

LOOK
NORTH
UNT 2030

DEVELOP | DISCOVER | DRIVE



WHO WE ARE

The Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science and the Honors College are interdisciplinary academic communities that support high-achieving students through rigorous coursework, faculty mentorship, and immersive learning experiences. Partnering across colleges and disciplines, TAMS and the Honors College foster undergraduate research, global engagement, leadership development, and civic responsibility. Through enriched academics and individualized support, these programs prepare students to excel academically, graduate on time, and pursue lives of meaning, impact, and service.



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Executive Summary

Strategic Direction Through 2030

By 2030, the UNT Honors College will be nationally recognized as a model for cultivating high-achieving students via rigorous academics, immersive learning, and transformative development opportunities. We will sustain and improve retention, graduation, and postgraduate success outcomes for our students while expanding access to high-impact practices such as global learning, community engagement, undergraduate research, and leadership development. Through intentional faculty partnerships, interdisciplinary collaboration, and innovative program design, the Honors College will serve as a UNT hub for academic experimentation and student success. This work matters not only for our individual students, but for Texas and the public good: graduates who are prepared to lead, serve, innovate, and address complex social challenges contribute directly to the state's workforce, civic health, and long-term prosperity.

Similar to the Honors College but for pre-baccalaureate students, the Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science is the premier early-college STEM program for high-school-age students who desire to start their higher education at the University of North Texas before they graduate from high school. Each year, the TAMS Recruitment and Admissions team works to attract the best students throughout Texas to apply for admission to and attend TAMS at UNT. The Admissions team strives to increase the number of applicants each year as well as the number of applicants from small and rural schools and from economically disadvantaged areas of Texas. Recruiting the best students, however, is fruitless without retaining students from the first semester through graduation two years later. The TAMS Academics team helps students navigate the challenges they encounter in university courses taught by UNT faculty. The Student Life Team similarly supports students' holistic development through community engagement and leadership development programs, while the Counseling team supports students' mental health during an unusually early (and potentially stressful) transition to a residential college experience. TAMS aspires to maintain a graduation rate of 90%, which far exceeds a traditional university's rate.

Within TAMS and the Honors College, the Office for Research and Nationally Competitive Scholarships oversees about 100 summer research scholarships to both entering and returning TAMS students and to Honors College students. This office also oversees the interdisciplinary, university-wide Undergraduate Research Fellowship. These research programs have grown as more professors realize that an R1 university should feature research-based undergraduate development.

The aforementioned engagement strategies, support systems, and educational vision have resulted in increased first-year retention of 15.5 percentage points and four-year increased graduation rates of 27.8 percentage points compared to the university baseline. This amounts to an impact twice as great as that of other Honors Colleges in large research universities nationwide. The practices adopted by our college stand to benefit other units across the university.

Unique Role, Contribution, and Strengths

The Honors College uniquely contributes to UNT's mission by supporting the recruitment, retention, and graduation of the university's highest-achieving and most academically motivated students while fostering deep faculty engagement in undergraduate education. Unlike traditional academic units, the Honors College operates across disciplines, partnering with campus-wide departments to deliver enriched curricular and co-curricular experiences that elevate learning without duplicating degree programs. Our core strengths include a strong culture of academic enrichment, individualized advising grounded in developmental best practices, and a robust portfolio of high-impact experiences — including undergraduate research, thesis mentorship, global education, leadership development, and community engagement. The Honors College also serves as a connective hub, bringing together faculty, staff, alumni, and external partners to create meaningful opportunities that extend beyond the classroom.

Through intentional identity building, transparent operations, and sustained investment in student and faculty success, the Honors College enhances UNT's academic reputation, improves student outcomes, and models innovative approaches to teaching, mentoring, and student development that benefit the broader institution.

Many universities offer an honors education, but TAMS is unique as it operates a similar on-campus model for high-school-age students who enroll early as full-time students at a university. Thus, TAMS adds benefits to UNT that other universities cannot match. For example, TAMS curricula allow students to explore STEM fields they otherwise would miss if they remained in a traditional high school, and having access to university-level physics, engineering, chemistry, biology, and computer science courses connects students with world-renowned researchers. These academic advantages provide the foundation for the various TAMS research programs, for our Undergraduate Research Fellowships, and for our students' quests for national and international awards (e.g., Udall, Truman, Goldwater, and Rotary Global Grants).

