

UNH FACULTY SENATE
MOTION # XIX-M6

on endorsement of the proposed revision of the University Honors Program

1. Motion presenter: Michael Ferber, chair of senate Academic Affairs Committee
2. Dates of Faculty Senate discussion: 10/20/2014, 11/3/2014
3. Rationale: The Academic Affairs Committee has examined the proposal from Jerry Marx and Kate Gaudet of the Honors Program to restructure the University Honors curriculum. We met with them three times for extensive discussions and made a number of recommendations that they have adopted. We now endorse the revised proposal as found in the attached PDF file. We think it is a considerable improvement over the current curriculum and offers some exciting and challenging opportunities for some of our most able students, and we thank Jerry Marx and Kate Gaudet, and many others who contributed to its development, for their good work.
4. Motion: **The Academic Affairs Committee send the proposed revision of the University Honors Program to the Senate and move that it be approved. We also move that it be reviewed by the Senate during its third year of operation, probably 2017-18.**
5. **Senate action: Motion passed with 38 votes in favor, no votes opposing and 4 abstentions.**
6. Senate chair's signature: *Alberto Manalo*

Forwarded to: President Mark Huddleston, on November 18, 2014
Provost Lisa MacFarlane, on November 18, 2014
P.T. Vasudevan, Sr. Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, on November 18, 2014
All college deans, on November 18, 2014
All department chairs, on November 18, 2014

Proposal for Revisions in University Honors Program

Submitted

August 3, 2014

Revised

October 14, 2014

By

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And

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Problem in Current University Honors Program (UHP)

The current Honors in Discovery curriculum asks students to complete 16 credits of their Discovery education in Honors courses. These are, for the most part, the same courses offered to the student body at large, modified to suit academically motivated students. The most distinctive part of the curriculum is the roster of Honors Inquiry Seminars (444 courses). While many of these were developed specifically as honors courses, they are offered in non-honors versions as well.

The principal problem with the current University Honors curriculum is that, having provided inspiration to the Discovery program, it is now **not distinct enough** from the experience of all University undergraduates. This is a positive development, as all undergrads are now offered small inquiry-based courses in the first year; however, it necessitates change in the Honors Program so that we can offer high-achieving students a suitably challenging and enriching experience.

The current roster of Honors classes is constructed for maximum breadth of subject offerings, in order to make it easier for students to fit Honors work into their schedules. In consequence, **not all courses offer the same level of Honors experience**. Some, for example, have only a handful of Honors students in a general-level class; these students are asked to do extra work, but miss the experience of elevated rigor and stimulation that occurs in all-Honors classes. A revised program would provide Honors experiences that are consistently high quality.

Finally, we believe that there is **a need to build a greater sense of community** among University Honors students. Currently there are few shared experiences. The revision should include more common experiences through the academic curriculum that promote peer learning, group problem-solving, and life-long relationships.

UHP Revision Goals:

- To create a University Honors curriculum that is consistent with, but distinct from the Discovery Program
- To provide a consistently high level of University Honors engagement
- To build greater community among University Honors students

Revised Curriculum for Honors in Discovery (Freshman/Sophomore years)

The revised Honors Discovery Program will require Honors students to take four courses (16 credits) consisting of:

- Two Honors Symposium “supercourses”
- One Honors Inquiry Seminar
- One additional Honors Discovery Course (e.g., ENGL 401H).

Inquiry Seminars: The University Honors Program currently offers 14 Inquiry Seminars each year. These small, discussion-based, in-depth courses are an original feature of the program, and have been its strongest component. The reorganized University Honors Program builds upon this strength. Each college has committed to providing a certain number of Honors Inquiry courses each year. We intend to retain these commitments.

In addition, we propose that the Honors Inquiry Seminars include a new option: seminar courses that meet two Discovery categories. This option will be available only for Honors courses, and each course will be evaluated by the Discovery Committee to ensure that the standards of each category are thoroughly met. We suggest that these courses carry 5 credits and correspondingly increased contact hours. The purpose of this modification is to address a longstanding problem. Students in some majors are deterred or prevented from participating in the Honors Program because of tight major curricula. The University Honors Program is committed to serving students in all colleges and majors. To do this effectively, we need to offer some flexibility in fulfilling Discovery requirements.

Honors Symposia: The Honors Symposium offerings will include interdisciplinary “supercourses,” each consisting of four course sections comprised of one faculty member and 20 students. These sections will meet separately, but will convene regularly for plenary sessions. Each 20-student section of the course will run as an independent seminar, with each professor responsible for the content and grading; each will count as a full course in the professors’ workloads. Most class meetings will take place in these groups, enabling highly participatory, in-depth discussion. At the same time, the professors will agree upon some shared assignments and texts so that all 80 students in the Symposium have a sense of participating in a common Honors experience.

