MISSION STATEMENT

The Davidson Honors College serves as a center and a symbol of the University's commitment to excellence in undergraduate education. As part of its mission, the DHC:

- offers an enriched program of liberal arts education for outstanding students of all majors;
- fosters both intellectual and civic values: inquiry, discovery, knowledge, and imagination, as well as responsibility, community, leadership, and service;
- provides support for instructional innovation, and for the best possible teaching and learning circumstances for participating faculty and students.

DEPARTMENT OBJECTIVES and ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC ISSUES

1. **Academic Excellence** - The Davidson Honors College will give its students a liberal education that enables them to understand the compass and diversity of the world, the gifts and burdens of culture, and the glories and limits of the sciences. We will become a nationally recognized model for academic excellence through student engagement, classroom instruction, and undergraduate research and creative activity. **Strategic Issue:** Partnering for Student Success.

2. **Leadership Development** - Encourage the development of moral and responsible leadership through Honors courses and applied learning experiences. **Strategic Issue:** Education for the Global Century.

3. **Intellectual Freedom** – Recognize and protect full freedom of inquiry, teaching, research, discussion, study, publication, and the creation and exhibition of works of art. **Strategic Issue:** Discovery and Creativity to Serve Montana and the World.

4. **Integrity** - Include ethical reflection as an essential component of all Honors courses. **Strategic Issue:** Education for the Global Century.
5. Diversity - Engage an ethnically, culturally, and geographically diverse student body and offer Honors courses that promote cultural awareness and intercultural communication. **Strategic Issue: Dynamic Learning Environment.**

6. Sustainability - Develop programs and activities that promote the conservation of natural resources, social justice, and sustainable economic development. **Strategic Issue: Dynamic Learning Environment.**

7. Civic Engagement - Provide opportunities and encourage student participation in community service. **Strategic Issue: Discovery and Creativity to Serve Montana and the World.**

## STUDENT LEARNING GOALS AND MEASUREMENT TOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Annual Student Self-Report</th>
<th>Course-Embedded Measure</th>
<th>College Learning Assessment (CLA)</th>
<th>Senior Honors Research Project Presentation Evaluations</th>
<th>Senior Exit Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Become intellectually curious.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Develop skills in critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and problem solving.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Improve students’ ability to write and speak effectively.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Acquire skills to succeed in active and collaborative learning.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Develop skills to engage in original research and creative scholarship.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Develop skills and habits of community and public service.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**RESULTS AND MODIFICATIONS**

| Student Learning Goal 1: | Modifications: The DHC will continue to engage faculty members who teach the required first-year Honors courses, HONR 120 *Introduction to Honors* and HONR 121L *Ways of Knowing*, in collaborative course development activities aimed at improving student learning outcomes through the exchange of information on best practices in teaching and assessment. 

**Course-Embedded Measure:** The Davidson Honors College has established a standard writing assignment (an essay on the First-Year Book) in its required freshman course, HONR 120, *Introduction to Honors*. Students enrolled in this course are encouraged to submit their essays to the annual First-Year Writing Contest, and many of them have chosen to do so. All contest entries are anonymously peer-reviewed by a panel of UM faculty and students selected by the UM Writing Center. The outcomes of this annual writing contest help the DHC to determine how its students fare in the qualitative assessment of their writing in comparison with non-Honors students. 

**Results:** Both essay contest winners in 2014 were DHC freshmen.

| Student Learning Goal 2: | Modifications: Previous assessment efforts in the DHC have indicated that there is a need for more quantitative, longitudinal data on student learning outcomes in the areas of critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and problem solving. Accordingly, the DHC will seek to acquire and disaggregate the University of Montana’s *College Learning Assessment* (CLA) data for the subgroup of Honors students. This data will help us to determine whether Honors students experience significant improvement in these skills from their freshman year through their senior year at UM. 

