The UG Registrars office will then notify you of your UMass graduation status. Diplomas usually follow within 2 months. Make certain you have an accurate mailing address listed on SPIRE for our use! Please continue to read your @umass.edu email account for a period of about 4 months following graduation in the event any office at UMass is attempting to communicate with you.

**COMMONWEALTH HONORS COLLEGE GRADUATION CLEARANCE**

**How will I know if I'm all set for Commonwealth Honors College graduation clearance?**

You may either meet with an Honors College advisor to review your status or wait to receive our honors clearance status letter a month after your final semester grades are posted on SPIRE. Typical problems which hold up honors clearance include INC, NR or Y grades, GPA < 3.400, unfulfilled Honors College course requirements, or lack of submission of Honors Thesis/Project materials for graduation with honors distinction.
You can help by

- asking your professor(s) to submit missing grades to the Undergraduate Registrar's office
- informing us if you plan to postpone graduation to do further coursework
- emailing us to request withdrawal from the Honors College if you do not intend to complete our requirements

**I need to postpone my graduation to take care of outstanding problems (Inc grades, etc). How will you know to clear me for Commonwealth Honors College graduation when my problems are all resolved?**

We won't know unless you alert us! Please contact us (advisor@honors.umass.edu or 413.545.2483) after you see that SPIRE has recorded all the changes you were awaiting and you are ready for us to resume your honors clearance.

**Can I graduate from the University if I haven't finished my Commonwealth Honors College requirements?**

Your UMass graduation clearance is dependent upon many factors, including completion of your Commonwealth Honors College requirements. If you do not intend to complete our honors requirements and want to be cleared for graduation, you will need to notify us to request withdrawal from the Honors College.

**When I put on my graduation cap and gown, which side does my cap tassel go on?**

The tassel is placed on your right hand side and is moved to the left after your degree is conferred at the UMass commencement ceremony.

**HONORS RAPs**

**What is an Honors RAP?**

Honors Residential Academic Programs (RAP) are intentionally designed programs for honors students who want to live together and take honors courses together. A few Honors RAPs require a declared major (Isenberg School of Management, College of Engineering, and the School of Nursing) and others are multidisciplinary, allowing any student interested in exploring the topic to join.

**What are the benefits of joining an Honors RAPs?**

Students who join Honors RAPs can more easily work on projects and study with their classmates since they live nearby. Students in Honors RAPs also tend to have more
lively discussions in their courses since they know their classmates so well. You will be
living with others who have similar interests. The Residence hall staff (RAs and Peer
Mentors) holds programs that connect students in the Honors RAP with their faculty
and with the topics of their Honors RAPs. Research has shown that students in Honors
RAPs often have a better academic GPA after their first semester, demonstrating the
academic support that comes as a result of being a part of one of these programs.

HONORS RAPs: APPLICATION PROCESS

Why is Commonwealth Honors College using an Honors RAP
application process for some of its programs?

The application process is being used so that Commonwealth Honors College can
ensure that students are well matched with the programs of which they would like to
be a part. This process will also help us create a better gender balance in the
programs, which is a benefit in the halls and courses.

What is Commonwealth Honors College looking for in the
application?

We are hoping to find a good match between the applicants and the program for which
they apply. Some things we will take into consideration when reviewing the
applications are leadership in activities or employment, interest or passion in a given
topic, and scholarship.

What if I don’t get into an Honors RAP by application?

We will have spaces available on a first-come basis for remaining Honors RAPs. There
will also be some non-RAP honors housing available in Melville, Oak, and Sycamore
halls. Students who want a RAP experience and are not accepted into an Honors RAP
can explore joining a non-Honors RAP. These programs are located outside of honors
housing, please look at the RAP website for more information. Any remaining Honors
RAP spaces will be available on the RAP sign up site starting at noon on Friday, May 27.

When will I find out if I’m in an Honors RAP?

You will find out on or by May 20, 2016 if you have been accepted to an Honors RAP.
You will have until May 27, 2016 to accept a space in that Honors RAP.

