



HARDING UNIVERSITY
HONORS COLLEGE

Annual Report: 2024-2025

Dean
Dr. James E. Miller



MISSION

The Honors College seeks to cultivate opportunities for highly motivated students to grow in leadership, service and academic excellence through shared experiences that are informed by faith and focus on the development of the whole person.

The college is committed to building a stimulating undergraduate experience that enhances the academic profile of students as they pursue opportunities after Harding.

VALUES

The College is committed to fostering an environment where communication is paramount, ensuring students can effectively convey ideas and collaborate across diverse disciplines; critical thinking is cultivated, encouraging rigorous analysis and thoughtful problem-solving; and scholarly contribution is championed, promoting original research and active engagement in the academic community.



ENROLLMENT POLICY

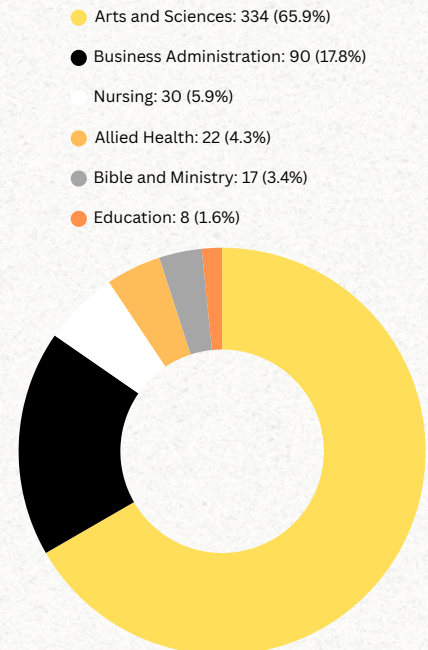
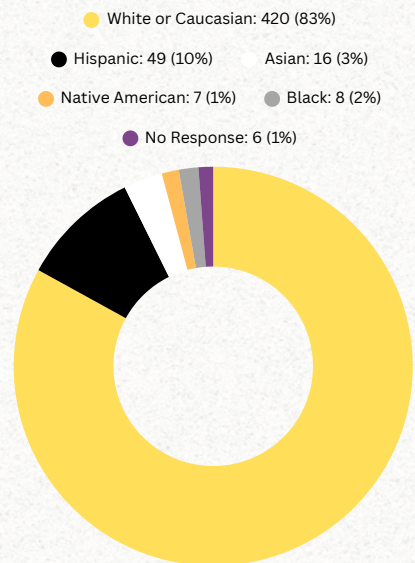
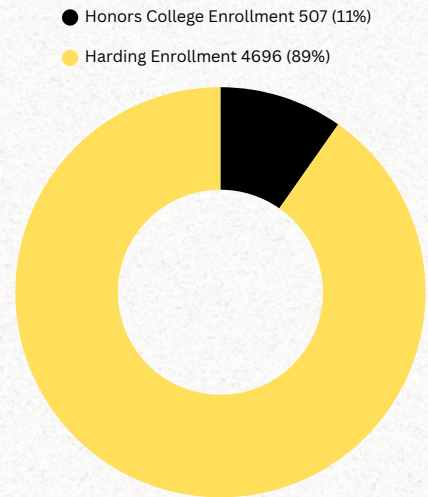
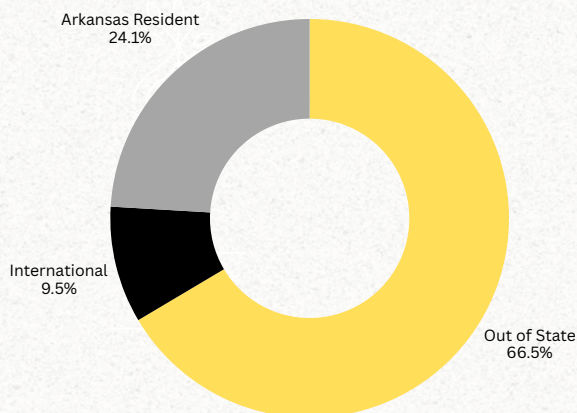
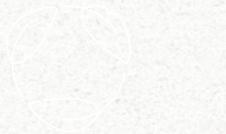
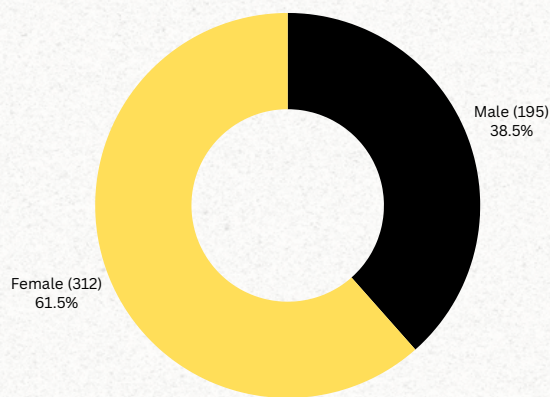
The Honors College welcomes around 100 students each year, which represents about 9% of Harding's undergraduate population — a number that reflects national norms for honors education.