**Course-Embedded Measure:** The Davidson Honors College has established a standard set of expectations for writing assignments in its required freshman course, HONR 121L, *Ways of Knowing*, with embedded assessment of learning outcomes. See Appendix #1 (below): *Embedded Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes: Sample Assignment.* 

**Results:** Assessment of student learning outcomes in this course shows distinct improvement of writing skills.

| New this year: DHC faculty members who teach HONR 121L *Ways of Knowing* and HONR 122E *Ways of Knowing II* have established a Moodle common area, a permanent, secure course resource website where they can exchange syllabi and post common reading assignments. This Moodle site now serves as a rich electronic resource for faculty who are working to develop online components for teaching these Honors courses through Moodle. |
**Student Learning Goal 4:**
Acquire skills to succeed and engage in active and collaborative learning.

*Course-Embedded Measure:* All students who participate in the DHC Freshman Leadership Retreat (offered in certain sections of HONR 120, *Introduction to Honors*) are required to complete an anonymous online survey that asks them to assess the effectiveness of various active and collaborative learning exercises during the Retreat. Data compiled from the survey enables the DHC to engage in continuous improvement of this student leadership development program.

**Modifications:** In autumn 2014, the DHC increased the number of student participants (from 24 to 33) and extended the length of the Freshman Leadership Retreat to two full days, while adding an active leadership activity (a rafting trip supervised by UM Campus Recreation). Survey results showed a significant improvement in student learning outcomes from the Leadership Retreat. In future years, the DHC intends to expand the Freshman Leadership Retreat (and its embedded survey) to provide this learning opportunity to a greater number of DHC students.

---

**Student Learning Goal 5:**
Develop skills to engage in original research and creative scholarship.

*Course-Embedded Measure:* The Davidson Honors College has implemented a standard set of expectations for the Senior Honors Research Project. See Appendix #2 (below): *Senior Honors Research Project guidelines*. Under these guidelines, all DHC students are required to submit an electronic copy of their final thesis or research paper for publication on ScholarWorks. The DHC has now compiled five years’ worth of Honors research papers in an electronic archive, which are periodically reviewed by a DHC faculty assessment committee. This electronic archive also provides essential data for qualitative assessment of undergraduate research outcomes in the context of seven-year Program Review.

**Modifications:** Previous assessment efforts have indicated that there is significant variation in the rigor and quality of research and creative scholarship carried out by DHC students who complete the required Senior Honors Research Project.

**New this year:** In autumn 2014, the DHC instituted a formal requirement that every graduating senior must submit an electronic copy of their completed Honors thesis or research paper for publication on ScholarWorks. Qualitative assessment of these documents will enable the DHC to provide specific guidance to UM faculty members in their endeavors to promote and sustain high standards of student achievement in the Senior Honors Research Project.
Student Learning Goal 6: Develop skills and habits of community and public service.

Course-Embedded Measure: All UM faculty members teaching Service Learning courses are asked to report data on student volunteer service hours, service organizations, and service activities to the Office for Civic Engagement at the end of each semester. Each year, this data is disaggregated and reported by college, enabling the Davidson Honors College to assess the relative degree of engagement of its students in comparison with other UM colleges and schools.

Modifications: Previous assessment data on service learning was difficult to compile because it was gathered through individual hardcopy questionnaires.

New this year: In autumn 2014, Office for Civic Engagement staff members created a new online survey, using Qualtrics research software, that provides a more efficient interface for UM faculty survey participants while also enabling more accurate tabulation and analysis of survey data. Survey participation rates have increased this year, enabling us to compile more complete campuswide data on these civic engagement activities.

APPENDICES

The following items are appended below:

1. Embedded Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes: Sample Assignment.
2. Senior Honors Research Project guidelines

FUTURE PLANS FOR CONTINUED ASSESSMENT

1. The DHC will continue to develop embedded assessment procedures in HONR 120 Introduction to Honors and HONR 121L Ways of Knowing through collaboration among the faculty members teaching those courses.
2. The DHC recently introduced a new elective Honors course, HONR 122E Ways of Knowing II, which seeks to prepare students to understand and actively defend their own ethical commitments and principles of moral conduct through close reading and analysis of a great books curriculum. Faculty members who teach this course are working to create embedded assessment procedures that will enable continuous improvement of student learning outcomes.
3. The DHC is currently working with the Mansfield Library to devise procedures for the electronic publication of research posters and PowerPoint presentations from the UM Conference on Undergraduate Research (UMCUR) on ScholarWorks. Once such an electronic archive has been established, it will be possible for the DHC to assess outcomes of this capstone research presentation experience over time and across academic disciplines.
4. The DHC will seek to acquire and disaggregate the University of Montana’s College Learning Assessment (CLA) data for the subgroup of Honors students in order to cross-reference and correlate these students’ CLA scores with other locally collected variables.
APPENDIX 1: Embedded Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes: Sample Assignment