The research programs in our college have facilitated a campus-wide culture change among faculty; indeed, increased PI mentorship has led to the growth of the TAMS Early Summer Research Program, and with staggering results. Strong evidence of that program's success is that during the last 10 years, more than 60% of UNT's Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship winners have emerged from our early researchers. These initiatives also led to two UNT faculty members having received the CUR-Goldwater Scholars Faculty Mentor Award; UNT may be the only institution in the country with two professors with this distinction. Likewise, some students working with faculty in the URF program have been invited to present at academic conferences and have earned multiple co-authorships in peer-reviewed publications.

Navigating External Forces, Trends, and Contexts

The UNT Honors College operates within a rapidly evolving higher education landscape shaped by rising student expectations, increasing scrutiny of time-to-degree and return on investment, and growing demand for experiential, career-aligned learning. Students and families expect personalized support, meaningful engagement, and clear pathways to post-graduation success, while institutions face resource constraints, staffing pressures, and intensified competition for high-achieving students.

At the same time, workforce and societal demands increasingly require graduates who can think critically, collaborate across differences, address complex public challenges, and engage globally. These trends position the Honors College to play an essential role at UNT by aligning academic rigor and research with civic engagement, global education, and leadership development.

The Honors College is particularly well-positioned to seize opportunities related to interdisciplinary learning, faculty-led innovation, alumni mentorship, and global engagement. By leveraging partnerships across campus and beyond, and by strategically investing in sustainable infrastructure and staffing, the College can navigate external forces via commitments to student success, discovery, and public impact.

TAMS features related optimism. Although the COVID-19 pandemic impacted all levels and types of educational services, the pandemic reduced TAMS enrollment due to health scares and the economic impact of the pandemic. Still, the TAMS Recruitment and Admissions team has returned TAMS application and admission numbers, as well as enrollment, to pre-pandemic levels, admitting the largest class (212) in TAMS history for Fall 2025. Additionally, more public schools have created their own collegiate academies where their best students take dual credit courses, allowing students to earn college credit at a fraction of the cost charged by four-year institutions. TAMS message to parents of prospective students emphasizes that TAMS is worth the full cost of a university education; this cost is curtailed by generous scholarships that TAMS provides each student/family. Without a change to the Texas state legislature's public school funding model, TAMS will continue to search for external financial contributions to defray the cost of the TAMS program at UNT.

The TAMS research programs rely on funding TAMS directly from the state legislature and the Texas Education Agency, but TAMS has been successful in encouraging alumni to set up endowments to support the summer-research programs. Similarly, the Honors College research program relies on UNT funding, and the Honors College hopes to experience a 10-15% increase during the next five years. With more faculty mentoring research students, an increase of funds for the university-wide (but Honors College based) Undergraduate Research Fellowship will be necessary. Finally, undergraduate research has not been systematically included in promotion and tenure deliberations across the university, so the Honors College will continue to partner with other colleges to facilitate the inclusion of mentored undergraduate research in faculty annual review.

Strategic Goals (2026-2030)

- **Strengthen student success and retention** | *Develop*

Via intentional advising, academic enrichment, and community building, the Honors College can sustain and enhance retention, graduation, and award attainment outcomes for high-achieving students. TAMS students can also contribute to national awards with high retention and graduation rates (graduation from the two-year program). The UNT Honors College has a measurable impact on the retention and graduation rates of our own students and a significantly greater impact on these measures of success than the national benchmark. Our impact on retention and graduation rates is twice the mean and average for honors colleges in large research institutions, as measured by the increase in percentage points compared to the university at large.

Our intent is to gather sufficient data to assess the impact of the various high-impact practices we use at a more granular level than it has been possible thus far. Thus, we can inform the rest of the university in order to develop priorities for future investments on retention and graduation rates.

