Recommendation to the Board of Governors
Proposal to Create the Honors College at Wayne State University

Recommendation

The administration recommends that the current Honors Program be designated an Honors College, with the Director of Honors now becoming a Dean. College status will be effective as of Fall 2008.

Background

The Honors Program was created in 1986, by Board of Governors statute. Prior to 1997, the Program was administratively housed in what is now the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. In 1997, the Program was moved to Academic Affairs. The Program staff consisted of a director with a one-course teaching release, an administrative assistant, and student worker.

In 2002, upon the retirement of then director Stanley Shapiro, the university conducted a national search for a new director of Honors who would be charged with enhancing the existing program and creating a plan for an honors college. Professor Jerry Herron (English Department) was appointed director in 2002. The program has grown from approximately 250 students to over 1,300 today, with a permanent full-time staff of 7, in addition to 5 senior lecturers who are instructors in the Honors freshman seminars.

Upon consultation with the Honors Council, Professor Herron presented a plan for an honors college to the Council of Deans in July 2007. A revised plan, based on their suggestions, went forward in Fall 2007 to the Academic Senate Policy Committee and subsequently to the Curriculum and Instruction, Student Affairs, and Budget Committees, before being presented to the general membership of the Senate in December 2007, when the college proposal received a positive vote.

In Fall 2007, Honors completed a self-study, in preparation for a site visit by three reviewers from the National Collegiate Honors Council (Samuel Schuman, Chancellor Emeritus, University of Minnesota at Morris; Robert Spurrier, Director of the Honors College, Oklahoma State University; Ada Long, Emeritus Professor and former Honors Director, University of Alabama at Birmingham). The visitors were on campus Nov 14-17; they have subsequently submitted a final report that contains a highly supportive evaluation of WSU Honors as well as an assessment that that the WSU Honors Program qualifies to become an Honors College.

Rationale

The National Collegiate Honors Council provides a checklist enumerating the basic characteristics of a fully developed honors college. As the external reviewers point out in their report, the WSU Honors Program already demonstrates most, if not all, of those basic characteristics. There is a compelling practical case to be made, therefore, for creating an Honors College at Wayne State University in order to give name to a project that has already been achieved, and garner the benefits that will follow.
Added distinction to the degrees of our graduates

Added potential benefit in recruiting highly qualified students who expect to attend an honors college

Added potential for development opportunities among donors who want to contribute to a high-profile undergraduate project.

Enhancements

The following enhancements will substantively differentiate the proposed Honors College from the existing Program. These modifications are based on discussions with faculty, the Honors Council, and also recommendations from the Curriculum and Instruction Committee of the Academic Senate:

- Increase in credit hours required for Honors graduation from 24 to 36, with a minimum of three courses being at junior/senior level
- Implementation of Honors General Education core curriculum, with a minimum of 6 courses required, including the Honors freshman-year sequence, City I/City II
- Creation of Honors Teams to articulate with departments, schools, and colleges
- Provision of Honors electronic portfolio for each student
- Requirement of at least one service-learning course for Honors graduation.

Process

The mandate to create an Honors College comes from both the previous Strategic Action Plan, and also the current Plan:

Goal 1. Promote an exceptional learning experience that builds upon the unique character of Wayne State University and leads to student success.

1.2 Improve delivery of programs and services designed to enhance student retention and graduation rates.

1.2.7 Create a plan for an Honors College.

A plan for the College was drafted in consultation with the Honors Council. This plan underwent successive revisions as it was discussed by the Council of Deans, and committees of the Academic Senate, prior to the Senate vote in favor of creating the College. In addition, the plan was submitted to the external review team from the National Collegiate Honors Council. The present proposal is based on all elements of this review process.

Timetable and Implementation

The essential elements of a college are already in place so that it can begin to function immediately upon approval by the Board of Governors. Effective as of Fall 2008, all entering students will be accountable for the degree requirements of the College; students already in the Program will be given the option of either completing current Program requirements or else
completing Honors College requirements. Students’ degrees will be appropriately notated, depending on the set of requirements they choose to complete.

Further improvements will be implemented over the next academic year, in keeping with recommendations from the Curriculum and Instruction Committee of the Academic Senate as well as the NCHC site visitors. These include an enhanced Honors General Education curriculum, revised requirements for University Honors graduation, collaboration with Honors teams in departments, creation of an Honors electronic portfolio for each student, and enhanced advising. No additional resources are required; improvements can be achieved through re-allocation of existing resources. Passage of this proposal will authorize the President or her/his designee to make appropriate revisions to the statutes governing Honors, as the program becomes a college.
Honors College Proposal

Presentation to the Board of Governors

January 30, 2008
The Mandate

- A Strategic Action Plan for 2006-2011

Goal 1. Promote an exceptional learning experience that builds upon the unique character of Wayne State University and leads to student success.

1.2.7 Create a plan for an Honors College
What will an Honors College do?

- Provide a rigorous undergraduate education to highly qualified students
- Offer a distinction that will set a new standard of excellence for Wayne State University degrees
- Create a university-wide resource for recruiting and retaining the best and brightest students
- Add new donor opportunities
Are we there yet?

坚定不一，所有特点表明，一个较为完善的荣誉学院已经实现，根据国家荣誉学院协会访客报告。

下一步，是课程改善和与校方、学校和学院之间更强的协作发展。
The Proposal

- Create the Wayne State University Honors College
- Provide a more rigorous academic experience, based on a required core of Honors General Education courses
- Collaborate with schools and colleges to plan strategically and to create a solid academic program, freshman year through graduation
- Assess current strengths and build on them as we move forward
What have we accomplished so far?

- Honors Freshman Year, including City I/II and Detroit Passport
- Honors “start” initiatives
  - Medicine
  - Business
  - Pharmacy and Health Sciences
  - Engineering
- Honors tracks in most majors
- Scholars Day and Honors recruitment events
- Honors achievements
  - 36 National Merit Finalists recruited since 2004
  - Honors students chosen for USA Today All USA College Academic Team in 2006 and 2007
  - 100% success rate for Honors pre-med graduates applying to medical school since 2002
- Honors organizations
  - Honors Council representing schools and colleges
  - Board of Visitors
  - Honors Student Association
  - Model UN
What comes next?

- Implement College status
- Increase credit hours required for Honors graduation from 24 to 36, with a minimum of 3 courses at junior/senior level, including a senior seminar
- Implement Honors General Education core curriculum, with a minimum of 6 courses required, including City I/City II
- Create Honors Teams in each department, school, and college
- Provide an Honors Electronic Portfolio for each student
- Require at least one service-learning course for Honors graduation
Graduating with University Honors

Current requirements

- Students must complete a minimum of 24 credits in Honors courses, including a 4000-level seminar and an Honors thesis.

Proposed new requirement

- Students pursuing University Honors would be required to complete 36 credits in Honors courses, including a core of at least 6 Honors-only General Education courses, in addition to a 4000-level seminar and thesis, plus 2 additional 4000-level Honors courses.