First Year Experience

When you enroll at CSU, Chico, you are entering more than a school; you are, in fact, entering a community. The word “community” comes from the Latin word *communis*, meaning “common” or “shared.” The First Year Experience program is one important way the University seeks to introduce you to this new community, intellectually and socially. The First Year Experience is designed to ensure a smooth transition to university life and includes courses, services and programs built on shared goals and shared experiences.

The goals of the First Year Experience program are to:

1. Provide you with opportunities to forge connections with other students, faculty, staff, and with CSU, Chico’s rich resources and facilities.
2. Give you the tools you need to set clear academic, career, and personal goals, and to develop strategies for achieving them. Build your foundational intellectual skills including critical thinking, verbal and written expression, and quantitative reasoning.
3. Engage you in a coherent learning experience, one that provides the knowledge, skills, and moral and intellectual values that form the basis for life-long learning and personal growth.
4. Lead you towards new and diverse ideas, viewpoints, and people; to help you explore opinions and values different from your own.
5. Make available opportunities for service to the community, participatory citizenship, and environmental awareness that can enrich your personal identity and your relationship to the world.

There are many parts of the First Year Experience that contribute to your success, including Residential Life, Advising, the Book in Common, and a variety of student organizations and leadership opportunities on and off campus, many of which are described elsewhere in the Catalog.

At the heart of the First Year Experience are two course-based opportunities that you should be aware of: CourseLINK and UNIV 101: Introduction to University Life.

CourseLINK

The CourseLINK program allows you to access a block of three courses required for first-year students. In some cases CourseLINKs are designed around a theme or a specific major. In all cases, the courses involved fulfill graduation requirements. About thirty CourseLINKs are offered each fall semester. CourseLINKs change from year-to-year, so check the current schedule for availability.

The CourseLINK program has been developed to enhance academic life for first-year students in several ways. Each block of courses accommodates twenty-five students. Participants therefore are part of an active community with twenty-four other students who are sharing three courses and many of the same academic experiences. This community allows collaborative learning and studying, increased opportunities to share and discuss ideas, and the possibility of integrated social and academic activities. Getting to know the other students in your classes gives you an important advantage—it makes it easier to form study groups, to share lecture notes, and makes it more comfortable to participate and ask questions in class. CourseLINK allows you to make friends more easily because you will meet regularly with people taking the same courses.

Registration in a CourseLINK does not mean, however, that you will spend your first semester with only the twenty-four other students in your block. Frequently, your group of twenty-five will be part of a larger class which includes one or more additional groups of twenty-five students. In this way, you will enjoy the benefits both of the more intimate community of the twenty-four students who will share several classes with you, and the opportunity to meet many other students.

CourseLINKs are prominently listed in the schedule of courses on the University webpage. You will also be given the opportunity to enroll in CourseLINKs at Summer Orientation. Be sure to consider CourseLINKs for your General Education requirements.
UNIV 101: Introduction to University Life
Joining any new community always involves a period of transition and adjustment. UNIV 101: Introduction to University Life is one of many ways that CSU, Chico welcomes you to our community and helps with this transition.
UNIV 101 is a comprehensive introduction to university life that will help prepare you for the academic, social and other challenges that you face as a new member of the campus and larger Chico community.
University 101 covers diverse topics, including the academic expectations of college and how to meet them, knowledge of campus resources and organization, and the role of service in creating a responsible and engaged citizenry. UNIV 101 classes are capped at 25 students, giving you the chance to meet your fellow students, discover common interests and concerns, as well as to get to know and consult your instructor. National and local statistics indicate that students who enroll in this kind of orientation course improve their chances of remaining in college and achieve an improved GPA over those who decide not to take advantage of the opportunity to take such a course.
An important dimension of UNIV 101 is discussing and reflecting on the Book in Common. The Book in Common is selected each year by faculty, staff and students as a common reading for first-year students. The Book in Common provides an engaging introduction to important themes confronting university students and society as a whole. Past Books in Common include Fast Food Nation, True Notebooks, and Never Let Me Go. A variety of important events and activities occur in connection with the Book in Common, including discussion groups, speakers, and other special events. See http://www.csuchico.edu/bic/ for more information.
UNIV 101 provides a context for intellectual engagement, sharing of mutual concerns, a guide to campus resources, and preparation for a successful university experience. UNIV 101 also fulfills General Education Area E requirements. You will be provided with information on how to register for UNIV 101 at Summer Orientation.

