

*The Burnett Honors College*



*A Faculty Guide to Teaching in Honors*

2014—2015



**A FACULTY GUIDE TO  
TEACHING IN HONORS**

**2014 - 2015**

*The Burnett Honors College*

*<http://honors.ucf.edu>*

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Honors! We have developed this *Guide* especially for UCF faculty new to Honors teaching, although our experienced teachers may also find it a useful source of information. We view this effort as a work in progress continuously evolving as faculty offer new insights and suggestions about how to make this *Guide* better each year.

We developed the *Guide* in response to the questions and concerns frequently expressed by new UCF Honors faculty about Honors teaching and Honors students. Our goal in writing the *Guide* is to assist faculty in ways that will successfully prepare them for an engaging and rewarding teaching experience. Some of you may have been Honors students yourselves, participated in Honors activities, or taught Honors classes at other institutions. For you, much of the information contained in this handbook will already be familiar. For most, however, this will be your first experience with Honors.

Honors education is important to our institution in many ways, including strengthening our ability to attract high achieving students to UCF by offering them academic enrichment that challenges and excites them. The presence of these students at UCF helps to raise the overall level of scholarly expectation and performance at our university. For our program to be successful, we depend on the participation of our most creative and distinguished faculty as teacher-scholars. We value not only your commitment, time, and effort in the classroom, but your willingness to assist us in keeping the program rigorous, sound, and vital. Without faculty such as you, this program could not exist.

The *Guide* is intended to present an easily accessible source of information about Honors instruction that you may keep handy and consult frequently. It focuses on those aspects of Honors teaching that we believe will help you in developing an outstanding Honors course and in working successfully with Honors students. However, we also want to stress that the *Guide* is only a small part of our effort to assure that Honors is a positive experience for our faculty and our students. The staff of The Burnett Honors College is here to serve and support you in any way possible. We invite you to visit us at your convenience and for any reason. We also solicit your critical evaluation of this *Guide* and any suggestions you may have for improvement. And again, Welcome to Honors!

Alvin Y. Wang, Dean

## **The Burnett Honors College**

### **Mission Statement**

The Burnett Honors College combines the intimacy of a small liberal arts college with the benefits of a large, research university located in a metropolitan environment. The mission of the College is to provide UCF's most academically talented and motivated students with a challenging and unique scholarly experience, creating a strong foundation for future achievements. The College strives to create a diverse learning community that fosters the pursuit of excellence, ethical, social, and civic responsibility, personal growth, and a passion for life-long learning.

### **Vision Statement**

The Burnett Honors College will lead UCF in cultivating intellectual inquiry, scholarly and cultural exploration, and creative expression. The College will provide a nurturing and transformative environment that enables students to succeed academically, grow personally, and become ethical and engaged members of their communities.

## **The Burnett Honors College**

### **Staff**

Dr. Alvin Y. Wang	Dean	823-0257
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Mr. Michael Callahan	Director of Information Systems	823-3455
Mrs. Lesanne Brunswick	Director of Budget and Personnel	823-3449
Mrs. Bridget Holt	Director of Student Development	823-2877
Mr. Rex Roberts	Director of Honors Advising	823-5871
Mr. Morgan Bauer	Director of Prestigious Awards	823-4019
Mrs. Brandy Blue	Honors Admissions Specialist	823-2545
Mrs. Denise Crisafi	Program Coordinator of Research and Civic Engagement	823-6402
Ms. Cynthia Gabriel	Accountant	823-0325
Ms. Jenna Bernier	Office Assistant	823-2076
Mr. Ken Bould	Database Administrator	823-6699
Mr. Matthew Hathaway	Systems Administrator	823-3989
Mr. John Marshall	Computer Operations Administrator	823-0903

## I.

### TEACHING IN HONORS

As with teaching any group of students, there is no single approach that must be followed to be successful as an Honors faculty member. Nonetheless, there are expectations that come with teaching a class designated as “Honors.” Thus, various perspectives on Honors teaching should be considered by faculty new to Honors teaching. In addition, teachers new to Honors may come to Honors with unrealistic expectations of Honors students and their attributes. This section will discuss these issues with the intent of providing new, and continuing, Honors faculty with insights, cautions, and encouragement that will lead to a positive teaching outcome.

In preparing this section, we have drawn from a number of sources including papers and in-house publications prepared by other Honors program directors. We would like to acknowledge in particular the contributions of Rinda West, C. Grey Austin, and Robert Spurrier. We are also grateful for the contributions of our own UCF faculty whose ideas and observations have been incorporated into this section. Additional information on teaching in Honors appears in Part IV of this *Guide*, where you will find commentary by UCF Honors faculty who offer a candid view of their experiences with Honors instruction. Part V contains widely-referenced articles and excerpts that address Honors education in general and Honors teaching perspectives specifically.

### ***What makes an “Honors” Class?***

The most common misconception of faculty new to Honors teaching is to assume that an Honors class is repeating what they normally do in their regular undergraduate classes but just making it harder. Unfortunately, “harder” may be interpreted as selecting excessively advanced materials from which to teach, giving students unreasonable amounts of homework or assignments to complete, or assuming that students have a knowledge base that has not yet been developed. These approaches lead to frustration, hostility, and a sense of failure or inadequacy by both students and faculty alike.

The key to teaching a successful Honors class is to keep in mind that this is an academic experience that should be *qualitatively* different from what students normally would receive if the same class were offered to the general student body. The most effective and lasting learning is active; but we all recognize that it may be difficult to engage in active learning in introductory GEP (General Education Program) classes where the instructor, as repository of all that must be transmitted, spends most of his or her time imparting information to the students. However, students need an opportunity to work with the paradigms that structure knowledge in our fields so that new information finds a home in a context that itself becomes increasingly familiar. The class should be more challenging, of course, but challenge should imply more than simply increased difficulty or longer assignments. Honors instructors should:

- make their classes student-centered
- envision the subject content of an Honors class as having greater complexity and “texture”
- analyze and discuss topics in an interactive setting
- encourage students to pursue special research interests or engage in more original and reflective thought
- create a classroom environment where opportunities for the creative exploration of ideas have a strong presence
- seek innovative methods of teaching that include greater flexibility in conceptualizing the course to challenge and excite students

Although the term “critical thinking” has been so overused recently in teaching circles that it is in danger of becoming meaningless, it nonetheless remains a worthwhile learning objective. Students should be taught how to frame questions and perform critical analysis that leads to a greater understanding of subject material. They need to be encouraged to think and write in ways that develop their ability to grasp point and counterpoint. Students need to be taught not only the content of a course but the assumptions and methods of the discipline, and presentation of content needs to be balanced with conversation about the frame of knowledge. As instructors operate on several levels at the same time, they move students in the direction of becoming conscious of their own assumptions, thought processes, and practices.

Honors classes are purposely kept small so that students and faculty have an opportunity to get to know each other as individuals. In a small class, there is ample opportunity for discussion and the exchange of ideas. The standard lecture format should be reconsidered as perhaps no longer the preferred or dominant method to present subject material. Honors classes should be interactive and involve a number of learning experiences such as projects, use of primary sources, use of visuals, music and video, group activities, Web exposure, personal journals, interviews, guest speakers, field trips, and so forth. All classrooms in the Burnett Honors College building have multimedia equipment and enhancements that support a broad range of instructional activities. A faculty member should view Honors instruction as an exciting opportunity to do those wonderful, experimental and exciting things that should be a part of teaching, but often cannot be realized because of classes that are too large or students who may not be interested in learning.

For the most part, Honors students are engaged, willing to work hard, and are enormously creative if given the encouragement and incentive to display these attributes. Thus, they are students who will be responsive to your efforts to get them involved. Be willing to invest in them, bring energy and enthusiasm to the classroom, and they will be a joy to teach. Honors teachers, then, bring to their work characteristics, attitudes, and habits that

enable them to connect with students and foster their growth. We find that Honors instructors:

- let their passion for their discipline shine through their teaching. Such teachers remember what drew them to their subject as young scholars
- stay current with their fields
- show their students how the subject affects them as people and how to apply both the content and the approach of their discipline to daily issues
- respect students and see them as adults with interesting points of view
- do not expect students to be reflections or clones of the instructor
- remember how it feels to be a learner, a novice
- enjoy a challenge from students and can say, “I don’t know”
- accept and incorporate criticism
- take risks

(Rinda West 1999)

### ***The Honors Student and the Honors Freshman***

All University Honors students are required to take a minimum of 12 hours of Honors GEP classes and most will complete this requirement in their first year. The great majority of Honors offerings are Honors sections of GEP classes. Thus, the typical Honors faculty member will be teaching freshmen students in Honors GEP classes. Teaching freshmen, Honors or otherwise, is not necessarily for everyone. Some faculty come to Honors having had virtually no experience teaching freshmen and consequently do not realize that *all* freshmen may have a very difficult period of adjustment during their first year at the university. Even Honors freshmen need to learn better study habits; they require considerable structure in a course, and need to understand exactly what is required of them to perform well. The Burnett Honors College invests enormous time and effort in these young new students and assists them with this transition by means of the Freshman Symposium, peer mentoring, and a full-time advising and counseling staff. However, most of these students will still need to learn many new skills to be academically successful as university students. Here are some points to consider when

reflecting on the students you will be teaching and how they may respond to you and their peers:

