

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

[final version, approved at Sept 21, 2020 FHC meeting]

This report covers the 2019-20 academic year and summer 2020

2019-2020 Faculty Honors Committee Members

Jeff Beneker, H (Classics/CANES)	2017-
Emily Fletcher, H (Philosophy)	2019-
Stephen Gammie, NS (Integrative Biology)	2017 -
Sabine Gross, Chair (Faculty Director; German/Nordic/Slavic)	2015-
Clarence Harley, Student (PoliSci and Economics)	Spring 2020-
Keisha Lindsay, SS (Gender and Women's Studies/PoliSci)	2019-
Jonathan Martin, NS (Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences)	2018-
Julia Miller, Student (Neurobiology major)	2017-
Daniel Quint, SS (Economics)	2018-
Cole Randolph, Student (Music and Economics major)	2017-Fall 2019

Ex Officio:

Erin Warner, Program Administrator

Matt Kohlstedt, Associate Director of Admissions and Research

Sara Stephenson, Associate Director of Advising and Curriculum

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.

The Honors Faculty Advisory Committee met monthly to evaluate grant applications, advise on curricular matters, provide input on Honors Program mission and practices as well as Honors programming, select Honors courses for UIF funding, and evaluate nominations for the Distinguished Honors Faculty award. The April and May meetings were conducted virtually.

The Letters & Science Honors Program currently enrolls 1550 students (vs. 1386 in 2018-19 and 1370 in 2017-18). 436 first-year students matriculated as L&S Honors students in the fall of 2019, up from 390 the previous fall. In AY 2019-20, a total of 201 students graduated with Honors degrees; 96 with Honors in the Liberal Arts (HLA), 71 with Honors in the Major (HM), and 34 completed both tracks earning Comprehensive Honors (CH). The average GPA at graduation was a 3.74. Of the 201 Honors graduates, 54% identified as female and 6.9% identified primarily as a member of a targeted minority group (up from 5.4% and 5.0% of graduates in the previous two years). Students from targeted minority populations made up 12.8% of the total Honors population of 1550; the percentage has increased gradually since 2013.

Admissions

An invitation goes out to all applicants who are accepted to the College of Letters & Science. The number of 741 completed applications to the Honors Program in winter/spring 2020 is a

decrease in applications from the previous year (812), perhaps due to spring 2020 circumstances. Of those applicants, 648 students were admitted (vs. 590 in the previous year), an acceptance rate of 87% (up from 73%). Of these admitted students, 470 decided to attend UW-Madison, an Honors-specific yield rate of 72.5% (as compared to an overall university yield rate of 31.6%).

Staffing update 2019-20

The Honors Program has 6.25 FTE (and additionally employed five student hourly undergraduates in 2019-20: three peer advisors and two office assistants).

New advisor Pete Keys started in March 2020, replacing Amy Drolet, who left in December 2019. Additionally, in summer 2020 Honors was able to establish an annual renewable 70% position for the Speech and Debate Coach, funded with 233 gift funds. Previously, this had been an hourly or 25% position.

Student grants and research support

In 2019-20, 67 Honors students were awarded grants by the Honors Faculty Committee for a combined total of over \$106,150 (\$42,000 of these as UIF funds):

- 26 Welton Sophomore Summer Research Awards totaling \$65,000
- 23 Trewartha Undergraduate Honors Research Grants totaling \$34,500
- 16 Honors Senior Thesis Summer Research Grants totaling \$48,000
- 1 conference travel grant totaling \$350
- 1 study abroad grant (pending based on feasibility of travel in 2020/21) \$1,250

Honors received approximately \$58,228 in donor gifts (including gifts to Forensics) from 45 different donors.

This year, Honors facilitated a Senior Honors Thesis writing group intended specifically for students who did not have departmental seminars supporting thesis writing.

Events

The Honors Program hosted a number of events, including a Fall Kick-off for Honors Freshmen attended by more than 400 students; a First-Year Dinner in September 2019 that brought together more than 130 students and close to 20 faculty, a luncheon-cum-discussion with Go Big Read author Deborah Blum, and a winter graduation reception. Usually we hold about 20 events per year, for between a dozen and 400 students. Covid-19 made it necessary to develop alternatives for all events scheduled after spring break. We replaced our April 2020 Senior Honors Thesis Symposium with a virtual platform where students could upload their Senior Honors Thesis presentation. In lieu of the Honors spring graduation reception, we developed a Commencement webpage with addresses by Dean Wilcots, Honors Director Gross, student speaker and Dean's Prize winner Claire Evensen, and a listing of all 201 Honors graduates. Many students responded to our invitation to provide more detailed profiles:

<https://honors.ls.wisc.edu/spring-2020-honors-commencement/> The page was accessed 1175 times. Honors medallions and our newly designed Honors pins were mailed to all graduates in summer. In lieu of a Summer Sophomore Apprentice Retreat for the 26 summer apprentices, in July we hosted a two-hour virtual research mini-symposium for the apprentices; a number of mentors attended as well.

Curriculum

For the 2019-2020 academic year, the Faculty Honors Committee and L&S Honors Program awarded \$125,000 to departments in support of 25 Honors-only courses (16 small-enrollment stand-alone Honors courses and 9 faculty-taught sections of larger courses). In Fall 2019, the College of Letters and Science offered 72 sections of 43 unique courses as Honors-only, 1152 total seats. In spring 2020, Honors students had access to 50 sections of 37 courses, totalling 718 seats.