What if I miss the Honors RAP application date?

Unfortunately, we will not accept applications submitted after the deadline. If there are
any available Honors RAP spaces in application programs, they will be available on a
first-come basis starting at noon on May 27.

What if I am invited to apply to BioTAP?

BioTAP has a different application process than Honors RAPs. Students invited to apply
to BioTAP should apply to that program if they are interested. They use rolling
admission rolling admissions beginning in early April. You will find out before May 1 if you have been accepted. If you aren’t accepted, you will have until May 9 to apply for an Honors RAP if you would like to do so.

**Can I join a non-Honors RAP?**

Yes, honors students can join non-Honors RAPs offered by the university, they are located outside of the buildings designated for honors students. Some are restricted by major or college.

**HONORS RAPs: LOCATION AND HOUSING INFORMATION**

**What is the difference between an Honors RAP and Honors Housing?**

Honors RAPs are course-related programs located within first-year honors buildings. All students are eligible for honors housing, even if they are not in an Honors RAP. There will be a very limited number of non RAP spaces in honors first-year buildings.

**Where are the Honors RAPs located?**

Honors RAPs are located in all three first-year buildings designated for Commonwealth Honors College students in the fall: Melville, a low-rise in Southwest (in closest proximity to the Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community); Oak (located in CHCRC), and Sycamore (located in CHCRC).

**If I don’t apply for/if I don’t get into an Honors RAP, can I still get Honors housing?**

Most spaces in first-year Honors RAP buildings (Melville, Oak, and Sycamore) are designated as Honors RAP spaces. The remaining spaces will be available for students who are not in Honors RAPs. Students will enter their housing preferences into the Housing preferences application form on SPIRE before or during Summer New Student Orientation. Students will be placed according to their randomly assigned priority selection number.

**Are Honors RAP communities located on quiet floors?**

Although you will be living with other honors students, these floors are not designated as quiet floors. Students across campus are expected to be quiet between 11pm-7am.

**What if I want a roommate who is not interested in an Honors RAP?**

Students must live with a roommate who is in their Honors RAP. There are a designated number of rooms on the Honors RAP floors for the exact number of students in the Honors RAP.
How do I find a roommate in my Honors RAP?

You may meet someone who is in your Honors RAP in a variety of ways. When a student has signed up on the RAP sign up page (after being accepted and confirming their acceptance), then they may look at the list of students in their RAP who have decided to share their contact information. Some students choose to participate in the on-line roommate matching process that is offered by the Office of Residential Student Services. If you are in an Honors RAP, you will only be matched with others in your Honors RAP. If you don’t indicate you want a particular roommate, then you will be randomly assigned one.

Can I be in an Honors RAP and live in a different building on campus?

The Honors RAPs are designated to a particular building, so you must live in the building in which the program is designated.

Once I’m in an Honors RAP, do I need to sign up for housing?

Yes, you must complete your Housing Preference application and confirm that you want to join the Honors RAP that is indicated. If you sign up for an Honors RAP after completing the Housing Preference Application, you will need to reconfirm your enrollment in the Honors RAP.

HONORS RAPs: COURSES/MAJOR

Do I have to take the honors course(s) affiliated with the Honors RAP?

Yes, you are required to enroll in the main honors course (and seminar if it is a component of your RAP) that is a part of your Honors RAP. If you have AP credits for the course that is a part of your Honors RAP, you should talk with your advisor when you are here for New Student Orientation. If there are course conflicts with an aspect of the Honors RAPs, we can sometimes make accommodations, but on a case-by-case basis during New Student Orientation. Since the courses are an integral part of the Honors RAP, if you don’t sign up for the courses in your Honors RAP, you will likely be dropped from your Honors RAP.

How does an Honors RAP work with my major?

If you are in one of the Honors RAPs associated with a College or a major (i.e. BioTAP, Isenberg Honors RAPs, Engin Honors RAP, or Nursing Honors RAP), the classes that are a part of the Honors RAP will help you satisfy your major and/or honors requirements.