- Because they are bright and have often moved through primary and secondary school ahead of their cohorts, many Honors students may be quite young. It is not unknown for 15 year-old Honors students to enter UCF. Some of these students may also be emotionally and socially immature as a consequence of their youth. Others, more closely fitting the general profile of first time in college (FTIC) students who enter at age 18, may also be immature for a number of reasons. Some very bright students may be so involved with their studies and other intellectual interests that they may not interact regularly with their peers and so may not develop good social skills. Others may have experienced social isolation in school because they were “different.” These high-achieving students may have been taunted or marginalized by their peers (and, unfortunately, even by teachers) and consequently do not make friends easily or are accustomed to feeling embattled in a classroom. It is important to convey to these students that many of the intellectual talents that may have contributed to their social isolation in high school have positive value in a university setting and can be fully developed.
- Some parents of very bright students may also have placed inordinate demands on these students in terms of academic performance while at the same time catering to self-indulgences. The result may be a student who is overly competitive, demanding, or unreasonably critical of the short-comings of others. This may lead to attitudinal problems that in turn distance or isolate these students from their peers and even some teachers. Because these young students often have been pressured by parents and teachers to achieve at the highest levels, they may put too much emphasis on getting good grades rather than on learning for its own sake. In particular, those students who are in the pre-professional (pre-med, pre-law, pre-dental, pre-pharmacy, etc.) majors or who will be competing for limited-access graduate programs may become obsessive about grades. They know that receiving a B rather than an A may mean the difference between success and failure in their desire to enter a program of choice. In The Burnett Honors College, we view these situations as difficult or unfortunate, but

not insoluble, and attempt to work with students to help them mature into productive, responsible individuals. We hope that you will join us in this effort. The classroom is an important arena for developing good academic and social skills and can be of immeasurable benefit in helping students to learn sound academic values and how to relate to and work well with peers.

Having provided these necessary observations, caveats, and cautions, we would like to point out that the great majority of our Honors freshmen are bright, eager, and well-adjusted, and need only your help as a teacher to learn the tenets of good scholarship. Generally, you can expect Honors students to:

- be well-organized, have a sense of time management, take adequate notes, and be able to access a variety of information sources
- come to class mentally prepared, focused, and ready
- have a commitment to engage the material at hand—that is, they are interested
- have a belief in their own ability to learn and to seek out those who will help them master the material (the instructor, other students, tutors)
- acknowledge and tolerate risk in trying new approaches
- have a willingness to accept and incorporate constructive criticism
- have good collaborative social skills
- see education as their personal project or task
- make connections linking class subject, institution, and the world and form broad concepts from their academic experience

While this list must be considered an ideal that even few of the faculty could consistently live up to, it also represents those strengths that we can help students value in themselves and help develop in those areas where they may be weak.

*Teaching Honors Interdisciplinary Seminars or Upper Division Courses—The Upper Division Honors Student*

All University Honors students complete the Honors Freshman Symposium and a minimum of 12 hours of Honors lower-division coursework. They are also required to complete six to nine hours of Honors upper-division coursework, depending on their major. For those students enrolled in one of the professional colleges (Business Administration, Engineering and Computer Science, Health and Public Affairs, and Burnett College of Biomedical Sciences), we have developed special courses that meet degree requirements to alleviate excess-hour problems. However, all students are still required to complete at least one Honors Interdisciplinary Seminar to satisfy the University Honors program of study.

By the time most Honors students become juniors, they have significantly matured personally and academically. They also have settled into an academic major that demands much of their time and energy. Nonetheless, a hallmark of many Honors students is the great versatility of their interests and abilities. It is not uncommon for Honors students to pursue a double major in fields as diverse as Engineering and Music. To provide these creative, curious students with the kind of academic enrichment they need for intellectual development, The Burnett Honors College offers from 10 to 15 Honors Interdisciplinary Seminars each semester. Seminars are selected on a competitive basis by the University Honors Committee. They are usually team-taught by two faculty from different programs or departments.

In general, teaching Honors Seminars should encompass the same teaching and learning elements as Honors courses being taught in the GEP. Although upper-division students should not need the same level of guidance in learning basic skills as do freshmen, their desire for creative challenge, engagement, innovation, and interactive learning will have increased. They are more willing to take greater risks as they become more secure in their own abilities, and they will often feel cheated if they are not given the opportunity to do so.

Team teaching is another means of introducing innovative elements to the classroom experience. The Burnett Honors College strongly discourages “relay teaching” in our Interdisciplinary Seminars whereby one instructor teaches the class for a specified amount of time followed by the other. This practice conveys a lack of commitment to meaningful learning in students and faculty alike. Relay teaching also makes it difficult to maintain the continuity and integrity of the course. Moreover, discussion of an interdisciplinary nature is virtually impossible without the presence of both instructors in the classroom.

However, when both faculty simultaneously participate in the classroom, students are exposed to the creative tensions that arise when scholars and students from different fields tackle and dissect a problem. Over the years, Honors students have commented that a primary benefit of taking an Honors Seminar is to participate in the lively and critical debate that can take place between two or more scholars from diverse disciplines. This experience also clearly demonstrates to students that knowledge is not necessarily immutable and may be fluid and open to interpretation.

While the benefits of interdisciplinary are obvious, the teaching of interdisciplinary courses is not without some difficulties. Perhaps the area that is most problematic is the difference in expectations of students from different disciplines. Sometimes these differences arise in overall expectations, including the nature and extent of work that is expected for a given course grade. Students from technical fields, for example, are sometimes dismayed to see a course that requires five books, because in their fields books are densely packed with difficult material that can be the basis for a semester, or even year-long, course. Perhaps a more fundamental difference across disciplines is the different expectations about the nature of research and term papers. In the social sciences and humanities, a critical research paper tends to be the model; in the arts a creative project, such as a screen play, a short story, or a work of studio art is the model; in other disciplines term papers tend to be viewed more as technical reports of research findings or literature searches. These differences are by no means insurmountable; in fact, they are part of the creative tension previously mentioned. However, faculty are advised early

in the term to explore these differences to make certain that they and their students have a common set of expectations.

Finally, when an Honors Interdisciplinary Seminar is scheduled to be offered for the first time, \$1,000 is transferred to each instructor's department as course preparation funds. The Burnett Honors College recognizes that team teaching requires additional preparation for a class, and compensates both instructors for this purpose. These funds are not paid directly to the instructors but may be applied toward any legitimate professional expense. Each faculty member scheduled to teach an Honors seminar should first discuss the expenditure of these funds with his or her department chair. Ultimately, it is the chair's decision as to how these funds may be allocated.

Faculty need to plan on meeting regularly prior to the beginning of the semester to discuss teaching methods, fully develop the course syllabus, and carefully plan the division of labor. Unfortunately, we have had experiences where faculty have not prepared adequately for team teaching, thinking, perhaps, that the course will in some manner "naturally" develop and problems will resolve themselves. The result is an unsatisfactory experience for students and faculty alike.

### ***Civility in the Classroom***

There is growing concern among faculty across the nation about student conduct in university classes. Unfortunately, Honors students occasionally may participate in inappropriate classroom behavior. As a matter of policy, The Burnett Honors College condemns such behavior among its students. Serious or habitual misbehavior is a violation of The Burnett Honors College Honor Code and is grounds for dismissal from the college. We believe that Honors students should enjoy freedom of inquiry and debate if undertaken with respect for others. Above all, Honors students should set the standard for proper behavior in the classroom. We also expect our faculty to set rules of conduct at the outset of the semester. This is particularly true for incoming freshmen who may need to be socialized in proper classroom behavior. Instructors may have classroom control issues arise when students do not clearly understand what is expected of them

from the first day of class. We recommend that faculty spend a class period discussing both academic and behavioral expectations and then hold to these rules throughout the semester. This does not mean that the classroom environment must be oppressive or coercive; rather, students simply need to know the ground rules. Even Honors freshmen, as with other freshmen, may fall into unacceptable patterns of conduct if we do not give proper guidance and set good examples. It is up to us as members of a university community committed to high standards of scholarship and leadership to impart to our students those models of conduct that we in the academy cherish and defend. To this end, on the following page we have provided a copy of The Burnett Honors College Honor Code, which we expect students to understand and practice.

**THE BURNETT HONORS COLLEGE**  
**HONOR CODE**

*As a member of The Burnett Honors College I pledge to uphold the following academic  
and ethical standards:*

To strive for the highest levels of performance in all scholarly endeavors and to do so  
with the enthusiasm that stems from a true love of learning and a devotion to academic  
excellence

To demonstrate self-discipline, commitment, and responsibility in fulfilling my  
obligations as a member of the academic community

To show thoughtfulness, understanding, and empathy toward my peers, and to offer  
encouragement as they pursue their intellectual goals

To be respectful of, and attentive toward those who teach and mentor, while cherishing  
the ideal that academic excellence is best served where scholarly debate flourishes

To honor the traditional rules of conduct that guide the achievements of a scholar  
including contempt for plagiarism, cheating, falsification, or any activity that threatens  
academic integrity and honesty

## II. PROGRAM INFORMATION

As indicated in the *Introduction* of this Guide, our purpose is to assist Honors faculty by providing them with an assortment of commentaries and readings that focus on Honors teaching and learning issues. Complete and detailed program protocols and guidelines are available and updated annually by The Burnett Honors College. The *University Honors Policies and Requirements* are available online at <http://honors.ucf.edu/>. The *Honors in the Major Handbook* is also available online, and hard copies are available. You may contact The Office of Research and Civic Engagement at 823-6402, or you may also come by BHC 107 during normal business hours and we will gladly provide you with a copy.

