I have exciting news to share: as of the Fall of 2024, the University of New Hampshire will have transformed the University Honors Program into the UNH Hamel Honors and Scholars College!

The new Hamel Honors and Scholars College aims to provide a motivating and supportive space for ambitious students as they pursue opportunities that allow them to challenge themselves, to have an impact on their communities, and to discover possibilities they didn’t know existed before arriving at New Hampshire’s flagship Research 1 university.

Our Honors Sustainability Fellows, under the mentorship of myself and Professor Fiona Wilson (Director of the UNH Sustainability Institute) have done research-intensive, thoughtful, collaborative work to create our first new Honors College curricular “pathway.” Pathways will emerge from student-faculty collaborations and allow Honors College students the option to structure their enhanced studies around foundationally important questions. This is an early example of what I trust will be many more innovative student-faculty experiments.

A committee of UNH faculty has likewise been working since last summer to invent a wholly new Honors curricular structure, which will prioritize flexibility, experiential learning opportunities, and creative partnerships between students and faculty. Without a doubt, the best part of my job is learning from enthusiastic students as they discover new paths in their various fields.

If you’d like to take more frequent peeks at Honors goings-on, please feel free to follow our Instagram page: @unhhonors.

Dr. Catherine M. Peebles
Thank You

Honors does a lot with a small budget. Donations large and small help us to provide an enriched experience for our students, funding field trips, guest speakers, student research, and more. We are very grateful to this year’s donors:

Bryce Baird
Madelyn Ball
Allison Blodgett
Heidi Bonenfant
Brett Branscombe
Kristen Butterfield
Alana Gudinas
Kimo Johnson
Troy LaPolice
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Lauren Libitz
Jean Mayhew
Allen McCormac
Luigi Petruzzielo
Kye Power
Bryanna Richardson
Meaghan Wakely
Victoria Ward
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and several anonymous donors

We welcome donations of all amounts to Honors during the 603 Challenge fundraising event, which will be happening April 8-12, 2024. These donations have made it possible for our students to take advantage of national conferences, field trips to museums, and guest lectures, to name a few of the most important examples. Going forward, our focus will be on building the Honors community through varied and exciting events and programs. Please know that your gifts to Honors do a great deal of good for talented students who work incredibly hard.

Stay up to date on the 603 Challenge's 10th year by visiting our website at unh.edu/honors or check out last year's results at unh.edu/603. We thank you for your generosity and commitment to making as many opportunities as possible available to Honors students.

COVER: Hamel Scholar Eric Boheen '27 proudly sports a UNH Honors Program shirt that he received upon his admission into the program.
Office of National Fellowships

In 2022-23, 16 Honors students and alumni worked with UNH's Office of National Fellowships to win prestigious awards, against tough competition from applicants around the country. Another 42 Honors students completed applications for national fellowships, but were not selected. All who complete the multi-step, in-depth application processes benefit from the experience of one-on-one coaching and draft development, and frequently build on their applications for a variety of future projects.

Three Honors Program participants won Fulbright Scholarships, which fund teaching, study, or research abroad. **Eli Duggan '23** is studying renewable engineering in Scotland and **Bailey Prasad '23** is interning at a business in Mexico. **Sam Mercer '23** received the Fulbright to pursue research in Germany, but declined so he could begin his PhD as an NSF Graduate Research Fellow. An Honors alumnus, **Tan Dao '21**, was one of 30 recipients of the Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans and UNH’s first Soros fellow.

UNH Honors students were also represented among the winners of Canada-Mitacs Globalink Research Internships, SMART Scholarships, NSF Graduate Research Fellowships, Gilman Scholarships, and NOAA Hollings Scholarships.

**Leigh Pratt** joined the Office of National Fellowships this year, as its new Director. Prior to joining UNH, she supported the fellowships office at West Virginia University and worked as a behavioral health clinician in education and community health settings. She is working enthusiastically to promote awareness of national and international award opportunities available to UNH students and alumni.
The University of New Hampshire has long been a leader in supporting undergraduate research, and Honors Program students, as usual, made excellent use of those opportunities to complete deep dives into their areas of interest.