Furthermore, the four sections will come together in plenary sessions approximately biweekly for a panel discussion in which the four professors examine a particular problem, issue or text, modeling their distinct disciplinary approaches in keeping with the spirit of Inquiry. In some cases, the joint meeting may include student panels, debates, or presentations. Note that the Symposia do not require participating faculty members to “co-teach,” but rather, to collaborate to some extent, primarily around the topics and formats for plenary sessions. The University Honors Program will facilitate this collaboration among faculty members.

This new model will help to create a distinct academic community for University Honors students. That is, the Symposia will enable students to experience the small-class, discussion-based structure highly valued within the Honors program while also offering a more cohesive Honors Program group experience. **See Appendix for examples of Honors Symposia.**

Revised Curriculum for Upper-level Honors (Junior/Senior year)

The revised program for upper-level Honors will offer students the following two tracks:

- Honors in Major curricula set by individual departments and agreed to by UHP
- Interdisciplinary Honors, a menu of high-impact learning experiences organized by UHP and participating departments

Honors in Major

Departments may continue to offer Honors in Major programs in their current forms. However, some departmental programs may set standards that differ from University Honors criteria and do not qualify for University Honors affiliation. Some programs may elect not to offer Honors in Major. In these cases, students of these programs may use the Interdisciplinary Honors option to complete University Honors.

Interdisciplinary Honors

The list of opportunities below is designed to incorporate hands-on, real-world, horizon-expanding experiences that are already offered at UNH. Based upon research involving the National Survey of Student Engagement, the Interdisciplinary Honors option encourages students to take advantage of these programs, and recognizes those who do.

Students would complete a thesis in their major and three of the following high impact learning experiences, at least one of which will be interdisciplinary:

- An interdisciplinary IMPACT group project* (e.g. Carsey Social Innovation Internship)
- An academic study abroad experience
- A major fellowship application (e.g. Fulbright, Truman)
- An IROP, SURF, or other approved Hamel Center research experience
- Named authorship on a publication in a peer-reviewed journal
- A presentation at a regional or national academic conference
- Other approved high-impact interdisciplinary experience (by petition)
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*An interdisciplinary IMPACT project is a semester-long experience in which students work in interdisciplinary groups to propose solutions to social and community problems.

Implementation and Assessment

Implementation, including the development of required guidelines and policies, will be carried out by the University Honors Program staff in consultation with the University Honors Committee, the faculty advisory body for the Honors program. In addition, we are working with the UNH Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning to develop an assessment plan for the revised Honors curriculum.

Appendix

Examples of Potential Honors Symposia

HONR 401: Land, Sea, and Space: Creating the Future

This course considers our physical world from philosophical, historical, cultural, and scientific perspectives. A theme of the course could be: How should scientific and political communities respond to the impacts of climate change on land, sea, and the atmosphere?

This course could be taught from the following four Discovery perspectives:

- A. A philosophy professor on the values encoded in ecological practices—HUMA
- B. A maritime historian on changes in the Atlantic Ocean—HP
- C. An environmental conservationist on the future of sustainable agriculture--ETS
- D. An earth scientist on the history and future of the climate—PS

HONR 402: Justice and Ethics: Examining the Great Issues

In this course students will examine the concepts and practice of justice and ethics both historically and within contemporary American society. A shared question for the course could be: what is the relationship between individual ethics and societal justice?

Sample sections:

- A. A business/economics professor on social justice in the global economy--WC
- B. A political scientist on the enduring and emerging ethical issues in criminal justice—SS
- C. A bioethicist on human subject research and the advancement of knowledge--BS
- D. A philosopher on classical conceptions of the just society —HUMA

HONR 403: Community and Capital: Growth, Values, and Costs

This course investigates the structure and development of communities via various forms of capital: social, economic, cultural, and physical. It encourages engaged citizenship through group problem-solving to better meet the needs of the local community. A focal point for the course could be the question: what are the best ways to promote livable, sustainable, and diverse communities?

