

# USC Discovery Scholar Distinction School Criteria for Capstone Project



Use this guide to review the Capstone Project Requirements specified by each USC Academic School. All other eligibility and application instructions can be found on the Academic Honors and Fellowships Commencement Honors website under [Discovery Scholars](#). Students enrolled in academic programs in multiple USC Schools (e.g., Dornsife and Marshall) may select which School's criteria they prefer to follow.

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**Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism  
USC Discovery Scholar Distinction**



**Submission Criteria**

**School of Communication**

The essential criterion for a Discovery Scholars submission for students from the School of Communication is that the piece should construct, advance, and support an original intellectual argument. Recognizing that an argument may be advanced through a range of different media, we invite Communication majors to submit any substantive piece of innovative work for the Discovery Scholars Prize. While entries may be presented in standard research paper format, or may include multi-media components, we also encourage the submission of work that is entirely multimedia in its presentation, such as a video, documentary film or website. Students may submit work that was originally produced for a class or as a Communication Honors thesis, as well as work done independently during their undergraduate career at USC.

**School of Journalism (Journalism & Public Relations)**

Journalism and Public Relations majors may submit original projects demonstrating clarity and depth in which the central underpinning is innovation. These projects in either public relations or journalism may advance an idea or present an existing one in new ways; the work may be a package of stories or public relations campaigns in which multimedia is the primary form of delivery; blogs, video, and interactive graphics may be part of the submission. The portfolio, or body of work, may also be presented in more traditional ways: well-written narratives in a print publication for journalism students or press kits and brochures for public relations. The projects should in most cases be produced under the direction of a USC faculty member, ideally presented on a digital platform.

**Chan Division of Occupational Science  
and Occupational Therapy  
USC Discovery Scholar Distinction**



**Submission Criteria**

Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy students will submit a research paper or project that explores issues in their academic field using resources and knowledge learned during their studies at USC.

## **Davis School of Gerontology USC Discovery Scholar Distinction**



### **Submission Criteria**

Students will also have performed a significant piece of research presented in the form of a thesis to the Gerontology faculty.

#### **Application**

Application for the program should be made by Fall of the Junior Year.

A faculty committee will review the applications, the plan for the research project, and clarify the mentoring responsibility of individual faculty members. Students will be required to have a clearly defined innovative research project and a plan for developing research skills before being accepted into the program.

#### **Program**

In addition to working with individual faculty mentors, students will be expected to participate in some research training either through courses or through attending a series of lectures on research design, data, analysis, and presentation of results. We require students to take a course in methods and statistics (either GERO 593 in Fall of Junior Year or an undergraduate course). In addition, we would expect students to complete the Gerontology Honors Seminar for 6 units (GERO 497ab).

During the fall semester, the research design and methods for the honors thesis are finalized and the research project undertaken.

#### **Selection of Discovery Scholars**

Gerontology will set up a three-person panel to review the papers and select nominees for the University Discovery Scholar prize competition.

Panelists will evaluate theses as those worthy of Discovery Scholar designation and those not worthy. Only students presenting theses designated as demonstrating exceptional creativity and competence in research will be designated as Discovery Scholars. The faculty panel will select the scholars to be forwarded for consideration for the University prize.

**Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences**  
**USC Discovery Scholar Distinction**



Submission Criteria

Discovery Scholars in the Dornsife College are recognized for submitting projects similar to one of the following activities:

- Participation in a **departmental honors program**, leading to the completion of an *original* research paper or project. Student must show a significant contribution if the paper or project is the result of a lab or group effort.
- Two semesters of **directed research** culminating in a paper that documents the original research performed.
- Publication of research in a **scholarly journal** as a named author (if coauthoring with a faculty member, a letter of memorandum from the faculty member detailing the student's contributions must be included).
- Presentation of research in paper or project form at a competitive regional or national **scholarly conference**.
- Selection as a 1st or 2nd prize winner at the annual [USC SCymposium](#) (*formerly USC Symposium for Scholarly and Creative Work*) and submission of a paper that documents the research performed.
- One year or more of participation in a **SOAR or SURF** program leading to the completion of a research product that sparked independent ideas or a co-authorship.
- **Internship** work that involves research and leads to a scholarly research product.