**Honors Thesis Topics 2022-2023**

- Biological Sciences (17.3%)
- Business and Media (23.5%)
- Engineering/Physics (7.4%)
- Health and Human Sciences (29.6%)
- Language and Literature (4.9%)
- Religion (1.2%)
- Social Issues (8.6%)
- Sustainability and Agriculture (7.4%)

From "Revolutionary Advances in the Treatment of Genetic Disease" (Emma Carrigan, Genetics) to "Anti-Queer Policy as it Translates to Violence Against the LGBT Community" (Kendall Bush, Political Science) to "Index Funds and ETFs: Simplifying Investing for Better Returns" (Patrick Cotton, Finance), Honors students covered a wide range of important research topics that will propel them into their post-baccalaureate careers. You can read published Honors theses at https://scholars.unh.edu/honors/.

**The Thesis Train**

During the Spring semester, Honors Seniors worked on their theses on the Amtrak Downeaster to Freeport, Maine. Once in town, they took a break for shopping, dinner, and camaraderie before heading back home to Durham.
The University of New Hampshire is proud to announce the establishment of the Hamel Honors and Scholars College. The new College will greatly expand UNH’s capacity to identify, reach, and support high-achieving students from New Hampshire and beyond. Building on the history of the University Honors Program, the Honors College will create a transformational homebase for academic leaders at the center of a top public research university.

Opening Fall 2024

The first incoming cohort of the Honors College will be welcomed in the Fall of 2024. They (along with continuing Honors students) will have access to the newly renovated Huddleston Hall (below and right) as well as a revamped Honors curriculum that emphasizes personal choice and high-impact learning.

Dana Hamel, a longtime champion of UNH, has made this transformation possible through a generous gift of over $20 million. Part of the gift enabled renovation of the historic, beloved Huddleston Hall, which will be the new home of the Honors College and a gathering place for students and faculty alike. The rest of the donation supports growing the Hamel Scholars Program, both in programming opportunities and in the number of scholarships that can be awarded each year. Mr. Hamel’s investment promises great returns for UNH students.
A New Space

The historic Huddleston Hall, named after campus architect Eric T. Huddleston, has previously been a dining hall, dorm, and office space. In its new form it will be the hub of the Honors College, with study rooms, gathering spaces, a ballroom for special events, faculty and staff offices, technology resources, and classrooms. Fairchild Hall, right next door, has been designated as the Honors-priority dorm to create an Honors neighborhood where students can live and learn.

A New Curriculum

The Honors Program has long provided students with enriching courses and academic experiences—and those aren't going anywhere. The Hamel Honors and Scholars College curriculum is building on those strengths, while adding a new focus on experiential learning. It also provides lots more flexibility so students can choose the courses and experiences that make the most sense for them, rather than following a pre-designed path.

"Not only will the Hamel Honors and Scholars College prepare students for future accomplishments, it will support them in making an impact here and now—in their academic fields and in their communities, from UNH to the whole world."

—Catherine Peebles, Honors Director
Honors Faculty Award

Dr. Alex Holznienkemper

Each year, Honors students have the opportunity to nominate their professors for the Honors Faculty Award. In 2023, students nominated faculty from 30 different Honors Discovery courses as deserving of this recognition. Within this crowded field, the award went to Dr. Alex Holznienkemper, Senior Lecturer in German, who teaches "What Is a Criminal?" (HUMA 444E) for the Honors Program.

"I always felt challenged to be more creative and thoughtful, and I'm a better critical thinker as a result," wrote one nominator about Dr. Holznienkemper's teaching methods. "He pushed students to reach their fullest potentials and always went the extra mile to help us succeed." Another student wrote that "his passion and energy were inspiring, so much so that I wish this class was required for everyone."