General Studies Thematic
A Private, Liberal Arts College Education at CSU Cost
Since 1973, Freshman General Studies Thematic (GST) has been providing well-prepared, highly motivated freshmen the educational experience promised at small, intimate, pricey, private liberal arts colleges. GST is for students who want the excitement and opportunities of a large state university and the affordable price, but who do not want the anonymity of a passive classroom experience. GST is for students who, having done well in high school, want to make the most of their first year in college, working closely with other good students and professors in small, engaging classes where active participation is not just possible, but required. GST provides one way for an entering freshman to participate in the Honors in GE program. GST covers all the lower division GE requirements in one year, except for a math course and one laboratory science course. In order to graduate with Honors in GE, GST students have to satisfy their remaining lower division requirements in Honors courses and have to satisfy the upper-division GE theme requirements by taking an upper-division Honors Theme.
How GST Works
The program admits about 34 students a year. They enroll in the same 6 classes in the fall semester for 17 units and the same 6 classes for the spring semester for 16 units. Yet the students experience GST as one class each semester, because they and the five GST faculty meet four days a week from 9–12:30 in a dedicated classroom, and spend the fifth day engaged in the art studio or other activities. After a three-day trip to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the students and faculty spend the rest of the year working their way through the history of civilization from pre-history up to the present. In the first semester, as they work their way through the Classical Era of the Greeks and Romans, the Medieval Era, the Renaissance Era, they examine some of the major achievements of each era in science, art, religion, literature, philosophy, history, psychology, and economics. In the spring semester, they continue on with the Enlightened Era through the Contemporary Era where they take a multidisciplinary look at some of the major challenges of our own time and immediate future such as global warming, economic globalization, and the revolutions in biopsychology and genetic engineering. The year ends with a two-day field trip to the Chico State Biological Field Station at Eagle Lake.
Students and faculty participate in all class sessions with discussion, presentations, reports, drama, recitations, and hands-on activities beyond the weekly art studios and science labs. Making connections across academic disciplines helps students learn as does active class participation. Having students anonymously and passively take notes from a talking faculty head is not GST style. As one recent GST student remarked, “GST offers you the chance to get actively involved in learning. Make your own cave-painting, see a Shakespeare play live, see how your brain works, experience through doing.”

Here is what GST offers:
• An instant group of 35 friends and study partners, and 5 dedicated faculty. By the end of the first week of class, you’ll all know each other.
• Active classroom participation through small class size and a mix of hands-on experience and small group activities.
• Field trips to Ashland, OR to experience drama; to San Francisco to see live art; and to Eagle Lake and local sites to study fragile, threatened eco-systems.
• Completion of 33 units of the basic 39 unit GE requirement in one year in a team-taught, interdisciplinary class.
• An ideal schedule: 9–12:30 four days a week, and a fifth day doing art and lab activities.
• A curriculum that builds most of the lower-division GE requirements into a meaningful account of human achievement, so that by the end of the year you will be looking at yourself and your place in this history.
• Membership in the Honors Program with its priority registration, and a chance to live in Honors housing.
The Students
Many of your college memories will come from the students you talk to and work with. GST students, except for being better prepared for college and more academically ambitious, resemble other college freshmen. With diverse backgrounds and interests, there are musicians, athletes, journalists, actors and actresses, computer people, and politicians. Their majors range from agriculture, business and computer graphics, to musical theater, political science, art, and physics. GST offers you, as one of its most important benefits, the opportunity to get to know and work with such diverse, bright students. GST alumni often cite the relationships they formed and the community they experienced as the best feature of the program.

The Faculty
The GST faculty come from such diverse disciplines as philosophy, psychology, physics, English, art, and agriculture. All chose to teach in GST because they believe it provides the best opportunity for giving freshmen the background and skills necessary for getting a good liberal arts education and getting the most out of the university experience.

Admission to GST
To apply, visit the GST Web site at http://www.csuchico.edu/gst/. Go to the application section and follow the directions to get the Honors Program application form. Make sure you check the box on page 1 indicating your interest in GST. If you are interested in Honors Housing, go to the Housing and Food Service Web site at http://www.csuchico.edu/hfs/ to find the date for securing on-campus housing. Then indicate your interest in Honors Housing in the Honors Program application form and get it in by that date. To find those students most likely to succeed in GST, we rely on:

- Cumulative high school GPA. Most GST students bring from high school a 3.5 GPA or better. (You will need a 3.5 or better to get into Honors Housing.)
- Eligibility for college math and composition either by being exempt from or having passed the EPT and ELM placement exams.
- Information in your application and the essay you submit with it.
- In-person or telephone conversation.

Honors Program

The Honors Program offers a wealth of special opportunities for motivated, academically successful undergraduate students. Opportunities range from specially designed courses in general education (the Honors in General Education Program) and in selected majors (the Honors in the Major Program).

Honors students often take advantage of both Honors in General Education and Honors in the Major. Through these programs, you enrich your academic experience and forge special relationships with other honors students and with faculty. Completion of Honors in General Education and/or Honors in the Major is noted on your transcripts and diplomas. Honors students are highly desirable candidates for graduate school and for employment.

Honors in General Education

For this program, you enroll in special, honors sections of general education classes. These sections are small, innovative, and interactive. They are taught by some of the best professors on campus. The classes offer a stimulating environment for learning, as well as an opportunity to work closely with honors faculty and other honors students. You become part of a vital learning community that comes together in the classroom as well as outside for social and educational events. While in the program, you benefit from priority registration for all your classes, and successful completion of the program is recognized at graduation and prominently noted on your diploma and transcripts.

