

**Proposal to the Associated Colleges of the South  
Integrating Information Fluency into the Senior Honors Research Seminar  
July 2002**

**Title**

Integrating Information Fluency into the Senior Honors Research Seminar

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**Workshop Presenters**

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**Brief Abstract**

At Rollins College, all seniors in the honors degree program enroll in a two-semester seminar designed to help them in initiating, sustaining, and completing their honors research projects. The seminar, especially in the fall semester, is crafted as a series of steps in which the students narrow their topics, define their theses, and establish their plans of procedure. Working with their individual faculty sponsors and with the seminar director, the students are assisted early in the spring term in the difficult process of completing their research and starting their writing.

In this proposal our immediate objectives are (1) to assure that these honors degree students possess the information fluency skills required to integrate traditional and emerging sources of information into their research and (2) to improve the process by which they incorporate the results of this research into

their thesis projects. Our overarching goal is to make certain that these projects demonstrate that the students have mastered the skills of computer literacy, information literacy, and critical thinking.

With support from the ACS we will convene a one-day workshop on Saturday, September 14, 2002, in which two reference librarians, two information technologists, and four faculty members (representing the expressive arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences) will conduct sessions for the students on developing the information fluency skills required for (1) identifying and accessing information, (2) evaluating their resources, and (3) integrating their research into their projects. Each session will combine theory and practice. The workshop will conclude with a final session and overview to which all the faculty sponsors for 2002-03 will be invited.

### **Rationale**

In recent years Rollins College has taken several initiatives to facilitate the process by which honors degree students design and articulate their senior honors research projects. In the junior year each student selects a faculty sponsor, identifies a research topic, and develops a prospectus which is submitted for approval to the Director of the Honors Degree Program and the Dean of the Faculty. During the summer between the junior year and the senior year, the faculty member who will be facilitating the senior honors research seminar reads these prospectuses and sends a letter to each student. These letters suggest strategies that the students might use to begin or continue their research during the summer months.

This summer the letter sent to the students asked them to keep "research diaries" in which they inscribe comments on their reading. No format was prescribed for these diaries, but the students were told to record citations for each resource they consulted, to take notes on points germane to their projects, and to write brief evaluations of the resources. The purpose of assigning these research diaries is to begin the processes by which the students use their information fluency skills to (1) identify sources of information, (2) document and assess information, and (3) incorporate their research into their projects. The students will submit these research diaries to the seminar facilitator at the first meeting of the seminar in late August.

Experience has shown that these honors degree candidates are among the brightest students at Rollins. After they complete their baccalaureates, most of them proceed directly to graduate and professional schools. But we are often surprised, as they begin work on their senior research projects, to discover how uneven is their command of information fluency skills. Some have considerable expertise in conducting research, but possess limited knowledge of the array of traditional and emerging sources of information available to them. Others are adept at gathering information, but have difficulty assessing its quality. Nearly all

of them struggle, to some degree, in deciding how to incorporate their research into their projects. As underclass students, they have all produced papers in which they documented their sources as notes or citations. But few have been produced literature reviews of the scope that we expect in their senior honors projects.

To assist these students in developing the skills of computer literacy, information literacy, and critical thinking required for success in their projects, we propose to offer a one-day workshop on integrating information fluency into the senior honors research seminar. Participants in the workshop will include the students themselves, their faculty sponsors, and, as presenters, two reference librarians, two instructional technologists, four faculty members representing the four divisions of the college, the library director, and the director of the honors degree program.

During the introduction (30 minutes) the senior honors students will briefly describe their research topics and identify the information fluency skills that they believe they require for success in their undertakings.

In Session I (90 minutes) two reference librarians will conduct presentations designed to answer two principal questions: how are you going to identify, access, and evaluate information to support your senior research project? What information fluency skills are required for success in this endeavor? This session will address issues of information literacy, including the ethics of the research enterprise and strategies for identifying, accessing, and evaluating information. Two of the students' projects will be selected in advance and presented as case studies to demonstrate the array of print and electronic resources available.

In Session II (90 minutes) two information technologists will conduct presentations to answer two principal questions: how are you going to use technology to support your senior research project? what information fluency skills are required for success in this endeavor? This session will address issues of computer literacy, including a review of the procedures for backing up files and the use of software to create tables, diagrams, and citations. Two of the students' projects will be selected in advance to demonstrate how to incorporate images, music, film, and other media.