In this section, we have prepared a set of instructional and informational pages that we believe may be of special interest to our teaching faculty. In general, these topics do not appear in other sources such as the handbooks noted above or they may be mentioned only in passing. If you have further questions about any of these items, please do not hesitate to contact us.

### ***Honors Classrooms***

The Burnett Honors College (BHC) building has five, fully-equipped multimedia classrooms with a seating capacity of 30 students each. Most Honors classes except labs are normally scheduled in The Burnett Honors College building. In addition, BHC has a 40 station computer lab. This lab may be reserved on an occasional basis by Honors faculty wishing to use it for instructional purposes. However, this lab is primarily for student use throughout the day and evening (M-F 8 AM – 10 PM) and we will not regularly schedule classes in this space. If you would like to reserve the lab for any reason, please contact our Director of Computer Operations, Mr. Michael Callahan, at 823-3455 and he will explain lab policies and procedures. His office is located in BHC 101A.

Questions concerning all other classroom scheduling should be directed to the Office of Honors Advising at 407-823-5871.

### ***Scheduling Honors Classes***

#### General Education Program (GEP) Classes

The most important point of information for Burnett Honors College faculty regarding the scheduling of Honors GEP classes is that all scheduling requests must go through the designated “scheduling” individuals in their respective departments. Currently, Honors initiates requests (often a year in advance) to Department Chairs for the courses we need and the number of sections for each. The department usually provides the course time and day, and we schedule the BHC classrooms on a space available basis.

#### Honors Interdisciplinary Seminars

Because Honors seminars are not intended to become permanent offerings and are often taught by more than one person, curricular approvals and scheduling of these classes can be time-consuming and confusing. The easiest way for participating faculty to avoid problems, scheduling errors, and confusion is to maintain *constant contact* with our office and the participating academic departments throughout the process. To facilitate the curricular approval process and assist faculty with questions they may have, The Burnett

Honors College has prepared a booklet entitled, *Honors Interdisciplinary Seminar Course Approval Package for Faculty*. This guide is available online at [http://www.honors.ucf.edu/Faculty\\_Info.asp](http://www.honors.ucf.edu/Faculty_Info.asp). All faculty teaching Honors Interdisciplinary Seminars for the first time will be provided with a copy of this booklet when their course proposal has been approved for offering.

Approval by the University Honors Committee of your seminar proposal *does not* constitute a deferral of, or substitution for, the normal curricular process. To the contrary, following approval of the proposal by the University Honors Committee, by far the most tedious and difficult tasks in the approval and scheduling processes still remain. The reasons for the difficulty lie in having to coordinate the many individuals and committees that are involved in approving a new course and then scheduling this interdisciplinary offering. The Honors staff will do everything possible to facilitate this process and to answer any questions you may have. Thus, it is important that you keep us abreast of the process as it transpires.

Most Honors Interdisciplinary Seminars are taught by at least two faculty and are offered as Special Topics. They are also cross-listed in the Course Schedule for each participating department (e.g. the seminar, “Community and Social Power,” taught by two instructors, is listed as SYO 3930H and POS 3930H). This enables both departments to receive Student Credit Hours (SCH) for these offerings and students are able to select either course prefix for credit. *Each* participating faculty member must complete a Special Topics form for his or her academic discipline (thus, for the above seminar, two Special Topics forms were submitted: one originating from Sociology and one from Political Science) accompanied by all of the necessary materials (syllabus, supporting documents, etc.). This paperwork must then be sent through the appropriate departmental, college, and university curriculum committee processes that are normally followed for any new course. If these protocols are not followed and completed in a timely manner (remember that many of these committees may meet only once or twice a semester), the course *cannot be* offered during the semester we are attempting to

schedule. We recommend that you begin the curricular approval process *immediately* after receiving word that your proposal has been accepted as an Honors offering.

It is also important that you maintain communication with your teaching colleagues so that during the scheduling process, all instructors are included in decisions about when and where the seminar will be taught. This information also needs to be shared with Department Chairs and others involved in scheduling for the department in order to avoid having one department schedule its section at one time and place while the other department chooses a different time and place. Unfortunately, this is an ongoing problem that causes inordinate difficulties in building the University Master Schedule.

Normally, Honors seminars will be taught up to four times over a four to six year period before we rotate them out. You may be aware that the university has a rule that no Special Topics course may be offered more than twice. By special arrangement with the University Curriculum Committee, Honors seminars may be offered up to four times without additional paperwork. We maintain records of when and how many times our seminars are offered and so will inform you when the course will be offered for the last time.

Scheduling questions should be directed to the Office of Honors Advising at 823-5871.

Finally, please be aware that many Honors Interdisciplinary Seminars have long waiting lists. If space becomes available in a class, we offer this space to students on the waiting list, starting with the first name on the list regardless of other considerations. Out of fairness to all of our students, we ask that faculty *do not override* students into these classes on their own. If you would like to inquire whether there is space available in your class, please contact The Office of Honors Advising at 823-5871. They will inform you about the current enrollment status of any Honors class.

### ***Honors Service-Learning Courses***

The Burnett Honors College seeks to expand service-learning opportunities for its students. We therefore encourage faculty to either to develop a new Honors service-learning course or to convert existing non-Honors service-learning courses into Honors courses. In developing an Honors service-learning course, faculty should be familiar with UCF's service-learning course requirements that can be found at <http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~service/>. Beginning in AY 2004-05, The Burnett Honors College will provide \$1,000 in course preparatory funds to faculty who create a new Honors service-learning course. In order to receive these funds, faculty must have their proposed course approved by the University Honors Committee. Faculty who are interested in creating a new Honors service-learning course should contact Ms. Kelly Astro at 823-6346 or by email at [kelly.astro@ucf.edu](mailto:kelly.astro@ucf.edu).

### ***Supplementary Materials for Your Class***

We have a limited amount of money that we are able to apply toward the purchase of software, videotapes, or other classroom materials. We make these decisions on a case-by-case basis and would prefer that a request not be made at the last minute. If possible, requests for special materials, particularly if they are estimated to exceed \$200, should be submitted early enough so that the request may be included in our general budget request for the academic year in which the materials will be needed. The budget process normally is completed by May 15 for the following budget year. The fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30. Hence, a request for materials needed for Fall 2014, for example, should be submitted prior to May 15, 2014. Departments receive course replacement funds for offering Honors Interdisciplinary Seminars, included in which is \$350 for course materials. The instructor should utilize these funds first before asking for additional course support.

Questions regarding the purchase of supplementary materials should be directed to Dr. Alvin Wang at 823-0257.

### ***The Honors Computer Lab and Reading Room***

As noted above, the Honors Computer Lab (BHC 121) as well as the Reading Room (BHC 122) may be reserved for limited class use. Like the lab, the Reading Room is a student use area, and while we can permit its being scheduled from time to time for class meetings (or for some other special occasion), it as well must be kept available for use by our general Honors student population.

Questions regarding the use of the Honors Computer Lab should be directed to Mr. Michael Callahan at 823-3455.

### ***Faculty and Student Evaluations***

The Burnett Honors College conducts its own evaluations at about the same time that the university is doing end-of-the-semester student evaluations of faculty, or about three weeks before the close of the term. We have developed our own form for students to evaluate faculty that requires written responses. This is to be administered *in addition to* (not in lieu of) the university evaluation. We also give the students the opportunity to request that the faculty member provide a written evaluation of their performance (in addition to the letter grade received for the course). Therefore, at the close of the semester, an envelope that contains two sets of evaluations is sent to every faculty member who is teaching an Honors course:

1) Student Evaluation of Faculty (white form)

These forms are to be distributed by a student to everyone in your class. As with university evaluations, ***you should not be present in the room when these evaluations are being completed.*** After the students have been given ample time to complete the evaluations, they should be collected by the same student who distributed them and be hand-delivered to The Burnett Honors College, BHC 107. ***Please do not return Honors evaluations to any other academic office since they run the risk of being lost or discarded.*** Photocopies of these evaluations will be sent to you after the end of the semester. The originals will be placed in a binder

in our Honors Reading Room (BHC 122) and are available to all Honors students. It is important to assure the students that these evaluations will not become available to you until after grades have been submitted.

2) Faculty Evaluation of Students (green form)

The second set of evaluations in the packet gives students an opportunity to be evaluated in much the same way as the faculty. These evaluations are *optional* for the instructor and the student and should be distributed *separately from the evaluations of faculty*. Since they will not be completed during the class period and do not influence a final grade, you may hand out these forms and then collect them yourself. Although this part of the evaluation is optional, it is important that you encourage your students to engage in this evaluation process. In addition to providing the student with beneficial input from the instructor, these evaluations may be called upon to provide supporting documentation for letters of recommendation for scholarships, graduate school, medical school, law school, or employment. If a student chooses to be evaluated, he or she should write his or her name on the evaluation form and return it to you. When you have completed all of your students' evaluations, please return them to The Burnett Honors College, BHC 107. Each individual evaluation will be filed with the student's records. Please note that students have the right to access their own files. *If you decide not to provide students with an evaluation of their performance, we suggest you not hand them out to the students at all. The forms should be removed from the evaluation packet prior to administering the student evaluation of faculty and discarded.* If the student receives a form, fills it out, and then returns it to you, the student expects that you will then complete the form.

Questions regarding student and faculty evaluations should be directed to Mr. Rex Roberts at 823-5871.