If you enter the Honors Program in General Education as a freshman, you have several options for your first year of honors work:

- Individual Honors Courses—Many of our freshmen enroll in individual honors classes. Every semester, the program offers approximately fifteen different honors classes from a range of departments across the University. With few exceptions, each class fulfills a general education requirement for graduation. We do offer an occasional section of popular, non-GE classes as a service to our students. You choose which courses you want to take in any semester. This structure gives the program the flexibility to fit well with every major on campus. Lower-division courses are available in most of the required GE areas, and more are added all the time. Some of these classes are special honors sections of popular general education courses. Others are special, innovative classes created just for the Honors Program.

- Upper-division theme requirements are met by team-taught theme courses. Students work with each other and professors from two disciplines, allowing a richer understanding of a world of rapidly changing social and technological demands and opportunities. In the upper-division Honors theme (Theme H) you have the opportunity to: complete a supervised research project, study abroad, and/or engage in service learning.

If you choose to take individual honors classes, you are required to complete 27 units, or nine honors classes, in your four years of study at the University. Of course, you can take more than the nine; many of our students do because they like the classes and do well in them. To remain in the program, you need to maintain an overall GPA of 3.3 or above. Once admitted, you will receive detailed information from us, and Honors staff is always available to review your options with you. For additional program details visit http://www.csuchico.edu/hnrs/.

General Studies Thematic—You can participate as an honors student in the Freshman General Studies Thematic. See the previous page for details. Integrated Teacher CORE—If you plan to become an elementary school teacher, you can participate as an honors student in the Liberal Studies Integrated Teacher CORE. Visit http://www.csuchico.edu/educ/progs_core.html for more information.

Admission to the Honors in General Education Program

Admission as a Freshman—if you are an incoming freshman who has exhibited scholastic ability and intellectual promise, we encourage you to apply for entrance into the Honors Program in General Education. To apply, you must have a high school GPA of 3.5, or an SAT score of 1200, or an ACT score of 27 or above.

Admission as a Transfer, Re-Entry, or Currently Enrolled Student—if you are transferring to the University and will have sophomore standing or better (10 or more transferable units), you will need a 3.3 or better GPA in your transferable course work to apply to the program.
Honors in the Major

Honors in the Major is a program of independent work in your major. It involves six units of honors course work completed over two semesters. The Honors in the Major program allows you to work closely with a faculty mentor in your area of interest on an original performance or research project. This year-long collaboration allows you to work in your field at a professional level and culminates in a public presentation of your honors project. While Honors in the Major is part of the Honors Program, each department administers its own program. Please contact your major department or major advisor to apply.

Some common features of Honors in the Major programs are:

1. You must take six units of Honors in the Major course work. At least three of these units are independent study (399H, 499H) as specified by your department. You must complete each class with a minimum grade of B.
2. You must have completed nine units of upper division course work or 21 overall units in your major before you can be admitted to Honors in the Major. Check the requirements for your major carefully as there may be specific courses that must be included in these units.
3. Your cumulative GPA should be at least 3.5 or within the top 5% of majors in your department.
4. Your GPA in your major should be at least 3.5 or within the top 5% of majors in your department.
5. Most students apply for or are invited to participate in Honors in the Major during the second semester of their junior year. Then they complete the six units of course work over the two semesters of their senior year.
6. Your honors work culminates with a public presentation of your honors project.

While not administered by the Honors Program, the following are also available for students:

Honor Societies

Phi Eta Sigma is a national honor society for freshmen from all majors who have a GPA of 3.5 or better and have completed 12 or more units. Visit http://www.csuchico.edu/phiesta/ for more information.

Golden Key National Honor Society recognizes academic achievement in junior and senior undergraduates in all fields of study who are in the top 15% of their respective class. Visit http://www.csuchico.edu/goldkey/.

Phi Kappa Phi is a national honor society for second-semester juniors (upper 5 percent of their class) and seniors (upper 10 percent of their class) from all majors. For more information visit http://www.csuchico.edu/pkphps/.

Discipline Associated Honor Societies exist in many departments across campus. Check with your major department for details or visit http://www.csuchico.edu/phieta/ for more information.

Discipline Associated Honor Societies exist in many departments across campus. Check with your major department for details or visit http://www.csuchico.edu/pkphps/.

Pinnacle National Honor Society for non-traditional students with a 3.0 GPA for undergraduates and 3.5 for master’s candidates. Contact the Re-Entry Commissioner for details.

Dean’s List

Each semester the college deans recognize superior scholarship by including on their Dean’s List those students who earn a 3.5 GPA or better on 12 or more graded units the preceding semester.

Honors at Graduation

The University recognizes superior academic performance at graduation and on students’ diplomas and transcripts. Each college of the University may award honors to up to 5 percent of its undergraduates each year. Honors designations are distributed as follows:

Summa cum laude may be given to no more than the top 1 percent of the graduating class.

Magna cum laude may be given to no more than the top 3 percent of the graduating class.

Cum laude may be given to no more than the top 5 percent of the graduating class.