In Session III (45 minutes) four faculty members will meet with the students in their respective divisions to answer two principal questions: how are you going to transform your research into a literature review and incorporate your research into your project? what information fluency skills are required for success in this endeavor? This session will address how research in the arts and sciences is documented, organized, and evaluated. Two of the students' projects will be selected in advance to demonstrate how the various disciplines construct and position the literature review.

In Session IV (15 minutes) the Library Director and the Director of the Honors Degree Program will describe the format required for the senior honors projects, copies of all of which are deposited in the Rollins College Archives.

During the informal conclusion, which will include all of the faculty sponsors, the workshop presenters will participate in an overview of the resources available at Rollins to assist senior honors students in developing the information fluency skills required for success in completing their research projects.

We view this workshop as an investment. By designing sessions to address how our students can apply their skills of information literacy, computer literacy, and critical thinking to their senior honors projects, we aspire to assist them in conducting studies of the highest quality. They will spend the better part of the senior year in developing and refining these skills, and we expect their completed projects to stand as evidence that our honors students have achieved the goals we have set for them for information fluency.

## **Timeline**

Planning: Summer 2002

Workshop: Saturday, September 14, 2002, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Evaluation: Fall 2002 and Spring 2003

## **Agenda**

9:00

Introduction

What are the topics of the projects that the students have proposed to undertake?

What information fluency skills do they think they require for success in their endeavors?

Edward Cohen, Seminar Facilitator  
senior honors students

Session I

9:20 – 10:50

How are you going to identify, access, and evaluate information to support your senior research project?

What information fluency skills are required for success in this endeavor?

Dorothy Mays, Head of Public Services  
William Svitavsky, Reference Librarian

Session II

11:00 – 12:30

How are you going to use technology to support your senior research project?  
What information fluency skills are required for success in this endeavor?

Sandra Bryant, Information Technologist  
Miriam Moore, User Specialist

12:30 – 1:30

Luncheon

senior honors students  
workshop presenters

Session III

1:45 – 2:30

How are you going to transform your research into a literature review and to incorporate your research into your project?

What information fluency skills are required for success in this endeavor?

Prof Edward Cohen (humanities projects)  
Prof Eileen Gregory (science projects)  
Prof Michael Gunther (social sciences projects)  
Prof Susan Libby (expressive arts projects)

Session IV

2:45 – 3:00

Format of the senior honors research project

Donna Cohen, Library Director  
Tom Cook, Director of the Honors Degree Program

3:00 – 4:00

Conclusion

Overview of the resources available at Rollins to assist senior honors students in developing their information fluency skills

senior honors students  
faculty sponsors  
workshop presenters

### **Strategies for recruiting participants**

Participation in the workshops will be mandatory for all students enrolled in the Senior Honors Research Seminar. Presenters have already agreed to participate. Faculty sponsors will be invited, for the closing session, both by the seminar director and by the students whose projects they are directing.

### **Target audience**

Students enrolled in HON 450: Senior Honors Research Seminar.

### **Plans for follow-up and evaluation**

At the beginning of the fall semester, prior to the workshop, the students will respond to surveys designed to ascertain the level of their information fluency skills. The results of the surveys will assist the presenters in preparing their sessions, and the students will also fill out an evaluation of the workshop.

At the end of the fall semester we will administer the survey again to measure the improvement in the students' information fluency skills. At this time, we will also ask the faculty sponsors to assess the students' skills in information fluency and their progress toward the completion of their honors projects.

The dean of the faculty and the director of the honors degree program will also review each honors research project at the end of the spring semester and assess therein the evidence of the students' skills in information fluency.

### **Plans for dissemination of results to ACS and beyond**

A description of the workshop and an account of the results will be submitted to the ACS (perhaps for notice in *Palladian*) and to the National Collegiate Honors Council. The seminar facilitator, other participants, and the director of the Rollins honors degree program will be eager to share the goals, the substance, and the results of the workshop with our colleagues at the other ACS schools. We would also support a venue in which students in our honors degree program could convey their experiences to their cohorts at other ACS schools.

### **Suggestions for replication at other campuses**

We are confident that the initiatives we are taking on behalf of our honors degree program, including the proposed workshop, are transferable to other ACS schools with similar programs requiring advanced information fluency skills.

### **Preferred time of year for the event**

Saturday, September 14, 2002

### **Approval of the Dean**