

HONORS PROGRAM STRATEGIC PLAN

SUBMITTED BY SHERRY ETTLICH, MADA MORGAN, AND DAN RUBENSON

PREPARED IN CONSULTATION WITH THE HONORS COUNCIL

MARCH 2008

Introduction

The Honors Program proposes three options, outlined in the Honors Workgroup Report of May 2007, that maximize student participation and minimize additional requirements that could delay time to graduation. *University Honors* utilizes H-sections of University Studies courses to provide disciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives and argumentation while developing leadership skills through practicum experiences. *Honors in the Major* will allow students to gain greater depth of understanding in their major field of study, culminating in a significant senior thesis or creative project.

Students enter the program as Honors Students. Some students may elect to stay at this level, taking advantage of the occasional Honors course and participating in extracurricular Honors activities sponsored by the Honors Program and/or the Honors Club. However, Honors Students are encouraged to become Honors Scholars, declaring their intent to complete the requirements to graduate with University Honors and/or Honors in their Major. Scholars will be encouraged to seek both University Honors and Honors in their Major, but they have the option of completing the requirements for just University Honors or just Honors in the Major.

The Honors Program is a university-wide program, open to students in all majors. The curriculum for either University Honors or Honors in the Major allows the Honors Scholars to meet graduation requirements in a different way, rather than adding a significant number of new requirements that could limit student options or delay graduation. Junior and senior transfers are expected to gravitate toward the Honors in the Major option since they will have met the majority of their University Studies requirements through transfer coursework and may wish to focus on their major field of study.

Honors programs are anticipated in all majors by fall 2010, the time our current freshmen are seniors. Honors in the Major programs are expected to gradually become available, with possibly six accepting juniors wishing to graduate with Honors in the Major next year, another six launching the following year, and the remainder accepting juniors for the first time in spring 2010. The Honors program will begin accepting applications for leadership practicum experiences spring 2008.

During this development year, students have had honors options within each of the University Studies strands: H-sections were available in three new Exploration courses and two new Integrations courses. Three new departments offered H-sections and seven new faculty members taught H-sections. This growth in departmental involvement and faculty commitment to Honors is expected to continue across the next two years, resulting in an Honors Program that all programs and faculty feel is their program. This perspective is being nurtured in the structure and function of the newly constituted Honors Council, which has representation from every academic department and is an active partner in developing the new program.

Connection to SOU's Mission

In general, Honors is tightly integrated with programs across campus, each of which exemplifies different aspects of the institutional mission. Specifically, this program addresses:

- *Student Success, Intellectual Growth, Challenging Educational Opportunities*
Honors provides an overt and thoughtful means for students' success and intellectual growth in a challenging, lively learning environment designed for high achieving students
- *Responsible Global Citizenship and Civic Engagement*
Leadership practicum instills not only leadership skills, but encourages community involvement on and off campus through identifying needs and avenues to address them

Goals, Outcomes, and Benchmarks, together with Associated Activities

- **Recruitment**

Primary Responsible Individual/Group: Program Staff (Director and Assistant)

Goals:

- Automatically admit the top 10-20% of new SOU students annually
- Steadily grow to approximately 500 active Honors Students by 2010-11, with the goal of graduating at least 50 Scholars with University Honors and/or Honors in the Major beginning in June 2011

Activities:

- Set and monitor admission thresholds so that they are in keeping with other Oregon universities and target the top 20% of SOU's new students each year
- Have an established recruitment plan in place for 2008-09 that builds on four key contact points under development this year: welcome letter to prospective students, follow-up item preceding Raider Registration, inform Raider Registration advisors, and an orientation activity
- Review and fine-tune recruitment plan for 2009-2010 and 2010-11.
- Have an established retention plan in place for 2008-09 for reaching out to Honors Students through Honors Club, Honors Residence Hall, Honors courses, informational meetings and extracurricular activities
- Review and fine-tune retention plan for 2009-2010 and 2010-11.
- Solicit Honors Scholar applications from students enrolled in Honors courses beginning immediately