“Receiving the 2022-2023 Honors Faculty Award was one of the most heart-warming moments in my time at UNH," said Dr. Holznienkemper. "It is always so inspiring to find support for creative ways of instruction, and have very strong cohorts of students that are driven by their intellectual curiosity to do well in our class. The Honors course 'What is a Criminal' in particular lends itself to transformative learning experiences with guest speakers and off-site visits. I frequently run into students who had the class a few years ago and still share the passion and excitement it stirred in them. I am so honored to have been recognized by the Honors students in 2022-23."
The annual Honors Alumni Award recognizes a graduate of the program whose post-UNH life exemplifies Honors Program values. In 2023, the award went to Dr. Kimo Johnson '00, co-founder and Chief Science Officer of GelSight, Inc., a startup commercializing a unique 3D imaging technology invented at MIT.

Dr. Johnson started his entrepreneurial journey as an undergraduate at UNH, earning a BA in Music Theory and a BS in Mathematics, while also working with Professor Kevin Short on the technology that led to UNH’s first spinout company, Chaoticom, which pioneered the first ever music downloads to cell phones.

After UNH, Dr. Johnson pursued a master’s degree in electro-acoustic music and a PhD in computer science from Dartmouth College. His postdoctoral research at MIT on the GelSight technology attracted the attention of engineers from various industries because of its ability to measure microscale surface topography. After founding GelSight in 2011, Dr. Johnson has grown the company through government grants, venture financing, and sales of systems into diverse industries around the world.

"Please remember," Dr. Johnson said in his remarks to the Honors class of 2023, "when you are passionate about your work, you connect to people with similar interests who form the network that supports you and helps advance your career. When you do interesting work, you create opportunities, many of which you may not be able to imagine at the outset. And finally: success is a side-effect of having fun."
The Hamel Scholars Program

Supporting about 100 of UNH’s highest-achieving students, the Hamel Scholars Program is designed to prepare "leaders for New Hampshire’s future." These students receive generous scholarships and participate in programming that builds leadership skills and connections at UNH and beyond.

Hamel Scholar Olivia Myers ’24 connects with the Hamel family at this year’s annual Celebration Lunch.

Hamel Scholars Program Expansion

As a result of a generous gift from program founder Dana Hamel, the Hamel Scholars Program began an exciting expansion in 2023-2024. More scholarships will be offered to exceptional students and the Hamel Scholars Program is taking a new shape that better supports students in building connections throughout New Hampshire and the nation through workshops, trainings and off-site experiences. To create a community of high-achieving leaders who will continue to support each other well after leaving UNH, the program offers both structured opportunities for collaboration and informal social activities designed to create lasting relationships.
Emily Schoonmaker is the Hamel Scholars Program Coordinator, meeting regularly with each student for holistic coaching sessions. She also leads group activities for Hamel Scholars that promote leadership, community service, collaboration, and networking. Recent examples include:

- Volunteering at Partners for World Health
- January program in Washington, D.C.
- Workshop on leveraging LinkedIn and Portfolios
- Celebration Luncheon with program founder Dana Hamel
- Weekend leadership program at Alnoba retreat center
- Team building at Boda Borg Boston

Before the start of their Freshman year, new Hamel Scholars are welcomed to the program with a week-long retreat exploring our state’s unique natural, civic, and business landscape.
The Honors Class of 2023

**University Honors in Major Graduates**
Completed enriched work in Discovery and their majors

**Interdisciplinary Honors Graduates**
Completed enriched work in Discovery and student-selected High-Impact Experiences

**Departmental Honors Graduates**
Completed enriched work in their majors

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**WHAT’S NEXT?**  A few examples of post-graduation life

- **Earning a Master’s in Mechanical Engineering at MIT**
- **Interning at the Joffrey Ballet School in NYC**
- **Working at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory for the U.S. Department of Energy in Colorado**
- **Pursuing a Master’s in Speech Language Pathology at the University of Maryland**
- **Completing a fellowship at UNH studying ocean acidification**
- **Working as an RN in the Medical ICU at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston**