**RWU Honors Program**

**The Honors Capstone Project**

**Overview of the RWU Honors Program**

The RWU Honors Program seeks to prepare and inspire students to be dedicated, engaged, and compassionate intellectual leaders locally, regionally, and globally. Our curriculum focuses on skills essential to higher levels of intellectual and creative scholarship, ethical community engagement, and civic communication and action. We have prioritized three domains of a student’s intellectual and professional development that serve as the bases for student learning within the program:

***Scholarly Inquiry: The ability to analyze knowledge and experiences to generate innovative and creative scholarship***

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

***The Public Sphere: The application and extension of one’s knowledge, experiences, and skills to civic and social life***

The Honors Capstone requires you to demonstrate an independent, meaningful contribution to a particular field of study (***Scholarly Inquiry***), and to reflect upon the value and application of the capstone for yourself and for society (***the Public Sphere***). This equal emphasis on exemplary scholarship and civic engagement is what distinguishes Honors Program Capstone Projects.

**Honors Capstone Requirements**

The Honors Capstone is a set of requirements representing the culmination of the student’s learning and development as an RWU Citizen-Scholar. Together, the components of the Honors Capstone showcase ***how meaningful and distinguished scholarship and a commitment to integrity and community enriches society.***

To fulfill the Honors Capstone requirement, each student must complete three required components:

1. a Capstone Project
2. the Honors Capstone Reflection
3. the dissemination of the Honors Capstone to the university community via an Honors-sponsored public forum

**The Capstone Project**

The capstone project is the artifact of the student’s process of Scholarly Inquiry. As an exemplary independent project within a discipline or an interdisciplinary field, the capstone experience should be credit-bearing, and at least one semester in length. The capstone project may take many forms, such as a creative report or senior thesis, a capstone performance (directing a play, performance in dance, musical composition, etc.), or an applied project in architecture, business, education, or engineering.

Many students are required to complete capstones in their major—a senior-level course or studio, an internship or practicum, independent research or senior thesis, etc. The Honors Program recognizes that the faculty who are best able to mentor and evaluate students on an appropriate capstone project are those in their disciplines. For this reason, students are strongly encouraged to link the Honors Capstone with their major requirements whenever possible, keeping in mind the additional criteria for Honors (*Scholarly Inquiry* and *the Public Sphere*).

**The Honors Capstone Reflection**

The Honors Capstone Reflection is a supplemental written component to the student’s capstone project. It is submitted as a separate document from the capstone. Within this essay, the student articulates what makes his or her capstone project an *Honors* capstone by situating the project within the Scholarly Inquiry and The Public Sphere learning domains.

Within the capstone reflection, the student should address how the capstone project exemplifies a superior level of ***Scholarly Inquiry***, as defined by the corresponding discipline(s) for the designated capstone project. This includes conducting in-depth research within the discipline(s), using appropriate methodological tools and approaches for analysis, and applying professional standards for publication and presentation. Unlike the capstone project, the capstone reflection requires students to communicate this in writing with a new audience in mind—the non-specialized, interdisciplinary Honors audience.

Additionally, the reflection should articulate how the capstone project connects to ***The Public Sphere*.** All intellectual and creative scholarship can be situated in the public sphere—that which comprises (but is not limited to) our civic and social life, politics, and other local, regional, and/or global issues. Within the Honors Capstone Reflection, students are expected to contextualize their work as it pertains to one or more of these dimensions of society. Students must demonstrate that they can connect and apply knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from their own academic study/field/discipline to the public domain. Exemplary students will extend this reflection even further, to challenge their own disciplinary lens and to critique their approach to the project from a diversity of social and cultural perspectives.

Additional guidelines for completing the Honors Capstone Reflection are available on the Honors Bridges page.

**University Dissemination**

The dissemination of the Honors capstone and the ensuing dialogue with your fellow Honors colleagues is an essential component of the Honors Capstone experience. It is in this context that students publicly demonstrate the ability to contextualize their scholarship to a non-disciplinary audience, and defend the meaningful contributions of their work to the public sphere.

