

CRC
Honors Subcommittee of the Academic Senate
2016-17 Chair's End-of-Year Report
5/4/17

Committee Members

Feindert, Kerstin
Hodgkinson, Georgine
Schubert, Rick (Chair)
Weathers, Lee
Montanez, Robert/ Powell, Torence (Executive Secretary)

Charge

The Honors Committee provides support and faculty leadership for the college's Honors Program. The Cosumnes River College Honors Program offers motivated, well-prepared and promising students the opportunity to engage in enhanced transfer-level college work in a uniquely rigorous academic environment that promotes and requires exceptional engagement and performance beyond that ordinarily expected at the lower-division college level. The program prepares students for successful upper-division undergraduate study as well as for eventual entry into graduate school or professional training. The Honors Program recruits students who are strongly committed to leadership, academic integrity, and the pursuit of educational excellence. The Honors Program graduate is a confident scholar and a highly contributing member of the academic community.

Background, Resources, and Enhanced Transfer Opportunities

As indicated in its annual reports to the Senate for many years now, CRC's Honors Program has been under-resourced for a long time. Happily, it is now significantly less under-resourced than it has been. For years leading up to 2014-15, Honors had only .4 AY FTE and was able to offer only one 3-unit class a semester. Honors FTE was improved from 0.8 total semester FTE across the academic year in AY 2014-15, to 0.934 AY FTE in 2015-16, and to 1.067 AY FTE this year. At current FTE levels, the program was only able to offer two 3-unit courses in Fall 2016 and three in Spring 2017 along with a single 1-unit course. As Honors is an interdisciplinary program with participation from eight different instructional programs, the result has been that some Honors courses are still offered rather infrequently. This is obviously problematic for students who seek to participate in Honors within their major or area of primary interest. The program's current lack of resources also still make it difficult for students to complete the college's Honors Scholar Program, a fifteen unit course of study.

Fortunately, with 1.267 FTE for AY 2017-18, the Program is finally in a minimally adequate position to pursue important transfer opportunities. In Fall 2017, it will apply for participation in the prestigious UCLA Transfer Alliance Program (TAP). As ARC and SCC, as well as fifty-five other California Community Colleges are TAP participants, CRC's current ineligibility for the program puts it at a very serious competitive disadvantage. Our Honors students are hampered in their transfer aspirations, an access, success, and equity issue. CRC loses a significant number of its Honors students, and potential Honors students, to ARC and SCC each year, an enrollment management as well as student success and equity issue. The Honors Committee fully expects participation in the UCLA TAP to meaningfully address these issues.

UCLA TAP participation is important not just in its own right, in terms of student success, access, and equity; as a pathway for our students to attend UCLA, it is also indirectly important. UCLA TAP participating colleges are widely viewed as academically superior institutions. Membership in UCLA TAP would thus serve to communicate the quality and desirability of a CRC education to a far broader audience than students interested in attending UCLA.

The Honors Subcommittee continues to strongly believe that Honors can be a pivotal part of improving student success rates on our campus. Our college is sometimes preferentially focused on underprepared students. However, as empirical studies have repeatedly demonstrated, insufficient preparation is not the only primary obstacle to student success; students also fail to succeed because they are under-stimulated and because their academic expectations for themselves are low. Our Honors Program, which it is worth noting, is open not only to "academically accomplished students", but also to students with "the potential for high achievement," provides an environment in which students who benefit from greater academic challenge thrive. Moreover, students from the Honors Program bring their enhanced academic socialization with them into the other, non-Honors, courses they take. For example, Honors students report regularly establishing study groups in all the classes they take. The benefits of the Honors Program thus also extend to CRC students who do not directly participate in the Program. In summary, a healthier Honors program is important to CRC student access, student success, and equity.

The Program has long aspired to participation in UCLA's TAP. With the support of our College President, and in consultation with the Vice President of Instruction, Honors set the goal of TAP participation by AY 2017-2018. We are essentially on track to meet that goal. An allocation of .4 FTE a semester President's reassigned time for an Honors Program Director starting Spring 2016 and extending at least through the first half of AY 2017-18 and an anticipated further improvement of Honors FTE to a total of 1.867 FTE AY by AY 2019-20 are helping making pursuit of this goal possible.