Sample sections:

- A. A social work professor on the changing nature of community activism—SS
- B. A musicologist on the role of art in social vitality—FPA
- C. An economic historian on cities as the engines of economic innovation—HP
- D. A professor of civil engineering on building environmentally healthy communities--ETS

Staffing for revised Honors in Discovery Curriculum

Symposia:

16 instructors

320 seats

Inquiry Seminars:

14 instructors

280 seats

Honors Discovery Courses

8 instructors

160+ seats (minimum of 20 students per course)

Total instructors per year: 38

Total Honors seats: 760

Comparison with current Honors Capacity and Faculty Resources:

We usually offer about 60 courses per year, but not all are Honors-only sections. We estimate 34-38 courses per semester are offered only to Honors students. The 38 instructors per year proposed above therefore maintains current staffing levels.

This does represent a decrease in the total number of Honors seats offered. In 2012-2013, the total number of Honors seats offered was 990. In 2013-2014, there were 959 Honors seats offered. However, the total number of Honors seats filled in the past two years was lower: 696 in AY2013, and 719 in AY2014—both below the 760 that we are proposing to offer. In sum, we are creating a more efficient curriculum in order to provide a consistently high quality Honors experience with the same number of instructors as at present.

Implementation Timeline:

University Honors is proposing to implement the newly revised curriculum as follows:

September/October 2014

Obtain Faculty Senate input and approval for revisions in University Honors Program.

Seek course development funds (\$3000/course section x 4 sections x 3 Symposia)

Send out RFP to faculty regarding new symposia & potential course development fund

Review faculty proposals, select proposals, and make preliminary teaching assignments

Gain commitments from Associate Deans on specific faculty members/ course sections

November/December 2014

Meet with campus stakeholders: Allotment, Admissions, & Executive Committees

Develop electronic and promotional materials for prospective students

Meet with Registrar's Office about documenting Honors credits

Request updates from Executive Committees about Honors in Major requirements

Develop system for tracking Interdisciplinary Honors experiences

Develop schedule for integrating various Honors student classes (i.e., class year) into new University Honors curriculum

January/Feb 2015

Begin individual symposia course development meetings

Work with Registrar to schedule courses and rooms

Follow up with departments about Honors in Major course requirements

Seek Discovery approval for new Fall 2015 symposia

March 2015

Registrar finalizes Fall 2015 Honors schedule; Honors courses finalized

Meet with Advising Network & Orientation Committee regarding changes to University Honors curriculum

April/May 2015

Introduce new courses to University Honors students

(requirements don't change, but can be met with new courses)

Fall registration: Current students enroll in symposia & Inquiry seminars

Finalize new Honors in Major and Interdisciplinary Honors requirements

Add information to new University Honors website

Course development meetings with University Honors faculty continue

Summer 2015

Orientation: Register incoming Honors freshman in new Honors in Discovery curriculum

New Honors Symposia course development continues and is completed

Fall 2015

New Honors requirements in place for incoming University Honors freshman

Honors Symposia supercourses begin; Honors Inquiry seminars continue

Obtain Discovery program approval for spring 2016 University Honors courses

Expected Outcomes and Assessment:

We are working with the UNH Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning to develop an assessment plan for the revised Honors curriculum. The following is a preliminary description:

Honors in Discovery Curriculum (Freshman/Sophomore years)

- A University Honors curriculum that is distinct from the Discovery Program. This will be assessed by:
 - Verifiable changes in the University Honors curriculum by the fall of 2015
- A consistently high quality Honors in Discovery curriculum as measured by:
 - Student evaluations of Honors courses
 - University Honors Program exit survey

University Honors Program

- The percentage of enrolled University Honors students in each entering class ultimately graduating with University Honors
- Multiple common experiences for University Honors students. This will be assessed by:
 - The number of new common experiences established for University Honors students by the fall of 2015
 - Honors students' evaluations of programs such as pre-orientation University Honors activities, University Honors-sponsored social events, and University Honors courses with engaging common experiences such as interdisciplinary plenary sessions
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Upper Level University Honors (Junior/Senior years)

- Consistent quality in upper level University Honors experiences as measured by:
 - University Honors Program exit survey
 - The percentage of enrolled University Honors students in each entering class ultimately graduating with University Honors
- A University Honors curriculum option to Honors in Major for department programs. This outcome will be assessed by:
 - Verifiable changes in the University Honors curriculum by the fall of 2015
- Greater inclusion of interdisciplinary and high impact learning experiences such as interdisciplinary theses, interdisciplinary group problem-solving, and interdisciplinary community engagement. This outcome will be assessed by:
 - Verifiable changes in the University Honors curriculum by the fall of 2015
 - Maintaining a “High Impact Database” of student educational and demographic information
- Increased completion of University Honors as measured by:
 - The percentage of enrolled University Honors students in each entering class ultimately graduating with University Honors

University Honors Committee Members

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