

## **2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FACULTY HONORS COMMITTEE AND HONORS PROGRAM (COLLEGE OF LETTERS & SCIENCE)**

### **Overview**

It is the mission of the L&S Honors Program to enhance and enrich the undergraduate experience for high-achieving and highly motivated students, to provide them with opportunities to engage in research and scholarship with faculty, to create a community within the larger College, to offer high-quality and comprehensive advising, and to promote leadership, service, and engaged citizenship through a liberal-arts education.

This report covers the 2015-2016 academic year and the summer of 2016. The Letters & Science Honors Program currently enrolls 1254 students. 374 first-year students matriculated as L&S Honors students in the fall of 2015. In AY 2015-16, 74 students graduated with Honors in the Liberal Arts (HLA), 64 students graduated with Honors in the Major (HM), and 29 completed both tracks earning Comprehensive Honors (CH) (all numbers: actual degrees conferred). The average GPA at graduation was a 3.716. Of the 167 Honors graduates, 62% identified as female and 2.4% identified primarily as a member of a targeted minority group (down from 6.1% of graduates in the previous year). Targeted minorities made up 8.7% of the total Honors population of 1254; the percentage has increased gradually since 2013.

The L&S Honors Program has an overall budget of close to half a million, detailed as follows: \$235,764 general 101 funding for salaries and supplies is supplemented by approximately \$21,000 annual gift endowment income used for essential operational expenses and student hourly employees. Honors also receives an annual allotment of \$192,000 in Undergraduate Initiative Funds, of which up to \$150,000 support instructional costs for departments offering Honors courses and sections that maintain or strengthen our curriculum and \$42,000 are awarded as Honors Summer Senior Thesis research grants.

In addition, the Honors program expends a total of approximately \$85,000 (\$45,000 estimated annual endowment income, plus donor gifts in non-endowed gift accounts) to support student research, outreach, travel, and community-building events.

### **Staffing**

Administratively, the Program has undergone some changes this past year. In August 2015, Sabine Gross, Professor of German, succeeded Sissel Schroeder, Professor of Anthropology, in the 50% Faculty Director position. While the full-time position of Associate Director of Academic Services (Jacqui Guthrie) remained unchanged, in November we received permission to increase Matt Kohlstedt's position as Associate Director of Administrative Services, which had been reduced to 75% in a previous budget reduction, to 100%. The Program Administrator position was reduced from 100% to 60% with the loss of long-time Administrator Mary Czyszczak-Lyne, who retired in October 2015 and was replaced by Erin Warner in December 2015. Losing an administrator with more than a decade of experience and knowledge of the program was a challenge, but also led to welcome restructuring and redesigning of numerous processes and responsibilities. Total Program FTE: 3.1

In addition to the core staff, the Honors program employs two academic advisors (50% graduate student PAs) and three peer advisors (part-time hourly undergraduates), as well as two student

hourlies for office coverage, website assistance, Honors online newsletter, and help with events, invitations, and mailing.

With five of the six faculty members on the Honors Faculty Advisory committee having rotated off in summer 2015, the committee was reconstituted as follows in fall:

***2014-2015 Faculty Honors Committee Members***

Sabine Gross, German, Chair	2015-
Harry Brighthouse, H; Philosophy	2015-
David Danaher; H; Slavic	2014-
Diane Gooding; SS: Psychology	2015 -
Tony Ives, NS: Zoology	2015-
Rita Kaushanskaya, SS: Comm. Sciences and Disorders	2015-
Jim Weisshaar, NS: Chemistry	2015-
Qihong Lu; Student: PSYCH and MATH majors	through graduation
Cole Randolph, MATH major	through graduation

***Ex Officio:***

Erin Warner, Program Administrator  
Matt Kohlstedt, Associate Director of Administrative Services  
Jacqui Guthrie, Associate Director of Academic Services

**Admissions**

Students mainly join the Honors Program in one of two ways, via initial acceptance or if they decide to pursue Honors in the Major. It is possible to join the Program (by application) anytime, including as a transfer student.