Recipients of the Trustee or Heritage scholarship, National Merit Scholars, and students with perfect ACT or SAT scores are accepted to the Honors College in the fall semester of their first year. All other students may apply to enroll at midterm of their first fall semester or in any subsequent semester, provided they have earned a minimum GPA of 3.25.

TOTAL ENROLLMENT

The Honors College enrolled a total of 507 students in 2024-2025. This represents 11% of Harding's student population, slightly above national norms in honors education.

The average GPA in the Honors College is 3.83. Women make up 61% of the total enrollment. The College of Arts and Sciences was by far the largest represented college, with nearly 70% of honors students coming from that area. More than 80% of honors students identified as white or Caucasian. Just over 9% were international students, mainly from Latin America.



NEW STUDENT ENROLLMENT

In fall 2024, the Honors College enrolled 41 new students, including nine National Merit Scholars. The fall class's average high school GPA was 3.99, with an average ACT score of 33. In spring 2025, the college accepted 38 new students who applied after earning a 3.25 midterm GPA in fall 2024. In total, the college enrolled 74 new students this academic year.

By the Numbers: Fall 2024 Cohort

- **20** Trustee Scholars
- **10** Heritage Scholars
- **9** National Merit Scholars
- **2** students earned perfect scores on the ACT
- **33** fall class average ACT score

GRADUATE OUTCOMES

Honors students may choose to graduate from the Honors College at two levels.

1. Honors College Graduates with Distinction must earn a minimum of 26 hours of honors credit, including three honors contracts and an honors thesis or capstone project while maintaining a 3.5 GPA. Twenty-one students graduated from the Honors College with Distinction in 2024-2025. Their theses and capstone projects titles can be found on the Honors College website, harding.edu/honors.
2. Honors College Graduates must earn a minimum of 20 hours of honors credit, including four honors contracts, while maintaining a 3.25 GPA. Thirteen students graduated from the Honors College in 2024-2025.

Graduate School Acceptances Include

Ball State University
Georgia Tech
Harvard University
Missouri State University
Oxford University
University of Arkansas
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
University of Central Arkansas
University of Denver
University of Kentucky

Employers Include

Hillsboro Church of Christ
Pioneer Bible Translators
Raytheon
Security Risk Advisors
Tennessee Secretary of State
Unified Health Services



Slater, Bell

GRANT FUNDING FOR STUDENT RESEARCH

Two students were awarded a Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to be funded over the next year. Olivia Bell, a psychology major, will be working with Dr. James Huff on "Characterizing the Shame Experience of Aspiring Mental Health Professionals." Amelia Slater, a mechanical engineering major, will be working with Dr. James Huff on "Design Activity Engagement of Women Engineering Students."

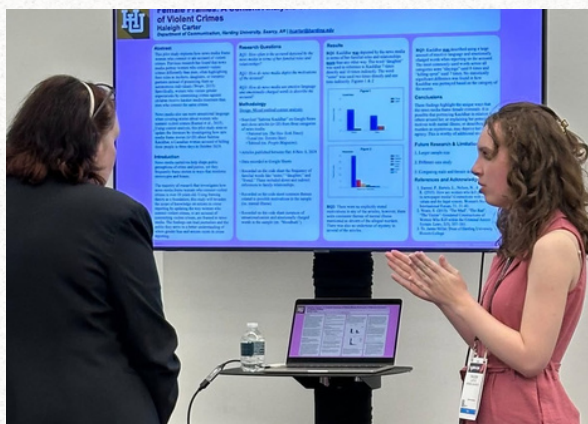
Each award is for \$4,000 and will support the students for two semesters. The grant funds a student stipend, research support, and travel expenses for students to present their findings at an external conference in their discipline.

Olivia and Amelia, both juniors, are working toward earning Honors Distinction at graduation, a prestigious designation that includes completing an honors thesis. The thesis process enables students to pursue ambitious project-level awards such as the ADHE SURF grants and supports our students and faculty mentors in original research.

Dr. Jaime Murphy, Honors College senior faculty fellow and associate professor of chemistry, was awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Arkansas Space Grant Consortium to help fund student training in research.



Gaskell



Carter

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

Several honors students were invited to present this year at national and international conferences in recognition of their scholarly and professional contributions.

Senior Julie Beehn and junior Olivia Bell presented research at the Society for Social and Personality Psychology Conference in Denver in February. Both students were working on their honors thesis research projects under the mentorship of Dr. James Huff, former senior faculty fellow in the Honors College.

