

2008-2010 REPORT OF THE FACULTY HONORS COMMITTEE AND HONORS PROGRAM

The Letters and Science Honors program currently enrolls approximately 1300 students. 224 students matriculated as first-year honors students in the fall of 2008-09 and 298 in the fall of 2009-10. 260 honors degrees were awarded in 2008-09 with 103 students receiving Honors in the Liberal Arts, 82 receiving Honors in the Major and 75 receiving Comprehensive Honors (completing requirements for both Honors in the Liberal Arts and Honors in the Major). In 2009-10 there were 264 Honors graduates with 95 students receiving honors in the Liberal Arts, 97 receiving Honors in the Major and 72 receiving Comprehensive Honors.

The period from fall 2008 through the end of the spring semester 2010 was significant in several ways. The spring of 2008 marked the 50th anniversary of a petition signed by 172 students in 1958 demanding more rigorous classes at UW which led to the development of the L and S Honors Program. We moved into our new home at Washburn Observatory during the summer of 2009 and formally dedicated the building on September 11, 2009. Throughout this period we worked on preparing for the 50th anniversary of the L and S Honors Program which we celebrated with a 2 day program November 4 and 5, 2010.

The administrative structure of the program remains the same as in 2007-08. Professor Charles Snowdon (Psychology) continues as Director. The full-time staff consists of Jeffrey Shokler continuing to serve as the Program's Associate Director, Mary Czyszczak-Lyne as its Office Administrator, and Molly McGlone as Assistant Director with oversight of the program's advising and curricular operations.

Innovations

Admissions

We completed our second and third years of admitting students under our new system of inviting all students accepted into the College to consider applying for admission to Honors. Our new admissions philosophy emphasizes student motivation and, significantly, no longer views high academic achievement in high school as a necessary *prerequisite* for admission to pursue an honors degree; rather, it views high academic achievement as a *desired learning outcome* of pursuing an honors degree in the college.

This new process has continued to be successful in many ways. We have paradoxically reduced the size of our entering classes to obtain a better fit between our available resources and the number of students we serve. We have significantly reduced the number (and proportion) of students on academic probation so that only 2 students were on academic probation in the fall of 2010. We do not know if this is due to improved advising due to smaller numbers, greater motivation on the students we are accepting or a combination of factors

Evaluating the first 3 years of this new process we find no difference in mean high school rank, high school GPA SAT or ACT scores but somewhat greater variance. The proportion of student accepting our offers has decreased from a mean of 75.3% in the four years prior to the change in admissions to 56.7% in the past three years. The proportion of women has not changed going from 59.1% in the four years prior to the change to 60.8% in the last three years. The percentage of in-state students has decreased from 55.8% to 33.8% since the change in policy. The percentage of students identifying as Caucasian has decreased from 85.3% to 75.5% since the change. Some of this is due to an increased number of international students from Asia, but some is also due to an increased effort to recruit targeted minorities. By not emphasizing quantitative academic measures but focusing on finding highly motivated students we are making some steps toward increasing our diversity.

Advisor Notes:

Jeffrey Shokler had developed a computerized system for maintaining notes on advising session we have with our students, much like the computerized medical records that many physicians now use. The idea has now spread campus wide and with MIU funding an Advisor Notes system based on the design created by Jeff Shokler is now being rolled out to the entire campus allowing advisors to follow a student from SOAR through pre-major advising through major advising.

Evaluation of Honors in the Major

It has been twelve years since the establishment of the “new” honors curriculum that created the Honors in the Major, Honors in the Liberal Arts, and Comprehensive Honors degree options for students in the college. We noticed considerable variation among departments in what is required for Honors in the Major. While we recognize the value of diversity across different disciplines, we started to review programs and develop a set of best practices drawn from the curricula and experiences of different departments. Assistant Director McGlone and Director Snowdon have had meetings with several departments to find out what aspects of Honors in the Major are working and which are not and to compile a series of success stories that can be shared with all departments.

Honors 480 and 180 Diversity Dialogues

For the last three years (2008-2010), the L&S Honors Program has offered the Honors Fellows Program, a two semester course sequence that dealt with issues of diversity and social justice. In the spring semester, upper class students (approximately 12-15 students each year) would take the small seminar Inter L&S 480: Diversity Dialogues and Leadership Facilitation, and then those same students (“Honors Fellows”) would have the opportunity to facilitate discussions with first year students in the 1-credit class, Inter L&S 180: Diversity Dialogues (with approximately 40 first year students each year). The program was designed to: engage students in discussion around diversity and social justice; explore the three core breadth areas (sciences, social sciences, and humanities); create honors community; and give upper class students an opportunity for leadership in the honors program.