**Additional Requirements**

1. A two-page abstract completely describing the research performed and the student's experience in the research activity.
2. The qualifying academic work, if graded must earn a mark of B+ or better
3. Supporting Letter of Recommendation: As stated on the AHF website, whenever possible, letter should come from the faculty member who has supervised or mentored the student on the project. Applicants should discuss intent to submit an application and request a letter as early as possible. Letter should provide context for student's work relative to the student's overall achievement and performance in the program; scope and quality of their contribution to submitted project; merit of the project relative to quality of work typically presented at the undergraduate level and the highest standards of the discipline; and value and implications of the project in the field of study and beyond.

# Iovine and Young Academy USC Discovery Scholar Distinction



## Submission Criteria

Iovine and Young Academy students will document the innovative underpinnings of their individual contributions to a senior project. The work should advance a new idea or present an existing one in new or disruptive ways.

Documentation should consist of a minimum of three written pages in academic format, and should include elements such as multimedia components, working applications, websites, images of prototypes and products, etc.

The written document should not simply be a description of the project but should highlight your individual innovative and creative contributions to the project. For example, you might identify your:

- Creative approaches to problem solving
- Innovations in UI, UX, or design
- Technological breakthroughs
- Unique business models
- Originality
- Unique contributions to a field of study

## Selection Process

Discovery Scholar submission will be reviewed by an Iovine and Young Academy faculty committee, and will be judged on how the work advances a new idea or presents an existing one in new or disruptive ways.

# Kaufman School of Dance USC Discovery Scholar Distinction



## Submission Criteria

### Project Criteria

Discovery Scholar candidates in the Kaufman School may demonstrate exceptional accomplishment in several ways, which include:

- Composition
- Performances
- Technology Projects
- Traditional Scholarship
- Other Creative Projects

Descriptions and specific requirements for each type of project are listed at the end of this document. Each project document must also include an artist's statement, resume, and written journal, as described below.

### Artist's Statement

Each candidate should provide a brief artist's statement about who they are and what they hope to accomplish as an artist. The artist's statement should be one to two paragraphs. For group projects, include one statement for each artist.

### Resume

Each candidate should provide a one-page resume (in a PDF format) highlighting their artistic background. The resume should include performances, choreographic experience, and employment, as well as awards and scholarships. Senior booklet resumes may be submitted.

### Written Journal

Each candidate should provide a written journal (in a PDF format) that describes the preparation and self-assessment of the project. More specifically, the candidate should reflect upon the experience that inspired the project and led up to the evolution and development of that project. The candidate's influences and inspiration for the project should provide context and indicate how the project has had an impact on plans for post-graduate study, research, and/or employment. The written journal should also address why the candidate is seeking the Discovery Scholars distinction. It should be no more than three pages, single spaced or six pages, double spaced.

## **Senior Project**

### ***Composition***

Candidates should submit a video link of one or more substantial works of original choreography. The total length may not exceed 30 minutes.

### ***Performances***

Candidates should submit a video link showing a combined 20-30 minutes of performances that took place while enrolled at USC. At least one of those performances must have been presented by Kaufman. If a candidate has performed in an extremely prestigious venue, but a recording is not available, the candidate may submit a comparable recording and explain the significance of the original appearance. No individual clip may be shorter than three minutes. Programs and/or playbills must also be provided.

### ***Technology Projects***

Candidates for technology projects (i.e. websites, apps, etc.) should submit one to three substantial technology projects produced while enrolled at USC. Only works wherein the candidate is the “technology creator” should be submitted under this category.

### ***Traditional Scholarship***

Candidates should submit a substantial paper that is focused on a very specific dance topic or a topic that explores dance’s relationship to other fields of study. The expected total length is a minimum of 30 double-spaced pages, not including the bibliography. An abstract of the paper must also be provided.

### ***Other Creative Projects***

The Kaufman School seeks to push the boundaries of dance in search of new models and platforms. Its curriculum is multidisciplinary, encouraging each student to find connections between dance and other personal passions and to utilize these unique talents to develop an individual artistic vision in dance. It recognizes that this vision may lead a student to pursue a career outside of more traditional options, such as choreography and performance. Therefore, the school welcomes any other substantial creative projects related to dance (i.e. a business plan, an education model, etc.). Candidates pursuing this option should consult with a faculty mentor regarding the presentation of this project, which is separate from the written journal.

