**RWU Honors Program**

**The Honors Community Engagement Requirement**

**Guidelines for Completion**

**The Honors Mission and Curricular Goals**

The RWU Honors Program seeks to prepare and inspire students to be dedicated, engaged, and compassionate intellectual leaders locally, regionally, and globally. Our goal is to prepare students to confront authentic community problems through the cultivation of critical thinking and the application of professional knowledge and skills.

The Honors Community Engagement Requirement provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the Community Engagement Learning Domain and its associated learning outcomes: ***Service-Learning Integration*** and ***Ethical Community Involvement.***

***Community Engagement*: *Collaboration with local, regional/state, national, and global communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources.***

***Service-Learning Integration: The application of academic, empirical, and experiential knowledge to facilitate a better understanding of and approach to the strengths, concerns, and conditions of a community and its constituents.***

***Ethical Community Involvement: the ability to recognize contentious social or ethical issues and use ethical reasoning to guide one’s involvement with a community and its constituents.***

**The Honors Community Engagement (CE) Requirement**

The Honors Community Engagement (CE) Requirement represents the advanced application of community-based knowledge, skills, and tools to an authentic community-based problem. Honors students are required to take up the challenge of applying academic learning and ethical reflection to a real-world scenario or issue, in partnership with community members who will benefit from the exchange of ideas and resources.

Within the Honors curriculum, the Honors CE Requirement is the culmination of student learning within the Community Engagement Learning Domain. Through the Honors CE Requirement, students are required to demonstrate a proficient level of mastery of ***Service-Learning Integration*** and ***Ethical Community Involvement***. **This is a requirement for graduation from the RWU Honors Program**.

Honors students can meet their CE requirement in one of several ways:

1. HON 300, a one-credit course in which a faculty member guides student participation in a rich and ongoing community-engagement experience.
2. A community engagement project that is embedded in another credit-bearing course.
3. A designated Global Service-Learning/study abroad experience.
4. An independent community engagement project of the student’s own design.

Students should plan to fulfill the Honors CE requirement during their Junior or Senior year. All Honors CE projects must have a duration of at least one academic semester, with the exception of intensive faculty-led service-learning projects abroad.

**Students seeking to fulfill the CE requirement outside of the HON 300 course must petition for pre-approval to the Honors Advisory Council Community Engagement Subcommittee (see procedures below).**

**Petitioning for a Study-Abroad, Class-based, or Independent CE Substitution**

The Honors CE Requirement is distinct from community service and from the project-based learning that occurs within many applied courses because of its emphasis on ***Service-Learning Integration*** and ***Ethical Community Involvement.***

To ensure that the proposed community engagement experience facilitates the development and mastery of the Honors CE learning outcomes, students seeking to meet this requirement outside of the recommended Honors curriculum must meet specified requirements corresponding with the best practices in Community Engaged Learning[[1]](#footnote-1). They are as follows:

1. Community-driven identification of a service need/problem;

*Community-driven* service begins with the partnership between RWU (students, faculty, interest groups, etc.), and rests on the premise that community partners know best how to define problems and operationalize interventions. As an institution of higher learning, RWU has many assets to offer community groups, but community partners are far more knowledgeable about exactly what kinds of contributions we may be able to make. Ethical community engagement starts with this conversation.

1. Academic rigor in the real-world application of knowledge;

*Academic rigor* in the application of knowledge puts the emphasis on *learning* in service-learning. Honors CE projects must transcend community service (typically defined by the donation of time and labor) by proposing to offer discipline-specific knowledge or a transdisciplinary intervention in addressing a community need. Generally, this should occur as part of a course or independent study learning experienced, supervised by a designated faculty sponsor or mentor within that area of specialization.

1. Purposeful reflection on individual, cultural, and political dynamics of social change;

*Purposeful reflection* is meant to allow students to apprehend the broader context in which their CE projects are taking shape: what are the social, cultural, and political forces that structure community issues and our responses to them? Reflection reaches beyond the specifics of the local project to allow individuals and groups to consider ethical questions, personal goals and values, and the relationship between a variety of institutions (including between the university and community partners).

1. A minimum of 15-hours of on-site fieldwork with the community partner;
2. Dissemination of the results of the project to the Honors community for evaluation of the student’s mastery of the Community Engagement learning outcomes.

*Evaluation* of the student’s learning is required to ensure the student is meeting the Honors Program requirements for graduation. Thus, the assessment of the student’s performance must be explicitly articulated as part of the petition. If the student will be evaluated within a course, the supervising faculty will be asked to complete rubrics corresponding with the Honors CE learning domain. Alternatively, the results of the students’ work may be disseminated to the Honors community for evaluation, either as a presentation or in the form of another artifact (such as a paper, visual portfolio, or poster).

It is possible that a community service or project-based learning experience embedded in a non-Honors class will not feature all of these criteria; it is the students’ (not the supervising faculty’s) responsibility to understand these criteria, adjudge if they are included a proposed project, and explain/defend the project in terms of these criteria as part of the petition for substitution of the Honors CE Requirement.

Students seeking to petition the Honors CE requirements should submit the **Honors Petition for CE Substitution Form**. Students should bear in mind that it is not uncommon to receive feedback that requires revisions on the proposed alternative CE experience in order to meet the requirements outlined above.

**Timeline for Submitting an Honors Petition for CE Substitution**

November 1st (fall)/April 1st (spring): **Honors Petition for CE Substitution Form DUE**

November 15th (fall)/April 15th (spring): **Review by Honors Advisory Council faculty**

December 1st (fall)/May 1st (spring): **Revisions of Honors Petition DUE**

December 15th (fall)/May 15th (spring): **Final Decision by Honors Advisory Council faculty**

**Honors Contact Information**

This document is intended to provide an overview of the Honors Community Engagement requirement. Additional questions regarding the Honors Community Engagement requirement or process may be submitted to the Honors Program Director or the Honors Program Office.

RWU Honors Program

Honors Living-Learning Center, Stonewall IV

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1. Saltmarsh, J. (2010). Changing Pedagogies. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)