Success by 2030: Honors students will continue to consistently exceed university benchmarks for retention and graduation; participation in Honors academic and engagement awards will increase year over year until the 2030 targets are achieved. For TAMS, the goal is to maintain a consistent graduation rate of 90%, consistent with the highest theoretical retention for this type of program according to the gifted and talented literature. A related outcome is that the number of students applying for national scholarships will increase, and our students will earn more Goldwater awards and Udall, Truman and Rotary Global Grants. Furthermore, our aim is for UNT to maintain its position as the greatest producer of Goldwater recipients in the state of Texas.

- **Expand faculty-led high-impact learning | *Discover***

TAMS and the Honors College will increase access to undergraduate research, honors thesis mentorship, and interdisciplinary coursework through strategic departmental partnerships, including funding from donors, and through faculty engagement and recognition. Besides faculty networking and mentorship pertaining to Honors College courses and research, we foresee broader engagement of faculty with TAMS students due to new curricular tracks.

Success by 2030: In the Honors College, there will be growth in combined honors courses, undergraduate research participation (including participation in summer research programs and URF), and faculty engagement across colleges. Seats in honors courses will increase by 50% and faculty will continue to design new courses, funded by our relatively new mini grants. In TAMS, there will be new tracks in data science and AI, and possibly psychology. Also, external funding will supplement existing funds and will support 100 summer research scholarships every summer.

- **Advance global, civic, and experiential learning | *Drive***

We will expand global education, community engagement, and leadership pathways that prepare students for lives of meaning, service, and impact. Some of the strategies for the Honors College include creating an international community engaging partners abroad, launching a redesigned Community Impact Recognition program, and adding civic discourse modules to the Honors College First Year Experience (HNRS 1000). For TAMS, there will be a new entrepreneurial program developed in partnership with the G. Brint Ryan College of Business.

Success by 2030: At least 10% of Honors College students will participate annually in global or globally aligned experiences, while community and civic recognitions reach parity with academic awards. In TAMS, 5-10% of students will participate in entrepreneurial programs, partly funded by alumni.

- **Expand partnerships with alumni and community leaders | *Drive***

The Honors College will establish an alumni network. TAMS will expand engagement with alumni and donors and will increase endowments to support more scholarships and new curricular and

co-curricular programs. TAMS will establish new partnerships with businesses and community organizations in small towns and rural areas.

Success by 2030: The Honors College will have an active virtual platform for alumni engagement, hold successful receptions, and have new large gifts. It will also double its endowments in five years. TAMS will receive a new seven-figure contribution or gather an equivalent amount from various major donors, and at least 10% of TAMS students will come from rural and smaller communities and border regions. Additionally, TAMS will launch a new summer outreach program in partnership with the UNT College of Education's Office of Gifted and Talented Education, bringing students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to the Denton campus for a mentored research experience.

Key Outcomes & Metrics

Core Metrics Contribution

The Honors College, composed of traditional students like UNT’s overall student population, contributes directly to UNT’s core metrics by retaining and graduating students at rates that exceed institutional averages, thereby improving overall student success outcomes and reducing time to degree. Honors advising, high-impact learning participation, and academic recognition align with university targets for retention, graduation, and post-graduation success.

Emergent Metrics and Measurement Approach

The Honors College tracks post-graduation placement through alumni engagement, graduate school reporting, and fellowship outcomes. Career-aligned learning is measured via participation in research, internships, global programs, and leadership initiatives. Awards and recognitions are documented annually across academic, civic, and global categories. Our college assesses student and alumni engagement via surveys, advising feedback, and participation in mentoring and alumni programs. These metrics collectively demonstrate how the Honors College prepares graduates for meaningful careers and civic contribution. Data from other honors colleges suggest that honors students have an income from a first job that is 10-30% larger than for non-honors students; we hope to collect similar data for UNT students.