### ***Field Trips***

On a case by case basis, The Burnett Honors College may consider funding or subsidizing the cost of a class field trip. These arrangements must be made at the beginning of the semester, especially if buses or vans are required because they must be ordered many weeks in advance. If you do not plan to request funding assistance from The Burnett Honors College for a field trip but are unfamiliar with the protocols regarding insurance and liability, please check with our office to be certain that you have all the necessary information.

### ***Reduced-rate or Subsidized Tickets***

On occasion, faculty members request that students attend a particular cultural event (play, film, exhibit) individually or as a group. Once again, we respond to these requests on a case-by-case basis. If faculty are able to purchase tickets in a block and/or at a reduced rate, we normally ask that they do this with their own funds and then present a receipt for reimbursement. If prior arrangements are made, and depending on the amount requested, The Burnett Honors College may agree to pay the full price of these tickets or subsidize a portion of the cost. Reimbursement of the faculty member may still be necessary, however. At times these funds can be drawn directly from state monies (if the event is a class requirement that appears in the course syllabus) which facilitates the process, but normally they must come from our very limited Foundation account.

### **III.**

#### **HONORS IN THE MAJOR**

In this section we offer some advice and information about the various roles that faculty play in the Honors in the Major (HIM) thesis process. In fulfilling any one of these roles, we believe that faculty will find the HIM process to be a rewarding and educational experience (for themselves as well as for the student). There are three roles that faculty members can assume to facilitate the successful completion and defense of an HIM thesis: thesis advisor, thesis committee member, and outside committee member. These roles can be overlapping (the thesis advisor is also a member of the committee), but for purposes of clarity we have organized this section according to these three roles. In reading this section, it should become evident that there are two overarching expectations that extend across all three faculty roles. The first is that the highest standards of professionalism, mutual respect, and patience should be expected from all participants in the thesis process. The second is that open, clear, and regular communication occurs between all thesis committee members and the student. Adherence to these expectations will not only facilitate student progress in the thesis process, but also ensures the positive socialization of a future scholar into the academy.

## ***Faculty Responsibilities on an HIM Thesis Committee***

### Thesis Advisor

As a thesis advisor you play a formative role in the development of a future scholar in your discipline. In addition to being scholarly mentors and role models, thesis advisors also serve as thesis committee chairs who help their students navigate through the more technical aspects of the thesis process (e.g., thesis committee work and the binding process). Successful HIM students have advisors who not only mentor them on issues of scholarly content, but also guide them through the process of thesis preparation and defense. Please consult the *HIM Handbook* and *HIM Thesis Advisor Fact Sheet* for more detailed information. These materials can be obtained from the Office of Research and Civic Engagement at 823-6402.

### Thesis Committee Members

Serving as a committee member has both its rewards and responsibilities. Being invited to serve on a thesis committee is a recognition unto itself. It indicates that an HIM student and his/her thesis advisor recognize the scholarly contributions that you can make to the student's development as a scholar.

Yet we have all heard thesis or dissertation horror stories. Perhaps some of us were the victims of overzealous committee members and can recall the panic, embarrassment, and dismay that we experienced when intimidated by a panel of academic curmudgeons. With the benefit of hindsight we should recognize that these experiences are not requisites to the thesis process and have very little to do with successful learning outcomes. As thesis committee members we should help our students avoid repeating this sort of history. In so doing, we should prevail upon the very best academic traditions of scholarship in promoting the successful completion and defense of an HIM thesis.

As a thesis committee member you will, of course, be asked to make contributions of a scholarly nature. These contributions will largely involve the transmission of knowledge *content*. However, it is important to remember that the *process* of transmitting your expert knowledge is also important to the success of a thesis. Indeed, the interaction

between you, the thesis student, and other committee members can be viewed as the initial socialization of our very best students into the community of scholars. In other words, you become a positive role model for how future scholars learn to communicate and relate to others in the academic community. As such, these interactions should always exemplify the highest standards of professionalism, mutual respect, and patience. The thesis process is not the place for carelessness, intimidation, or “one upmanship.”

As a thesis committee member, you also have a right to expect appropriate behavior on the part of the thesis student. If you believe that a thesis student is not performing to the high levels of professionalism, respect, and patience that you have set for yourself, you should communicate this in a constructive way to the student. Constructive feedback is an important component of the socialization process. For instance, if a thesis student has missed an appointment, or has not given you enough time to read a thesis draft, you should raise your concerns to the student immediately. The key to avoiding these difficulties may be to schedule in advance when you will meet with the student and what materials the student should bring to each meeting. Encourage the thesis student to stay in e-mail contact with you and to keep you regularly updated as to his/her thesis progress. Moreover, determine as soon as possible when the student plans on an oral defense. Knowing which week the oral defense is planned will minimize any scheduling conflicts that might emerge; especially when faculty are making travel plans for the summer.

The key to a successful thesis defense is that there are no “surprises.” That is, neither the student is surprised by issues raised by the committee nor are any committee members surprised by the content or quality of the thesis. The best way to avoid such surprises is for all concerned to maintain open, clear, and regular communication with each other throughout the thesis process. Consequently, any issues of a substantive nature that you may have as a thesis committee member should have been raised and resolved when the thesis committee reviewed earlier drafts of the thesis. To raise substantive concerns for the first time during the oral defense is unfair to all concerned and invites a repeat of the thesis horror stories that we should avoid.

### Outside Committee Members

On occasion, you will be approached by an HIM student inviting you to serve as an outside committee member (i.e., a faculty member not in the student's program or department). Some of us may be initially surprised by these invitations for two reasons. First, it may be the case that you are not familiar with the student; in fact, the student may not have taken any of your classes. Second, a natural initial response by some of us might be "But I'm not an expert in this area! What could I possibly contribute to this thesis?"

To these concerns we offer two observations. First, the reason why an outside committee member is a requirement for the thesis committee is so that scholars from different disciplines can provide insights and viewpoints which are not typically forthcoming from a highly focused disciplinary discussion. The fact is, as an outside committee member you *can* make a contribution as an intelligent and interested scholar who can bring a fresh perspective to the thesis. This fact was undoubtedly recognized by the student and thesis advisor; hence your invitation to serve on the thesis committee. Second, a benefit of serving as an outside committee member is that the thesis process can be a learning experience for you as well as the student. Frequently, in learning about another discipline you can gain valuable insights regarding issues and perspectives that relate to your own intellectual and research interests. This is the basis for interdisciplinarity: the notion that complex issues and problems can only be solved from a discussion that considers diverse sources.

Whether you are serving as a thesis chair or committee members, we in The Burnett Honors College believe that you and your student will have a rewarding learning experience. We appreciate the time and effort that faculty invest in an HIM student and will provide the assistance needed to ensure the successful completion and defense of your student's thesis. We are here to help. Do not hesitate to contact Office of Research and Civic Engagement at 823-6402 if you or your HIM student have any questions about the thesis process.



## Honors in the Major 2014 - 2015 Thesis Chair Fact Sheet



This fact sheet highlights some of the information, responsibilities, and deadlines that you should keep in mind as you guide your student through the Honors in the Major (HIM) thesis process. Please consult the *Honors in the Major Handbook* or the HIM website (<http://www.honors.ucf.edu/HIM.asp>) for more detailed information. Also, you should contact your department chair to determine whether there are additional departmental requirements beyond those described in the handbook. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact Kelly Astro ([kastro@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:kastro@mail.ucf.edu)) at The Burnett Honors College.

### **Thesis Chair**

Thesis chairs play a formative role in the development of future scholars. In addition to being scholarly mentors and role models, thesis chairs also serve as guides who help their students navigate through the more technical aspects of the thesis process (e.g., thesis committee work and the binding process). Successful HIM students have advisors who not only mentor them on issues of scholarly content, but also guide them through the process of thesis preparation and defense.

### **Thesis Committee**

The thesis committee comprises at least three faculty members including the thesis chair. These three members must be tenured or tenure-earning faculty at UCF. The thesis chair and one other committee member must be from the student's major department or program. The third committee member must be from a department or program outside of the student's major. Additional members who serve on the thesis committee do not have to be tenured or tenure-earning faculty at UCF. You should assist your student in forming the committee because students are not always familiar with issues such as faculty rank, status, and research interests. Also, help your student determine whether all committee members will be available during the week of the oral defense (this is especially important in the summer).

### **Thesis Consultant**

An integral component of the thesis process is learning to write in accordance with the style and format of an academic discipline. In this regard, The Burnett Honors College has a thesis consultant, Ms. Mary Ellen Gomrad, who can assist your student throughout the thesis process. Unlike a journal editor who only sees a final manuscript, a thesis consultant assists in the planning, managing, writing, and binding of written material that culminates in a thesis manuscript. While reading and editing should first be the responsibility of the thesis chair, Ms. Gomrad will help ensure that your student's thesis conforms to all of the technical requirements for binding.

### **HIM Scholarships**

The Burnett Honors College, in collaboration with other UCF colleges and area campuses, offers HIM scholarships on a competitive basis. Contact your college Honors Coordinator or Department Chair for specific deadlines and requirements.

### **Thesis Chair Honorarium**

The Burnett Honors College recognizes that thesis chairs expend a great deal of time and effort guiding their students through the thesis process. As a token of our appreciation, faculty advisors receive an honorarium in the amount of \$250 for each student who graduates with HIM distinction. This amount is automatically transferred into your department's account as Expense a few weeks after the end of the semester in which your student graduates. For spring graduation, the

honorarium is transferred in early July (the next budget year). At that time we will notify you by letter of the account transfer. Please note that how and when this amount is spent is an issue that you should discuss with your department chair.