Initial acceptance into the Honors Program is not determined by test scores or other numerical data – motivation and interest are crucial factors. An invitation goes out to all applicants who are accepted to the College of Letters & Science. The number of 683 completed applications to the Honors Program was roughly in line with the two previous years. Of those applications, 523 students were admitted, an acceptance rate of 77%. Of these students, 392 decided to attend UW-Madison, an Honors-specific yield rate of 75%. Staffing constraints would not allow us to increase the number of admitted students measurably.

**Events and Programs**

The Honors Program hosts a total of about 20 events each year, with attendance ranging from 15 to 300-plus guests, in addition to a number of student workshops.

***Fall Kickoff Picnic***

The Honors Fall Kickoff outside Washburn Observatory has become a popular annual tradition, the first in a series of Honors community-building events for incoming students. In September 2014, about 200 students attended; on September 1, 2015, we welcomed more than 260 new Honors students.

### ***First-Year Dinner***

In fall 2015, we introduced the dinner format for what had previously been a Saturday-morning retreat. Attendance was almost double of what we had previously achieved at the fall retreat (185 students registered, with actual attendance somewhat lower), and we have made this an annual event. The dinner offers Honors students the opportunity to meet faculty and staff, talk to them informally, learn about their career path and personal choices, and ask questions about campus resources, research, disciplinary and career interests, study abroad, and service learning opportunities.

### ***Go Big Read Luncheon***

Fall 2015 marked the fourth year in which the Honors Program collaborated with UW-Housing to co-host a luncheon with the Go Big Read author for Honors students and several First-Year Interest Groups (FIGs), which allows our students to engage with the author in a more intimate setting. The 2015-16 Go Big Read book was *Just Mercy*, by Bryan Stevenson. We had about 150 students, staff, and faculty participate at this event.

### ***Senior Honors Thesis Symposium***

The fifth annual Senior Honors Thesis Symposium, funded by an Honors supporter, was held in April 2016 and featured 35 seniors who shared their research in a professional-style conference.

### ***Welton Summer Sophomore Apprenticeship Program***

This is a successful program offering an early research experience for which students apply as freshmen or sophomores, funded by a donor, the Welton Family Foundation, and through grants from the Brittingham Fund and the Kemper Knapp Bequest Fund. For the summer of 2016, the Faculty Honors Committee reviewed 45 applications and selected 37 apprentices, who had faculty and academic staff mentors in 26 different academic departments across four colleges (L&S, Engineering, CALS, and the School of Medicine and Public Health). To help build community, this year we held a Welton dinner (rather than an afternoon meeting) for the first time at which students and mentors got to know each other, which was well received. A workshop helped students prepare for the retreat in July (see below). Students may communicate by Facebook and other social media during the summer, and we invited some of the apprentices to join the welcome party for new first year students at the beginning of the semester, to share their experiences with the incoming first-year students and generate interest in the program.

### ***Welton Sophomore Apprentice Retreat***

In late July the Program sponsors an annual day-long retreat at Hilltop Farm outside Spring Green for Welton Apprentices and for their faculty and staff mentors. Student presentations are quite polished and impressive in the grasp of research problems the students have been studying. In three working groups and during meals, the retreat provides a setting for discussion of the presentations and broader exchange.

### ***Grants and Awards Workshops, Symposium/Retreat Workshops***

For all major grant categories – Welton, Trewartha, Summer Research, Leadership Trust – we offer one or several workshops to assist students in putting together a strong application. For the Senior Thesis Symposium and Welton Retreat, workshops focus on public speaking skills and effective strategies for giving an academic presentation.

## **Curriculum**

Four Honors in the Major curricula were revised and approved through governance (Faculty Honors Committee and L&S Curriculum Committee) during the 2015/16 school year: STAT, BIOCHEM, AF LANG LIT and COM ARTS. Proposals for NEURO and GEOG/GEO SYS are expected in the 2016/17 school year.

