

Dear colleague,

Thank you for considering taking on the role of advising one of our Donaghey Scholars as they begin work on their final project. We recognize that this can be a major commitment of both time and energy and we appreciate your willingness to work with our student. Below, you will find some information that will give a sense for the expectations for students, mentors, and the overall project. This is intended to give guidance to advisors that is not contained in the general guidelines that accompany this letter.

The Donaghey Scholars Program is a highly selective honors program designed to give students a well-rounded education in the liberal arts and sciences. Our Scholars enroll in an interdisciplinary core curriculum that is different from the university core and emphasizes critical thinking, writing skills, and the analysis of primary texts. As part of the graduation requirements, all Scholars must complete a final project that is a substantial piece of original work.

The exact definition of this will vary from discipline to discipline, but the general pattern is for work that is approaching, but not equivalent to, masters level graduate work in the appropriate field. Successful projects have often been presented at professional conferences. The student must do independent work that will involve planning and developing the project, placing the project in the context of the field and drawing on the appropriate literature, and carrying out the work more or less on their own. Of course, in the academic and professional world, work is often conducted in teams. In such instances, Scholars need to specify in their proposal what aspects of the project they are responsible for in particular.

The issue of originality and scope can be tricky. While no work can truly be original, it should not merely replicate what has gone before. There should be an awareness of the academic or professional context surrounding the project, such that the student knows how their work builds on, extends, or responds to preceding work. The project must make an innovative contribution. For a project to be successful, the primary advisor must have the expertise that can help place the project in its fuller context and guide the student in making connections between their work and the larger field. It would be far better to turn down a student's request to advise the project if one doesn't have the needed background than to take it on and not be able to adequately support the project.

While the project is carried out independently, the relationship with the committee is crucial to the success of the project. In general, the student will have one primary advisor and two additional committee members. The primary advisor will be responsible for the general supervision of the project, while the other committee members will be resources that the student should draw on for particular components of the project. As ever, patterns will vary, but the most common model is for the student to meet with the primary advisor once a week. In this meeting, the advisor will assess progress, answer student questions, and discuss strategies for moving forward. In programs where this is possible, it is common for this to be done as an independent study course. In some programs it is done in conjunction with a capstone or senior seminar.



DONAGHEY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Each project must be approved by the Policy Council of the Donaghey Scholars Program, composed of faculty, an alumni representative, and two student representatives. They will evaluate a project proposal for clarity, scope, and viability. Requests for revision may include greater specificity on methodology, a fuller discussion of the context, a more specific delineation of the student's role, a need for clarity on what the final written component of the project will entail, a discussion of the proposed IRB process, or the like. Once the proposal is approved, the Donaghey Scholars Program has no more oversight of the projects. We do not have the expertise to provide the necessary guidance, nor do we routinely see the senior students often enough to be able to evaluate their progress. The monitoring, assessment, and ultimate approval of the project are entirely in the hands of the student's committee. Students are required to present their work, and we strongly encourage committee members to attend this presentation, but it is important to note that this is a presentation, not a defense. Committee members' approval should be based on successful completion of the work as laid out in the proposal.

Again, thank you for your support of our student. We hope this will be a fruitful and enjoyable collaboration. We are happy to answer any questions that you might have about this process or the program itself.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Simon Hawkins'.

Simon Hawkins, Ph.D.
Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jessica Scott'.

Jessica Scott, Ph.D.
Assistant Director