For the Honors Fellows, the program is an intensive year-long experience in which they participate in difficult conversations around issues such as race, social class, gender, sexuality, immigration, religion and ability. As part of their spring semester experience, each student writes a lengthy research paper or other project on one related issue of topic that is relevant to them or their academic interests. Projects for this past spring (2010) included: “Desegregation and the Implication of Race in the Milwaukee Public Schools,” “The International Experience at UW-Madison” (an audio project); “Social Justice in Medicine;” and “Inequality in Dental Care.” Student response to Inter L&S 480 has been largely positive, describing the class as an important one that got students thinking in new ways about the issues at stake:

“It has been an amazing experience. I am much more willing to discuss these topics (even bring them up!) in my life now. I am so excited this program was developed.”

“I know it can be frustrating for some people at times, but I continue to think this is the most valuable course I could take at school in terms of relevance to the ‘real world’ and importance to our society.”

The most common criticisms about Inter L&S 480 were about the lack of diversity within the class itself (not enough students of color), the loose structure of the course, and the perceived lack of participation from some of the other students.

In the fall semester, we have found that students really enjoy working with the first year students:

“I enjoyed getting to watch students come to their own conclusions, discover parts of their perspectives that may not have known about or considered before...it was really rewarding to see them respect each other’s opinions and genuinely participate.”

“I learned a lot from the students, which I didn’t expect.”

Improved Communication with Other Units

We continue to improve our communication with other advising and administrative units in the College. Molly McGlone became a member of the L and S Advisor Consortium, and an *ex-officio* member of the College Curriculum Committee and the Council on Academic Advising. Honors closely collaborates with both Cross-College Advising and L&S Assistant Deans with the hiring and training of SOAR student advisors. Director Snowdon is a member of the FIGS Advisory Committee, the Faculty Advisory Board to LSSAA, the Go Big Read Selection Committee, the University Honors Council and the SOAR Vision Committee.

50th Anniversary:

We created an Honors Advisory Committee made up of petition signers, local alumni, some former Directors and current students to help the Honors Program prepare a series of celebrations and create a development program to coincide with these celebrations. As noted above we had a two day symposium in November 2010, with talks by alumni representing all decades of the program along with current students (Sophomore Apprentices and Leadership Trust Awardees). We have also worked hard on development sending personal letters to all surviving petition signers and relocating Honors alumni from 1962-78 who had been unidentified in the Foundation records, mailing personal letters to each of them. The anniversary has created a “buzz” which has led to significant increases in donations over the past three years.

Program Grants and Awards

The Program annually awards approximately \$150,000 to departments in support of their Honors courses (either small stand-alone honors courses or faculty taught sections of larger courses) and Honors curriculum development. In addition, the Program provides grants and awards to students in several categories: Sophomore Summer Research Apprenticeships, Senior Honors Thesis Research, Leadership Trust Awards, Mark Mensink Honors Research Award, and the Abraham S. Burack Travel Award.

National Scholarships

The last two Truman Scholars from the University, Julie Curti and Jeffrey Wright also happen to have been honors students serving as student representatives on the Faculty Honors Committee. Daniel Lecoanet (who also served on the Faculty Honors Committee) won a Churchill Scholarship to study in England and also received a \$250,000 Hertz Foundation Fellowship. The majority of UW students who received nationally competitive scholarship awards in 2008-10 were students in the L and S Honors Program.

Leadership Trust Awards

We have received a generous grant from a donor who wishes to remain anonymous to pay two semesters of tuition and a \$3,000 supply allowance for student initiated programs that provide services and benefits to the University community and beyond. Since 2003, we have awarded funds for 10 different projects, most of which are still being continued by subsequent generations of students. In 2008-09 we made two awards, one for the development of a *Wiscipedia*- a student generated wiki designed to provide up to date information about how to navigate the campus. The Chief Information Officer and Director of LSSAA were both excited by this project. The other project is developing a resource data base on the problems of refugees and how agencies and individuals in Wisconsin can be more effective in helping refugees. In 2009-10 we awarded Yongqing (Douglas) Yang the award to create the University of Wisconsin Literacy Initiative which offers a unique gateway for UW-Madison students to help the broader Madison community by organizing and offering free training to become volunteer tutors of English as a Second Language, as well as in Basic Literacy. The goal of the project is to bring together interested undergraduate and graduate students to help support the city's lower income and educationally disadvantaged adult residents in their attempts to not only increase their command of the English

language, but also to improve their economic and social positions in the workplace, community, and at home. The project has been a great success in just a few months. For the first time in its history the Madison Literacy Council reduced its backlog of clients to zero and there are now so many trained student tutors that some are now working with UW Human Resources to provide training in English as a Second Language and financial literacy skills to UW employees in need of assistance.