### **Timetable for the Thesis Process**

The HIM program requires that students enroll in a minimum of two semesters (six credit hours) of Honors course work. The first semester is Honors Directed Readings (4903H) or for Engineering Students the Honors Engineering Seminar (EGN 4931H), and the second semester is Honors Thesis (4970H). The oral defense occurs towards the end of the semester in which students are registered for 4970H.

The *Honors in the Major Handbook* has a detailed timetable and checklist for progression towards graduation with HIM distinction. Both you and your student should regularly consult the checklist (and each other) when assessing progress toward HIM graduation. In addition, the HIM website has updated information about deadlines each semester. You should impress upon your student that these deadlines are fixed because several UCF units (e.g., registrar and library) require timely delivery of graduation materials. Thesis advisors should be particularly mindful of the following student responsibilities and deadlines:

### **Prior to First Semester**

- Select a Thesis Chair from your declared major. This will be a faculty member who will serve as your mentor for the writing of the thesis.
- Submit the Honors in the Major application and course registration form to the Office of Research and Civic Engagement in BHC 107.
- Register for HIM Directed Readings (4903H – 3 hours).

### **First Semester**

- Create a meeting schedule with your Thesis Chair. Begin work on project development and background research. Begin to formulate ideas for your research proposal.
- Attend the mandatory **Honors in the Major Orientation** (Orientation dates will be sent by e-mail from the Office of Research and Civic Engagement).
- Attend a mandatory **Thesis Formatting Workshop** (Workshop dates will be sent by e-mail from the Office of Research and Civic Engagement).
- Select, in consultation with your Thesis Committee Chair, at least two additional thesis committee members. The entire committee should be formed at least six weeks prior to the end of the first semester. Be sure to check the HIM Handbook about policies regarding your committee.
- Complete your thesis proposal.
- Submit your thesis proposal to your committee no later than two-three weeks prior to the last day of classes.
- Submit your thesis proposal with the signed **Thesis Proposal Cover Page** to BHC 107 by the appropriate deadline.
- Register for Honors Thesis (4970H – 3 hours). Use the **HIM Directed Readings and Thesis Registration** form

### **Second Semester**

- Submit an **HIM Intent to Graduate** form to BHC 107 by the appropriate deadline if you are planning to graduate this semester. This form is available online at <http://www.research.honors.ucf.edu>.

- Establish the date of oral defense with your Thesis Chair and committee at least 6 weeks prior to the completion of classes.
- Meet with the Thesis Editor for your initial format review. You must bring your front matter, the body of your thesis, and a working reference list.
- Complete the thesis or project.
- Submit a completed copy of your thesis to your Thesis Chair and committee at least two-three weeks before your scheduled defense date.
- Submit your signed notice of defense through e-mail (HonorsResearch@ucf.edu) to the Office of Research and Civic Engagement (BHC 107) at least one week prior to your date of defense.
- Complete your oral defense.
- Incorporate your committee's recommendations into your thesis. Make all formatting corrections suggested by the Thesis Editor from the format review.
- Submit a copy of your thesis to Turnitin.com. Your thesis adviser may submit this for you to his or her Turnitin.com account, or your Thesis Chair may create a course section through his or her Turnitin.com account for you to upload a final draft of your thesis. ***This is a UCF requirement for thesis writers at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Without this review and verification that the thesis is, indeed, original work, The Burnett Honors College and UCF will not accept your thesis for publication or completion of the program.*** If your Thesis Chair does not have a Turnitin.com account, please ask him/her to contact the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning which manages free Turnitin.com accounts for UCF faculty.
- Begin the thesis submission process as outlined in the HIM handbook.
- Complete the HIM exit survey which will be available online toward the end of each semester.

Please feel free to contact Kelly Astro (Kelly.Astro@ucf.edu) or Denise Crisafi (Denise.Crisafi@ucf.edu) at (407) 823-6402 should you have any questions about the HIM program. Also, please inform us of any changes to your contact information so that you continue to receive important e-mail updates and reminders from the Office of Research and Civic Engagement about the HIM program and other research-related opportunities.

#### **IV.**

##### **COMMENTS FROM HONORS FACULTY**

In this section, faculty members familiar with teaching Honors classes at UCF offer their insights about the experience. In requesting faculty input, we specified that we would like both positive as well as critical observations about teaching in Honors, and that faculty should feel free to be as candid as possible. Our objective here is to give our new Honors teaching faculty some idea about what their peers think about teaching Honors students and what they have enjoyed or found challenging. As is evident from these comments, each Honors faculty member has had a unique experience that is largely the result of the many variables that are brought to any teaching situation, not specifically Honors. However, there are also some common threads that are evident in this commentary that should prove interesting and useful to the reader. These insights include those from faculty who have taught lower division Honors students in the GEP in addition to those from faculty who have taught Honors Interdisciplinary Seminars or other Honors courses to upper division Honors undergraduates. We welcome your comments to add to this guide as we update it each year.

Suzanne Jaeger

Department of Philosophy and Humanities

The starting point for philosophy is often bewilderment or doubt. It is not knowing or not understanding. Philosophy begins and, for that matter often ends, with questions. I have had the pleasure of teaching Honor students at UCF for two years now. I agree wholeheartedly with my colleagues when they say that Honor students generally have better study habits than other students. They are, on the whole, better prepared when they come to class. They complain less than other students about having to work for the 'A' grades they all want. I have even heard some of my Honor student's voice concerns about the devaluation of their academic accomplishments through grade inflation. In my experience, Honor students are high achievers who are very motivated to succeed and they are, therefore, very gratifying to teach. On the other hand, it is precisely their need always to have the right answers, always to say the right thing and perform confidently that sometimes prevents them from expressing their bewilderment. Not knowing can be uncomfortable for Honor students.

One of my challenges in teaching Honor classes has been getting the students to explore ideas and issues more creatively. Honor students are better at confidently asserting their opinions than questioning their assumptions and reflecting on the tensions and contradictions that often exist in our belief systems. Expressing doubt and uncertainty can seem to undermine training for success. I do not believe that they are incompatible, but they can seem so to the Honor student for whom performance standards are higher than average. I have found that Honor students need to be encouraged to develop their ideas a little further by questioning their assumptions. I try to get them to see the classroom as a workshop for the development of ideas as well as a place for polished presentations. They need to be reminded that some questions do not have right answers.

I have also recently learnt that there can be a lot going on for students about which they will tell you nothing. Peer pressure as well as fear of authority figures often inhibits them from admitting even just confusion and incomprehension. It is important to clarify

instructions and to provide a variety of safe forums for communication. I continue to develop strategies for encouraging intellectual exploration as well as expressions both of uncertainty and of self-confident assertion.

Melody Bowdon

Department of English

I have taught in the UCF honors program for three years. Based on that experience, I believe that the key to success with this group of students is consistent, reasonable, and high expectations. Generally speaking, they want and expect to be challenged. Like most students, they respond best to tasks that have clear purposes and that are clearly connected with an articulated course agenda. I emphasize service-learning in my courses, and I've found that honors students as a group have been eager to engage in non-traditional and experimental kinds of activities when they can make the connection to their learning and their individual intellectual goals.

Most of my work with honors students has been in first-year composition courses. I give highly detailed assignments for the first four major projects in our class, identifying the kinds of intellectual moves I want to see them make with each project. The students seem to appreciate the security that clear standards and expectations provides for them. They like extensive feedback and concrete suggestions for improvement. Then, when they've gotten fairly dependent on explicit instructions, I alter the plan, taking away the explicit structure for their final project and providing, instead, a challenge of their creativity and innovation.

The final assignment in my courses is a portfolio that allows students to demonstrate their writing skills as they've developed over the semester. Students are responsible for coming up with a complex theme and using their creative skills to make the portfolio engaging and intellectually significant. Despite the fact that this large task must be

completed during the most difficult couple of weeks of the semester, the students rise to the challenge and produce impressive materials. I think the key here is their belief that this process brings the entire course together in a meaningful way. The final assignment requires students to do serious reflection on their growth as writers during the semester and places accountability for their progress and accomplishments clearly in their own hands.

Stephen Levensohn,

Department of Philosophy and Humanities

#### Four Notes and a Coda

Bright, with diverse interests, honors students are relatively uniform re. ability. As a group, they are different in tone from non-H students, at once more intense, more engaged – or disengaged.

Many of the students are irreverent – if with reason. They discovered early on that they were quicker studies than many of their teachers. (Some haven't lost the thought.)

For my part, I encourage students to approach assignments keeping to their own rhythm, pace and humor. While it's true that the forms which their works take will vary, it does have me rewriting the syllabus at the end of term – a good in itself.

I've had success with guests. If you decide to use them, I have found it better to choose from folks I learn from, especially if they're open to dialogue and Q and A. (ADD NOTE: Star quality never hurts.)

Coda: stay loose – honors classes are no place to play defense – and you will find the reward considerable.

Kevin Meehan

Department of English

During my tenure at UCF, Burnett Honors College students have crossed my path in Honors Composition classes, team-taught interdisciplinary Honors Seminars, Honors in the Major advising and thesis projects, scholarship screening interviews, and more. The best aspect of working with Honors College students is their high level of energy and motivation. They generally accomplish whatever you ask them to do. Typically, though not always, they do so with enthusiasm. Often they surpass requirements for research, writing, and preparation. Class sizes are smaller, students take other classes together, and the college provides superb advising and support. Significantly, faculty may also consult with Honors College advisors and I have found their insights and involvement to be helpful in my own teaching and advising. Over time, I have maintained contact with Honors College students as they progress in academic or professional careers, which is another gratifying facet of working with them.