Most of the other Honors RAPs are meant for students with any major. They will typically satisfy honors requirements as well as general education requirements.
You will sign up for your courses when you attend New Student Orientation. You will first meet with an academic advisor in your college or major. Please let that person know that you are in an Honors RAP. Your advisor may recommend dropping the Honors RAP if the courses conflict with classes that are in your major.

Some majors have so many first semester requirements that it is difficult to complete the major requirements while taking the Honors RAP courses. For example, students in Animal and Veterinary Science should only consider joining the Ideas Honors RAP, which offers more flexibility with scheduling. Music students often have difficulty working in Honors RAP classes with their music curriculum as well. If you really want to apply to an Honors RAP and are in one of these majors, please contact Melissa Woglom (melissa@honors.umass.edu) to discuss options.

**Once I’m in an Honors RAP, how do I sign up for courses?**

You will sign up for your Honors RAP courses when you attend your New Student Orientation in June or July. If you can’t attend a New Student Orientation session, an honors advisor will work closely with an advisor in your major to enroll you in your Honors RAP courses.

**HONORS SEMINAR SERIES**

For answers to your questions about the Honors Seminar Series, see the Honors Seminar Series web page.

**RESEARCH: HUMAN SUBJECT TESTING**

My research involves human subject testing -- are there special rules or forms I need to know about?

Yes, please refer to the University's web site on human subject testing.

**STUDY ABROAD COURSEWORK**

Can my study abroad courses count toward Honors College requirements?

Yes, via submission of our "Petition for Exception" form.

Can my study abroad coursework count toward my Honors Thesis/Project?

Generally not, unless you specifically negotiate this arrangement in advance with your Independent Honors Thesis/Project guidance committee and the Honors College office.
What is Commonwealth Honors College?

Commonwealth Honors College is the honors college at the University of Massachusetts Amherst UMass Amherst. Current UMass Amherst students with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.400 are eligible to apply. See our Admissions web page.

What's my current status with Commonwealth Honors College?

If you have received an invitation to join Commonwealth Honors College upon acceptance to UMass Amherst, then you may confirm your membership by signing our Commonwealth Honors College Membership Contract. This is typically done at an Honors College group info session scheduled during your New Student Orientation.

If you did not receive an invitation to join Commonwealth Honors College, you may consult our Admissions web page for application options.

What are the requirements for Commonwealth Honors College?

The full curriculum requires nine honors courses via a General Studies component and an Advanced Scholarship component, however, students may prefer to complete only the General Studies or Advanced Studies component for reduced honors credentialing if it better suits their needs. There are minimum grade and GPA requirements for members based upon graduating class year. Full details can be found in the requirements section of our website.

How do I benefit from Commonwealth Honors College membership?

Three of the obvious benefits of membership are:

- enhanced preparation for graduate school or a career via small honors courses and research opportunities
- credentialing upon graduation reserved for graduates of Commonwealth Honors College, i.e., Honors with distinction, great distinction or greatest distinction, as well as Departmental or Multidisciplinary Honors)
- scholarships

Many transfer students additionally appreciate the opportunity to design their own honors work via an Honors Independent Study or Independent Honors Thesis/Project. Some enjoy participating in Student Advisory Board activities. Others will make their mark working closely with faculty on research projects, followed by participation in the statewide Undergraduate Research Conference which is held annually at the UMass Amherst campus.
These are only a few of the many benefits addressed on our website. Please consult our A-Z Site Index for web page locations for these and additional listings.

Transfer Credit

I have questions regarding my Transfer Credit Evaluation. What should I do?

The majority of transfer courses are frequently accepted toward elective credit rather than being equated to specific UMass Amherst major or General Education requirements. This is because the Transfer Credit Evaluator must initially make determinations based solely upon course titles vs. descriptions.

