

Building an Honors Transfer Program
Santa Rosa Junior College

April 2026

Important Note: This is a report assembled by Matthew Martin and served as a jumping-off point for the work completed by the Honors Program Workgroup. It represents almost 100 hours of researching the many programs across the state and correspondence with several HTP coordinators and the Honors Transfer Council of California leadership. This document was prepared with the intention of informing colleagues of the benefits and incredible potential of creating an HTP at our college. Intentionally, there are no specific recommendations made in this document as the official recommendations were made at the Academic Senate on April 29th, 2026.

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Honors Transfer Program: Did You Know?

- Honors Transfer Programs (HTPs) combine Honors-level coursework across disciplines, regular counseling support, Honors-specific transfer opportunities, access to scholarships/grants, foundational leadership opportunities, and academically and culturally enriching events like statewide community college honors research symposiums.
- HTPs are for all of our students. The Honors Transfer Council of California ([HTCC](#)) and the National Collegiate Honors Council ([NCHC](#)) ensure and require equitable practices everywhere from recruitment to course offerings and admissions practices.
- More than fifty two-year colleges around the state of California have an Honors Transfer Program.
- Honors coursework can be completed in almost every discipline! As long as the course is UC-transferable, it can count towards Honors work.
- Earning Honors credits can be very flexible. Students can complete work in cohorts/learning communities, individually in a non-honors course, or in an honors-specific course.
- Honors Transfer Programs are designed to reflect the values and commitments of the district. Many programs require service-learning and participation in campus events or clubs.
- Across the state, programs are reporting HTP students transferring at rates of 90-97%.
- Creating an HTP gives faculty access to nationwide professional development opportunities and conferences!
- Events like the Student Research Conference, the We the Future Conference, the Intramural Speech and Performance Tournament, Arts and Lectures Series, and various events put on by the Sawubona B.L.O.C. and Intercultural Centers are just some of the many opportunities we already have at SRJC that can pair beautifully with an Honors Transfer Program.
- According to the [National College Honors Council](#), “Honors colleges and programs can often serve as a ‘third space’ on campus that link Academic Affairs and Student Affairs (and other offices) because of the unique nature of the programming that takes place in the unit, thus allowing honors to serve as an important cross-campus conduit for information and ideas.”

Introduction: What is an Honors Transfer Program?

An Honors Transfer Program (HTP) offers students an enriching educational experience that prepares them for the academic expectations once they transfer, and currently, more than fifty two-year colleges across the state of California have an Honors Transfer Program. These programs combine Honors-level coursework across disciplines, regular counseling support, Honors-specific transfer opportunities, access to scholarships, and academically and culturally enriching events like statewide community college honors research symposiums. Altogether, HTPs create a synergized, supported, and motivating educational experience for our students, with several of these programs reporting 90-97% of their HTP students transferring to a four-year ([WVC](#); [GCC](#)). Every UC-transferrable course is eligible for Honors credit, meaning students can personalize and tailor their Honors experience to align with their passions and goals.

Historically, there have been concerns and issues with Honors Transfer Programs only serving certain populations within education, but as written by Richard Badenhausen and James Buss "While there may be some legacy perceptions of honors education as narrow, elitist and exclusive, these new standards present honors as inclusive, innovative, relevant and strategically positioned to advance institutional goals (if not lead some of them). The standards, which emphasize inclusive excellence, holistic admission processes, and curricular flexibility, also reflect changes that have already been taking place in honors education, especially over the past decade" ([Insider Higher Ed](#)). Built into the expectations and requirements of the Honors Transfer Council of California ([HTCC](#)) and the National Collegiate Honors Council ([NCHC](#)) is the need for equitable practices everywhere from recruitment to course offerings and admissions practices. As is already in place with many of the Puente learning communities across the state, embedding honors courses is proving to not only provide their students with excellent education, but also better prepare them for transfer.