The Program is partnering with departments that have historically listed Honors offerings in unique or one-off ways to bring them into alignment with standard methods of listing and offering Honors courses. Approximately half of this “curricular clean-up” was completed in the 2015/16 school year, making Honors offering easier to understand and helping students to enroll correctly for Honors components of courses.

The Honors Program partnered with APIR and the Registrar’s Office on several initiatives this past year: creating a more efficient, accurate and query-able way to track who is enrolled in a university Honors Program, preparations for the new Guide and CIM (Curricular Information Management) Courseleaf tools implementation, and a clean-up of erroneous catalog-level Honors course offerings. Projects are well underway and should create several efficiencies for students and faculty/staff alike.

The Honors Program continued its practice of offering two fall Honors-only FIGs (First-Year Interest Groups). *Legacy of Greece and Rome in Modern Culture* and *Goodness, Happiness and the Meaning of Life* were the fall 2015 offerings, enrolling 18 and 14 respectively.

We continue to work closely with departments as they develop their Honors course offerings. This includes helping them determine which honors course designation is a best fit for a particular course, verifying that courses are set up with correct Honors designations and requisites, and promoting the courses that departments are able to create happens throughout the year. Additionally, as departments adjust to budget constraints, the Honors Program Director and Associate Director for Academic Services spend significant time working with departments that are eliminating Honors courses or trying to find more efficient ways of teaching their Honors offerings. When course offerings are eliminated or altered, associated curricula also need to be adjusted. Maintaining a variety of Honors course offerings and ample offerings for the number of students pursuing the degree is a priority for us, and increasingly this happens in individual consultations with departments.

## **Advising**

### ***Staffing***

Associate Director of Academic Services Jacqui Guthrie supervises the 5 part-time members of the Advising Team (two graduate-student advisors and three undergraduate peer advisors), including hiring, training, and mentoring. The Graduate PA advisors serve as primary advisors; Honors students also relate well to our peer advisors, who are trained to answer basic questions and are themselves in the Honors Program. In 2015, we transitioned from a phone-based

advising appointment system to the campus Scheduling Assistant online tool, which has made more staff time available for advising and to field inquiries.

### ***By the Numbers***

During the 2015-2016 school year, the Honors Program Advising Team held 570 individual 30-minute advising appointments, 398 drop-in appointments and responded to 972 advising-related email inquiries from students. (SOAR contacts are tracked separately and can be found just below).

### ***SOAR Advising***

The L&S Honors Program continues to advise at every first-year student SOAR session. During the 2016 summer, we served 335 incoming first-year honors students over 28 two-day SOAR sessions. 95% of L&S Honors SOAR attendee respondents to a survey about their SOAR experience agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I am satisfied with the academic advising experience at SOAR”.

### ***Advising for First-Year Students***

The L&S Honors Program Advising staff provides mandatory interaction-focused small-group advising (Honors 181 and Honors 182) for all first-year students in the fall semester. In addition to group advising, first-year students are encouraged to avail themselves of advisors via drop-ins, email, and individual appointments to assure a successful transition to college.

### ***Advising for Graduating Seniors***

L&S Honors Program Advisors audit the records of students who intend to graduate in the next two terms and proactively contact students with graduation deficiencies. Additionally, the Advising Team offers drop-in advising specifically for graduation checks so that graduating Honors students can confirm whether they are able to graduate in their intended semester, a service much appreciated by students and parents alike.

## **Grants and Awards**

### ***Curriculum***

An annual call in fall semester invites applications from departments seeking funds for lecturer replacement or S&E to enable faculty to teach Honors courses or Honors-only discussion sections. For the 2015-2016 academic year, the Faculty Honors Committee and L&S Honors Program awarded \$120,000 to departments in support of 32 Honors-only courses (15 small stand-alone Honors courses and 17 faculty-taught sections of larger courses).

### ***Student Research and Leadership Opportunities***

The Faculty Honors Committee recommended funding for grants and awards totaling over \$170,000 to 75 students in several categories: Welton Sophomore Summer Research Apprenticeships, Trewartha Undergraduate Honors Research Grants, Honors Senior Thesis Summer Research Grants, the Leadership Trust Award (see following), and several study abroad and conference travel grants.