If you believe a transfer course might satisfy a specific UMass requirement, you will need to provide a course description or syllabus for further evaluation. If your request pertains to:

- a Gen Ed requirement: present the course description to the Transfer Credit Evaluator in the Undergraduate Admissions office
- a college requirement: present the course description to your Academic Dean's office
- a major requirement: present the course description to the Chief Undergraduate Advisor for your major

ADVISING

Who is my advisor? Where is s/he?

Each student has several advisors assigned to help with various categories of requirements:

- University requirements: see the Undergraduate Records Office in Whitmore Administration Bldg.
- College requirements: see the Academic Dean's advising office for the college of your major (e.g., College of Arts and Humanities for English, School of Management for Accounting, College of Natural Sciences for Psych, etc.)
- Major requirements: see the Chief Undergraduate Advisor in your major department (e.g., English, Accounting)
- Commonwealth Honors College requirements: see an honors advisor in 201 Commonwealth Honors College at the Bloom Honors Advising Center.

You may start at the Commonwealth Honors College office if you aren't sure where to begin!
Make sure to schedule visits with your Commonwealth Honors College and Major department advisors. October and March are great times for check-in appointments since demand for advisors' time is typically low.

**HONORS COURSES**

**How do I know which honors courses to take?**

A consultation with an honors advisor during your New Student Orientation will help you determine which honors courses are appropriate for your interests, academic plans and goals.

Two considerations when selecting honors courses are:

- which courses will satisfy your remaining Commonwealth Honors College requirements
- which type of honors course best suits your needs: honors, seminar, honors colloquia, honors independent study, etc.

Prior to meeting with an honors advisor, we recommend that you read more about the various [types of honors courses](#).

**How do I find an honors course?**

Start with our online [Honors Course Guide](#) (HCG). This is a searchable database of courses offered as honors. Initially search for courses that you need to complete for your major or Gen Ed requirements. You may also register for honors courses for elective credit. Once you've found a course, proceed to the SPIRE database to register or follow alternate instructions listed in the HCG course description. (Note: Courses in the HCG may not appear on SPIRE if a department cancels a course and does not notify the Honors College.)

**Must I take an honors course each semester?**

Not necessarily. You may adjust your schedule to accommodate other interests such as internships or extra-curricular activities. Just plan ahead to avoid a backlog of requirements in your final two semesters and stay in touch with your advisors.

**How hard are honors courses?**

The challenge of an honors course will vary with its content and professor, but the focus of honors work is enrichment through engagement vs. difficulty. Honors courses may not be any more difficult than their non-honors counterparts but the benefits are usually greater.
Honors courses offer students the opportunity to engage in active learning in a class of 25 or fewer students. Oftentimes research opportunities and an increased level of faculty mentoring are provided beyond those in non-honors courses.

**What is the Honors Thesis/Project requirement?**

The Honors Thesis/Project requirement is a sustained 6-credit research effort typically undertaken in the senior year. You may choose from an Independent Honors Thesis/Project or Honors Thesis/Project Seminar. Each leads to a research manuscript in the form of a traditional thesis or a project manuscript with accompanying artifact(s). For details see the Honors Thesis/Project section of our website.

**How do I participate in the Five College system?**

Students can take courses and receive credit for courses at Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mt. Holyoke, or Smith College. To get help with this, you can meet with an advisor at the Honors College or visit the Five College office in Goodell Building.

**SERVICES AND RESOURCES**

**Where can I purchase textbooks?**

Students can purchase books at designated locations on campus, downtown or online: [efollet.com](http://efollet.com), [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), etc.

**What does the library have to offer besides books?**

Students can use library resources:

- Learning Commons (basement)
- Reserves for courses (3rd floor)
- Best view of campus & sunset/sunrise (23rd floor)
- "Procrastination Station": coffee, pastries, fruit, etc.
- 100 free prints from library computers (or $ on your UCard for this)

**Are there any places on campus to practice my musical instrument?**

If there are no programs happening, students are welcome to use the CHC Events Hall piano for practice. There are also rooms in the Fine Arts Center (FAC). Look for sign-up sheets at the FAC to reserve a room.