Core Metrics: Established Benchmarks that Define University Performance				
Metric	UNT Baseline (2024/25)	UNT Target (2030)	Honors College Baseline (2024/2025)	Honors College Target (2030)
1st to 2nd year retention	77%	90%	92.5%	95%
4-year graduation rate	42%	65%	69.8%	75%
6-year graduation rate	61%	80%	TBD	--
Annual R&D expenditures ¹	\$124M	\$250M	\$382K	\$0.5M
Doctoral degrees awarded	286	300	--	--
Time to value	6 years	Decrease time for programs over median	TBD	--

¹ Additional details about R&D expenditures data will be shared from the VPRI in early 2026.

Emergent Metrics: Important Dimensions of Our Success that Require New Approaches

Post-graduation placement: Percentage of graduates placed in high-demand occupations or graduate and professional programs

Honors College: Because honors is a program rather than a degree, post-graduation outcomes are tracked through advising records, targeted alumni outreach, and partnerships with the UNT Alumni Association. Ongoing collaboration will improve identification of honors graduates pursuing high-demand careers, fellowships, and graduate or professional programs.

TAMS: TAMS gathers students' matriculation to their post-TAMS undergraduate institution via a survey. The TAMS Alumni Coordinator then maintains contact with students.

Career-aligned learning: Percentage of academic programs that integrate internships, industry-sponsored projects, or other work-integrated learning experiences

Honors College: In alignment with high-impact best practices, the Honors College tracks career-aligned learning via enrollment in HNRS 4200Z, which awards honors credit for internships, practicums, and applied experiences. Advising records and departmental collaboration provide insight into student participation in work-integrated learning across majors. Participation in undergraduate research programs also provides a measure of practical learning that is career-aligned.

TAMS: Mainly via students' research positions, TAMS Academics and the Research offices monitor participation of about 60% of students during their time in the program.

Awards and recognitions: Prestigious awards, exhibitions, and performances achieved by our students, faculty, staff, and alumni

Honors College: Honors awards and recognitions are tracked via internal records, faculty reporting, and graduation data. Those data include research presentations, scholarly publications, Honors College recognitions, community engagement awards, and competitive fellowships earned by graduating seniors and alumni. The Office of Research and Nationally Competitive Scholarships tracks recipients of several national awards. Plans are underway to enhance internal processes for publicizing such accolades.

TAMS: TAMS tracks students' participation in regional, national, and international science fairs and competitions, including the national Regeneron Science Talent Search, and other national and international awards (e.g., Goldwater, Udall, etc.).

Innovation and entrepreneurship: New ventures, startups, and public impact projects launched by students, faculty, and alumni

Honors College: Honors College records of student achievement — including those based on self-reporting and documented academic, research, and community accolades — help track innovative external and internal contributions by our students and alumni.

TAMS: TAMS communicates via alumni newsletter and requests news contributions from alumni.

Student and alumni engagement: Perceptions of how well UNT prepares graduates to pursue lives of meaning and purpose

Honors College: Honors College student engagement is measured through participation in advising, workshop attendance, honors programming, and programming assessment. Alumni engagement is tracked via Honors College communications, mentorship programs, and partnerships with the UNT Alumni Association North Texas Network and the Career Center’s Mean Green Mentors.

TAMS: TAMS analyzes the impact of alumni on current students via the interaction of alumni with current students at “Seminar” presentations, as commencement speakers, or via financial contributors to TAMS.

College-Level Metrics: Other Important Priority Metrics Tracked at the College Level

- **Honors student retention (matched comparison analysis):** Measures the impact of Honors College participation on first-year retention by comparing honors students to a statistically matched group of high-achieving non-honors undergraduates who met honors eligibility criteria. This comparison indicates the impact of honors engagement on retention.
- **Four-year graduation rate (matched comparison analysis):** Evaluates time to degree by comparing four-year and six-year graduation outcomes for honors students and a matched control group, demonstrating the contribution of honors participation to timely degree completion among high-achieving students.
- **Honors academic and engagement awards at graduation:** Help measure the percentage of honors graduates earning academic, global, or community engagement awards, providing insight into depth of participation and successful completion of honors pathways.
- **Honors College Student Needs Assessment:** The annual Honors College Student Needs Assessment uses attachment theory to determine how participation in honors courses, mentoring, advising, and student programming influence our students’ sense of belonging, sustained engagement, and emotional attachment to UNT.
- **The Honors College Student Life Survey:** Indicates how our staff-led Honors College Programming Council and other student-life initiatives affect our students’ sense of belonging in, and satisfaction with, the Honors College experience.

