

The Commonwealth Honors Academy (CHA) is a prestigious 3-week academic program for outstanding rising high school seniors that occurs each June on Murray State's campus. CHA students take 2 courses earning 3 (transferable) college credits and are awarded a 4-year in-state tuition scholarship to MSU (provided they continue to meet academic requirements). Students live in our residential halls and dine at Winslow to get a feel for what it is like to be a college student at MSU. Students also attend personal development seminars, attend presentations, and engage in lots of fun extracurricular activities.

A new [informational video](#) will give you more information about the program and several faculty who have taught recently share their experiences and reflections on the program. You can also scroll through our [Instagram page](#) to get a better feeling for the experience.

Faculty Qualifications:

In order to satisfy SACS requirements, Commonwealth Honors Academy teachers must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and 18 graduate hours in their teaching area.

2026 CHA Leadership Team

Laura Sullivan-Beckers, Academic Dean
Melanie McCallon Seib, Student Life Dean
Jonathan Durr, Counseling Director

2026 Dates

Faculty Applications Due: October 1, 2025
Interview Dates: starting week of Oct 13th, 2025
Spring Workshop: March 27-28, 2026
Academy Dates: June 6 - June 27, 2026 (Faculty arrive June 3th)

Faculty Roles & Responsibilities

I. Coursework:

A. Overview: Faculty are tasked with developing an engaging and challenging 3-week course for talented rising high school seniors. The particular courses offered at CHA vary each year, depending on the faculty hired for that academy. The courses are often focused on topics that are of scholarly interest for the instructors but that are not available to teach fully during a regular semester.

Examples of courses previously offered at CHA:

- *90 Seconds to Midnight: Apocalypse and Dystopia in Pop Culture and Literature*
- *AI Horizons: Building Tomorrow's Tech with Heart and Ethics*

- *Class Struggles: The College Campus in American Literature and Culture*
- *Fraud: Examination and Analytics (Accounting)*
- *Global Soundscapes: A Cross-Cultural Musical Experience*
- *How Democracies Die--Dictatorship & Democracy in the Modern Era (History)*
- *Intercultural Communication*
- *Magic in the Making (Visual Arts)*
- *Manufacturing Balance*
- *The Power of One: Media Literacy and the Art of Influencing*
- *Secular Saints and Faithful Heretics (Literature)*
- *Truthfully Lying (Creative Writing)*
- *Use Your Words: Podcasting for a Peaceful Resolution (Journalism)*
- *Winning Arguments Without Losing Your Friends: Debate & Advocacy in Our Everyday Lives*

Descriptions of 2025 Academy courses can be found [here](#).

B. Class Scheduling:

Classes meet at a regular time Monday-Friday for either a 2-hour or 3-hour block of time. Each class period may be structured at the discretion of the instructor, and instructors are encouraged to break up the block of time by varying activities. Field trips and other learning experiences outside of the classroom are welcome and also encouraged. Office hours will be required on a regular basis. (See sample weekly schedule below.)

C. Teaching Philosophy

Faculty members expand the intellectual horizons of Academy students, providing leadership by integrating subject matter from the humanities, sciences, and arts. They must be willing to use non-traditional and engaging/participatory methods, with little traditional lecturing. Faculty must relate well and communicate effectively with bright high school students. They should be enthusiastic and flexible enough to keep pace with this challenging, dynamic program.

Problem-Based Learning

CHA emphasizes a conceptual (rather than a skills/memorization) approach to learning, and an interdisciplinary approach to teaching. As such, all faculty will integrate project-based or problem-based learning (PBL) into their classes. Students should produce projects that demonstrate key factors of PBL such as sustained inquiry, student choice, reflection, and producing some sort of product appropriate for the public. On the final day of the academy, we host a **learning fair**, which gives students the ideal space to share the results of their projects. Learn more about problem-based learning below.