In April, Haleigh Carter and Emma Gaskell presented research at the Broadcast Education Association Conference in Las Vegas. They were the only undergraduate presenters in their respective research divisions. They completed their research in Dr. Jim Miller's HNRS 2010 Communication and Literacy course in fall 2024.



FELLOWSHIP ADVISING

The Honors College supports the Office of Fellowship Advising, which is overseen by Dr. Russell Keck, Honors College faculty fellow and associate professor of English.

In the fall, one honors student applied for a National Science Foundation Grant based on the work he completed for his honors thesis project. He was not selected for this grant, but with the support of the fellowship advising office, he completed a strong application.

Madeline Broshears, who graduated in May 2025, and Isaac Raymond, who graduated in May 2024, worked with the office on their applications to Harvard Law School and Oxford University, respectively. They were both accepted to their programs. As part of his acceptance to Oxford, Isaac qualifies for the All Souls College Fellowship Examination, which he has confirmed to take in September.

Three juniors working with the office will apply in the upcoming cycle for several fellowships including Fulbright Awards, the Truman Scholarship, and the Rhodes Scholarship.

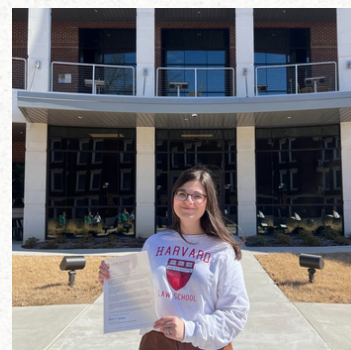
HARDING RESEARCH CONFERENCE

The Honors College and Alpha Chi co-sponsored the fifth annual Harding Undergraduate Research Conference (HURC) in April. Dr. Russell Keck, Honors College faculty fellow and associate professor of English; and Dr. Nathaniel Wiewora, Honors College faculty fellow and associate professor of history, served as conference co-chairs. They were assisted by a student committee including Lily Burrows, Caden Haustein, Bayli Nash and Noah Opperman.

A total of 61 students from across campus participated in more than 40 presentations of original research and creative scholarship.

From interpretations of visible emotions and finding God in art, to stress on international students and perfectionism among bilingual college students, to violence in media and depression among older adults, to the spirit of Christian life, and a roundtable discussion on human dignity, the conference was truly interdisciplinary.

Nearly 500 people attended. Participants also heard a keynote address from Paulette Bane, 2024 Alpha Chi Faculty Scholar.



Broshears



Raymond

HONORS SYMPOSIUM

Honors Symposium is a two-week summer academic program on the Searcy campus designed to challenge, encourage and equip high school students who are entering their senior year.

Honors Symposium introduces students to college life, specifically the Harding experience, and gives

them exposure to the Honors College, which they may aspire to join in the future.

Students take classes in theology, philosophy, ethics, history, literature, critical thinking, art and design, and more taught by faculty affiliated with the Honors College.

By the Numbers: 2023 Cohort

- **215** total 2023 Honors Symposium students
- **81%** enrolled at Harding full time in 2024-2025
- **18%** were accepted to the Honors College in 2024-2025

DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER EVENT

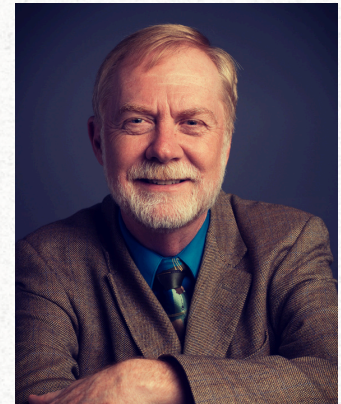
In February, the Honors College and Department of Communication co-hosted Harding Distinguished Alumnus Jerry Mitchell. He spoke in Honors chapel and led a one-hour seminar in honor of the Bison newspaper's 100th anniversary, which coincided with Scholastic Journalism Week.

In addition to press freedom and media literacy, Mitchell discussed interviewing, writing stories, publishing a book, and writing a screenplay.

The stories of investigative reporter Jerry Mitchell have helped put four Klansmen and a serial killer behind bars. His stories have also helped free two people from death row, exposed injustices and corruption, prompting investigations and reforms as well as the firings of boards and officials.

He is a Pulitzer Prize finalist, a longtime member of Investigative Reporters & Editors, and a winner of more than 30 other national awards, including a \$500,000 MacArthur "genius" grant.

After working for three decades for the statewide Clarion-Ledger, Mitchell left in 2019 and founded the Mississippi Center for Investigative Reporting.



Mitchell



Jerry Mitchell leads a weekend seminar on press freedom and media literacy. The seminar also touched on interviewing, writing stories, publishing a book, and writing a screenplay. Photo courtesy of Kenzie James



Adair



Fatula



Miller



Perring

FACULTY AND STAFF NEWS

The Honors College hired three new faculty fellows in 2024-2025.