Goals in Action

The Honors College and Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science play a critical role in the recruitment, retention, and success of UNT's highest-achieving students. Via rigorous academic experiences, close faculty mentorship, leadership development, and a strong sense of community, the Honors College provides the academic enrichment and personal support necessary for students to thrive at a large, public-research university. These benefits not only attract talented students to UNT but also foster sustained engagement that keeps them engaged, on track to graduation, and prepared for meaningful post-graduate opportunities. The strategies outlined below reflect the commitment of the Honors College to advancing student success, interdisciplinary discovery, and innovative models of education that contribute to UNT's broader mission and long-term institutional goals.

Develop the potential of UNT students, faculty, staff, and community members.

- **Enhance student success via developmental advising and targeted engagement**, including structured advising frameworks, group workshops, and proactive outreach measures that support timely progress toward graduation and honors awards. Ensure that students fulfill requirements to facilitate completion of the TAMS program (tantamount to high school graduation), keeping them on track to matriculate to their four-year institution. Engage faculty in a community of practice, supporting student mentorship through undergraduate research.
- **Modernize and expand honors curricula through interdisciplinary partnerships**, increasing combined honors courses, problem-based seminars, and enriched learning opportunities aligned with student majors and workforce needs. Continue to add curricular tracks and pathways to TAMS in order to provide an interdisciplinary approach for students to explore various STEM fields. Expand enrollment in research courses, where students observe how to solve real-world problems via interdisciplinary collaboration.
- **Strengthen faculty and staff engagement, recognition, and retention** by formalizing recognition programs, clarifying roles and expectations, and investing in professional development and workload transparency.
- **Cultivate a cohesive honors identity and community**, guided by mission, vision, and five pillars of engagement to deepen belonging among students, staff, faculty, and partners.
- **Enhance awareness of financial policy** and assure sustainable delivery of academic and co-curricular programs that maximize student impact.

Discover new knowledge and insights that bridge traditional academic disciplines

- **Expand undergraduate research and creative activity** by strengthening faculty-student research partnerships, honors thesis pathways, and interdisciplinary research experiences. Continue to

fund summer-research programs and encourage students to become Undergraduate Research Fellows. All such efforts will help students pursue national and international awards.

- **Increase access to faculty-led discovery and inquiry** by supporting innovative pedagogical models that integrate research, scholarship, and creative work into honors coursework.
- **Leverage interdisciplinary learning environments** that bring together students from diverse majors to address complex questions via collaborative, problem-based approaches.
- **Use data and assessment to guide academic innovation**, identifying gaps, scaling high-impact practices, and improving time to degree and time to value outcomes. Study the efficacy of placement tests and high school course completion to identify the propriety of TAMS requirements and/or the need for courses or adjustments of curricular tracks.
- **Integrate appropriate learning technologies** to support collaboration, dissemination of student work, and engagement with regional, national, and global partners.

Drive creative advances, partnerships, and new models of higher education

- **Expand global education and experiential learning opportunities** via faculty-led study abroad, global intensive programs, and virtual exchanges that prepare students for leadership in a global society. Develop pathways for international undergraduate students to join the Honors College.
- **Support student applications for national and international awards** that allow students to conduct immersive research in other parts of the country and world.
- **Strengthen alumni and external partnerships** to support mentorship, networking, and career exploration while reinforcing the long-term value of an honors or a TAMS education. Encourage alumni to contribute funds that facilitate student research.
- **Advance civic engagement and community-impact initiatives** by recognizing service-oriented learning and connecting students to regional and statewide challenges.
- **Pilot innovative Honors models**, including interdisciplinary programs, experiential awards, and co-curricular credentials, that inform broader institutional practices.
- **Pursue sustainable funding and revenue strategies** through philanthropy, partnerships, and program-aligned fees that expand access to high-impact learning experiences.