Mission

The mission of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College is to prepare citizen scholars who are fired by the life of the mind, committed to the public good and driven to find solutions.

Founded in 1997 through a gift from Jim and Sally Barksdale, the SMBHC attracts a diverse body of high-performing students to the University of Mississippi and provides them a vibrant center of academic excellence. The Honors College seeks academically versatile students who enjoy intellectual novelty and critical thinking through reading, writing, discussion and experiential learning. Honors students hail from around the country and other parts of the world, and from any department at the university that confers an undergraduate degree. The Honors College encourages those students to identify and develop their interests while also seeking an understanding of the world around us.

Through the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, you actively participate in your college experience. You will take small, honory.olemiss.edu

Alexis SMITH

The best experience afforded to me through the SMBHC has definitely been my experiences in Honors 101 and 102. When I came to college, I was unsure if I had made the right decision. Was an SEC school for me when I had opportunities to go to other seemingly more focused academic schools? After my first day in Honors 101, my answer was absolutely. I was challenged, met my best friend, learned more about myself than I ever had before, and had the best professor who still functions as my mentor two years later. And if I had to pick a second best, it’d definitely be my trip to La Paz, Bolivia, funded partially by an honors fellowship to study for a summer.”

Hometown
Picayune, Mississippi
Classification
SMBHC ’18
Major
International Studies
seminar-style honors classes offered in many disciplines. Through honors freshman seminars, you will explore “self and society” and “ways of knowing/believing.” Each semester, you can select from a variety of honors classes, most of them designed to meet university general education requirements for any major or, often, targeted to fulfill the introductory courses required by many majors. You will be taught by some of the university's finest faculty, in a class whose size allows you to engage with the professor and your peers. Imagine classes of 15 to 20 rather than the more common (in lower-level course work) 75 to 200, and you begin to see why honors courses appeal to students who want the rich experience, not just the information.

As you advance in your major, the Honors College capstone project and thesis support the goals you name for yourself, whatever those might be. Working independently with a professor in your field, you may produce research accepted for publication in a refereed journal, present a senior voice recital or the lesson plans you will use while student teaching, or organize a portfolio to enhance that first professional job application. Through the capstone and thesis, you will have learned to ask the questions of your field and pursue its methodology in exploring them. You will be a stronger candidate for graduate or professional schools, and a more-refined citizen scholar.

Your participation as a citizen scholar extends beyond the classroom or research facility. Through Freshman Ventures and Junior Quest, honors students at Ole Miss have opportunities to plan trips throughout the United States, to talk with experts or everyday citizens, and the Honors College picks up the bill. The Honors College also encourages our students to explore by providing honors fellowships to support study abroad or internship experiences (see Benefits). All honors students participate in the Community Action
Challenge each semester, finding some way to apply their talents to addressing a community need. Like the capstone, your CAC efforts might well be tailored to preparation for a career or pursuit of your individual community concerns, or linked to the shared community service efforts of groups to which you belong (e.g., Greek organizations or honor societies).

Your engagement with the world through the Honors College will not prevent you from participating in other activities on campus. In fact, our students are unusually active in opportunities such as student government, the Greek system, band, choral groups, faith-based societies, athletics and ROTC. Because of their energy and creativity, honors students often start new organizations, such as Populi (an undergraduate literary magazine), an undergraduate mock trial team, or Engineers Without Borders.

The Honors College asks you to envision your future with courage and imagination. For our part, we make a commitment to create challenging courses for you, provide you with a community where your creative and intellectual ideas can grow, and set high standards while giving you plenty of room to maneuver. One promise: The Honors College will not underestimate what you can do.

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**OUR PURPOSE IS TO ENGAGE AND SUPPORT MOTIVATED STUDENTS BY CREATING CHALLENGING COURSES FOR THEM, PROVIDING THEM WITH A COMMUNITY WHERE CREATIVE AND INTELLECTUAL IDEAS CAN GROW.**
Curriculum

Our students tell us that honors courses “aren’t harder; they’re just different.” Being a student in the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College means more in-depth study, more discussion in class, more critical thinking — and more chances to apply theories in real-world situations.

The curriculum of the Honors College requires at least 30 hours of honors credit, including the 6 hours of Hon 101 and 102. In addition, the capstone/thesis component usually earns students another 6-9 honors hours, hours that often count toward the major also.

Most of our students take more honors courses than we require because they seek the enhanced focus and support of fine professors and motivated classmates, and the opportunities to explore topics only the Honors College will put before them.

Your major is not a deciding factor in whether or not you can participate in the Honors College; our curricular design and requirements accommodate all undergraduate majors on campus.

Your transcript will show a special “Hon” designation for each honors course completed. And when you complete all the requirements (minimum of 30 honors hours, completion of capstone/thesis, 3.50 GPA and full satisfaction of CAC), you will graduate as a Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College Scholar. That special distinction on your transcript forever marks the successful completion of a robust, extraordinary undergraduate career.