II. Social Development Seminars: In small groups, students engage in a 60-90 minute group seminar aimed at social and professional development. The seminars are prepared and led by CHA's residential counselors (MSU students who live with students in the dorms) and our counseling director. Each seminar group also has a faculty member or two who attend sessions

to assist the group and offer any insight and experiences. Seminars are held 3 evenings each week and CHA faculty are required to attend.

III. Community Meetings: On MWF, before morning classes begin, the entire CHA community (students, faculty, residential counselors, and the leadership) gather to reflect on learning, discuss upcoming events, announce activities, and address any other issues necessary. Faculty will be present and engaged in these meetings.

IV. Other activities: CHA will schedule a number of speakers, movies, and other events. Faculty are welcomed and encouraged to attend as many of these as possible, but they will not all be required. Many events are family-friendly and faculty are welcome to bring spouses and children.

V. Fall Reunion: A CHA family reunion will be organized in November following the Academy. Faculty are encouraged, but not required, to attend.

A note about working with CHA:

Being a faculty member at CHA is both rewarding and exhausting. Many of our faculty report that teaching at CHA is the best teaching they get to do all year. It's fun, it's social, it's engaging and the students are phenomenal. That said, it is also immersive, time-consuming, and physically demanding. We seek faculty who are enthusiastic and energetic and excited for such a challenge.

Questions about faculty roles and responsibilities? Please contact Dr. Laura Sullivan-Beckers at LBECKERS@murraystate.edu

Compensation and Conditions

Compensation is **\$6,500.00** with some meals provided throughout the program. Housing is available for faculty who do not live in or near Murray. For faculty not living in the residence hall, one meal is provided daily at Winslow (which meal is up to you). For faculty living in the residence halls, all meals are provided.

Faculty availability in and out of the classroom is key to the development of the living-learning community at CHA. Therefore, faculty are encouraged to eat lunch and/or dinner with students, be available during office hours, attend seminars, and some of the extra-curricular activities. Faculty are not expected to live in the dorms. Local faculty are expected to live at their own homes. All faculty will be provided with an office inside the residence hall to use for office hours.

Time for faculty to work together to develop curriculum is crucial to the success of the Commonwealth Honors Academy. Therefore, faculty members are required to participate in one spring workshop (March 27-28, 2026) and to arrive on campus on June 3th to finalize plans for

CHA. The spring workshop is typically a Friday evening session (approximately 3 hours) and 7-hour day on Saturday (with time to work on your own). An additional Zoom meeting may be required prior to the start of the academy.

Example Faculty Weekly Schedule (for faculty teaching in the morning block)

	CHA 2025 - WEEK 2						
Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8:30							
9:00		Community Mtg	GROUP A	Community Mtg	GROUP A	Community Mtg	
9:30			9a-12p		9a-12p		
10:00		GROUP A		GROUP A		GROUP A	
10:30		10am-12p		10am-12p		10am-12p	
11:00							
11:30							
12:00		LUNCH	LUNCH		LUNCH		
12:30							
1:00							
1:30							
2:00							Pickleball
2:30							Tournament
3:00							
3:30							
4:00	Guest Speaker						
4:30							
5:00		Office hour		Office hour			
5:30				DINNER		DINNER	
6:00							
6:30	Seminar		Guest Speaker	Seminar	Guest Speaker	Seminar	
7:00							Karaoke
7:30							Game Night
8:00			Swing & ChaCha			Talent Show	Power Point Nt
8:30				Flashlight Tag Creative Writing	Craft Night: Totebags,	I	Rock Painting
9:00					Bracelet Making	I	Richmond
9:30							

Classes and office hours are shown in light blue. Meals are shaded white, Activities in yellow cells are required. Community meetings precede classes on MWF mornings. Optional activities and free time are designated with the gray cells.

Note: The first (June 6) and last day (June 27) of the academy are full of events from morning until evening and faculty will be required to be on campus for most of those days.