These awards have stimulated some outstanding ideas among our students and have allowed the recipients to develop important leadership and service skills.

Program Enhancements

Honors Programs Abroad

In conjunction with the University of Michigan Honors Program and the UW's International Academic Programs, the Program offers an honors study-abroad opportunity in Florence, Italy. Director Snowdon was part of an evaluation team that did an on-site visit in summer 2010 and made several changes to improve the program. The Honors Program is collaborating with the Office of International Academic Programs on an honors program at University College Utrecht in the Netherlands (one or two semesters). We are currently working with the Department of Spanish and Portuguese to develop an Honors Study Abroad program where students can use Spanish language skills in a service learning environment.

UW Forensics Team

The L&S Honors Program assumed sponsorship of the UW Forensics Team about seven years ago. Forensics had effectively died at the UW in 1992 but was resurrected by a core of active students in 2001. These students, on their own initiative, began training and competing in local and regional forensics meets and, shortly thereafter, began seeking official sponsorship at the university. The Honors Program has also subsidized the part-time salary of a coach for the team, Ben Jedd, who has been able to make great strides in making the team competitive at all levels.

Common Book Program

We were successful in securing support for an Honors Common Book Program for First-year Students. Friends of the UW-Library agreed to provide funding for the Common Books and help in sponsoring the dinner and meeting with the author. The 2008 Common Book was *Breathing Spaces: How Allergies Change our Lives and Landscapes* by Greg Mitman (History of Science and Medicine) and the 2009 book was *Human Goodness* by Yi-Fu Tuan of Geography. With the start of Go Big Read we are actively partnering to work on selection of books and creating opportunities for honors students to meet with the authors.

Student Retreats

In late July each year the Program sponsors the annual summer retreat at Hilltop Farm in Spring Green for students with Sophomore Summer Honors Research Apprenticeships and for their faculty mentors. Student presentations are quite impressive in terms of their grasp of the research problems they have been studying and their poise in presenting their work to a broad audience. The annual Fall Retreat for our first-year Honors students is held in September or October each year and provides first year students with a chance to meet faculty and staff and ask questions about a variety of topics from disciplinary and career interests to how to obtain balance in their lives.

Advising

Advising for first-year students.

Starting in the summer of 2009 we began advising independently from L&S at SOAR. This has given us the opportunity to have our own morning presentation where we give information about the L&S degree requirements while also discussing the underlying philosophy and value of a liberal arts education and the L&S Honors Program. We are able to more fully integrate the honors requirements with the general L&S

degree requirements, which helps to reinforce the idea that our honors coursework is a part of the L&S degree. As part of our presentation, we highlight unique honors opportunities including honors classes, honors research experiences, honors programming, and honors advising. As a result of having our own SOAR room, we have found that students have a stronger understanding of the honors program and honors requirements, and we can then spend less time in the fall reviewing honors requirements, and more time addressing student questions.

Our student reviews from SOAR have been very strong. For the summer of 2010, 89% of our students found the Academic Advising very useful or extremely useful, and our advisors (both academic and peer advisors) received 90% positive feedback (agree or strongly agree) on all advising measures (being informed, communicating clearly, and providing personal attention). Some individual comments from students include:

"Honors Advising was a small and personal setting--very easy to get questions answered."

"I absolutely loved everyone that helped in my advising session. Both my advisor and the students. Any question I asked they were more than helpful and reassuring. They were also just incredibly nice. They made me feel really confident that my decision to go to Madison was the right one. I feel that I chose a great schedule and I will be very happy with my classes. I really liked that I felt like we made a personal connection."

"All of the advisors were very helpful and made me feel comfortable in asking questions and getting answers."

Honors advisors thoroughly revised processes for Summer Orientation, Advising and Registration (SOAR) and first-year orientation sessions. The two are now much better integrated and shape, in essence, two parts of a whole. We hold a session known as "Honors 181" for students in the first week of the semester and another around enrollment time in October known as "Honors 182." These sessions help us to efficiently advise our first year population in small groups and to give them the assurance that they will meet with an advisor at least twice in their first semester. We have found that the first session is best given before the add/drop deadline, giving students the chance to adjust their schedules if their courses are not a good fit. Similarly, the second session occurs after the timetable is released but before the final drop deadline (where students will receive a DR on their transcripts), which allows the advising contact to include a discussion of academic progress and future planning in the same session.