Jarvis BENSON

What really made me choose the Honors College was the warmth and personal connections I felt from the honors faculty, staff and fellow students. The Honors College has made me feel connected and heard within the large university space. The people I’ve met through Honors have been life changing.”
Everyone is the main character of one shared stage. Thus, it is important to realize that you are always influencing and being influenced by other people around you. The Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College will not provide the scripts for you because they respect your uniqueness. Nevertheless, they will provide four important tools: a screen to reflect yourself, a microphone to share your thoughts, speakers for listening to other actors, and a spotlight to guide you.”
Special Classes

The Honors College believes in learning that goes beyond the campus and limits of Oxford, at a level not usually provided to undergraduates. Experiential learning courses ask questions of history and of science, often by tackling a concept we still do not quite understand at on-site locations, or going to a spot — such as the Texas State Fair or the FIFA World Cup — where richness lends itself to an exploration of human experience in a specific moment. Also, the Honors College partners with the UM School of Law so honors third- and fourth-year students can take Introduction to American Law and Reasoning, which is a gateway to taking select law school classes for undergraduate hours.

Faculty

Professors who teach honors courses are master teachers and on the cutting edge of research in their fields, but they would not be part of the honors program if they did not genuinely care about students and like working with them. “The professors are all open to anything, and they always encourage us to come to them for help,” says one honors student. That kind of extra attention from faculty is an everyday occurrence in the Honors College, from individual meetings with professors, to simply getting advice about adjusting to college life, to the occasional cooking class in the honors kitchen.

Professor Michèle Alexandre (left) leads a discussion in Hon 102.
Benefits

Along with being involved in the life of the university, the greatest benefits of the Honors College are the friendships that are formed among students and the community among the faculty and students. This community does not arise just in the classroom. Honors students can choose to live in Pittman Hall as freshmen or in clusters in the South Residential College any year. All honors students enjoy 24-hour access to the Honors College building.

The Honors College is a four-story building located near the heart of the campus, just a few minutes’ walk from major academic buildings and the Student Union. Many of the honors classes meet in the Honors College. Along with classrooms and administrative offices, the building also houses:

- A computer lab open only to honors students
- Study rooms for individual or group study
- Several lounge areas
- A fully equipped kitchen
- Wireless internet accessibility even on the courtyard and deck

Spend a few minutes talking with students, and it’s easy to see how much this space means to them. The Honors College has been described as a “refuge,” an “escape” and even a “home.”

Honors students also receive priority registration, giving even an honors freshman an earlier registration window than most seniors. Entering honors
freshmen also have the opportunity of attending an honors-only orientation session prior to the first regular session. Assistance from the Honors College staff adds to the personal side of a public education. Whether it’s dealing with a course scheduling problem or getting advice on career options, the Honors College administration is here to help students succeed. The college also has an information technology manager who is ready to help students with their computer problems.

One important part of the college is the Office of National Scholarship Advisement. The office’s staff works with any student who may be eligible, but with the office housed in the Honors College, honors

Malerie LOVEJOY

Hometown
Ballston Lake, New York

Classification
SMBHC ’19

Major
English and Linguistics

“Being in the Honors College has challenged me to think outside of my comfort zone. I have taken many creative risks in my academics that I would not have taken if not for the support of the people I met through the Honors College. The SMBHC has shaped where I am today academically because of the ways that I was forced to look beyond the obvious solutions and become an independent thinker.”
students naturally have more exposure to the workshops and to individual meetings that can help them learn about opportunities in their areas and what it takes to become competitive for major scholarships such as the Rhodes, Marshall, Gates/Cambridge, Truman, Goldwater and Fulbright scholarships.

In addition, the Honors College funds trips organized and implemented by students themselves. Armed with provocative questions, goodwill and a bit of grit, you might find yourself with four of your first-year classmates traveling to Los Angeles, New York or Chicago to interview common (and some fairly uncommon) Americans, probing who we are, together and divided.

Or perhaps you’ll travel to a city such as Boston or Seattle with other third-year students only to split up on arrival, pursuing the chance to talk to an expert in your field who might help shape your future direction or flesh out a portion of your thesis.

The Honors College encourages studying abroad and offers fellowships of various amounts to its students for a semester, year or summer abroad. With the help of these fellowships, honors students have studied in places as varied as Namibia, China, Chile and France. Students can choose from programs in which the university is a partner, including the select International Education of Students (IES), or Ole Miss’ direct exchange arrangements with
schools in the U.K., Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, Chile and Uruguay. Students are required to pay tuition and residence and meal rates, plus travel expenses; however, financial aid and scholarships transfer to certain universities and — with the honors fellowship — place the study abroad experience within students’ financial reach.

Honors College fellowships can also support students who have received unpaid internships. These fellowships can help offset the living expenses of working in places such as Washington, D.C., New York City or Madrid. The SMBHC also has funding to help you travel to a conference to present your capstone work and research funds to help you buy supplies or travel for your capstone research.