Per [ASCCC](#): "Honors courses and programs are designed to offer students an enhanced community college experience [...]; California community colleges structure their Honors Transfer Programs in a variety of ways. Institutions may offer honors sections as a part of regular course offerings, have students contract to work with instructors while taking 'traditional' courses, or do a combination of the two. [...] Students who participate in Honors Transfer Programs have stronger transcripts, which can increase their chance to transfer to the institution of their choice."

An Honors course does not necessarily mean it is a "harder course"; rather, it means the student will be engaging with more and different work. For example, if a

student is taking English C1000 for Honors credit, they will not only complete the work for a non-Honors English C1000 course, but they will also complete an additional project. Students engage in self-driven research that can culminate in conference presentations, creating a podcast, making a short film, etc. This document will go more in-depth in the kinds of projects students are completing around the state under [Honors Coursework](#).

The scope of each Honors Transfer Program is tailored to the individual district and community; the values of the district are highlighted and celebrated as part of the program and structure. Requirements for earning an Honors Certificate can be designed to not only measure GPA and number of courses, but they can also encompass a level of community service, engagement with the campus, and utilization of counseling services, for example. Events like the Student Research Conference, the We the Future Conference, the Intramural Speech and Performance Tournament, Arts and Lectures Series, and various events put on by the Sawubona B.L.O.C. and Intercultural Centers are just some of the many opportunities we already have at SRJC that can pair beautifully with an Honors Transfer Program.

The scope of our Santa Rosa Junior College Honors Transfer Program will be defined through efforts of our Academic Senate, All Faculty Association, and administration. As written by the [National College Honors Council](#), “Honors colleges and programs can often serve as a ‘third space’ on campus that link Academic Affairs and Student Affairs (and other offices) because of the unique nature of the programming that takes place in the unit, thus allowing honors to serve as an important cross-campus conduit for information and ideas” (2).

To be considered an Honors Transfer Program and able to offer our students the transfer opportunities and many benefits that come with being an HTP Scholar, it is important that our program aligns with the expectations/bylaws of:

- [Honors Transfer Council of California \(HTCC\)](#)
- [UCLA TAP](#)
- [National College Honors Council](#)

It is of note that these organizations intentionally highlight pedagogical innovation and equity practices as criteria for participation. They also allow for flexibility, encouraging each college to design the program that best fits their community.

This document has been prepared with the intention of sharing examples of the many options and approaches utilized by some of the more than 50 two-year colleges

across the state of California with Honors Transfer Programs. Ultimately, the shape and scope of the SRJC Honors Transfer Program is ours to sculpt and design for our students.

Sample College Programs

[Glendale College: Scholar's Program](#)

[MiraCosta College: Honor's Contract](#)

[Saddleback College: Honors Transfer Program/Benefits/Transfer](#)

[San Diego City College: Contracts/Guided Pathways](#)

[IVC: Honors Transfer Program](#)

[Miramar College Honor's Program](#)

[Sac City College](#)

[Las Positas College](#)

[Foothill College](#)

Benefits of an Honors Transfer Program

Honors Transfer Programs have wide-sweeping benefits to our students, faculty, and district overall. Listed below are some of the many benefits, but note some of these are dependent on the scope of the Honors Transfer Program. This list should be seen as potential benefits we can create.

Transfer Benefits:

- Membership in the [Honors Transfer Council of California](#), which provides scholarship opportunities and opportunities for transfer to over thirty-five universities throughout the country
- [UCLA Transfer Alliance Program \(TAP\)](#)
- [The National Collegiate Honors Council](#)
- Various Transfer Partnerships
 - [UC Davis University Honors Transfer Program](#)
 - [CSU Sacramento Honors Transfer Program](#)
 - [CSU Sacramento's Black Honors College](#)
- Receive the Honors designation on their transcripts for each Honors contract course they successfully complete

Academic Benefits:

- Small Seminar Format Classes
- A supportive community of peers, staff, and faculty
- Opportunities for original, semester-long, self-initiated research projects
- Deeper relationships with faculty-mentors
- Gain experience as an undergraduate research student; this is a unique opportunity for community college students seeking to transfer
- Develop research skills for your major and/or for graduate school
- Opportunities to experience interdisciplinary research forums
- Close academic and social interaction with other highly motivated students
- Opportunity for letters of recommendation from Honors Transfer Program faculty
- The opportunity to do exciting and challenging coursework geared toward those who wish to achieve beyond what is normally required for lower-division classes
- Students get to work one-on-one with faculty as they engage in honors work
- The opportunity to participate in the statewide community college honors research symposium held at either Stanford University or UC Berkeley each spring ([Bay Honors Consortium](#))

Other Benefits

- Priority registration
- Dedicated Counseling & Academic Advisors
- Honors Study Center
- Field Trips/Events
- Leadership Opportunities
- The opportunity to become a student leader or member of the Honors Club
- Honors Certification Completion
- Honors Transfer Program Sash/Stool
- Will be honored at graduation, receive an honors designation on their transcript and degree, and a medallion of completion for their work
- Honors receptions, special lectures, cultural events, tours of universities, and awards ceremonies

Program Administration

Per requirements established by HTCC, UCLA TAP, and NCHC:

1. There needs to be a faculty member serving as the **Program Coordinator /Director**. The scope of this position and its duties will need to be negotiated. Per research, it appears the normal range is 40-60% RAT. The scope of this position directly impacts the scope of the program. Sample position listing: [Moreno Valley College](#)
2. There needs to be an **Honors Counselor**. The scope of this position and its duties will need to be negotiated. Per research, it appears the normal range is 20% RAT. Sample position listing: [Moreno Valley College](#)
3. There must be an **Honors Transfer Program advisory and/or policy-making group** composed of faculty, students, and administrators. The scope of this position and its duties will need to be negotiated. Sample Charter: [Moreno Valley College](#)

Honors Coursework

There are multiple models for honors coursework

1. Honors Contract
2. Honors Courses
3. Honors Cohorts/Learning Community

Most programs do a blend of Honors Contracts and Honors Courses. Some samples: [Glendale Community College](#), [City College of San Francisco](#), and [San Diego City College](#). Skyline's model is contract only with one Research Seminar Pathway.

Honors Contracts

[Riverside Honors Contract Defined:](#)

“An Honors contract is a way for motivated students to work with participating professors to offer an otherwise non-Honors course, completing additional assignments (as stipulated by the contract) to count towards completion of the Honors Transfer Program.

[...]

The details of the contract are to be arranged between the faculty member and the student in advance. Honors contract assignments/projects explore topics that are more advanced than traditional classes. While not an exhaustive list, contracts could include the following examples of assignments:

- Research Paper
- Quantitative/Qualitative Research Project
- Conference-Style Presentation
- Creative Writing or Fine Arts work
- Research Journal
- Short Film/Video
- Computer Program
- Podcast
- And more”

[Additional examples:](#)

- an empirical research paper based on experiments, fieldwork, or an extensive gathering and analysis of statistical data
- a traditional review of literature paper or a literary analysis

- a case study or series of case studies
- a specialized series of lab experiments
- an art project with analysis
- a musical composition with analysis
- a literary composition
- an original software or hardware creation with documentation
- a series of higher level assignments over the course (more complex math problems for a math course, as an example)

Note: Some colleges do not allow Honors Contracts for courses that have already been approved for a standalone Honors Course. Also, some colleges limit the number of contracts an instructor can offer per semester, and some offer RAT for each contract an instructor takes on.

Per [Miracosta College](#):

“Per the Collective Bargaining Agreement, associate faculty are collectively limited to 100 contracts total per semester.

