

## **Peabody Scholars Program Guidelines: Updated Fall 2024**

Peabody Scholars is the college-wide honors program for undergraduate majors in Peabody College. The program is designed to attract Peabody's brightest and most intellectually engaged undergraduate students to provide them with a community of like-minded scholars. The Program was established to offer particularly promising undergraduates at Peabody College opportunities for holistic flourishing through intellectual adventure, community service and research. Emphasizing personal, professional, and civic contributions, the program is designed to expose students to academic, civic and cultural experiences with the goal of deepening students' appreciation for how they can have an impact on local and global communities through meaningful engagement and scholarship.

First year students who achieve academic distinction during their first semester at Vanderbilt are invited to apply to the Peabody Scholars Program. Students apply to Peabody Scholars in the fall of their freshman year and, if accepted, begin the program in the spring semester. To be accepted into the program, students must have a first-semester GPA of 3.6. To remain in good standing in the program, students must maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.0 each semester and have a final combined GPA of at least 3.4 at graduation.

The Peabody Scholars Program offers a rich array of enrichment experiences and opportunities. First, all first year Peabody Scholars enroll in an Honors Seminar during the spring semester. In the sophomore year, scholars work together on a meaningful immersive service-learning project in the local community. Peabody Scholars are offered a summer stipend (typically used between sophomore and junior years) to support engagement in an individual service-learning project (either domestic or abroad). In their junior year, scholars engage in independent research with a Peabody professor. Senior Scholars participate in scholarly and cultural events.

To graduate with Honors through Peabody Scholars, students need to complete both required elements and completion events.

### **Description of Required Elements**

**First year Seminar:** First year students who have been accepted to the Peabody Scholars Program will take an Honors Seminar that will be taught by a Peabody Faculty Member. The goal of this requirement is that students will begin to identify with members of their cohort and to build an appreciation for the ways in which Peabody College is connected to the greater Nashville community through both scholarship and service.

**Group Service-Learning Project:** During the second year in the program students will work in small groups with their cohort to design and implement a community engagement project. The focus of the project will vary by cohort, but the primary goal of this required element is that students identify an organization in the Nashville community that they can support with their efforts or deliverables. In doing so, the cohort will be encouraged to consider the process of engaging in service-learning as a group, reflect on the challenges they face as they the complete

their service-learning project, and think through how they might sustain participation in community engagement work in the Nashville community. The cohort will have regular meetings in the Fall semester with the director of the Scholars program to identify an organization the group is interested in working with, make initial contacts with the organization, and draft a written plan or presentation outlining the goals and scope of their project. Once approved by the program director, the group will develop action steps that they will follow through with in the Spring of their Sophomore year. These action steps will detail the activities that each member of the cohort will engage in as their part of the community engagement project. The cohort will present their project (including initial goals, scope, challenges, outcomes, future goals) at a Scholars Service Fair

**Individual Service-Learning Project:** Between their Sophomore and Junior year students will engage in an individual service-learning project. Students will propose a project that has clear goals and a reasonable plan of action. Strong projects are connected in meaningful ways to students short- and long-term goals. In designing these projects, students can either work with an organization or self-design the project. The program director will also assist as needed. Although it is not required, students can integrate their research experience component (see below) into the service-learning project. As with the cohort level service-learning project, students will be asked to reflect on the impact of their community engagement work and to consider the challenges and potential for long-term engagement as they complete their project. After completion of the independent project, students will present their project (including initial goals, scope, challenges, outcomes, future goals) at a Scholars Service Fair during the Fall semester.

The individual service-learning project can take place either domestically or abroad. Students are awarded a stipend to cover travel and living expenses (\$6000.00 for international projects and \$5000.00 for domestic projects). Students will design these projects during the Fall or Spring Semester of their Sophomore year. Proposals are due to the program director by the end of March. These projects can be considered an immersion experience (but do not need to be used for this purpose). Applications and sample projects can be found on the Scholars webpage.

**Research Experience** The fourth required element of the program is to work with a Peabody faculty member on a research project. There are two ways students can complete this requirement.

One is to integrate their research experience into their independent community engagement work (described above). This will require students to consider this aspect of the Scholars Program when planning their independent service-learning project, but the result can be very rewarding. The research component will be tied to individual student's service interests which may facilitate bringing research into the real world. Students will need to identify a faculty supervisor for the project and submit a brief proposal of their research plan to the director (at the same time the service stipend application is due) The preference is that students work with a Peabody Faculty Member for this component of the project. The director may approve

exceptions to this, but only if the student has first made a reasonable effort to identify a Peabody Faculty Member for this role.

The second way students can fulfill the research experience requirement is to work with a Peabody faculty member for at least one semester. This version of completing the research component usually occurs during student's Junior year. Exceptions to the timing may be granted with director approval. Research is interpreted broadly for this component of the program. Some examples of suitable activities include (but are not limited to) archival research, classroom-based work, working in a lab, and qualitative or quantitative analysis of existing data. The nature of the research will vary depending on the interest of the faculty supervisor and student. Students should seek approval from the director of the program before beginning their research experience. This term of research work can include one semester of working on an honors project.

### **Completion Elements**

In addition to the required elements described above students must complete **four** completion events (described as activity types below). Completion events must come from at least three different activity types. **Students are responsible for tracking their completion events and reporting them to the program director by January of their senior year.**

**Community Events:** During the final year of the program students can attend community or campus events in small groups. These events will be scheduled in the Spring semester (for juniors/rising seniors) and Fall (for seniors). Details about these events will be shared by the Program Director.

**Community Engagement:** Students may choose to complete additional community engagement work (either individually or in small groups). This will require pre-approval by the director. Depending on the scope of the project, this may count for 1 or 2 activities.

**Research Engagement:** Students can work on research with a Peabody faculty member for an additional semester.

**Research Presentation:** Students can present at the Vanderbilt Undergraduate Research Fair (typically held in the Fall semester) or at an academic conference. For the campus research fair: Please let the director know so other scholars can come visit your presentation. You can submit a selfie of you at your poster for credit.

**Honors Seminar:** Students can take an Honors Seminar. A grade of B or better must be earned in the course to receive credit for program completion. The seminar students take with their cohort spring of their first year does not count as a completion event.

**Program Engagement:** Participate in the Scholars program by mentoring new students, reading and scoring applications for incoming students, assisting at recruiting events, contributing to

the webpage, and/or helping plan the Service Fair. Students must engage in at least two ways to earn credits in this way.

**Research Relevant Events:** Students can attend 3 research-relevant events or talks on campus. This includes undergraduate research fairs where you are not a participant.

**Book Club:** Participate in a semester long book club. Students may select a reading (or the director can help). Meetings must include other scholars and occur semi-regularly (every other week is fine).

**Leadership Role:** Leadership roles that show evidence of high levels of commitment to an organization on campus that is related to either community engagement or research.

**Other:** Additional activities with director approval.

Further information on the Peabody Scholars Program may be obtained from the director of the program, Professor Megan Saylor ([m.saylor@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:m.saylor@vanderbilt.edu)).