Blair WORTSMITH

“ One of the most beautiful things about being a part of the SMBHC is that I’m being challenged to grow academically and personally through meaningful discussions and interactions with others in small groups, and although my thoughts and ideas are often challenged, they are also valued by my peers.”
The Honors College wants students to dream big. The Barksdale Award (two awards of $5,000 each) supports citizen scholars who, willing to take a risk, propose ambitious, independent programs of study, research or humanitarian effort. So, dream big. Use the Barksdale Award (and the other honors resources) to make us jealous of your chance to make your vision a reality.

Eligibility and Application

Successful applicants usually have a minimum ACT of 28 (1250 math/critical reading old SAT or 1310 new SAT) and an unweighted high school GPA of 3.50, although meeting those criteria will not mean automatic acceptance. The Honors College encourages applications from students who have shown academic ambition, who have sought ways to understand themselves and their world, and who have taken leadership in meeting community needs. Such students, particularly those near the top of their senior class, should apply to the SMBHC even if their test scores do not meet the minimum.

Application to the Honors College is accomplished through the university’s Special Programs and Scholarship Application. The Honors College application includes a résumé, two essays and letters of recommendation. Your transcript submitted for university admission will also become part of your application. Most portions of the application can be used for other special programs at the university such as the Croft Institute for International Studies, Lott Leadership Institute and Chinese Language Flagship Program.

Jake Thrasher

My favorite part of the Honors College is the interdisciplinary opportunities they offer. Even though I’m a chemistry major, I’ve been able to pursue art through the Honors College Art Gala, Populi magazine and the Honors Report. I also participated in the Mississippi Water Security Institute through the SMBHC, where I learned about the economic, environmental, agricultural and societal issues surrounding water. By being a student in the Honors College, I’ve become a well-rounded person.”
Requirements

At the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, we expect students to be active in plotting their own educational strategies and to let the SMBHC enrich their options and their experiences. As noted earlier, the curriculum of the Honors College requires at least 30 hours of honors credit, including the Honors 101 and 102 sequence and the 6-9 hours usually earned in capstone/thesis work. A student must achieve at least a 3.20 grade-point average as a freshman, a 3.40 as a sophomore and a 3.50 as a junior and senior to graduate from the Honors College.

The Community Action Challenge, or CAC, is integral to the Honors College mission. Students are expected to commit at least 10 hours of their time each semester to making a difference in their communities. Students have freedom in choosing the focus and the avenue of their work either by pursuing a path of their own or working through student organizations with which they are affiliated.

Each year at the fall and spring honors convocations, we are called together to spend an evening with a nationally or internationally recognized citizen scholar, such as a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize (Elie Wiesel) or a three-time Pulitzer Prize winner (Tom Friedman) or an attorney general (Eric Holder). Whether our speaker is familiar from the news or from a classroom discussion, we invite these guests to introduce perspectives that richly deserve our shared time and attention and always challenge our preconceptions. All honors students are expected to attend convocations.
Scholarships

We understand that scholarship opportunities and financial assistance are among your top concerns. Your application for admission to the Honors College is also your application for our highly competitive honors scholarships. Fewer than 5 percent of our entering freshmen receive an Honors College scholarship. You must apply by the regular-decision deadline (Jan. 5) to be considered. These scholarships are available only to students enrolled in the Honors College:

- McDonnell-Barksdale Honors Scholarships, annual awards valued at $32,000 ($8,000 per year) and limited to Mississippi residents
- Doris Raymond Scholarships, annual awards valued at $32,000 ($8,000 per year) and open to all applicants
- Harold Parker Memorial Scholarships, annual awards valued at $32,000 ($8,000 per year) and open to all applicants
- Everett Williams Honors Scholarships, annual awards valued at $32,000 ($8,000 per year) and open to all applicants
- Annexstad Family Foundation Leaders for Tomorrow Scholarships, annual awards valued at $25,000 ($6,250 per year) and open to applicants with financial need

Other University Scholarships

Although the SMBHC itself awards only a few scholarships, most honors students qualify for one of the university’s many academic excellence scholarships, including attractive packages for National Merit and National Hispanic semifinalists and finalists. Applicants to the Honors College are often the strongest contenders for university and departmental scholarship awards, as well as for other forms of financial aid available at the University of Mississippi. Please visit the university’s financial aid website (finaid.olemiss.edu) and the department or school that offers your intended major to learn about other scholarship opportunities.
The SMBHC prepared me for life post-college by teaching me the importance of finding and crafting my own niche. Freshman year I set a goal to take one honors course outside of my discipline each year. And thus began the adventure, starting with my 80-year-old art history professor driving 15 honors freshmen, in a van, to the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, then a year later learning about medieval printmaking and how to restore damaged manuscripts using modern technology. I am not a risk taker by any means, but these experiences challenged me to take meaningful detours in my education.”