All of these factors help to create a strong esprit de corps in and around the Honors College. The downside to this esprit is a lurking sense of elitism and entitlement that can mar otherwise positive experiences. Occasionally, an Honors College student will seem to perceive and treat a professor like a servant or factotum. Combating this elitism, particularly by offering a service ethic as a necessary complement to group and personal identities rooted in privilege, has been one of the greatest challenges in teaching and advising Honors College students. A related challenge is that Honors College students are often over-achievers in the sense that their motivation and energies take them farther than students with the same skills. Overall, I have found that skill levels in Honors College classrooms are comparable to regular CAS classes. Perhaps because of the intense esprit, and the entitlement which is its shadow version, Honors Students sometimes expect to be rewarded for excellence when their skills are average. Assigning an Honors College student a "C" when she or he has earned one, and then explaining that

grade to someone used to getting "A's" and settling grudgingly for "B's," is not an easy task!

Overall, there is no substitute for a good honors class at UCF to boost faculty morale. In a climate where students have decreasing standards for completing work in quantity or quality, the commitment to excellence among Honors College students is consistently refreshing.

Carole Adams

Department of History

I have taught Honors classes at the freshman level at UCF (Western Civ), and have also co-taught an upper-level seminar. I thought our seminar was a great success until one of the students said: "The course wasn't as boring as I thought it would be." You can see that my thoughts are mixed.

Students who enter UCF's Honors College are bright and talented. But unlike the bright and talented students at Yale or Stanford, the majority of our students did not receive the sort of education, at school or at home, that students at elite universities frequently have. Many attended public schools that emphasized memorization rather than thinking skills. Some have parents who did not attend college, or who are immigrants, and who therefore did not encourage their children to read challenging books (or read at all), or have discussions on current issues in the news, or watch C-Span. At the same time, our Honors students were the best in their classes, which means that they believe that they understand learning and know how to "do" it. As the brightest kids around, they have no experience in discussing or debating issues with talented peers.

What has this meant in classes I have taught? It means that some students, perhaps one-half, are a joy to teach. They are creative, they can think analytically (or get the hang of

it very quickly), and they understand what they read. They love discussion. The other half believe that learning is simply reading and memorizing facts. Many in that group, however, do not know how to read for meaning. Finally, within that second half there will be students who are looking for facts but are supremely self-confident, because rote learning has always gotten them As in school. One Western Civ student complained to me that, because I spent a lot of time in discussion, he did not feel he was learning anything. “Last semester I took *four pages* of notes in each class,” he said, expecting me to feel guilty that I wasn’t teaching as much or as well, since he got fewer notes.

Students in Honors also tend to resent having to work in groups. My guess is that they are used to being the brightest in the class, and working on their own, so that they are uncomfortable and suspicious about group work. They are afraid that they will end up doing all the work or having their ideas stolen.

What works? My most successful class was held in a seminar room where we all sat around a table. Perhaps the less hierarchical and more intimate format encouraged attention and discussion. Not swamping students with reading just because they are in Honors helps. And you will be rewarded if you develop projects that let the students work to their strengths and be creative. When I told students to give a picture of life in the Middle Ages, one wore a medieval costume and one did a dramatic reading.

Finally, don’t assume that Honors students do not need the aids you might give to other students, such as listing objectives for each class or giving advice on how to write a paper. One young woman came to me in Western Civ after a few weeks and told me that she felt lost and was afraid to speak out in class because everyone else seemed to know so much more about the topics. She remarked with some surprise that she had recently begun to answer, on paper, the questions I had posed in my syllabus, and “that helped.”

Teaching Honors is challenging and demanding, and can take more time in preparation than teaching a regular UCF class. But it is very rewarding if you are willing to make a real effort in order to get the best out of bright and talented young people.

Ron Wallace

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

When I introduce Honors students to biological and general anthropology, I am primarily interested in getting them to think scientifically. Of course, the mastery of basic information is essential as well, but I believe it is more important for them to cultivate what I believe is a distinctive and powerful form of thought. I use the textbook and orientational lectures to introduce them to fundamental concepts, but additionally require that they read and report on recent articles in the technical scientific literature. I ask them to struggle with the ideas and vocabulary using any resources they can find. My experience has been that Honors students, overall, accept these kinds of challenges readily. They also seem to enjoy the greater freedom to solve difficulties as they see fit. As well, given their competitive personalities, the course gathers intensity as each student in his or her report tries to surpass the presentation of the previous student. Out of everyone in the class, I am probably the one who enjoys this format the most. Each year I have a renewed opportunity to experience a group of talented students discovering, through their struggles, the demands and excitement of scientific thought.

Jay Van Hook

Department of Philosophy and Humanities

Teaching Introduction to Philosophy in the Honors College has been an exciting and rewarding experience for me. I have taught this course for six consecutive semesters and each class has been an intellectual and pedagogical challenge. The small size of the class allows for individual student attention and participation by all of the students. The students are intellectually gifted and often highly motivated. The quality of their written

work is often outstanding. Nevertheless, each of the six groups of students has been very different. In some cases the students interacted extremely well and became a very coherent group with a strong sense of identity. In other sections group coherence was more difficult to achieve. And one group last year was particularly disappointing in this regard. It never achieved any kind of group solidarity and the quantity and quality of class discussion during that semester did not measure up to that of previous sections. Excessive absence from class also became a pattern for a couple students.

As an acknowledgement of their special status as Honors College members, I encourage students to take a more decisive leadership role in choosing the type of questions and format of examinations. If I have been surprised by anything, it is how traditional and conservative their choices have been.

One problem that Honors College instructors face is the expectation of some that as honors students they are entitled to an "A" grade. The introduction of pluses and minuses has accentuated the concern of students who fear the prospect of any grade lower than a straight "A". I try to deal with this by being very clear at the beginning of the semester about my expectations, standards, and grading procedure. Another problem is that in spite of very small sections, there are always a couple students who are very shy about participating in class discussions. The other side of that coin can also pose a problem: uninhibited students who want to contribute too much.

Students in the Honors College are not perfect. Like their non-honors peers, they often come to class unprepared; and they are not always eager to be pushed too hard. But on the whole they are a fun, bright, and challenging group of students; and I feel privileged to have the Honors Introduction to Philosophy course as a regular part of my teaching assignment.

Aubrey Jewett

Department of Political Science

I find teaching in the UCF Honors program a rewarding experience. I have taught introductory American government and an interdisciplinary upper division course on community power with Ida Cook. Honors students tend to be brighter, more engaged and more prepared than students in my regular classes. On average, honors students, compared to typical undergraduates, can generally be relied on to: cover some basic information on their own; read and listen with more comprehension; and produce higher quality written and oral responses. This was particularly evident in the upper division course. Having said that, remember that these are not 'mini' graduate students - they are undergraduates and so still exhibit typical undergraduate behavior and challenges. For instance, sometimes honors students do not show up prepared to discuss material. A few honors students will find that they are not up to the challenge of your course and either drop or do badly. This has been more of a problem for my introductory government courses and probably stems from the fact that a percentage of freshman in the honors program are discovering that they probably shouldn't be in the honors program. In almost all cases this is not because they are not smart enough. It is usually that they are having a crisis of some sort: personal or motivational, or related to direction or interest. Like all undergraduates, some will complain (either to your face or through evaluations) about the reading load or discussions or test format or that you lecture too much or that you lecture too little. You will also probably get some complaints about grades. While on average my Honor students do better than pupils in my regular classes some of them invariably don't do as well as they hope or expect: they earn a 'B' but wanted an 'A' or, sad but true, earn a 'D' or an 'F' and hoped for something better. I write this not to be negative but to encourage professors contemplating teaching in The Honors College to be realistic about their own expectations. If you are looking for students who seek knowledge only for its own sake, unflinchingly do twice the work load of your regular course, are all fascinated with your topic, always do the highest quality work without prodding, and always come prepared without being reminded, I dare say you will be disappointed. However, if you want to have a smaller class that allows more face-to-face interaction with students who

on average are smarter, more motivated, more interested and are interesting than typical undergraduates, I strongly recommend teaching an honors section.

Robert C. Brigham

Department of Mathematics

I wasn't sure what to expect when I came to the Honors Program last year. I was pretty sure that the students would be brilliant, and I even worried about being able to keep up with them, at least on the technological front. Everyone in my classes (Calculus I and II) was either a computer science or an engineering major, except for a single physics major. It took me a while to realize these were just normal kids with perhaps slightly above normal intelligence for a college class. Indeed, except for the delightfully small class size, I detected little difference from regular calculus classes. What is different about these students is their acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of goofing off and delaying projects until the last minute. They are willing to work if they are excited about what they are doing, but will not push themselves if they are not. The kids in my class were uniformly pleasant. I think they are very happy with instructors who treat them with respect, are prepared, and who seem to genuinely care about them. They are not afraid of heavy work assignments, but as indicated earlier they do not necessarily feel the need to do a good job on them. Many, in spite of advanced programs in high school, are woefully unprepared in mathematics. Along with the general college population, they cannot do algebra and hence suffer in the calculus sequence. There are exceptions, of course, but not as many as I expected.