Maximum teaching load for associate faculty is 10 LHE. Each contract = .227 LHE. Fulltime faculty are limited to five contracts total per semester, and total load cannot exceed 23 LHE. Each contract = .227 LHE.”

According to [Skyline College](#): “Honors courses are not more difficult, but you will have the unique opportunity to research a topic of your choice with a faculty mentor of your choice. Your faculty mentor should be the instructor for a course you are currently taking.”

[Contract Sample Skyline](#)

Stand-alone Honors Classes

A Stand-alone Honors Course is one in which there is an approved COR (the chancellor’s office has been releasing [COR templates](#) for many Honor’s courses), every student enrolled in the section is doing honors work, and the workload is above that of the non-Honors version of the course. When designing the COR for the course, it is recommended to allow for flexibility in what makes the class an Honors course. Some courses have higher reading expectations, word count, and additional research projects similar to the examples listed under Honors Contracts.

Honors Cohorts/Learning Community

Some districts create FYEs /cohorted learning communities for their HTP students. This provides students with a more immersive and structured HTP experience.

It is also becoming popular to embed HTP courses in already established learning communities (Puente, Umoja, APASS, etc.) This is an easy model to imbue these LCs with all of the benefits that come with being an HTP student.

Requirements for a Recognized Honors Transfer Program

**This document is an amalgamation of the criteria established by [UCLA TAP](#), [The Honors Transfer Council of California](#) (HTCC), and [National Collegiate Honors Council](#). The HTCC requirements should be prioritized, as this is the organization with the most transfer partners, scholarships, and conference opportunities for our students, but it is highly recommended that we meet all requirements, as it will open more opportunities for our students.

- The program offers honors/scholars courses and/or contracts designed to offer an equity-driven and enriched educational experience as defined by the instructional faculty of the college
- The program is designed to assist students in developing their critical thinking, research, writing, and oral communication skills
- Honors courses offered in the program are small enough to provide a faculty/student ratio appropriate for honors education.
- The program is a campus-wide endeavor that offers courses from various disciplines and is assisted by a multidisciplinary advisory council
- The program establishes and adheres to completion requirements that include a minimum GPA and a minimum number of letter-graded honors/scholars courses or units
- The program sets its own admission requirements but establishes a minimum completion GPA at 3.0 or above and at least 15 semester units or its quarter equivalent of honors coursework (25 percent of lower division coursework). [15 units as a minimum is standard across HTCC/TAP]
- The program demonstrates a concerted, continuous effort to recruit from underrepresented populations
- The program welcomes and serves students of all religions, ages, ethnicities, sexual orientations, nationalities, gender identities, disability statuses, and economic backgrounds.
- The program is headed by instructional faculty members

- The head of the program is remunerated by reassigned time and/or stipends commensurate with the size of the program and the number of students served
- The program is supported by clerical assistance commensurate with the size of the program and the number of students served;
- The program has dedicated physical space;
- The program makes counseling available to honors/scholars students to support them in their educational endeavors and plans, including transfer;
- The program pays annual dues to the Council, unless those dues are forgiven for reasons given under Article VII number 3 of the bylaws.

Additional Requirements to Join TAP [not directly stated for HTCC]:

- Evidence of support from Community College President that TAP affiliation is desired and will be supported administratively.
- Two primary positions are required for TAP affiliation – faculty member to serve as program Coordinator/Director and at least one Counselor to provide counseling and student support. These roles are separate and distinct and may not be assigned to the same individual. [HTCC also requires a faculty director and an honors counselor]
- Faculty Coordinator to oversee the program, be a liaison to UCLA, and serve as a member of the UCLA TAP Council. If this is not a primary institutional role of the incumbent, reassigned time or overload pay for serving as Director/Coordinator should be provided.
- Organized structure of the Honors/Scholars Program that reports to an academic dean or vice president, having official representation on college governance committees.
- Organized Honors/Scholars advisory or policy-making group composed of faculty, students, and administrators.
- A plan for program assessment and accountability.