- **Curriculum**

Primary Responsible Individual/Group: Director and Curriculum Subcommittee

Goals:

- To have a wide variety of H-sections of University Studies Courses available across each year, individually enrolling 10-25 students each with an average across all sections of 16-18 students per term
- Offer at least one H-section for each of the Foundation and Explorations strands per term and at least one H-section for each of the Integration strands per year, with the goal of having H-sections compose 10% of the University Studies courses in each strand by 2010-11
- Steadily expand the departments offering H-sections until every department participating in University Studies is also offering H-sections and multiple faculty in each of those departments is participating
 - 07-08 added three new exploration H-sections (HST 112H, PH 175H, and HE 250H) and two new integration H-sections (BIO 384H and ENG 315H), involved three new departments (HPS, CPMS, and HPE), and involved seven new instructors (Morgan, Gentry, Miller, Siem, Jessup, DeHay, and Vener)
 - 08-09 and 09-10 should show similar growth by adding 3-5 new courses, 2-3 new departments, and 3-5 new instructors each year while also continuing some of the previous new and existing courses
- Have Honors in the Major available to all seniors in 2010-11, but gradually build up to this goal by adding half a dozen in 2007-08, another half dozen in 2008-09, another half dozen during 2009-10, with all ready to serve seniors by fall 2010 (2007-08's freshmen)

Activities:

- Continue to refine guidelines and provide a relatively simple process for faculty, with departmental approval, to offer H-sections
- Combine collecting syllabi with course visits and regular student and instructor course assessment to draw data on the effectiveness H-section guidelines and proposal process; refine guidelines and/or process as data directs
- Continue to refine guidelines for Honors in the Major programs to assure sufficient guidance without unnecessary constraints on departmental choices in designing the most effective program for programs in their discipline(s), encouraging them to capitalize on opportunities within the existing program rather than add-ons that dramatically increase departmental workload
- Continue to create and implement a regular assessment that holds departments accountable without forcing Honors Council or staff judgments and perspective on the program faculty in each discipline
- Work through the Council and Chairs to support departments actively seeking to participate and encourage others to consider this opportunity to serve their students
- Maintain strong support from President, Provost, and Deans for the Honors Program and encouraging University-wide departmental participation

- ***Extra Curricular Opportunities***

Primary Responsible Individual/Group: Program Staff and Student Subcommittee

Goals:

- Maintain an active Honors Club's reaching out to both Honors Student and other interested students on campus
- Have Honor's Residence Hall available for incoming and continuing students beginning fall 2008
- Plan at least one Honors Program sponsored (or jointly with Honors Club) extracurricular activity for 2008-09 and 2009-10 with the goal of expanding to quarterly events

Activities:

- Continue to support the Honors Club and their ongoing leadership development
- Create a vision and plan for the Honors Residence Hall that would create a living and learning community, possibly including an office for the Honors Club, a "home" for Honors activities and meetings, etc.

- ***Assessment***

Primary Responsible Individual/Group: Honors Program Staff (Director and Assistant) and Assessment and Planning Subcommittee

Goals and Activities:

- Continue development of an effective assessment plan that provides useful data for decision-making
 - Implement student and instructor assessment of courses immediately
 - Implement others as finalized through 2007-08 and 2008-09
- Review assessments habitually to determine if they are providing the program with useful data for decision-making; refine as needed

- ***Policy and Procedure Development***

Primary Responsible Individual/Group: Director and Assessment and Planning Subcommittee

Goals:

- Complete establishing major policies and procedure this year; refine as needed through 2008-09 and 2009-10
- Maintain opportunities for departmental input and customization through Council representatives and Chairs

Activities:

- Honors Council is composed of representatives from each academic departments, key administrative units, and students and is active in overseeing the program development and operation through three subcommittees: Student Subcommittee, Curriculum Subcommittee, and Assessment and Planning Subcommittee
- Continue to develop avenues of communication with Council and through Council to Departments and Programs

Funding and Leadership

Goals:

- Permanent funding established no later than July 1, 2010
- Ongoing leadership appointed by July 1, 2008
- Honors Office located no later than July 1, 2008

Issues:

- Funding

The temporary 2007-08 funding was drawn from the Provost's Reserve. These funds provided \$8100 (plus OPE) for faculty release to oversee the program and \$14,000 to pay the Program Assistant and cover S&S. No funding was planned for backfill to departments offering honors sections; however one course release was redirected from program leadership for this purpose in order to assure minimal honors offerings for spring term.

