



University of
New Hampshire

Hamel Honors and
Scholars College



Annual Report 2024–2025

Letter from the Director

Greetings from the Hamel Honors and Scholars College at the University of New Hampshire! There is so much to share with you about our gratifying first year that we were not able to fit it all within the pages that follow, so allow me to update you on a couple of bright lights.

First, we offered our first ever Honors Outdoor Orientation Trip (HOOT) to incoming students: a two-day, three-night early arrival experience in the woods near UNH's Browne Center. They stretched themselves, bonded, and on their last day, hiked over footpaths several miles back to campus. Resounding cheers rang out, including, "This is THE BEST way to start college!" This year, several of those first HOOT-ies are among the leaders for the next cohort of this new Honors tradition.

Another highlight was the first Honors Think Tank—a chance for students and faculty from many different disciplines to come together to learn about, discuss, and act on a compelling topic. Last year, that topic was artificial intelligence. Once a week for the Spring semester, students from all UNH undergraduate colleges and faculty from 11 different disciplines met to present and discuss various facets of AI and their implications—for the arts, computer science, law, the health sciences, etc. Professor Scott Smith (Classics) and senior Hamel Scholar Nathan Chasse led the group of about 25 students, who decided to write up a formal report for the UNH leadership to use in crafting our institutional AI policies. Their work is now part of UNH's AI policy formation process. The Think Tank is the sort of communal, thoughtful, and impact-oriented practice that we have dreamed of making possible for the UNH community.

Please enjoy the stories in this year's report. We are so fortunate to work with such inspiring, hard-working, and talented students. Thank you for your support!



Dr. Catherine M. Peebles

Thank You to Our Donors!

Donations to Honors enable us to support students in multiple ways, from community-building programs to research and travel funding. We are very grateful to this year's Honors donors:

Jessica Bailey

Allison Blodgett '92

Aiden Brown '27

Megan Brunelle '10, '11G

Julia Bryce

Meredith Burns '97

Kristen Butterfield-Ferrell '08

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Catherine DeAppolonio '02

Dev Dutta '14G, '24G

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James Huddleston '74, '84G

Kimo Johnson '00

Jennifer Latham '90

David Power, Jr. '85

Deborah Power '86

Janabeth Reitter '93

Jason Reynolds '91

Meg Scarpetta

Aaron Scheinman '17

Cheryl Smith

Victoria Ward '13

George Wildman '57

and several anonymous donors

Giving to the Honors College

Donations of all amounts help us create challenging and supportive opportunities for students who want to go above and beyond the expected. We hope you will consider including us in your charitable giving.

- The Honors College participates in the [603 Challenge](#), UNH's annual spring fundraiser.
- Visit <https://www.unh.edu/honors/give> to make a donation at any time.
- Gifts of time and expertise are also welcome! Email honors.college@unh.edu to start a conversation.

COVER: In May, the Honors College celebrated the graduation of 123 students, representing 5 colleges and 50 majors.

Our New Home: Huddleston Hall



Opened in 1919 as a dining facility, the building was called the Commons until it was renamed in honor of its architect, Eric T. Huddleston, in 1963. A gift from philanthropist Dana Hamel enabled the renovation and expansion of Huddleston Hall to serve as the home of the newly named Hamel Honors and Scholars College.



ABOVE: Dana and Karol Hamel celebrate the reopening of Huddleston Hall at a September ribbon-cutting event.

LEFT: A mural by Portland, Maine artist Ryan Adams creates a bright nook on Huddleston's second floor. Adams's design echoes the shape of the building's distinctive arched windows.

OPPOSITE, TOP: "Huddle spaces" are ideal for solo or small-group work, while the Huddleston Ballroom is a round-the-clock destination for studying.

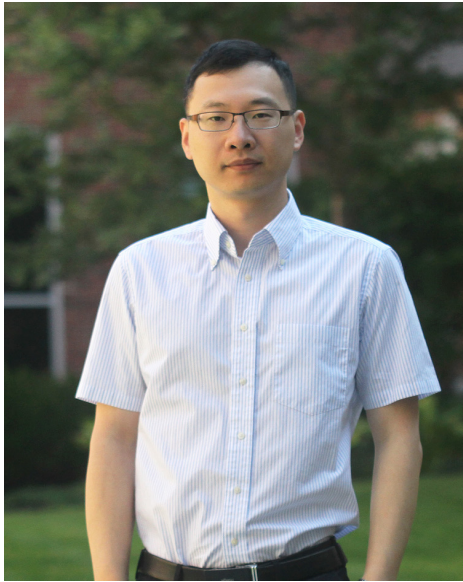
BOTTOM: A modern addition to the historic building created new, generous space for meetings and classes.