### ***Leadership Trust Awards***

We have a generous grant from an anonymous donor to pay two semesters of in-state tuition and a \$3,000 supply allowance for student-initiated programs that provide services and benefits to the University community and beyond in the spirit of the Wisconsin Idea while allowing the students to develop leadership skills. Since 2003, we have awarded funds for more than twenty different projects, many of which are being continued by subsequent generations of students. In 2015-2016, the Faculty Honors Committee selected two Leadership Trust awardees (one funded through the Leadership Trust Award, one with Pathways to Excellence support):

1. Junior Arielle Mitchell (with emeritus and former Honors Faculty Director Chuck Snowdon as mentor) is developing a project on music engagement against memory loss for older citizens, with significant student volunteer involvement, that has the potential markedly to improve participants' lives and well-being.
2. Freshman Jordan Madden (with faculty mentor and Assistant Professor of Gender and Women's Studies Araceli Alonso) is developing a campus-wide campaign named "Bleeding Love" with the dual goal to increase awareness of the need for menstrual products for women living in poverty, and to encourage donations.

### ***National and International Awards***

Honors students continued to be successful as candidates for prestigious national and international awards. In 2015-2016, student awardees and nominees included: Colin Higgins (Rhodes), Hannah Mast (Goldwater), Jacob Roble (Truman Finalist), and Chandler Davis (Schwarzman Finalist).

### **Recruitment and Campus Presence**

Honors Programs at large research universities are generally considered one of the best bargains in Higher Education, and an important component in attracting the best high-school students. (See Frank Bruni, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/09/opinion/sunday/frank-bruni-a-prudent-college-path.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/09/opinion/sunday/frank-bruni-a-prudent-college-path.html?_r=0)) For many of our students, admission to the Honors Program is a significant component of their decision to attend the UW-Madison. The yield rate of students admitted to Honors is double the campus rate. (In fall 2016, 75% of students admitted to the L&S Honors Program chose to attend UW-Madison, compared with 37% of students overall.) In cooperation with the Office of Admissions, the Honors Program hosts approximately 45 prospective student information sessions for students and their parents each year, which are led by Matt Kohlstedt. Over 450 student participants register, and combined with their families the sessions attract more than 1000 registrants annually. Matt Kohlstedt also attended the Office of Admissions prospective student recruitment fair in Milwaukee, and was a panelist and information session participant for the four spring Your UW Days. We regularly send representatives to other campus recruiting events such as those for Chicago Scholars. We have also increased our outreach efforts to other campus partners such as the Chancellor's Scholars Program, the Powers-Knapp Program, and the Center for Academic Excellence. The Honors Director, Associate Director and team members are always available to meet with families individually and answer questions.

Honors has an active presence at other events across and beyond campus such as the Major's Fair and Summer Collegiate Experience.

### ***Parents' Day and Family Day***

the Honors Program participated in both events by hosting a Saturday-morning breakfast with a presentation and Q&A for the families of Honors students, attended by 37 on September 26, 2015, and 27 on October 1, 2015. The Honors Director provided an overview of the Honors Program, with ample opportunity for parents (and students) to ask questions and engage in conversation with the Director and members of the Honors Program team.

## **Community Building, Outreach, and Communication on Campus and Beyond**

### ***The Honors On-Line Blog***

The Honors Program makes weekly blog posts about opportunities of interest to Honors students such as grant opportunities, study abroad information sessions, honors course offerings and more. The Honors Online (HOL) weekly emailed newsletter points students to these blog entries. During the 2015-2016 school year, we tracked approximately 2,300 individual page views of blog entries each month, confirming student interest.

