



Sustainability

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Expanding Sustainability Opportunities for Honors College Students

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Anna Madden '24 | English:Text, Business

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Recently, UNH announced the creation of its new [Honors and Scholars College](#). Thanks to the generosity of Dana Hamel, a longtime supporter of the University, the College will receive \$20 millions in funding towards the expansion and development of educational programs and opportunities.

As the Honors Program transitions to an Honors College, one of the new initiatives it hopes to launch is an Honors Sustainability Pathway, designed by and for Honors students. This past academic year, the Sustainability Institute worked with the Honors Program to create a group of Honors Sustainability Fellows. The Fellows contributed to the

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implementation of the new pathway by conducting research on sustainability practices at UNH and across the nation. The Fellows then designed an Honors Sustainability route based upon the information they gathered, with the hopes of making the pathway available to all future Honors students.

Among those leading the conception of the program are Fellows Molly Kent '24 ([English, Women's and Gender Studies](#)), Samantha Pearson '25 ([Physics, Minors in Forensics, Justice Studies](#)), Alexis Eaton '24 ([Environmental Engineering, Sustainability](#)), Catey Selby '25 ([Environmental Engineering, Sustainability](#)), and Lauren McDowell '24 ([Marine, Estuarine, and Freshwater Biology, Sustainability](#)). Presenting their work at the 2023 UNH [Undergraduate Research Conference](#), the students shared their vision for the developed pathway. According to studies they conducted, common issues found within student academic experiences were of a lack of opportunity to participate in transdisciplinary research and hands-on experiences. In many cases, academic major requirements limited student education mostly to indicated fields of study, leaving fewer chances to explore other disciplines. The Honors in Sustainability pathway will address these issues, by developing a flexible design that would provide students with greater opportunities to participate in, such as service-based internships, one-on-one mentoring sessions, sustainability focused classes, community projects, and research.

“We hope to be able to combine a lot of the options that already exist on campus and add in new ones we found in our research,” Molly explained.

In distinction from the Sustainability Dual Major currently offered at UNH, the Honors in Sustainability Pathway would be built for students interested in studying sustainability but desiring the independence to

explore various topics within the field. For example, students wanting to research financial investments or medical equipment in relation to sustainability would have the option to pursue those concepts as they wished, without being required to take the specific courses outlined by the Sustainability Dual Major. This way, those unable to add a dual major to their academic requirements would be able to participate more in sustainability-related research and experiences, utilizing the greater flexibility to be able to design their interdisciplinary academic studies. “If we want to see more students involved in sustainability, we have to make it accessible,” the Honors Fellows remarked at the Undergraduate Research conference. Having students help spearhead the research and design the Honors in Sustainability pathway was a large step forward toward achieving this goal.

“I really appreciated the fact that students were at the forefront of the development of the pathway,” Alexis said. “Getting the chance to use my understanding of the honors program experience and my time as a sustainability dual major to create a meaningful experience for future students was extremely rewarding.”

“This research was an amazing opportunity to work with other strong leaders that are passionate about sustainability,” Samantha agreed. “I am very grateful for the opportunity to create a pathway that will help future honor students pursue their enthusiasm for sustainability.” In reflection of the interdisciplinary design for the new pathway, Molly added “It was a great opportunity to develop my skills around research. As an English Major, I haven't had many chances to do interdisciplinary work with students from CEPS, so this has been a beneficial experience!”

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