At the same time, the program is pursuing participation in the Honors Transfer College of California (HTCC), an organization whose member institutions' Honors Program students are eligible for enhanced transfer opportunities with twenty-seven different colleges and universities throughout the country including large public universities like U.C. Irvine and The University of Arizona as well as smaller institutions like Trinity College and Mills College. The program expects to be an HTCC member by the end of AY 2017-18 as well.

Finally, the Honors Program began working this academic year with the University Honors Program at UCD to develop an Honors-to-Honors Transfer program with Davis. We expect this will come to fruition within the next 3-5 years.

The Committee very much hopes the Academic Senate will continue to support the Honors Program as it solidifies these and other opportunities for our students.

Committee Activity

Application Solicitation and Review

As Honors is a restricted admissions program, much of the day-to-day work required to support the Program revolves around soliciting, accepting, evaluating, responding to, and fielding inquiries regarding, student applications to the Program. As regards recruitment, on March 16, for example, the Honors Program participated in the 2017 High School Partners Conference. As regards recruitment, the Program received and processed 71 applications from prospective students so far this academic year (a 54% increase over AY 2015-2016). All but one applicant were accepted into the Program.

Program Admissions Criteria and Application Revisions

Until recently, the Honors Program had no detailed admissions criteria, which made it difficult for students to know whether they were Honors-eligible, and took a single pathway ("one size fits all") approach to admissions. This academic year the Program implemented, and initiated a preliminary review of, the new admissions criteria and the three-pathways-to-admissions approach it approved last year. The new criteria and three-pathways-to-admissions approach seems to be serving our students well. The previously unavailable restricted admissions option has proven particularly helpful to recruitment and retention.

During AY 2016-2017, the Committee approved a new General Application form and Challenge Application form to Honors to reflect the new admissions criteria and admissions pathways. It rolled out, and initiated a preliminary review of, these new applications forms during the current academic year. Revisions are planned for AY 2017-18 based on this preliminary review.

(Please see https://www.crc.losrios.edu/areas/honor/applying_to_honors for detailed information regarding the new admissions criteria, Honors admissions pathways, and applications.)

Counseling Support

On 3/30/16 with agreement from Counseling Department faculty representation and administration, the Honors Committee appointed Lee Weathers Designated Honors Counselor. This academic year has thus been the first that Honors Program has had a Designated Honors Counselor available. Feedback from Honors faculty and students regarding the resulting improvement in counseling support for Honors students has been overwhelmingly positive.

Curriculum Development and Changes

The Honors Committee is grateful to Profs. Dan DuBray and Eric Neff for their continued assistance developing HONOR 341: *Honors Seminar: Persuasion within Social Issues* and HONOR 385: *Honors Seminar in Genetics*, respectively. Both received UC and IGETC articulation during the current academic year and are scheduled for a first offering during the coming academic year. Also in various stages of development are new Honors courses in English Literature (Film Adaptations), Statistics, American Government, and U.S. History.

During AY 2016-2017, the Honors Committee undertook a major revision of the 15-unit Honors Scholar Program. Prior to the revision a number of non-Honors courses could be applied to Honors Scholar Program completion. Happily, the Honors Program now has minimally sufficient resources to permit a student to complete the Honors Scholar Program in normative time.

Honors Program Activity beyond the Classroom

The Honors Program is committed to providing Honors students enhanced opportunities for scholarship both within and beyond the classroom. February 18-21, Honors faculty member Georgine Hodgkinson and CRC Honors Students Kaleemah Muttaqi, Tyler Gunn, and Jillian Self traveled to the *Western States Communication Association Conference* in Salt Lake City, Utah. At the conference, students presented their research papers written in Hodgkinson's Fall 2016 Comm 480/Honors 340: Honors Seminar in Political Campaign Communication. Presentations included "Researching Media Coverage of the 2016 First Presidential Debate" by Self, "Unveiling Prejudice: Addressing Islamophobic Rhetoric's Role in the 2016 Election" by Muttaqi, and "An Ethnography of California's 7th Congressional District Race in 2016" by Gunn.

The Program also supported six of its students in attending U.C. Davis' Undergraduate Research Conference (URC), April 28-29. It arranged for four students, accompanied by Prof. Eric Neff, to meet with J. David Furlow, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education and Director of the University Honors Program at U.C. Davis, in conjunction with the URC.

Respectfully submitted on May 4, 2017 by Rick Schubert.