

# Department of Communication

## TIPS **FOR** HONORS STUDENTS **BY** HONORS STUDENTS

### **Tip #1: Do An Honors Thesis!**

You get to spend a whole year researching and thinking about a topic that means something to you. You get to conduct a research experiment and understand what it means to unearth some information that people either didn't know about before or no one had proved. No matter how mundane that piece of new information is, it's still incredibly exciting to discover something that other people didn't know before.

### **Tip #2: Learn About Research**

Investigate current research topics being done on campus. These will help inspire your own ideas for your project, and they can also help you find students and professors with whom you may be able to work throughout the years.

Get experience running studies! Volunteer to work in a Comm or Psych lab for a quarter to familiarize yourself with IRB protocols, analyzing data, and working with individual subjects.

Do interviews in your subject because it's a great way to network and find your own research. Instead of using research from books or other journal articles, don't be afraid to supplement it with your own research through interviews that you initiated. Even if it's not the brunt of your data, it will supply a realistic and helpful viewpoint into the area of your thesis.

### **Tip #3: Pick Your Advisor Well**

Not because any one advisor is better than the other, but because they all do different things. Find an advisor whose research piques your interest and who is interested in the same things you are. You'll be spending the year getting to know them and they'll be both your mentor *and* your cheerleader when things get hard. All of the faculty are amazing and working with them on a topic that both of

you are passionate about will make your honors thesis one of the most meaningful things you do in college.

Create your topic with your advisor. This way, they will be as excited about it as you are! Also, they can help you shape your topic and point out things you may not have considered.

Choose an advisor with whom you already have a good relationship and would like to talk a lot with *and* whose viewpoints you respect. Writing an honors thesis can really help to foster a relationship and your advisor will most likely affect the direction of your thesis, so it's really important that you understand their way of thinking.

#### **Tip #4: Choose Your Topic Wisely**

You will be spending the entire year chewing (mentally) on this topic. Pick something that you think is interesting to you and others – but mostly you! This will be a year of your life, so make it a happy one. Make a list of tons of different topics; questions that you come across during your everyday life are a great place to start. If the research is a little bit personal to you, it'll be easier to stay interested throughout the entire year.

Read, read, read! You will be writing a thesis, so see what's expected by reading some! Look at the past ones in Katrin's office.

Explore all your options. Talk with multiple professors before you settle on your thesis advisor, and consider at least 2 or 3 proposals before choosing your final topic. Also, realize that your topic *can* and *will* change. If you realize while running your study that you aren't getting results, it's okay to modify things.

#### **Tip #5: Get To Know Other Students Doing An Honors Thesis**

Talk to those doing thesis work in your year and get advice from those who did it in previous years. Katrin/The Alumni Center can help you find their contact info. It was really fun talking with the other students who were working on their theses because there's nothing more magical than sharing your research findings. I never realized I would get so excited about finding statistical significance.

And talking to people about their topics – which are all fantastic as well – is both interesting and helpful for your research.

**Tip #6: Start Early!**

Don't wait until the last minute to decide – it's too stressful! Also, *do not* wait until midway through winter quarter to start your research. Start early and get a good chunk of your research done every quarter. You really do need the entire year to get everything done. And trust us: you don't want to be holed-up any more than you have to spring quarter of your senior year!

\*\*\*\*\*