Additional Shared Principles from the National Collegiate Honors Council:

NCHC does not appear to have additional requirements beyond the scope of TAP and HTCC. It does have very helpful language/explanations/reasoning for the required pieces of the Honors Transfer Program. They do have an annual fee of around 1000\$.

Student Admission Requirements

Each institution can establish its student admission requirements. There is a large array of requirements to join various Honors Transfer Programs around the state—they range from everything from no requirements or application to applications with GPA requirements. Various requirements have been listed below:

- No application and no minimum GPA ([Miramar](#)/Sac City)
- Application with no GPA requirement. The application is used to give guidance and recommendations on “level of participation” ([MiraCosta](#))
- Application, maintain a GPA 3.5, one honors course per semester, 10 hours of community service per year ([Las Positas](#))
- Application, 3.0 GPA, 9 transferable units (before becoming a member) ([MVC](#))
- Various colleges have other requirements to continue as a member of the program. These will be explored further in a document examining the scope of the program
 - Community service
 - Rate of taking courses
 - Level of course completion
 - Number of meetings with a counselor

Thoughts to consider: It will be important not to establish arbitrary barriers to entry for our students. Historically, too many people have believed they don't belong in an Honors Transfer Program. Whatever SRJC decides, it will want to be mindful of the best IDEAA practices.

Honors Certificate Requirements

Each Honors Transfer Program has a different set of standards for the Honors Certificate. HTCC and NCHC have a base standard, listed below, but there is intentionally a lot of flexibility. The scope of the certificate requirements should reflect the vision and values of a district. Listed below are both the base requirements and the additional requirements seen throughout the state.

Minimum Requirements:

- GPA at 3.0 or above
- At least 15 honors units

Per [HTCC](#) Bylaws: Article 1.3.f: “The program sets its own admission requirements but establishes a minimum completion GPA at 3.0 or above and at least 15 semester units or its quarter equivalent of honors coursework (25 percent of lower division coursework).”

15 semester units is the same for HTCC, NCHC and UCLA TAP.

Other potential requirements/varieties as seen throughout the state:

- Minimum GPA Range: 3.0 3.25 (this can be cumulative or in Honors Transfer Programs).
 - Most common: 3.25 cumulative (HTCC sets the 3.0 minimum)
- Complete a set number of research projects/Honors contracts (some programs have limits to the number of contracts possible.)
- Specific courses can be required
 - **Research Seminar complete (some colleges require a research seminar [LIR10?])**
 - English C1000H (Canada)
 - Honors has to be in multiple departments
- Community service/Service Learning
 - ~16 Hours
 - Service leadership [Rubric](#)
- Strictly adhered to the guidelines for academic honesty/integrity
- Maintain a level of engagement with the college (clubs, activities, service learning)
- Maintain a portfolio of capstone projects completed in Honors coursework
- Successfully presented the completed portfolio at an exit interview
- Number of academic counseling appointments (Foothill requires 1 per quarter)
- Meet graduation requirements or transfer requirements

Sample Honors Schedules

Honors Course Pathway (Canada)

1st Semester

- ENGL 100/ENG C1000 Honors (3 units) or
- MATH 200/STAT C1000 Honors (4 units)

Spring:

- ENGL 110 Honors (3 units) - Required for HTP students starting fall 2024
- LIB 100 Honors (1 unit)
- CRER 110 (1 unit) ... best taken the spring before you apply for transfer

2nd Fall:

- Honors Contract (3 units) ... or another Honors Course
- IDST 150: Honors Research Seminar (1 unit) ... if you are doing an Honors Contract
- You will also complete your transfer applications and apply for scholarships

Second Spring:

- Honors Contract (3 units) ... or another Honors Course
- [IDST 150](#) (1 unit) ... if not taken previously
- You will also complete your UCLA TAP paperwork (if applying to UCLA) and apply for scholarships