I think teaching Honors students is more work than instructing other types of classes. One reason, of course, is extra assignments given and the associated grading. Another relates to the fact that I was involved in a cohort involving two other courses and that required extra meetings with both the other instructors and jointly with them and the

students. In general teaching, Honors was a pleasant experience and I think most instructors would enjoy it.

Susan Hubbard

Department of English

My expectations of honors students changed considerably as I taught them. I'd expected these students to be bright, organized over-achievers, willing to take creative risks in class discussions and written work, eager to make connections among disparate concepts and to break new ground. From what I've seen so far, they indeed tend to be bright, organized over-achievers--but many of them are timid about departing from safe traditions in order to make imaginative or innovative leaps. They fear being wrong. I believe this relates to a more general fear of failure common among students who are habitual over-achievers; some studies purport that high-achieving college students often face real problems in their subsequent careers when things go awry (and someone needs to take responsibility for bad decisions), because they are afraid to admit failure. Having experienced failure rarely (if ever), they don't know how to handle it, and their immediate response is denial. I'm certainly not recommending we teach our students to fail--but I do think we need to encourage them to be less attentive to grades and knowing "right" answers, and more experimental and playful in their problem-solving. Toward that end, we teachers can incorporate in our class work more open-ended assignments, ones that provoke them not to respond "correctly" so much as to wrestle with complex questions in creative ways. Students may at first greet such assignments with skepticism, but over time tend to appreciate that, through this kind of work, they may arrive at new and worthy insights.

Shirley Leckie

Department of History

Teaching a class in the honors section of American History II, was the best experience I have ever had in terms of offering a survey course. It is hard for me to convey how wonderful these students can be. At the same time, I am convinced that they are not younger versions of graduate students. Instead, they must know from the very beginning what is expected of them and the course must be rigorously but reasonably structured. In my first day of class, I made it clear that I expected the students to keep up with their readings and that the syllabus represented a contract that they and I accepted. I also built into the course as much interactive and collaborative work as possible. I gave the students specific dates in which they would present panel discussions on the assigned readings, with particular emphasis on content and, even more on meaning, as a way of developing their responses to the material. I also often gave them take home quizzes to prepare them for subsequent classes. When they arrived in class, I often broke them down into smaller groups to work on specific historical questions arising from the material they had read. I acted as the resource person, moving from group to group to ask leading questions or suggest new ways of approaching the problems. Later, their groups reported their findings to the entire class, and I assured them *that these* contained insights into future examination questions. In addition, I used art--in this instance--films, as ways of gaining insight into the reading material (One book on the Cold War discussed the film, *Salt of the Earth*, which was made by one of the blacklisted Hollywood Ten and based on an actual strike in New Mexico. Showing the film also brought before the class issues of race and gender). Since I believe that collaboration also means students and teachers working together, I involved the class in the task of preparing midterm and final examinations. They were given the assignment of drawing up possible examination questions, which they shared with everyone. Their questions were excellent and I found ways of incorporating them into the examinations I wrote. Overall, I am convinced that the class must be well-structured but it must allow for a high degree of student collaboration and, at the same time, constant feedback and assistance on the part of the faculty member.

Joby Anthony

Department of Mathematics

For the past two years I have been one of the teachers in a course that is designed to give honors students who are not majors in the College of Education an opportunity to teach in the local public school system. The intent, of course, is to give these students some teaching experience with the hope that some of them will choose teaching as a profession. Even if they do not formally become teachers, the process of visiting a public school classroom, preparing a lesson plan, and teaching a component to that class will certainly influence their thinking about teaching and learning. The honors students that I have dealt with in the past two years have been bright, articulate, and interested in everything that we have tried to do. They participate in class discussions and are conscientious about completing assignments. They have been very well received by the public school teachers and students where they have taught. Many of them have expressed an interest in becoming teachers and stay in touch after they are finished with the course. Altogether this has been a very positive experience. I think that the special circumstances of this course make it quite different from more routine classes that are focused on a particular aspect of some academic discipline. In this course the students are self-selected and have an obvious built-in interest in what we are doing. Since grades are based on submitted lesson plans and evaluations of their teaching, the grading process is not as intimidating as it is in other mathematics classes where the major component of the grade is based on test scores. I believe that honors students in more traditional mathematics courses are more defensive about their grades and generally less enthusiastic about the subject matter. But, in general, they are intelligent and will work hard.

Lynn Casmier-Paz  
Department of English

Teaching in the Honors Program has been a singular experience for me, as one who has taught every conceivable writing course from middle school, high school, through the community college level, all the way to the university. This is true mostly because of the high level of intellectual commitment shown by the Honors students I have taught at UCF. Their exemplary work ethic and desire to engage rigorous intellectual work make Honors students a pleasure to teach. These students rarely turn in late assignments, and their writing tends to demonstrate higher order skills of analysis and synthesis, which Honors teachers are encouraged to expect.

Perhaps the only criticism to which the Honors program has been vulnerable is that the students can sometimes be arrogant in their demands. Often the students in the Honors program feel entitled to privileges which other college students would not consider. In their position as "elite" students, they can be argumentative about criticism of their work and the process of evaluation.

Howard Sherwood  
Department of Mathematics

For me, teaching Honors classes is a worthwhile experience. It took me several times doing this to realize that it is not so much teaching the class differently that makes an Honors class different, rather the difference lies in the questions that are asked by the students and in the expectations I have in terms of their performance. Also, we each have a tendency to excuse our bad behavior by comparing ourselves to others; students do it

too. In these Honors classes, the comparisons available make it more difficult to excuse one's own bad behavior. The level of the questions asked by the students is on higher level.

Moreover, while I had given up some time ago asking students in standard calculus classes to write proofs, I do occasionally ask Honors students to do that. But the quizzes and tests in my Honors classes are not, in general, too much more demanding than my standard quizzes and exams.

These students are a product of our current society, and while some of them come with the kind of work ethic we would hope for, many have not had to work so hard previously to get good grades. As a result, I have found it necessary to go the extra mile myself to help in whatever way I can to enable some who need it to overcome the misconception that good grades are a given. I give frequent quizzes to give them early feedback. Also, I make sure I am readily available in my office to help them. I want by my example to encourage them to put in whatever time they must to excel.

I give out group projects about a month before the end of the semester, but I tell them at the beginning of the semester, and remind them often, that only those students who have an 80% average or better on all the quizzes and tests up to that point will be assigned a group project. The numbers work out so that it is nearly impossible to get an A in the course if they do not get to do a project. I warn them about that too. Then I stick to it. If they cannot earn an 80% average (i.e. a B) on the in-class work, then I do not want to assign them additional work. Also, it cuts down on the number of freeloaders who would like to get a free ride on someone else's work. Each group is required to meet with me for an hour to make an oral presentation of the project. I randomly select a person's name from a hat when they come to the oral defense to determine which of them will make the presentation. I do that so that they must make sure that everyone in the group understands the work that was done.

It is the small class size that makes it possible to spend the time to do the things I do in these Honors classes. It is worthwhile because one has the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of a few who are willing to spend the time and energy to learn more than they would have in a standard class. It is nice when a student comes back a semester or two later to thank you for the things expected in the project because it helped so much in a later context. It is nice when a student makes phenomenal changes in her academic life because of the time you've spent helping in the office to overcome weaknesses in the background that were permitted by previous school experiences. Finally, one gets students of all levels in these Honors classes, but the percentage of better students is greater and the percentage of poor students is fewer. That too makes teaching the Honors class nice.

Charles Killinger

Department of History

Teaching the U.S. history survey courses primarily to freshmen Honors students has provided an exceptional teaching and learning opportunity. The benefits are obvious: small classes of bright, eager, students, many with well-developed study habits and the ambition to work hard. Most have been willing to embrace an academic culture in which thinking creatively and accepting an intellectual challenge is “cool.” I have found myself challenged as well, especially in developing a course that will provide much-needed discipline (especially in formal writing) while not stifling the freedom to think “outside the lines”; in providing a unique environment, free of many normal constraints, without reinforcing any feeling of elitism; and in developing a sense of the intrinsic worth and excitement of learning. The beauty is that, although we all struggle to find our own most productive approach, The Honors College affords an ideal environment for this pursuit.

Terry L. Bryant

Department of English

*Do not hurry; do not rest. Goethe*

While Honors students are often characterized by self-motivation, self-direction, and self-discipline, student qualities that appeal to any professor, Honors students are not all "A" students; they are not necessarily gifted in all areas; and they may not be more responsible than average students. No physical demonstration predicted the scope and depth of creative intelligence the students demonstrated when I asked them to write personal essays that merged their own experience with that of the scholars of the ages. However, the challenge of this activity often emerged in students' initial emotional insecurity: the anxiety of confronting a new form, accompanied by latent fears of failure to please the instructor and/or to exceed to norm. Students have demonstrated every behavior from appalling silliness and bouts of hyper-archaic language to tardiness and avoidable "unavoidable" absenteeism, until they have regained their confidence to succeed. In the case of fine artists, Thomas Merton has described, divine inspiration often resides in apparently indiscriminately selected minds. Therefore, my generalizations about this body of students are inconclusive at best. However, my own behavior throughout the semester is ultimately guided by Goethe's dictate, no matter the extensiveness of my preparation.

Charles Killinger and Lynn Casmier-Paz  
Department of History and English Department  
History/English LINC

I am sorry that I hit you with my somewhat negative comments about first semester during a week in which you had already heard too many negatives.

