

## **Role of the Independent Reader**

## **OS Honors Program**

### **Time commitment**

- Several hours at the reader's convenience in mid-March to carefully read student's thesis (approximately 40-50 pages) and make notes for later reference.
- Attendance at one meeting in late March or early April, approximately 1 - 2 hours, for student's oral defense of thesis, discussion with other readers, and decision on designation to award to the project.

### **Role and Process**

The OS program requires each honors student to have three thesis readers. One is their faculty mentor, who has been very involved in the project from the early proposal stage. This person will have the most knowledge of the effort the student has put into the project, how the student has dealt with any challenges the project has presented, and how the student's research and analytical skills have developed over the course of the project.

The second reader is the coordinator of the OS honors program. The coordinator has attended several group meetings of OS honors students throughout the academic year. He/she has heard each student give progress reports at various stages in their projects, so is somewhat familiar with each project. However, the coordinator has never actually reviewed any data, results, or writing.

The third reader is an "independent" reader, who has enough knowledge in the relevant field to make a judgment on the quality of the research project, but who has previously \*not\* been involved in the project in any way.

In early March, the OS Program Assistant will contact the independent reader to set a date for the student's thesis defense/discussion meeting (which will include the student and the two other thesis readers). This meeting will take approximately 1 - 2 hours in late March or early April.

The independent reader will receive a copy of the student's honors thesis in mid-March. The reader should be sure to carefully read the thesis before the scheduled defense/discussion meeting. The OS Program will make every effort to allow for a one-to-two week period for this reading to take place. The independent reader should make notes of any discussion points or questions to be raised during the upcoming thesis defense/discussion meeting.

The Program Assistant will contact all parties to determine a mutually convenient time for the defense meeting. The independent reader will then attend the scheduled thesis defense/discussion meeting with the student and the other two readers. By bringing these three different reader perspectives together, the OS program hopes to obtain a fair assessment of the student's project. After the student presents his/her work at the thesis defense/discussion meeting, all three readers will have the opportunity to make comments and ask questions. After the Q&A portion of the meeting, the student will be excused and the three readers will confer as to their assessment of the project. The readers should judge the project based on their past experiences with undergraduates, and what each would expect from an advanced undergraduate research project. After discussion, the readers will come to consensus on the designation to be assigned: honors, high honors, or highest honors.

Following the agreement upon a designation, the independent reader's participation is completed. The designation will be communicated to the student by either the faculty mentor or the coordinator of the OS honors program. The independent reader may either keep a copy of the thesis, or may leave it with the OS program.