Sample Assignment: HONR 121L Ways of Knowing Final Take-Home Examination Essay

For your first in-class writing assignment in Ways of Knowing you were asked to write an essay in response to the question, "What ways do I know reality, including knowing the divine, the natural world, society, and the self? What counts as authoritative sources for these ways of knowing and why?" before we had encountered many of the materials in the course.

For your final examination essay, revisit these questions, this time at the end of the course, looking back at all we have read and discussed. Write an 8-10 page essay that readdresses these questions, this time drawing on materials from the course to illustrate the arguments and claims you make.

Make sure to cite at least two texts from each of the three sections of the course: knowing the divine, the natural world, self and society. Your essay will be evaluated in terms of (1) the cogency and logic of your arguments, (2) how well you support your claims with examples from the text, as well as (3) the breadth, depth, and accuracy of your engagement with the texts you cite.

In developing your essay, it might be helpful to think about the following questions:

• How does your response to these questions compare to your previous position, and why?
• Where have you changed your mind or developed further your previous position, and why?
• Where do you hold the same position as in your first essay, and why?
• Which texts have been most influential in shaping your views, and why?
• With which texts do you most disagree, and why? How does this disagreement help you to clarify your own position?

Bring your completed essay to the final exam session. Be prepared to spend a few minutes sharing with the class some of the main points of your essay.

APPENDIX 2: Senior Honors Research Project guidelines

THE SENIOR HONORS RESEARCH PROJECT (Guidelines revised August 2014)

To qualify for graduation from the Davidson Honors College with the “University Scholar” distinction, DHC students must fulfill a set of academic requirements, one of which is the Senior Honors Research Project. Students should begin thinking about and planning for their project during their junior year, discussing possibilities with a faculty member or members in their major discipline(s) as well as with the Dean or Director of Advising in the DHC. These projects may take a wide variety of forms and culminate in a thesis, a performance or exhibit, an independent scientific experiment, etc., depending on the student's major or majors.

Regardless of the discipline(s), topic(s), or nature of the project, all Senior Honors Research Projects must include the following elements:
Each project must involve significant **original research** or **creative scholarship**.

Each project must result in some kind of **written interpretation and analysis**, even when the main focus of the project is in a technical, creative, or performative discipline. The final paper should be consistent with the standards of the discipline and appropriate in length and format to the topic of the project.

Each project needs to be supervised and evaluated by a UM faculty member who will serve as the student’s mentor throughout.

Each project must conclude with a **public presentation** of the results. Several venues are available for these presentations: at symposia or conferences on campus and off, as well as in forums organized for this purpose by the DHC. Unless students have made prior arrangements to present in other venues by February 1 and had them approved in advance, they must apply to and present at the **UM Conference on Undergraduate Research (UMCUR)**, held annually in mid-April.

All students who complete the Senior Honors Research Project are required to submit an electronic copy of their undergraduate thesis or final paper to the Mansfield Library through ScholarWorks, using the **Honors Research Project Template** as a formatting guide. **Submission deadline:** the last day of classes in the semester of your graduation from UM.

**Senior Honors Research Projects** are intended to provide DHC students with a substantial capstone experience that encourages them to work diligently and creatively in collaboration with a faculty mentor over an extended period of time. These projects should challenge students to draw on knowledge and life experiences that they have attained throughout the course of their education, and apply them to an in-depth investigation of the chosen topic.

Preferably during the junior year, but no later than October 1 of the senior year, each student must present a short description of the proposed **Honors Research Project** to the Dean of the Davidson Honors College for approval.

Many students would benefit from enrolling in a **research methods course** in their major discipline prior to embarking upon the Honors Research Project. Consult with your faculty mentor to ascertain which course(s) would best prepare you to carry out the proposed research project.