Honors students graduating in the spring will present their capstone projects at RWU Student Academic Showcase (SASH) in a special session designated for Honors Program presentations. Students should prepare a formal presentation. You are expected to work with your faculty mentor(s) and/or other Honors Program administrators or faculty to develop and prepare for this critical component of the Honors requirement.

**Evaluation of the Honors Capstone**

The Honors Capstone requires you to demonstrate an independent, meaningful contribution to a particular field of study (Scholarly Inquiry), and to reflect upon the value and application of the capstone for yourself and for society (the Public Sphere). This equal emphasis on exemplary scholarship and civic engagement is what distinguishes Honors Program Capstone Projects.

The various components of the Honors Capstone requirement are evaluated as follows:

1. The Capstone Project receives a graded evaluation by the student’s faculty mentor. This grade should reflect the faculty mentor’s evaluation of the degree to which the capstone meets (or exceeds) the standards of the discipline, including but not limited to disciplinary/theoretical knowledge, methodological tools, and professional standards for publication and presentation. ***A grade of a B+ or higher on the project is required for the student’s graduation with Honors.*** Each faculty mentor also confirms the student has met a proficient level of Honors Program learning outcomes via the **Scholarly Inquiry Rubric.**
2. The Honors Capstone Reflection is evaluated by a minimum of two faculty members of the Honors Advisory Council (HAC). HAC faculty representatives evaluate the capstone reflection utilizing the **Scholarly Inquiry Rubric**and **The Public Sphere** **Rubric*.*** Faculty mentors from within the discipline are also welcome to evaluate the Honors Capstone Reflection, though this is not required.
3. The Honors SASH presentation (or equivalent) is evaluated by a minimum of two faculty members of the Honors Advisory Council (HAC). HAC faculty representatives evaluate the capstone reflection utilizing the**Scholarly Inquiry Rubric**and **The Public Sphere** **Rubric**. Faculty mentors from within the discipline are also welcome to evaluate the Honors SASH presentation, though this is not required.

Copies of the Honors rubrics are available on the Honors Bridges page. Students demonstrating the greatest success with the Honors capstone utilized these rubrics throughout all phases of the capstone process; to guide their conceptualization and execution of their projects, as well as their understanding of and discussion of their experiences or findings. Students should seek mentoring from either their capstone faculty mentors or from faculty representatives in the Honors Program to ensure the effective and successful completion of all components of the Honors Capstone requirements.

**Honors Capstone Timeline and Procedures**

The timeline for completing the capstone project varies considerably across majors. Students choosing to pair their Honors Capstone with the capstone project in the major are required to follow the standard timeline and procedures for capstone projects within their sponsoring department.

All working deadlines for completing the capstone project should be coordinated with the student’s capstone faculty mentor. The student should also work with the Honors Associate Director or Honors Capstone Seminar instructor to determine the process for completing the Honors Capstone Reflection, and for preparing for the dissemination requirement.

In addition to these deadlines, the Honors Program maintains several deadlines associated with documentation of the student’s progress and the submission of the Honors Capstone Project. It is the student’s responsibility (not the faculty mentor’s) to be vigilant about their project, and to meet the Honors deadlines accordingly. Failure to meet the Honors Capstone deadlines may jeopardize a student’s graduation with Honors.

* ***At least two years before graduation…***

*…*students should familiarize themselves with the Honors Capstone requirements and begin thinking about the Honors Capstone with respect to their majors. Students are also required to attend the Honors Capstone SASH sessions each spring.

* ***At least one year before graduation…***

….students should formalize their individual plans for completing the Honors Capstone. For some students, this will involve the identification of a capstone faculty mentor and/or the development and defense of a formal proposal. For others, a plan will consist of knowing which semester they will register for their major capstone course. Specific guidance for various schools and programs is available on the Honors Bridges page.