**Keck School of Medicine**  
**USC Discovery Scholar Distinction**



Submission Criteria

Discovery Scholar candidates must demonstrate exceptional research and scholarship within the field of Health Promotion or Global Health in one of the following ways:

- Submission of a substantial *original research* project conducted independently by the student, under the supervision of a USC faculty member. \*
- Completion of at least four units of HP 490: Directed Research, earning a grade of A- or better and resulting in a paper that documents the *original research* performed. \*
- Publication of research in a scholarly journal as either author or co-author. If the publication is co-authored, a faculty letter is required to document the extent of the student's contribution.
- Presentation of a research project or paper at a refereed session of a national or regional professional conference.
- Selection as a first- or second-prize winner at the University's annual Symposium for Scholarly and Creative Work and submission of a paper that documents the research performed.
- Participation in a team research project will be considered (e.g., research conducted for HP 490 projects). In such cases, the student must submit a description and supply evidence of his/her *significant contribution* to the larger project. The extent of the student's contribution should be explained and documented in the faculty letter of recommendation submitted as part of the application.

\* Original research means that your project is distinct and separate from the faculty member's study.

Note: Posters, slides, and other materials can be submitted as a *supplement* to but **not in place of** the student's written work.

**Marshall School of Business &  
Leventhal School of Accounting  
USC Discovery Scholar Distinction**



**Submission Criteria**

Discovery Scholar candidates from the Marshall School of Business/Leventhal School of Accounting can be students in BUAD/ACCT 490x (Directed Research) or BUAD 494/ACCT 494 (Marshall Honors Research and Thesis). Candidates must have the support of the faculty member for whom they are working and will submit original scholarly research on a topic pertinent to an undergraduate business education. Students working with a faculty member on original research who are not registered for BUAD 490x or 494 may apply with the approval of the school. Students enrolled in academic programs in multiple USC Schools (e.g., Dornsife and Marshall) may select which School's criteria they prefer to follow.

**Selection Process**

All candidates for the Discovery Scholar designation will be asked to submit completed papers/projects for evaluation by a Marshall/Leventhal review committee. These will be judged on the research concept and design, the analysis of gathered data, and the quality of the writing.

**Price School of Public Policy  
USC Discovery Scholar Distinction**



**Submission Criteria**

A substantive project of high quality that integrates or explores concepts related to issues that correspond to the mission of the Sol Price School of Public Policy, e.g., public policy, public management, urban planning, health care, urban development, international development etc. The student should do this in conjunction with a faculty advisor.

**Roski School of Art and Design  
USC Discovery Scholar Distinction**



**Submission Criteria**

**Artist's Statement**

Submit a brief artist's statement (no more than 3 pages; single or double-spaced) in which you reflect upon your experience(s) that inspired your topic of research and led up to the evolution and development of a portfolio. Please refrain from simply describing the work in the portfolio. The influences and inspiration for the portfolio should help contextualize the project and indicate how these might have impacted your plans for post-graduate study, research or employment.

**Portfolio**

Roski students will submit a cohesive body of work in a portfolio that exemplifies evidence of creative research and investigation into a particular topic of their choice. The portfolio will be evaluated on presentation, innovation, and originality of ideas.

An indexed PDF or printed portfolio is the most suitable format for review. Students should not submit multiple individual image files. Additional media such as video and sound files or actual art pieces may also be submitted.

# Thornton School of Music USC Discovery Scholar Distinction



## Submission Criteria

Discovery Scholar candidates in the Thornton School may demonstrate exceptional accomplishment in several ways, which include:

- Composition
- Performance (solo or small ensemble)
- Recording and technology projects
- Songwriting
- Traditional scholarship

### **Artist's Statement**

Candidates in the composition, performance, and songwriting areas should also submit a brief artist's statement (no more than 3 pages; single or double-spaced) in which the candidate reflects upon the experience(s) that inspired the project being submitted for consideration. This statement may also reflect on how the work being presented has had an impact on plans for post-graduate study, research, or employment. An abstract or other written narrative is required in place of the artist's statement for submissions in traditional scholarship or recording and technology.

### **Composition**

Candidates should submit a score or a portfolio of at least 30 minutes of original music composed while enrolled at USC. The portfolio must include PDF scores of the composition(s) plus digital files of corresponding live audio and/or video recordings.