Dr. Scott Adair of the College of Bible and Ministry has been functioning as a faculty fellow in his role as academic director of the Honors Symposium for years. This permanent appointment formalizes the vital role he is already performing in the college.

In addition to his duties with Symposium, Adair will continue teaching the freshman honors Bible courses and will contribute to developing strong upper-level honors Bible seminar offerings each semester.

Professor April Fatula of the Department of Communication will teach a section of HNRS 2010 beginning in the 2025-2026 academic year and will also help the college develop a stronger communication strategy on campus and beyond.

Professor Matthew Perring of the College of Education will teach a section of HNRS 2040, help design a

clear curricular pathway for honors students within the College of Education, and oversee the honors contract process each semester.

Fatula began her three-year term in fall 2024, joining Professor Tessa Davidson, Dr. Russell Keck, Dr. Mac Sandlin, Dr. Anessa Westbrook and Dr. Nate Wiewora. Adair and Perring will begin their three-year term in fall 2025.

Dr. Jim Miller, professor of communication, was named dean of the Honors College in fall 2024 in recognition of his leadership and service as assistant dean for the last two years.

In his new role, he now serves on the Dean's Council. He has served in many positions at Harding since 2000, including Department of Communication faculty and chair, Honors College Faculty Fellow, and, most recently, assistant dean of the Honors College.

Dr. Miller has played a pivotal role in reimagining the Honors College over



Smith

the last several years. Under his leadership as assistant dean, honors students are more engaged in high-quality research and scholarly contributions than at any time in the college's history.

Candice Smith joined as the Honors College Coordinator in September. Candice earned a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of North Texas and an MBA from the University of Texas at Dallas. She also earned a graduate certificate in academic advising from Angelo State University. She worked in corporate human resources in Austin, Texas, before her current job as a loan officer in Harding's financial aid office, where she worked for five years.

NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL



Partners in Peace
2025-2026 Cohort Participant

**NOBEL
PEACE
CENTER**



Partners in Peace

A course in Harding University's Honors College has been approved for the Partners in Peace partnership between the National Collegiate Honors Council and the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, Norway. The course, titled HNRS 2010 Communication and Literacy: Communication Tactics of Nihon Hidankyo, will be taught this fall by April Fatula, assistant professor of communication and an Honors College Faculty Fellow.

The course will look at 2024 Nobel Peace Prize winner Nihon Hidankyo. Organized in 1956 and comprised of survivors of the American atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945, this organization relied on personal witness statements to educate audiences on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons.

Students will closely examine the communication tactics employed by Nihon Hidankyo and look for ways to apply them to other problems and crises affecting humanity. As a current leader in Partners in Peace initiatives, Fatula also has been invited to present the results of the course at the NCHC & NPC – Partners in Peace - Oslo Peace Congress (PIP-OPC) May 27-30, 2026, in Oslo, Norway. Honors College administrators have also been invited to participate.



National Conference

Dr. Jim Miller and Dr. Jaime Murphy took five honors students to the National Collegiate Honors Council's national conference in Kansas City, Oct. 31-Nov. 3.

The five students were selected for the conference's research poster presentation session. They were Chelsei Arnold, Julie Beehn, Kiera Blankinship, Noah Opperman and Caitlyn Pettis. They also met Jørgen Watne Frydnes, chair of the Nobel Peace Prize selection committee, who gave a keynote presentation at the conference.



Westbrook, Brooks

ALPHA CHI NATIONAL HONORS SOCIETY

The Honors College houses Harding's chapter of Alpha Chi National Honor Society, which aims to promote contributive scholarship among students. Membership is open to the top 10% of the junior class (3.85 grade point average on 80+ hours) and of the senior class (3.75 grade point average on 104+ hours).

This year, Harding's chapter had 98 active members led by President Lily Burrow, senior social work major, Vice President Kiera Blankinship, senior psychology major, and Secretary Ally Murphy, senior chemistry major.

In April, senior interdisciplinary studies major Jackson Trahan presented at Alpha Chi's national convention in Birmingham, Alabama.

He presented on "Politics, Pedagogy and Public Perception: The Loss of Liberalism in 21st Century America." Jackson also won a scholarship and service grant from the Alpha Chi National Honor Society. This grant was designed to support the organization's members as they advance in their professions and pursue lifelong learning and service.

Dr. Greg Brooks, professor of nursing and assistant dean of student affairs, was named the 2025 Alpha Chi Distinguished Faculty Scholar.



HONORS STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Led by President Olivia Bell, the Honors Student Government Association was very active this year. The officers planned community-building activities, including a semiformal, pickleball tournament, holiday parties, weekly chapel services, and movie and game nights, just to name a few. They also organized service projects, including organizing and sorting supplies for a faith-based organization in Searcy that supports foster families, and helping the White County Literacy Council raise money.