* ***During the second-to-last semester before graduation…***

...students should confirm with their capstone faculty mentors their role on the project. If the student has not yet discussed the faculty mentor’s role regarding the Honors Capstone components, now is the time to do so.

Students are required to submit an **Honors Capstone Declaration Form** (a copy of this form is available on the Honors Bridges page, the [Honors Program website](https://www.rwu.edu/undergraduate/academics/honors-program/academic-standards-requirements/honors-capstone-project/honors-senior-capstone-progress-report), and in the Honors Program Office). The Honors Capstone Declaration Form serves to confirm the student’s intended graduation date, define the capstone (i.e., identifying a capstone topic, a capstone mentor, and a capstone course or other credit-bearing experience), and secure the commitment of the faculty mentor to supervise the capstone.

***The deadline for submitting the Honors Capstone Declaration Form, signed by the faculty mentor, is:***

* October 1 (or the next business day, if it falls on a weekend or holiday) for spring graduation (May)
* February 15 (or next business day) for summer graduation (August)
* May 15 (or next business day) for fall graduation (December)

Any changes to the student’s capstone plan (intended graduation, the capstone topic, faculty mentor, or credit-bearing experience) should be updated with the Honors office via a new Honors Capstone Declaration Form.

* ***During the final semester…***

… students are required to produce concrete evidence of their progress toward completing their Honors Capstone. This documentation is necessary for the program to confirm with the University Registrar students’ eligibility for graduation with Honors and for inclusion in the commencement program. TWO forms of documentation are required:

1. *Bridges.* Each student is required to post a draft of either their capstone project OR the Honors Capstone Reflection essay on the Honors Program Bridges website. The project need not be completed, provided the Honors Capstone Progress Form is submitted (see #2 below).
2. *Honors Capstone Progress Form.* Each capstone mentor is required to confirm the student’s progress toward completion via the **Honors Capstone Progress Form**. Faculty mentors will be contacted individually via email to request this submission, with reminders to ensure its completion. A copy of the form is available on the Honors Bridges page, on the [Honors Program website](https://www.rwu.edu/undergraduate/academics/honors-program/academic-standards-requirements/honors-capstone-project/honors-capstone-project-progress-report), and in the Honors Program Office.

***The deadline for submitting evidence of Honors Capstone progress (via a draft to Bridges and the Honors Capstone Progress Form) is:***

* + April 1 (or the next business day, if April 1 falls on a weekend or holiday) for spring graduation (May)
	+ July 1 (or the next business day) for summer graduation (August)
	+ November 1 (or the next business day) for fall graduation (December)
* ***Within 2-4 weeks of graduation…***
1. The Honors Program office will schedule the student’s **Honors Program Exit Interview** with the Honors Program Director. This brief 20-minute interview is designed to gather information for improving the Honors Capstone experience and the Honors Program as a whole. ***The exit interview is a requirement for seniors in the Honors Program***.
2. Students will complete their SASH presentation (or equivalent) during a specially designated Honors Capstone SASH symposium or another comparable Honors Capstone forum. The precise timing of this session will be arranged with the student by the Honors Program office.
3. By the deadline for submitting grades to the registrar, students will submit to the Honors Bridges website:
	1. a digital copy of the completed capstone project artifact
	2. the Honors Capstone Reflection
4. The Honors Program office will receive confirmation that the student satisfactorily completed the capstone project from the student’s faculty mentor via the submitted grade for the Capstone Project and the Scholarly Inquiry Rubric. This rubric is submitted electronically to the Honors Program office.
5. Within 2 weeks following graduation, the Honors Program will evaluate the Honors Capstone Reflection via the Scholarly Inquiry Rubric and The Public Sphere Rubric. The Honors Program will post the results of this evaluation to the Honors Program Bridges website.

**Honors Contact Information**

This document is intended to provide an overview of the Honors Capstone requirements. Additional questions regarding the Honors Capstone may be submitted to the Honors Program Associate Director or the Honors Program Office.

RWU Honors Program

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