

HONORS PROGRAM

OLIVET NAZARENE UNIVERSITY



The background of the image is a photograph of a building with classical architectural features, including large columns and hanging lanterns. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The word "MISSION" is centered in the upper half of the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

MISSION

The Honors Program at
Olivet Nazarene University exists
to equip academically-gifted
students for lives of service as
Christian scholars and leaders
in their chosen disciplines.

PROGRAM

CHARACTERISTICS

- Cohort program model that fosters a community of scholarship as students and faculty progress together through a sequence of four Honors Program courses
- Freshmen- and sophomore-level interdisciplinary classes taught by a dedicated team of faculty experts
- Junior and senior research seminars focusing on research methodology specific to student's discipline
- Culmination in the completion of a fully-funded, faculty-mentored, two-year capstone research project
- Coursework in the program satisfies four university general education requirements
- Enrichment activities including a capstone sophomore Chicago trip at conclusion of coursework
- Honors designation on transcript and recognition at graduation
- Potential for publication in university honors research journal
- High success rate in placing graduates in fully-funded graduate school programs



ERIN OLSON

CLASS OF 2020

**“My capstone project has unlocked a
newfound passion for research.”**

Erin is a member of Honors Cohort 10. At Olivet, she worked alongside Dr. Dan Sharda to investigate means of protecting intestinal health using a cell culture model of intestinal inflammation.

“By starting the project development process freshman year, the Honors Program fosters and facilitates a higher level of scholarship and project complexity than is generally achievable in a single-semester research setting. I am incredibly thankful for the opportunity to contribute to the larger body of scientific literature in a meaningful way and for the investment my Honors professors and research mentor, Dr. Sharda, have made in my project. My capstone research not only strengthened my laboratory, communication, and critical thinking skills, but has also unlocked a newfound passion for research.”

Erin is currently an MD candidate at the University of Illinois College of Medicine. Her honors experience has equipped her to be a strong contributor to community health research projects as well as an effective communicator and member of interdisciplinary care teams.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

DAN SHARDA, PH.D. STEM RESEARCH COORDINATOR

“Students will discover in themselves new levels of perseverance, excellence, leadership, independence, and confidence.”



Dr. Sharda's doctoral and postdoctoral studies have been in the fields of cancer and cardiovascular disease, the two leading causes of death in developed countries. He's had the privilege of conducting research in top labs in the United States and Japan and dining with Nobel Laureates. Nothing holds him in awe though as much as looking through a microscope at a cell he has never seen

before. A self-proclaimed research “junkie,” Dr. Sharda is addicted to learning and discovering more about creation and, by extension, the Creator.

“I see teaching in the Honors Program as having two primary benefits. The first is to develop leaders and Kingdom ambassadors in all fields. Students who complete the program will discover in themselves new levels of perseverance, excellence, leadership, independence, and confidence. The second benefit is wisdom. How much care has the King of the universe put in His creation? How is it that in His infinite wisdom and mercy, He has allowed us to uncover even a small part of His remarkable creativity? How wonderful is it that we have the opportunity to share these discoveries with others? Might we even learn something about ourselves in the process? Are you game to find out?”

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

NICOLE VANDER SCHAAF, PH.D. STEM RESEARCH COORDINATOR

“Our students are conducting research
that no one has ever done before.”



Dr. Vander Schaaf holds a Ph.D. in Cell & Molecular Biology and loves discovering more about God’s handiwork through research. She has a diverse scientific research background—from studying Antarctic bacteria to investigating the epigenetics of colon cancer—but a common theme of these projects is that they reveal molecular and microscopic details about creation.

