

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

This report covers the 2020-2021 academic year and summer 2021

2021-2022 Faculty Honors Committee Members

Emily Fletcher | Professor of Philosophy / 2019 –
Randall Goldsmith (Chem): 2021 -
Clarence Harley| Student Member / 2020 –
Jenny Saffran (Chair and Faculty Honors Director; Psychology): 2021
Keisha Lindsay | Professor of Gender and Women’s Studies and Political Science / 2019 –
Grant Nelsestuen | CANES and Director of ILS / 2020 –
Daniel Quint | Professor of Economics / 2018 –
Andreas Seeger (Math): 2021-
Amy Yadev| Student Member / 2020 –

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 courses for Honors funding, and evaluate nominations for the Distinguished Honors Faculty award. All meetings during the previous academic year were conducted virtually.

The Letters & Science Honors Program currently enrolls 1614 students (vs. 1550 in 2019-20 and 1386 in 2018-19). 436 first-year students matriculated as L&S Honors students in the fall of 2020, up from 436 the previous fall. In AY 2020-21, a total of 172 students graduated with Honors degrees; 89 with Honors in the Liberal Arts (HLA), 37 with Honors in the Major (HM), and 46 completed both tracks earning Comprehensive Honors (CH). The average GPA at graduation was a 3.74. Students from targeted minority populations made up 10.9% of the total Honors population.

Admissions

An invitation goes out to all applicants who are accepted to the College of Letters & Science. The number of 672 completed applications to the Honors Program in winter/spring 2021 is a slight decrease in applications from the previous year (741), perhaps due to spring 2021 circumstances. Of those applicants, 575 students were admitted (vs. 648 in the previous year), an acceptance rate of 86% (down from 87%). Of these admitted students, 445 decided to attend UW-Madison, an Honors-specific yield rate of 77.4% (as compared to an overall university yield rate of 27.8%).

Staffing update 2020-2021

The Honors Program has 6.3 FTE and additionally employed three student hourly positions in 2020-21: two peer advisors and one office assistant. Additionally, during the 2020-21 academic year, Honors staff participated in a search for a new L&S Honors Program Director to replace outgoing Director Sabine Gross. Jenny Saffran from the Psychology Department was hired as the new Director and started in Fall 2021.

Student grants and research support

In 2020-21, 63 Honors students were awarded grants by the Honors Faculty Committee for a combined total of over \$166,350 (\$42,000 of these as UIF funds):

- 35 Sophomore Summer Research Awards totaling \$87,500
- 9 Trewartha Undergraduate Honors Research Grants totaling \$13,500
- 2 Mensink Awards totaling one year in-state tuition
- 13 Honors Senior Thesis Summer Research Grants totaling \$39,000
- 2 conference travel grant totaling \$700
- 1 Leadership Award totaling one year in-state tuition and \$3,000 in project funds

Honors received approximately \$34,400 in donor gifts from 50 different donors. UW Speech and Debate (currently housed within Honors) received approximately \$49,900 in donor gifts from 11 different donors.

Events

The Honors Program usually holds about 20 events per year, for between a dozen and 400 students. COVID made it necessary to develop alternatives for all events scheduled during the 2020-21 academic year.

- Faculty/Student Connections were online small group sessions where a faculty member led a small group discussion about a specific topic. All first year students attended at least one of these sessions and were able to pick based on interest in a topic and schedule.
- Honors Pods were created to assist students in making social connections with other students. Honors matched up 3-5 students in Pods based on things like year in school, academic interests and where they were living during the academic year.
- Go Big Read event was held virtually with Dave Cullen author of “Parkland”.

- Honors provided tickets to Honors students and staff to attend an online production of “Niceties”.
- Seniors Honors Thesis Symposium was held virtual in April and allowed students to present their thesis research to faculty, fellow students, and family/friends.
- Honors recognized our winter and spring graduates with a commencement webpage for each graduating class. Each webpage contained addresses by Dean Wilcots, Honors Director Gross, and student speakers. In addition, we invited all Honors graduates to provide us a photo and more detailed profile which we also included on the Honors commencement webpage. Honors medallions and Honors pins were mailed to all graduates prior to UW Commencement so students could wear them with their cap, gowns and Honors stoles.
- Summer Sophomore Research welcome event and retreat were both held virtually. Both events allowed students to share information about their research.

Curriculum

For the 2020-2021 academic year, the Faculty Honors Committee and L&S Honors Program awarded \$150,000 to departments in support of 28 Honors-only courses (20 small-enrollment stand-alone Honors courses and eight faculty-taught sections of larger courses). In Fall 2020, the College of Letters and Science offered 72 sections of 41 unique courses as Honors-only (excluding Senior Honors Thesis courses), with 806 total seats. In Spring 2021, there were 58 sections (885 seats) of 42 courses offered as Honors-only.

In fall 2020, the Honors Program supported two Honors-only FIGS: Perspectives on Ancient Medicine and Healing (CANES) and Altruism and Selfishness (Philosophy). Both FIGs filled to capacity and had additional students on the wait list. An additional 65 Honors students enrolled in non-Honors only FIGs, many of which included Honors-optional components.

We continue to experiment with proactive outreach to departments as the schedule-building process occurs, verifying that courses set up as Honors-only have the appropriate requisites, and to ensure that Honors-optional courses are correctly identified.

Following the discontinuation of the “Distinction in the Major” credential at the college level, FHC began to have conversations about Honors in the Major and ways to support departments and students who had been using Distinction quite heavily. FHC reaffirmed the general belief that Honors in the Major requirements should include a well-supported, long-term student project. FHC is interested in department proposals for Honors-level, disciplinary appropriate capstone experiences.

FHC also began discussing the idea of allowing service-learning courses to fulfill Honors requirements.

Advising (excluding SOAR)

Advising was held fully virtually during this academic year. First-year students were required to attend virtual group advising sessions during the first week of classes.

During the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters, advisors recorded Advisor Notes for 1356 student appointments for 697 unique students.

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

In Summer 2021, the Advising Team served 430 incoming first-year Honors students over 8 weeks. 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. 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)

Christine Evans: Wisconsin Experience Grant Committee (Fall 2020-); Orientation Advising Team (Fall 2020-); L&S Advisor Consortium (2019-); Integrated Liberal Studies 139: Building Your Honors Education (Instructor, 2021); Integrated Liberal Studies 138: Foundations of Liberal Education (Instructor, 2020); L&S Scholarships (Evaluator, 2020); Summer orientation for first-year PEOPLE Scholars (L&S Honors representative, 2020); OUA Student Development Theory Community of Practice (Participant, 2020); Our Wisconsin [inclusion education program] (Facilitator, 2018-2019); Instructor of Counseling Psychology 125: Wisconsin Experience Seminar (Instructor, 2019)

Sabine Gross: University Honors Committee; L&S Honors Faculty Advisory Committee (Chair); L&S Dean's Prize Committee; 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); L&S Lumen Committee; FIG Selection Committee; Advising Supervisors Community of Practice; L&S Policy Works.

Communication

Fall 2020 Honors Newsletter "The Honors Challenge" mailed to more than 6,900 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)

Program review

Honors completed a program review during the 2020-21 Academic Year. During the Fall 2020 semester, Honors staff spent significant time gathering data, surveying students, and writing the self-study, multiple drafts of which were reviewed by the Faculty Honors Committee. An outside review committee interviewed Honors staff during the spring semester in preparing their report to the APC. Both the then-current and incoming directors of Honors responded to the program review report, which was highly supportive of the program.

Response to COVID-19:

Honors has returned to offering in-person events and services to students in addition to continuing to offer virtual advising options.