Within the year, Huddleston Hall became a beloved homebase for Honors College students. The beautiful Huddleston Ballroom is now a 24-hour common room where Honors students gather to study. Students can also choose to work in "huddle spaces," equipped with whiteboards and monitors for sharing work. The building also includes advising offices, meeting spaces, and state-of-the-art classrooms.



Honors Faculty Award 2025



Dr. Jiadong Zang **"He made learning physics fun"**

Honors College students selected Professor Jiadong (JD) Zang, who teaches Honors General Physics, for this year's Honors Faculty Award. Professor Zang's course is part of the longstanding Honors Studio Calculus and Physics sequence, in which students learn the two subjects together, leading to an integrated, practical understanding of both.

In their nominations, students wrote that Professor Zang is "a brilliant teacher" who was "highly accessible both in and out of class." They appreciated that the course encouraged group work and independent learning. "The course structure allowed us to collaborate with our peers during the entirety of the course with little lecture, allowing us to learn from each other," said one student. According to another, "Classmates bonded over the group problem solving of the course, and created a strong learning community."

Professor Zang is Director of the Materials Science Program and holds appointments in both the Department of Materials Science and the Department of Physics and Astronomy. His research focuses on theories of condensed matter and magnetism. He has won multiple awards for his research, and demonstrates an enthusiasm for educating the next generation of scientists. "He always came to class with excitement and a passion to teach us introductory physics," wrote one. Professor Zang's deep expertise and interactive classroom make him an inspirational Honors faculty member. In the words of one of his students: "Jiadong is a role model for me."

Honors Alumni Award 2025

Dr. Matthew Henn '97 **Innovator in bioscience**

Each year, the Honors College presents an Alumni Award to an Honors graduate "in celebration of a distinguished career, dedicated service, and generous support of the University of New Hampshire." The 2025 award was presented to Dr. Matthew Henn, who graduated from UNH with University Honors in Evolution and Ecology. He earned his PhD from the University of California at Berkeley, where he was a NASA Earth Systems Sciences Fellow. He was a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at Duke University and served as Director of Viral Genomics and Assistant Director of the Genome Sequencing Center for Infectious Diseases at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard.

Throughout his career Dr. Henn has researched the physiology of microbes, and sought to understand the role microorganisms can play in improving human lives. In 2012 he launched Seres Therapeutics, where he is Executive Vice President and Chief Scientific Officer. The company's mission is "to transform the lives of patients worldwide with revolutionary live biotherapeutics." He is working to create a completely new kind of medicine: a microbiota-based drug that can prevent infection in immunocompromised people, especially cancer patients, without having to use the blunt and often harsh tool of antibiotics.

Dr. Henn was presented with his award at the Class of '25 Graduation Toast, where he shared how his research experiences at UNH set the stage for his inspirational career.



Office of National Fellowships

Operating under the Honors College, the Office of National Fellowships serves all UNH students and alumni who pursue highly competitive national fellowships. In 2024–25, 10 Honors College students won prestigious awards including Canada–Mitacs Globalink Research Internships, Gilman Scholarships, the Critical Language Scholarship (Spark), and the NOAA Hollings Scholarship.

UNH FIRSTS



Sarah Nicholls '25 (left) was one of 35 US recipients of the Gates Cambridge Scholarship and is UNH's first Gates Cambridge scholar. Sarah will pursue a fully funded PhD in Medical Science at the University of Cambridge, where she will research tau, a key protein involved in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. Marking another first for UNH, Jesus La Paz '26 (right) was one of 20 national recipients of the Beinecke Scholarship, which will provide \$35,000 toward his graduate studies in Philosophy.

The Hamel Scholars Program



The Hamel Scholars Program offers a generous scholarship, networking and community-building programs, and individualized coaching to 145 Honors College students identified as "leaders for New Hampshire's future."

2024–2025 Highlights

- Human-Centered Design workshop
- Tea with UNH's President Elizabeth Chilton
- Supporting the Walk to End Alzheimer's in Portsmouth
- Tea with Ellen Foord, Creative Director for the City of Boston
- Supporting Girls on the Run NH with their fall 5K
- Tea with Kristin Laberis, Parkland Medical Center
- Luncheon with Gary Hirshberg of Stonyfield Farms
- Workdays at Partners for World Health in Portland, ME



Three Hamel Scholars spent a month in Uganda volunteering with Takataka Plastics, a sustainable materials company founded by HSP alum Paige Balcom '16. Their travel was funded by an International Changemaker Grant through the UNH Sustainability Institute.