One of her latest research projects was a collaboration with several students and faculty in Olivet’s Biology department. Published in *Microbiology Spectrum* and applauded by researchers from Yale’s School of Public Health, this work reported the methodology and impact of routine, cost-effective saliva testing on limiting the spread of SARS-CoV-2 on Olivet’s campus during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“One thing I love about teaching in Olivet’s Honors Program is that I get a front-row seat to the new discoveries being made by the Honors students. Our students are conducting research that no one has ever done before, and I have the privilege of coaching them through the research process, being among the first to see their data, and cheering them through the finish line of communicating their findings through oral and written scholarship. It is a joy to see such talented students pursuing their passions through research and seeking to make an impact in their field even at a young age.”



DAVID RUSH

CLASS OF 2024

**“I’ve been challenged to examine my thinking
and develop my skills as a scholar.”**

David’s Honors research focuses on the unique capabilities of video games as narrative vehicles. Working with English professor Dr. Andrew Hoag, David is investigating how other games have produced compelling stories and prompted interesting discussion among audiences and is developing a game that implements the techniques observed. He is also researching the ways game design can guide players to make the experience more consistently enjoyable. This work builds on his past experience modifying existing games using the Java programming language and his computer science major. Upon completion, David hopes to publish his game for both Windows and Linux.

“In the Honors Program I’ve been given a chance to grow and interact alongside talented and passionate peers. I’ve been challenged to examine my thinking and develop my skills as a scholar. The professors in this program ask students to grapple with big-picture issues in society and problems of philosophy and apply them to our own interests.”



ABBY FLOOD

CLASS OF 2023

“Walking into an Honors Program classroom is simultaneously exhilarating and reassuring.”

Abigail’s Honors research focused on the intersection of race, children’s ministry, and the Kingdom of God. Given the rising racial and ethnic diversification of the U.S. reported in the 2020 Census, she saw a need for the Church to address how racial differences should be navigated in light of the Kingdom of God. To this end, she has written a five-week children’s ministry curriculum that can be used in both church and para-church settings to disciple children and families in how to follow Jesus in loving our neighbors in the midst of a diversifying society.

“The Olivet Honors Program has given me a place to dive deep into hard questions— to be challenged both academically and spiritually. One of the things I appreciate most about the program is that we move through college together as a cohort. Walking into an Honors classroom is simultaneously exhilarating and reassuring. I know I will be challenged but I also know it will be within the comfort of professors who care about me and classmates who know me. The Honors Program has enriched my Olivet experience in countless ways and prepared me for a life of scholarship, no matter my context.”

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

STEPHEN CASE, PH.D. PROGRAM DIRECTOR

“The Honors Program gives our students the tools they need to become Christian scholars and servant leaders.”



Dr. Case is a historian of science whose research bridges the humanities and physical sciences. After pursuing graduate work in physics (MA, University of Mississippi), he began teaching courses in the Earth and Space Sciences program at Olivet before completing his doctoral studies in the history and philosophy of science (Ph.D., University of Notre Dame). His scholarship focuses on the history of astronomy, and his first book, *Making Stars Physical* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018), was short-listed for the History of Science Society's prestigious Pfizer Prize. His work has appeared in scholarly journals including *Journal for the History of Astronomy* and *Annals of Science* as well as magazines such as *Aeon* and *American Scientist*. At Olivet, Dr. Case teaches courses in astronomy, history of science, and the Honors Program.

“The Honors Program gives our students the tools they need to become Christian scholars and servant leaders. Society needs thinkers with the mind of Christ, able to explore various perspectives, tackle open-ended problems, think outside the box, and cross disciplinary divides with expertise and empathy. In the Honors Program, students have the opportunity to grow as part of a community of faith, mentored by professors who are experts in their fields and passionate about God's creative act in the world.”

APPLICATION PROCESS

1

Apply and be admitted to Olivet Nazarene University

2

Verify a composite ACT score of 28 or an equivalent SAT score, or rank in the top 10% of class (100 minimum students), or have a 3.75 GPA on a 4.0 scale

3

Submit completed Honors Program application form along with required essay online by January 30

4

Complete an Honors Program interview with ONU faculty

for more details visit olivet.edu/honors

CONTACT INFORMATION



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*For questions regarding the
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