In fall 2019, the Honors Program supported two Honors-only FIGS: Perspectives on Ancient Medicine and Healing (CANES) and Altruism and Selfishness (Philosophy). This year, Honors instituted a new practice of contacting departments and instructors offering “Honors optional” courses early in the schedule-building process to ensure accuracy in the course listings and consistency in offerings. In summer we responded to the Covid-19 instructional mandates by compiling and sending additional materials on engaging Honors students and Honors-appropriate teaching to instructors.

Following an increase in student interest in double majors, Faculty Honors Committee began discussing guidelines for students interested in completing a dual thesis to satisfy the thesis requirement of two majors simultaneously.

Advising (excluding SOAR)

In fall, the Advising Team delivered group advising to students: Honors 181, which took place the first week of classes (21 sessions of 20 students), and Honors 182, an interactive workshop to prepare for spring semester enrollment (26 sessions with 12-14 students). Both opportunities allowed students to hear information presented about the Honors program, meet other Honors students, and ask individual questions of an Honors advisor. Advisor Notes document 887 individual scheduled student appointments and 321 drop-in conversations with 694 individual students. With campus closed after Spring Break, the Advising team accomplished the transition from in-person advising to virtual appointments quickly and efficiently.

Each semester, the advising team reviews the cumulative GPA of all Honors students and provides outreach to students who may be struggling to meet the 3.3 GPA benchmark. Annually, we review student enrollment to ensure students are meeting the appropriate benchmarks of one Honors course by the end of 3rd semester and one Automatic Honors course by the end of 5th semester. Students who have not met these benchmarks are contacted and invited to meet for a conversation about how Honors fits into their plans at UW.

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.

SOAR Advising

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Honors Team completely reconfigured an established, in-person program to provide a remote, individual experience to students in approximately six weeks. In summer 2020, the Advising Team served 408 incoming first-year Honors students over 8 weeks. An additional 30 students were initially advised by other units and connected with Honors after enrolling in their fall courses. 90% 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”.

Recruitment

In cooperation with the Office of Admissions and the College of Letters & Science, the Honors Program shared hosting duties for approximately 45 prospective student information sessions for students and their parents interested in L&S high-impact practices; Honors-led sessions were hosted by Matt Kohlstedt, who also led Honors-specific training for colleagues from other units who served as session hosts. When the sessions were held virtually beginning in March, Matt worked with L&S Communications to record an Honors video that plays at the beginning of each session. Matt also participated in several virtual Open Houses that were organized by the Office of Admissions, and Honors continues to send participants to recruiting events such as the Chancellor's Day Lunch and the Chicago Scholars recruitment day.

Additional Engagement across Campus

The Honors Program, represented by the Director, is a member of the HIP (High-Impact Practices) Working Group initiated by SAA Associate Dean Cal Bergman. Honors participates in meetings and initiatives such as the 2019 HIP information luncheon for faculty. Staff in the L&S Honors Program participated in a number of different campus committees and working groups:

Lisa Blum (Spring 2020): Honors representative on the Bioscience Advising Team (BAT)

Aimee Drolet (Fall 2019): Honors representative on the Bioscience Advising Team (BAT);
Facilitator for Our Wisconsin inclusion education program

Christine Evans: Facilitator for Our Wisconsin inclusion education program; Instructor for Counseling Psychology 125: Wisconsin Experience Seminar; L&S Scholarships evaluation; Honors representative in L&S Advisor Consortium; Summer 2020: L&S Honors representative at summer orientation for first-year PEOPLE Scholars; Participant in OUA Student Development Theory community of practice;

Sabine Gross: University Honors Committee; L&S Honors Faculty Advisory Committee (Chair); L&S Dean's Prize Committee (spring 2020); various committees in the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic.

Matt Kohlstedt: University Honors Committee; Beinecke Campus Nominating Committee; Data Works Community of Practice; Financial Aid Scholarship User Group; Campus Convocation Committee; L&S Scholarships Evaluation; L&S Convocation Committee; L&S Website Working Group.

Sara Stephenson: Ex-officio member of the L&S Curriculum Committee; Council on Academic Advising (CAA); Orientation Advising Team (OAT); L&S Lumen Committee; FIG Selection Committee; Advising Supervisors Community of Practice; L&S Policy Works.

Communication

Fall 2019 Honors Newsletter "The Honors Challenge" mailed to more than 6,700 alumni and supporters.

The Honors Website now features regular news items about Honors students.

The Program has improved communication with Honors students through a redesign of HOL, the weekly "Honors On-Line" newsletter.

Student organizations

The Honors Program serves as administrative home and “umbrella” for three student organizations:

- 1) HSO (Honors Student Organization)
- 2) JUIS (Journal of Undergraduate International Studies)
- 3) WI Speech and Debate (with a part-time coach funded through gifts)

Response to COVID-19 (summary/selection):

Late spring and summer SOAR advising shifted to remote mode (see above)

April 2020 *Day of the Badger* Advancement event canceled due to Covid-19.

Increased communication with students, parents, faculty.

Honors Commencement webpage (see above, *Events*)

Regular communications to faculty teaching Honors-only and Honors-optional courses, April through August, offering guidance on remote teaching and on engagement in Honors courses and including a compilation of Honors teaching ideas sent to Honors instructors.