Funding rates for 2008-09 and 2009-2010 could continue to be temporary funding sufficient to cover faculty release for the Program Director (0.33-0.55 FTE), salary line for the Program Assistant (0.375 FTE, 12 month appointment), and at least \$1000 for S&S. By 2010-11, this program should have an ongoing budget that covers these essentials.

Departments will be encouraged to include Honors sections in the University Studies offerings. It may be valuable to plan a small amount of backfill is needed to assure an appropriate spread of offerings each term.

- Leadership

The Accelerated Baccalaureate Director was charged as Special Assistant to the Provost for Honors Restructuring with overseeing the implementation of the Workgroup Report for 2007-08. This was a temporary appointment while the existing Honors Director was on sabbatical. With her retirement and the expiration of this temporary appointment, ongoing leadership should be identified beginning July 1, 2008.

The Honors Program Assistant was hired this February and is highly skilled including a strong marketing background. This should be converted from a limited-duration appointment (through June 30, 2008), to an ongoing appointment if at all possible by July 1, 2008.

- Office Space
The Honors Assistant is currently sharing space with the AB Assistant. This is temporary space “borrowed” from the Mathematics Department in order to be in close proximity to the current AB Director. A more permanent space needs to be located once an ongoing Honors Director is appointed. Ideally, this should be located where there is high student visibility such as the Stevenson Union or Hannon Library, but it might be worth exploring the ramifications of locating that office in the Honors Hall.

Ongoing Challenges

The Honors Program has received broad faculty and administrative support. It will seek final approval from Faculty Senate this spring. Despite this support, questions like those below continue to arise.

- *Why Honors?*
 - All students deserve to be challenged and have multiple opportunities for academic growth. Are we serving our best students as well as we are serving our general student population?
 - How much should I invest in this program (H-sections or Honors in the Major Program) if it may not even exist next year?
 - Departments and faculty are offering all the courses. The Honors Club is providing all the activities. Where’s the administrative support? Is this something students and faculty want, but the administration doesn’t?
 - Changes imposed on my department already short-change my students. Why should honors students get special consideration in these days of cuts and belt-tightening?
 - I need strong students in all my classes. Won’t separating out the Honors students diminish the educational experience for the others?

- *Potential Impacts on Departments and Academic Programs*
 - My department wants to offer H-sections for one or more University Studies strands. Will it be interpreted as meaning we are overstaffed and result in further cuts to my program?
 - If we run these lower enrollment honors sections within our existing offerings our overall SCH will drop. Will that drop raise a red flag and cause our program to be targeted in the future?
 - We attract majors through the exploration courses. Dropping our enrollment could reduce our total majors and graduates. Can we afford that in the current campus climate?
 - We have several courses that would be much more effective if I could cap their enrollment at 30, but our department’s been told that is not affordable. Why are honors sections allowed to run at 10-25 with an average enrollment that is only in the high teens?
 - We can barely cover our current offerings. Without backfill, there’s no way I can add an honors section. An even if I could, who would staff it? With the cuts, our adjuncts found other work and are no longer available.
 - I can’t afford to replace a section that would enroll 40-60 with an honors section that is capped at 25. How would we serve the displaced students?
 - My department doesn’t load independent learning options for students. If we openly report the loading for honors projects, even if they are uncompensated, will that lead to the need to report these other items? If so, it will show our faculty are habitually overloaded. Would the fact that these overloads are not compensated be problematic? Could it result in my program being deemed “too expensive” and possibly eliminated?