### ***Honors Student Organization (HSO)***

The Honors Program provides some staff assistance to HSO, a student-led organization that works to build a sense of community among Honors students. In 2015-16, the HSO continued with the successful Wednesdays@Washburn monthly event. Students select and invite UW-Madison faculty to have a conversation with Honors students in an informal setting at Washburn Observatory over supper provided by the Honors Program. HSO also co-hosted the Fall Kickoff Picnic, co-sponsored a two-day group study café at the beginning of final exam week each semester, organized events such as Lakeshore Nature Preserve clean-up days, and attended cultural events at the Madison Opera, Overture Center, and campus venues.

### ***Alumni Newsletter "The Honors Challenge"***

The annual full-color newsletter of the Honors Program is sent to approximately 6,300 alumni and other interested parties. The November 2015 newsletter featured stories around the theme of "Honors Makes a Difference".

### ***Open Doors Madison Event***

The Honors Program participated in the "Open Doors" community outreach event on Sunday, April 24, 2016, offering snacks, beverages, and information about Washburn to all interested community members. The Faculty Director personally welcomed more than 100 visitors to Washburn during this successful event.

Honors partners with the Astronomy Department – with whom we are happy to share Washburn Observatory – for events such as this throughout the year.

### ***Additional Engagement across Campus***

Staff in the L&S Honors Program participated in a number of different campus committees and activities.

- Sabine Gross: University Honors Committee; Faculty Honors Committee (Chair); University Library Committee; Search Committee for the Associate Dean of L&S Student Academic Affairs / Director of L&S Undergraduate Advising (December

- 2015-March 2016, Chair); Graduate School Fall Research Competition Committee (fall 2015); Named Professorship Selection Committee (fall 2015); L&S Dean's Prize Committee (spring 2016); various committees in the Department of German, including Personnel Review committees (chair) and Library.
- Jacqui Guthrie: Ex-officio member of the L&S Curriculum Committee and sub-committee on Mandatory Major Declaration Implementation, Member of Council on Academic Advising (CAA), Orientation Advising Team (OAT), Cete (committee on the biosciences), Campus Pre-Health Committee, ASEC-appointed Student Misconduct Hearing Panel Committee, FIG Selection Committee.
  - Matt Kohlstedt: University Honors Committee, L&S Career Initiative Retreat, Scholarship Stewardship Committee, L&S Scholarships Evaluation, Equity & Justice Institute 2016.

### **Speech Team of UW-Madison**

The L&S Honors Program assumed sponsorship of the UW Forensics Team – now named “WI Speech and Debate Team” – in 2003. Defunct since 1992, Forensics had been resurrected by a core of active students in 2001. The Honors Program assists with grantwriting and fundraising for coaching and team travel and subsidizes a portion of the salary of the part-time coach for the team, Ben Jedd. 2014-15 was a year of re-building for the team after key members graduated.

### **Challenges:**

Resources continue to be a challenge – as they are throughout the College – and constrain the reach of the Honors Program and what we can offer. Our staffing (see above) gives us one of the smallest FTE-to-student ratio of any of the Honors Programs/Colleges among our Big Ten Academic Alliance (formerly CIC) peer universities. The Honors Program continues to subsidize our coverage of summer SOAR with our own personnel and hiring additional staff. In summer 2016 we were able to partner with CFYE, sharing costs for hiring a graduate-level advising intern, which worked well.

The Honors Program has no designated faculty; our curriculum, while meeting most Honors students' needs, is entirely dependent on the willingness of L&S Departments to offer Honors (and Honors-optional) courses and Honors sections for large lecture courses. Given recent budget cuts and an emphasis on teaching larger-enrollment courses, it has become increasingly difficult for departments to collaborate with us in offering such 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 faculty members are accepting teaching overloads in order to be able to teach an honors class.

We continually monitor and try to optimize all aspects of our work, searching for additional efficiencies that will allow us to continue to meet our mission and programmatic goals with fewer state resources, to publicize the Honors Program as a resource across campus and beyond, and to connect and to share information about Honors effectively with current and prospective students, faculty, and parents. The Honors Program draws on its Foundation funds for many of its activities; the Faculty Director engages in a number of stewardship activities.