But let me now tell you this: Our second semester class is GOOD. Here is my (perhaps premature) assessment: The culture has changed. Two of the four local high school guys who were perpetuating some adolescent behavior and subtly undermining the seriousness have taken themselves out of the mix. In their place we have about eight bright and enthusiastic newcomers. Suddenly the norm seems to have shifted away from the mildly anti-intellectual tone of last semester. We now have more informed and probing discussion.

The other thing that happened is that Lynn and I, after several hours of consternation, developed a plan to give joint orientation. Our private ground rules were that we would make no references to last semester (in consideration of the newcomers) and would use no negatives. We stuck to our guns, sat together up front, and laid down the law as to what was expected of Honors students in the cohort. We were positive but, I think, forceful. We started with basics: Buy the books, read the books, learn how to read different books differently, mark up the margins of the books, sleep with the books if you have to, come to class prepared, contribute by making specific references to pages in the book, be critical in your reading and assessment, etc.

We continued through various aspects of the two courses, then tried to establish some general sense of why it is important to be the very best student you can be. Maybe this was a bit simplistic, and perhaps we came on a bit strong. But we had agreed that we would not accept mediocrity from this group, and would not accept that mild undertone of anti-intellectual attitude that we had felt all too often last semester. (That group was not overtly bad, by the way, just too often settled for mediocrity).

Gerald J. Schiffhorst  
Department of English

*Editor's Note: After teaching an Honors Seminar numerous times and having to repeatedly encourage students to become more active learners, Dr. Gerald Schiffhorst wrote the following essay that he now provides to his students at the beginning of the semester:*

*HONORS SEMINARS: What I Expect*

By Gerald J. Schiffhorst, Ph.D.

Having taught an Honors seminar on the Faces of Evil five or six times and another seminar on Masculinity, I have a number of observations and recommendations that I hope will be helpful to you, as students planning to take these or other seminars in the Honors College.

As the dictionary tells us, a seminar is a meeting, usually of advanced students, to exchange information and hold discussion. In academic practice, this means a seminar is a small class where the format is not lecture-based but discussion-based. The assumption behind such small classes is that students learn by participating in a guided *conversation* in which they challenge what they hear and read, ask questions, and enter into dialogue both with the instructor and with their fellow students.

These assumptions seem to me to be central to being educated; you are not at the university to be passive. As you know, you learn about issues by writing about them; the same is true in seminars. Often we do not know what we think about a topic unless we are asked to speak or write about it, until we see or hear how others' views help us understand a complex issue.

I make these points because students sometimes attend my seminars more as observers than as active participants. While I can understand the reluctance of many to speak up in a class, I also know how important it is that everyone in a seminar be intellectually and emotionally engaged with the material by evincing enough interest in it to ask questions or volunteer for discussion topics or get acquainted with and work with fellow students.

Like most instructors, I want to hear your voice and get to know you, not just by your writing but by sharing ideas with you; this is how I learn about the often complex human issues that our readings require us to respond to. I cannot do this alone since my seminar is by definition a discussion, a sharing, a conversation.

Part of what is expected in academic discourse is this type of active engagement; sometimes it merely means showing enough interest to ask a question or to talk about the assigned material with the instructor after class or by e-mail. Sometimes it means respectfully challenging assigned readings, especially when you find them disturbing, unclear, or wrong-headed. And sometimes it even means respectfully challenging ideas stated in the heat of discussion by the instructor or other students, who, ideally, make comments not to sound impressive but to test their validity. Students who remain silent in such classes are missing a key element in the learning process.

Perhaps you have heard the remark by Mark Twain that it can be better, sometimes, to remain silent and be considered stupid than to open your mouth and remove all doubt. We all have nodded in agreement with this at times, yet the fear of sounding stupid is irrelevant to the type of interchanges that seminars like mine presuppose: **there are no right answers!** Everyone's interpretation or opinion has value in the conversation.

So when you register for one of our Honors seminars, mine in particular, you should know that you play a key role as a participant, that your ideas and reactions are important, and that your involvement in the ongoing conversation of the seminar is an essential part of your learning.

I must admit that many of the issues raised in my seminars can make people feel uncomfortable; few of us like to examine the roots of racism or homophobia, for example, and many students, understandably, prefer to examine the present culture, showing little interest in the way the past has shaped our present understanding of such topics. Yet the very purpose of your being educated in an Honors College is to be exposed to controversial ideas and their historical origins—and to explore them with an open mind. I am often worried about students who leave a discussion about a volatile issue, having said nothing; sharing feelings about a violent film or story is much more healthy than keeping such feelings hidden.

To sum up: My seminars involve sensitive material, and I value student responses. I want to know each of my students through their writing and their participation. I have high expectations, but this does not mean that I expect brilliant oral comments, perfectly expressed. I expect much more than passive listening. If all of us in the seminar are prepared--by completing the assignment, challenging it with questions, and engaging in a conversation about the relations among the ideas raised—then I feel that our time together has been well spent.

Jack H. Noon

Physics Department

There were 21 students in the class this semester. Teaching the class was a mixture of pleasure and disappointment. Most of the students enjoyed and benefited from the group discussions in class, but a few showed their dislike for participation and preferred to ponder problem solving on their own and were unwilling to share with others or to ask for help. It appears to be a characteristic of honors students that they are reluctant to ask questions of the professor, as though they fear doing so will count against them in

assessment of their grade at a later stage. This immaturity seems almost impossible to overcome.

The biggest innovation I introduced in this class was to require in exams that there be written explanations of how a problem was solved before any formulas were introduced or calculations begun. This was objected to by some diehards who persisted in believing that calculating some number was "the answer" to a problem, and it was unnecessary to show any steps in working out their "solution". But on the whole, I believe most of the class recognized the value of following my instructions on problem solving techniques.

In group class discussions, I explained that figuring out how to do a problem, step by step, was a "solution" already and that calculation after that was only a routine job, admittedly where care should be taken. This strange concept never did get accepted by student groups. They all persisted in substituting in formulas to derive a number that could be compared against a numerical "answer" in the back of the textbook problem sets. They remained unconvinced that if they really understood the "physics", they had already learned enough from discussing the procedure for solving the problem. As a result each group could usually only work on two or three problems in a session, although five or six were assigned. By the end of the semester, however, I was encouraged to find groups were achieving that number. I suspect this had something to do with the realization that for a comprehensive final, they needed to be prepared. Since grades seem particularly important to honor students, I emphasized always why they lost points on exam questions and how the credit given for stating assumptions, drawing diagrams, and explaining reasoning earned more points than the actual calculation. Some responded to this and improved their technique week by week. Others did not, and it was disappointing to see them not achieve their full potential.

Three students whom I expected to do well clearly suffered from panic in the comprehensive final and did not do well as a result. Their work during the semester was quite satisfactory, and I am sure that the pressure they felt with time constraints caused their uncharacteristic failure.

All honors students are "individuals". One in particular would tell me that he should not be penalized for not stating assumptions or showing steps in his work, or drawing diagrams because that's "not physics". He stated that when he looked at problems at the end of the chapter, he knew he could do them (not that he did them), so he knew physics, but my exam problems did not allow him to get credit because his concepts were different from mine. Another student was obviously a leader in group discussions and helped her team members. I am sure, however, that she had many outside interests that caused her to miss homework assignments and preparation for exams. Many of the students clearly do not have good study habits or self-discipline for judging how much effort to put in, versus outside interests.

I always start off enjoying working with honors students, yet end up disappointed that I was not able to get ALL of them to achieve as much as they are capable of. Even 21 is too large a class size to allow working with individuals, especially when they do not ask for guidance.

Ali Korosy

Department of Foreign Languages

My Cool Pool

When my colleagues ask me what the difference is between teaching Honors classes and regular classes my answer is always the same, "it's like diving into a cool pool on a really hot summer day." In the Honors classes, we break out of the pattern of reading, memorizing, discussing without recognition, and then spewing. These students prepare and are ready to challenge, use, question, master. They challenge me with questions no one in my nearly twenty years of teaching has ever asked. They pick up on and sometimes mirror my passion and curiosity about what I do know and what I don't know

and try to beat me to the answers, sometimes successfully. They appreciate my intelligence while challenging it and even more so because I can reciprocate the appreciation. I am thankful every day that these classes are part of my experience.

I'd like to offer a couple of thoughts on teaching them that are very close to my heart. It is my conviction that as undergraduates, Honors students should not be treated as if they were mini-graduate students. By loading on too much extra reading, extra facts to be learned, and a lot of extra work, I found I was defeating the purpose. They became overworked regular students, able to mimic a greater quantity of material but less available mentally to master it. By cutting down some on the quantity of material and raising the quality of interactions in class through creative planning I found that everyone benefited and that the ambience supported an unbelievable level of learning and mastery. Students were more motivated than ever to prepare and to enter into the fracas of discussions, support each other in creatively solving unexpected critical-thinking problems that I throw their way, and work toward real learning. I strongly believe that it is this type of education that prepares these students to do excellent graduate work.

One other strategy that I have found successful and delightfully annoying to my students, like a pea under the mattress, is to take away their ability to calculate their grade on a minute-by-minute basis. I find a way to grade them on their learning and their effort toward learning rather than solely on numerically-based percentages. With this approach, I believe Honors students are far more likely to focus on thinking about material covered in different contexts rather than how they will be tested on it. If you'd like to know more about this, or tell me your opinion of it, feel free to contact me at [akorosy@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:akorosy@mail.ucf.edu) or 407-823-3428