### **Performance**

The portfolio for performance should include digital files of audio and/or video recordings of one or more performances that took place while enrolled at USC. In some rare cases, when the student has performed in an extremely prestigious venue, and a recording of the actual performance is not available, the student may submit a comparable recording accompanied by a written explanation of the significance of his or her appearance.

*For each performance area below, submissions must consist of at least 30 minutes of music.*

#### *Chamber Ensemble, Jazz Combo, or Popular Music Band*

Members of a small ensemble may file a joint submission. Only members of the group who satisfy the 3.5 GPA requirement are eligible for the Discovery Scholar designation. If the work of a small ensemble is recognized by the awarding of a Discovery Scholar Prize, the eligible group members will receive equal shares of the \$10,000 prize.

#### *Classical Instrumentalists*

The performance recording for classical instrumentalists should include a portfolio of music or a full-length concerto performance with orchestra.

### Classical Vocalists

The performance recording for classical vocalists should include a portfolio of music or a full principal role from a staged opera production.

### Jazz Soloists

The performance recording for jazz soloists should include a portfolio of music roughly equivalent to 5 or 6 charts.

### Popular Music Soloists

The performance recording for popular music soloists should include a portfolio of music in the popular music idiom.

## **Recording and Technology Projects**

Candidates in recording and/or technology should submit four or five production projects, which have been created while enrolled at USC. At least 50% of the material submitted must be original or co-written by the candidate. All submitted material must be produced, edited, mixed, and mastered by the candidate.

## **Songwriting**

Candidates in songwriting should submit a portfolio of at least 6 original songs, written while enrolled at USC. The portfolio must include a lead-sheet and digital files of audio and/or video recordings for each of the 6 songs.

## **Traditional Scholarship**

Candidates should submit one or two substantial paper(s) on a topic that is either a focus of traditional music research (e.g., musicology/ethnomusicology, music teaching and learning, music theory and analysis, the music industry), or an interdisciplinary topic that explores music's relationship to other fields of study. The expected total length is a minimum of 50 double-spaced pages, not counting bibliography. This can be one 50-page paper or two papers of roughly 25 pages each.

**USC School of Architecture  
USC Discovery Scholar Distinction**



**Submission Criteria**

**Portfolio**

Architecture students shall submit a thematic presentation of a project or series of projects towards a collective vein of inquiry. A short paragraph description of the inquiry should appear in the early pages of the portfolio. For group projects, please clearly identify your role or contribution to the project. All projects should be identified by title, semester, location, and studio instructor.

Students in the B.Arch. program shall include design and written work from the 4th and 5th year design studios and other courses that demonstrates the Discovery criteria, including in-progress work developed for ARCH-501/502.

Students in the B.S. in Architectural Studies program should present a portfolio of creative and research work that includes in-progress work for the ARCH-470 capstone project.

**Statement**

The statement should describe what aspects identify the project(s) as exceptional new scholarship, innovation, or artistic work and how it is worthy of a USC Discovery Scholar Distinction. Consider discussing how this work has or will impact your trajectory after you graduate.

**Criteria**

All submissions will be reviewed by a panel of faculty in the School of Architecture. For the first deadline only, a selection of top submissions will be forwarded to the University prize panel for final review.

# USC School of Cinematic Arts USC Discovery Scholar Distinction



## Submission Criteria

### Division of Cinema and Media Studies

Discovery Scholar candidates in Cinema and Media Studies may demonstrate excellence in research by submitting a substantive piece of original scholarly work in standard research paper format or in the form of a work that also includes multi-media components. Submissions will be evaluated on a number of criteria, including the quality of research, historiographical contribution, theoretical analysis, or new forms of multi-media knowledge production.

### Division of Film and Television Production

Discovery Scholar candidates in Film and Television Production may demonstrate excellence in filmmaking by submitting a short film or television production made in one of the advanced undergraduate production classes: CTPR 480, CTPR 484, or CTPR 486 or any combination of courses resulting in a crew-based project that is approved by the division to substitute for one of these courses. **Submissions will be made by groups of students working in collaboration** and will be evaluated on the following criteria: the content and writing; the expertise exhibited in producing, directing, cinematography, editing and sound; and the collaborative skills exhibited in making the film or video.