The Honors College Curriculum:

Designed for Flexibility

This year's launch of the Honors College included an updated curriculum, developed in response to student feedback and changing needs. While maintaining the high-quality, challenging courses that have been at the core of Honors for decades, the new program also emphasizes community belonging and hands-on learning.



To serve the varied needs of UNH students, the new curriculum makes room for students to chart their own paths through Honors. Instead of taking a specified number of courses, students earn Honors Units through four different categories of Honors experiences (see opposite page). Students work with Honors advisors to identify the courses and experiences that work best for them, and each can decide how to distribute their Honors Units among the different categories.

The goal of the new Honors curriculum is that each student who graduates with University Honors will have pursued an individual path

to gain important experiences, skills, and knowledge. The Honors College provides the structure, support, and community for these exceptional students to make the most of their time at UNH.



4 Categories of Honors Experience

Gateways

Community building programs that help Honors students connect with one another and with UNH

Cocurricular Learning

Outside-of-the-classroom experiences, including research, fieldwork, teaching/tutoring, study abroad, and other forms of hands-on education

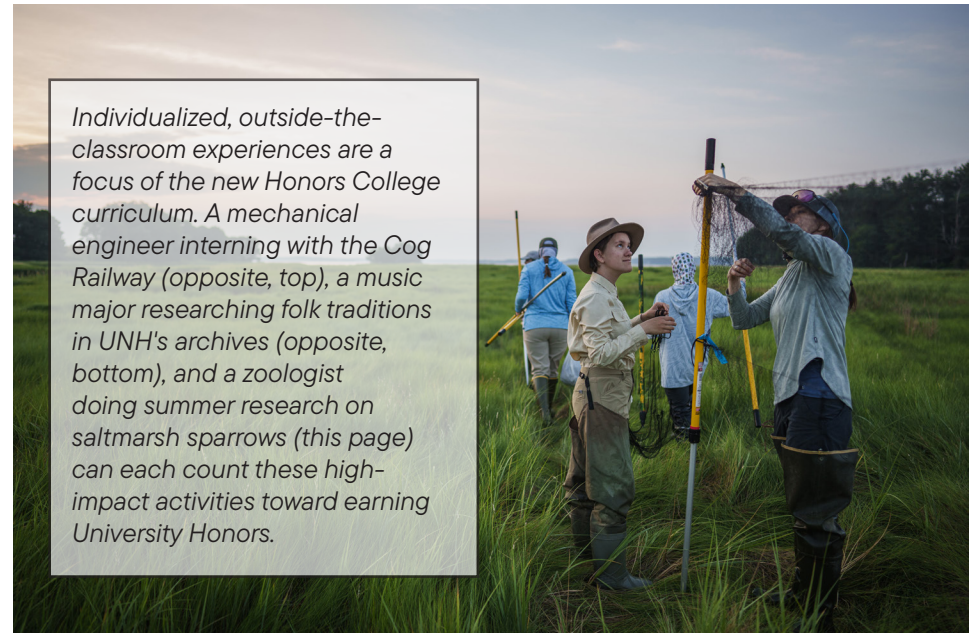
Honors Courses

The traditional core of the Honors curriculum. Honors Discovery and in-major classes emphasize deep learning, peer discussions, and individual challenges.

Culminating Experiences

Honors Theses or alternative projects that bring together 4 years of learning

Individualized, outside-the-classroom experiences are a focus of the new Honors College curriculum. A mechanical engineer interning with the Cog Railway (opposite, top), a music major researching folk traditions in UNH's archives (opposite, bottom), and a zoologist doing summer research on saltmarsh sparrows (this page) can each count these high-impact activities toward earning University Honors.



In Memoriam



Dana Hamel

April 15, 1931–September 4, 2025

Dana Hamel's generosity transformed Honors at UNH. He endowed the Hamel Scholars Program in 2007; since then, it has provided generous scholarships and leadership opportunities to over 400 students. Mr. Hamel's most recent gift enabled the creation of the Hamel Honors and Scholars College, which opened its doors in 2024. In September, he cut the ribbon to celebrate the opening of the Honors College. At that event, which would be his final visit with UNH students, Mr. Hamel offered some typically encouraging advice: "Just keep looking ahead. Yesterday's finished. Did you make a mistake? Well, that's the past. Right now and the future are what matters. You're all going to do great."