**Are there other places on campus, besides the library, that I can access computers?**

There are many locations on campus that provide quick computer access:

- You can use OIT computer kiosks placed around campus: multiple labs in the library, laptops that you can sign out, Bartlett Hall, Lederle Graduate Research
Tower, Fine Arts Center, Thompson Hall, Goodell Bldg, and Whitmore Administration Building.

- The Learning Commons in the library has a lot more space than it seems. If you go either left or right and go all the way down, you will see more computers that are available.
- Specific floors in the library have computer labs. Look on the index in the elevators to see which floors have labs.

**Where can I find wireless internet access?**

There are many Wi-Fi hot spots around campus:

- **On Campus:** Dining Commons, Newman Center, Campus Center, Library, most academic buildings, North apartments, etc.
- **In Town:** Starbuck's, Bart's Homemade Ice-Cream, Rao's Coffee, and more.

**How do I figure out how to use all of the school's computer programs: OWL, Spark, OIT software, etc.?**

Go to OIT to see if they have software and programs for free or at a discounted rate. You can get free security software and free copies of Microsoft Office programs right off of their website. Otherwise, approach the Honors College with your concerns, and they could ask OIT to provide a tutorial on all of the programs.

**Do the ATMs on campus charge fees?**

It varies depending upon the bank.

**Do I have to pay to ride the bus?**

Buses on campus are free, provided you have your UMass ID card; the fee is already worked into your bursar's bill, so use the bus! You can find the UMass Transit schedule and times online at: [http://www.umass.edu/transit](http://www.umass.edu/transit).

**How do I get help finding a post-graduation job?**

Career Services is located in 511 Goodell. Advisors there will assist you with resume writing, internship and co-op information, job searching, interviewing skills, and self assessment.

**HOUSING AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

**How do I meet other Honors College students?**

By participating in student programs such as Pizza & Prof, Weekly Wednesday Workshops, Sweet Tooth Soiree, Film Series, and Faculty Lectures, you will find it very easy to meet other Honors College students. Also, most of these programs provide food from local vendors! In addition, you can get to know other students in your honors courses.
How can I find out about housing options off-campus?

See Commuter Services and Housing Resource Center.

How can I find out about activities in the area?

Check out the Amherst Chamber of Commerce website.

Where should I eat?

In Town sampling:

- Antonio's: Awesome pizza and crazy toppings. Open late!
- Rao's coffeehouse
- Amherst Brewing Company: Local brewery and restaurant. Live jazz.
- Amherst Coffee: Inexpensive and relaxed.
- Rt. 9 Diner: So many different choices. Open 24 hours.
- Amherst Chinese or Panda East: Excellent Vegetarian options as well as Chinese classics.
- So many more!

On Campus:

- Franklin, Worcester, Berkshire, and Hampshire Dining Halls
- Student Union: EarthFoods Café, People's Market
- Campus Center Concourse: Blue Wall, etc.
- Whitmore Administration Building: Whitmore Café
- Roots Cafe, CHC Building
- Newman Center: Newman Center Café
- Greeno Sub Shop: Basement of Greenough Hall in Central
- Sweets and More!: Field dorm in Orchard Hill

What can I do for fun?

Off Campus:

- Puffer's Pond: Swimming, small beach, walking trails. It is located off of Pine Street in Amherst
- The Holyoke Range: Great hiking! Along Rts 116 and 47
- Iron Horse, Pearl Street Ballroom, The Calvin: Concert venues in Northampton Center
- Look Park: Bumper boats, paddle boat, tennis courts, etc. Located in Northampton

On Campus:

- Mullin's Center: Free ice skating at designated times. See the rink schedule: http://www.mullinscenter.com
- The Grad Lounge: Located across from the Blue Wall in the Campus Center
• Coffee House: Sponsored by RSO's, like Greeno Sub Shop
• Student Union: Craft Center, Union Billiards

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