### Division of Writing for Screen and Television

To apply for Discovery Scholar status, undergraduate writing students must be in their senior year, must be enrolled in CTWR 418a or CTWR 419a or CTWR 420a in the fall semester and CTWR 418b, CTWR 419b, or CTWR 420b in the spring semester.

In the fall semester students must declare their interest for consideration as a Discovery Scholar. In addition to working on their advanced writing project in class, students must secure an additional faculty mentor who will offer further guidance and support. During the spring semester, while students are in CTWR 418b, CTWR 419b, or CTWR 420b, **both the classroom instructor and the mentor will need to recommend the student in a letter for consideration of Discovery Scholar status.**

The finished written work must be either a feature-length screenplay not less than one hundred pages in length, a pilot script and bible for an original one-hour dramatic television series or a pilot script for a half-hour comedic television series. The subject matter of the student's project should represent humanitarian values and reveal insights into the human condition and/or advance the values of understanding and tolerance.

The criteria for judging student's work will be based on:

- Originality of concept and design
- Quality of writing
- Creation and development of insightful characters

- Mastery of theme and subject matter
- Understanding and effective use of dramaturgy

### **Division of Animation and Digital Arts**

To apply for Discovery Scholar status, undergraduate animation and digital arts students must be in their senior year, must be enrolled in CTAN 401a in the fall semester and CTAN 401b in the spring semester.

In the fall semester students must declare their interest for consideration as a Discovery Scholar. In addition to working on their advanced animation and digital arts senior project in class, students must secure an additional faculty mentor who will offer further guidance and support. During the spring semester, while students are enrolled in CTAN 401b, **both the classroom instructor and the mentor will need to recommend the student in a letter for consideration of Discovery Scholar status.**

The finished work must be a fully rendered, animated piece with a completed sound track. In the case of installation work, the piece must be mounted in a suitable space with all sound and animated components completed and functional.

In the case of an interactive work, the piece must be fully functional with completed animation, sound and interactivity.

Students' projects should articulate the requirements and relationships between theory and practice regarding the complexity of an animated film in idea and execution while also representing humanitarian values and insights into the human condition and/or advance the values of understanding and tolerance.

The criteria for judging student's work will be based on:

- Originality of concept and design
- Quality of execution and mastery of the art form
- Quality of research and written documentation

### **Division of Interactive Media and Games**

To apply for Discovery Scholar status, undergraduate interactive entertainment students must be in their senior years and enrolled in one of the following courses: CTIN 459, CTIN 486, CTIN 491, CTIN 492, or CTIN 493.

In the fall semester students must declare their interest for consideration as a Discovery Scholar. In addition to working on their advanced game project in class, students must secure an additional faculty mentor who will offer further guidance and support. During the senior year, while students are enrolled in one of the courses listed above, **both the classroom instructor and the mentor will need to recommend students in a letter for consideration of Discovery Scholar status.**

The finished work must be a complete, polished advanced game project that is innovative in both its aesthetic and technical aspects. The project must exhibit new and different design ideas that clearly show innovation beyond the examples of existing game genres.

Students' project should articulate the requirements and relationships between theory and practice regarding the complexity of an advanced game project in idea and execution while also representing humanitarian values and insights into the human condition and/or advance the values of understanding and tolerance.

The criteria for judging student's work will be based on:

- Originality of concept and design innovation
- Quality of execution and mastery of the art form
- Quality of research and written documentation

### **Division of Media Arts + Practice**

To apply for Discovery Scholar status, undergraduate Media Arts + Practice students must be in their senior year, and they must be enrolled in IML 440, 441, 444 or 490.

In the fall semester students must declare their interest for consideration as a Discovery Scholar. In addition to working on their media arts thesis project in class, students must secure an additional faculty mentor who will offer further guidance and support. This faculty mentor will need to recommend students in a letter for consideration of Discovery Scholar status.

The finished work must be a polished media project that is both aesthetically and technically innovative, exemplifying digital scholarship and practice-based research. The project must have a compelling conceptual core that effectively engages with the issues raised in the project's research; a strong research foundation utilizing multiple kinds of sources; and an effective relationship between form and content demonstrating controlled and deliberate design decisions.

The project should also be creative and imaginative in its approach, exploring new forms of scholarship, communication, storytelling and/or user experience.