Advising for all students.

The L&S Honors Program website publicizes our Advising Syllabus, provides advisor profiles, answers to frequently asked questions, and provides information about the various advising options offered through our office. Advisors link their advising profiles to the walk-in hours posted on the Web Calendar. An instant messaging chat advising program has been initiated that is available two hours a day (Monday through Thursday), including evening hours that has proven popular among our students studying abroad.

Advisor training

Assistant Director Molly McGlone built upon our Advisor Development Program to successfully provide new and continuing Honors advisors (both professional and peer advisors) an overview of the advising field, with particular emphasis on conceptual and relational issues of advising. Readings, group activities, role plays and discussions were used to explore the definitions and values of advising, to examine the commonalities and diversities of our target population of high-achieving students, and to build and enhance advising-related skills. The advising team meets weekly to enhance their skills and discuss any particularly difficult issues that have arisen. As part of the evaluation process McGlone sits in on an advising appointment with each advisor to provide feedback.

Awards:

Molly McGlone received an L and S Advising Award in 2009 and Associate Director Jeffrey Shokler was named a recipient of the Student Personnel Association's Norman Bassett Award for Outstanding Achievement in Student Services in 2010.

Challenges:

Like all units of the College our main challenges concern resources. We have a staff of 2 full-time academic staff, a full time classified staff member, a half time director and two half time Project Assistants plus 5 students hired as student hourly. This is the smallest FTE to student ratio of any of the CIC Honors Programs/Colleges. Nonetheless, by working hard and working smart, we are able to meet most of our mission. We utilize the intelligence and motivation of our students as Peer Advisors.

The Assistant Director position to supervise Curriculum and Advising has become so involved with curricular and administrative issues that it is hard to meet the advising components of the position. As a result of this we have had to suspend the Honors 480/180 courses until we can obtain additional staffing.

At Wisconsin, we do not have to worry about the academic profile of our undergraduates and, philosophically, we in Honors prefer need based scholarships over merit based awards. However, many of our signature programs- Sophomore Summer Honors Research Apprenticeships, support of Forensics, support of community service activities, etc. are based on annual proposals to a variety of funding sources that are also in demand to fund other programs as well. We are actively seeking long term continuous support (endowments or bequests) to support our most successful programs and have had some success in the past two years. We are using the occasion of the Washburn renovation and the 50th anniversary to develop a successful fund raising program so that we can provide firm financial support for our future.

Finally, with impending budget cuts, it will be increasingly difficult for departments to collaborate with us in offering honors level courses. Although we can provide lecturer replacement funds for several courses, many departments cannot afford to have their faculty diverted from their regular teaching needs to teach honors courses. Some wonderful faculty are actually doing overloads in order to be able to teach an honors class, but we should not count on faculty volunteering to have an overload in order to sustain an honors program. Our hope is that with the MIU hires at least some departments will be able to increase Honors offerings as a part of the high impact practices that are required in accountability for MIU positions.

With our vision of Honors that is consistent with intellectual curiosity and the goals of the Wisconsin Idea, we hope to maintain an exciting and vibrant program with diverse students who will be the future of our state, our nation and our world.

2008-2009 Faculty Honors Committee Members:

Suzanne Desan (History)
Sabine Gross (German)
Jia Luo (Student Member, Economics and Biochemistry)
Alexander Nagel (Mathematics)
Mario Ortiz-Robles (English)
Byron Schaefer (Political Science)
Sissel Schroeder (Anthropology)
Charles Snowdon (Psychology, Chair)
Karen Steudel (Zoology)
Peter Timbie (Physics)
Jeffrey Wright (Student Member, Political Science and International Studies, Truman Scholar)

2009-10 Faculty Honors Committee Members

Suzanne Desan (History)
Dana Geary (Geoscience)
Sabine Gross (German)
Mary Halloran (Zoology)
Daniel Lecoanet (Student Member, Physics and Astronomy)
Mario Ortiz-Robles (English)
Byron Schaefer (Political Science)
Sissel Schroeder (Anthropology)
Charles Snowdon (Psychology, Chair)
Laura Stewart (Student Member, History)
Peter Timbie (Physics)

Ex Officio:

Mary Czyszczak-Lyne, Office Administrator
Jeffrey Shokler, Associate Director
Molly McGlone, Assistant Director