The criteria for judging student's work will be based on:

- Conceptual core
- Quality of research
- Relationship between form and content
- Creative realization

### **School of Cinematic Arts Minors**

Minors in Cinematic Arts, Animation and Digital Arts, Comedy, Digital Studies, Entertainment Industry, Game Animation, Game Audio, Game Design, Game Entrepreneurship, Game Studies, Game User Research, Media and Social Change, Science Visualization, and Screenwriting will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**USC School of Dramatic Arts**  
**USC Discovery Scholar Distinction**



**Submission Criteria**

Discovery Scholar candidates in Dramatic Arts must identify a faculty mentor in the School. During their senior year they should submit a substantive dossier that demonstrates a body of original work that is either scholarly or creative in nature.

The contents of a dossier will vary, depending upon the main focus of study or creative work, as follows:

**For Performance**

- A proposal that states why the student seeks to be designated as a Discovery Scholar.
- Minimum of two performances, one of which must be a School of Dramatic Arts production (programs/playbills required as attachments).
- Written journals that describe the preparation and self-assessment of these performances.
- Minimum of two critiques of the student's performances by members of the performance faculty; one of these may be from the Director if that person is a faculty member.

**For Directors**

- A proposal that states why the student seeks to be designated as a Discovery Scholar
- Minimum of two projects (programs/playbills required as attachments)
- Written journals that describe the preparation and self-assessment of these projects
- Minimum of two critiques of the student's projects by members of the performance faculty

**For Playwrights**

- A proposal that states why the student seeks to be designated as a Discovery Scholar
- Minimum of one full-length play or two one-act plays.
- Written critique of the student's work by a member of the playwriting faculty of the School of Dramatic Arts

**For Design/Production**

- A proposal that states why the student seeks to be designated as a Discovery Scholar
- Minimum of two design/production portfolios, one of which must be for a School of Dramatic Arts production
- Written journals that describe the preparation and self-assessment of these performances
- Written critique of the student's work by a member of the design faculty of the School of Dramatic Arts

### **For Scholarly Research**

- A proposal that states why the student seeks to be designated as a Discovery Scholar
- An original thesis of at least twenty pages prepared in conjunction with THTR 490
- Written evaluation of the dossier by a member of the critical studies faculty.

### **Inter-Area Projects**

The School of Dramatic Arts will also consider projects that cross the areas above (for example, an actor who wants to submit a role and a related research paper or a research project that includes a production. Solo performance and Applied Theatre projects might fit this category as well.) In such cases the Dean of Academic Affairs will decide what the dossier should contain, based on the models above.

**USC School of Pharmacy**  
**USC Discovery Scholar Distinction**



**Submission Criteria**

Seniors in the pharmacology and drug development major are encouraged to submit a research project for consideration for the USC Discovery Scholar Distinction. The project is a demonstration of knowledge in the student's chosen area of interest which results in a product/project, research data, research paper, or portfolio of work, and a presentation. This experience encourages students to use a variety of skills in the areas of writing, speaking, research, and documentation, which distinguishes them as scholars and future leaders in pharmacy. Criteria and submission requirements will be determined in consultation with a faculty advisor.

## **Viterbi School of Engineering USC Discovery Scholar Distinction**



### **Submission Criteria**

Undergraduate students majoring in Engineering or Computer Science who have participated in research with faculty, who have excelled in their senior design projects beyond the standard requirements for completion of the course, or who have competed in the University's annual Symposium for Scholarly and Creative Work, the KIUEL Senior Design Expo, the USC Student Innovation Showcase or similar competitions are eligible to apply for designation as Discovery Scholars.

Candidates should submit documentation of a completed project, including a research quality paper of at least five pages in length that summarizes the research methods employed and documents the research performed by the student specifically. Past submissions have included students who have participated in undergraduate research and who have also co-published technical journal articles with their faculty mentors; developed portfolios of multiple projects related to alternative vehicles; developed plenary posters for presentations related to robot learning at technical conferences; developed unique data modeling programs as part of a faculty research project or senior design project, etc. Any published journal articles as well as recognition given at any of the above competitions should be included as addendums to the required documentation submitted.

All submissions will be evaluated on the basis of creativity and competency in the relevant areas of engineering and will be reviewed by a faculty committee in the Viterbi School.