

Provost's Advisory Group on the Honors Program
Report to the Housing Project Implementation Team
September 12, 2012

Members: JJ Jackson, Robert Mock, Mike Mullen, Don Witt, and Ben Withers (chair)

Charge: Interim Provost Tracy asked the workgroup to examine how the new Honors curriculum can be implemented in support of priorities of undergraduate education and budgetary restructuring.

Executive Summary: This report describes an ambitious vision for the mission, essential functions, and core characteristics for the new Honors curriculum approved by the University Senate in the spring of 2012. It provides recommendations for the size, recruitment of students and faculty, and curricular foci for Honors Program and outlines the budgetary and human resources needed to serve those functions. Key findings of this report include that:

- The University should maintain a unique identity for a centralized Honors Program that attracts and serves high-achieving undergraduates in all colleges and departments.
- The core function of a central Honors Program include promotion of excellence in teaching and learning, recruitment of well-prepared and highly-motivated students, and identification and rewarding of UK's best teachers. A vital and vibrant central Honors Programs is a visible symbol of the high quality of undergraduate education.
- The Honors Program should seek to grow in size and within three years enroll 10% of the undergraduate population and, through support of departmental and college honors requirements and centralized academic enrichment efforts, service the academic needs of as much as 15-20% of high-achieving undergraduates.
- The Honors Program should partner with and complement undergraduate degree programs by enriching, broadening, and deepening the educational quality of the undergraduate experience at UK. In this way, Honors may play a crucial role in fostering student success and retention across all campus units.
- The Honors Program can and should become a site of curricular and pedagogical innovation, a place where UK's best faculty can be identified and recognized for their contributions to undergraduate education.
- The University should construct its new budget model in ways that allows and encourages the maximum collaboration among academic units and central Honors; units should not be penalized for permitting faculty to teach in Honors.
- A vital, central Honors Program can only be achieved through strategic investment of resources.

The University Honors Program (as approved by the Senate in spring 2012)

The program includes required coursework in UK Core Inquiry, participation in at least one for-credit Honors Experience, a Senior Thesis, and a choice of coursework campus-wide to fulfill the educational goals of the Honors Student. The program is illustrated in the figure below. There are Honors Course expectations across the academic career of the student, a commitment to the Honors Living Learning Community, particularly during the first two years, and opportunities for enhanced advising and co-curricular activities.

Overview of Proposed UK Honors Program Curriculum			
Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
2 Honors Courses for at least 6 credit hours in UK Core: Inquiry.	1 Honors Course and 1 Experience for at least 6 credit hours.	1 Honors Course and 1 Experience for at least 6 credits hours.	Honors 395 Senior Capstone for at least 3 credit hours.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Each student will take two Honors Courses in UK Core Inquiry areas (as HON courses or Honors sections of existing UK Core courses), at least two Honors Experience Courses, and the HON 398 Senior Capstone, in addition to 6 other credits in Honors Courses. A total of at least 21 hours is required to graduate from Honors. ◆ Honors Courses include Honors Seminars (HON) or Honors courses, sections or options in the major. ◆ Honors Experiences include Honors Research, Education Abroad, Service Learning or Community Outreach, or other approved activity. At least two Honors Experiences are required. ◆ Honors Students who have not earned advanced placement credit or waiver in writing (via an AP English exam) will also be required to complete an Honors Composition and Communications Course. 			
Honors Living Learning Community →			
← Honors Advising and Mentoring →			
← Co-curricular activities and opportunities →			

Each Honors Student must complete at least 21 hours in Honors Courses, including at least two Honors Courses in the Intellectual Inquiry area of the UK Core (HON 15X or College Honors courses/sections) and HON 495 – Senior Honors Thesis (or college/departmental equivalent) in order to graduate with Honors.

Additionally, each student is expected to complete an Honors Experience in one of the following areas: Education Abroad, Service Learning or Community Outreach, or Undergraduate Research Experience (HON 352, 353, or 354 or equivalent Honors Course in the major).

Drafts of Documents to be Shared with Colleges and Unit Faculty Pertaining to the Honors Program, its Curriculum and Structure

This appendix contains definitions and information about procedures and policies that will be necessary for colleges and other academic units that wish to create and offer Honors courses. Most of these recommendations are taken from reports of previous faculty committees.

I. Honors Courses and Options in the Campus Honors Program

Curricular Flexibility

Students in the Honors Program will enjoy great flexibility in their course of study. Students will be able to choose from courses specifically in Honors, special courses offered through a department, Honors-only sections of regular department offerings. Students may also opt to meet Honors requirements through service learning, education abroad, or individually-designed undergraduate research experiences. Appropriate graduate courses can be used to satisfy Honors course requirements. Further, graduate courses may be selected as appropriate substitutions for degree requirements, with approval from the Director of Undergraduate Studies for the degree. Students will work with Honors Advisors and their Major Advisors to determine the curricular path that best meets their needs.

Honors (HON) Courses

The Honors Program will offer a number of interdisciplinary HON seminars each semester. These seminars will often meet UK Core or other UK requirements. Departments and Colleges across the university will be encouraged to offer opportunities for their faculty members to offer these innovative courses.

HON prefix courses are offered at lower division (100 and 200) and upper division (300, 400) levels. HON courses have a maximum enrollment of 20 students, are conducted in seminar format, are usually interdisciplinary in content and approach, and have a significant writing component. These courses are for Honors students only.

Honors Courses and Sections (H-Sections) in the Majors

Faculty from all colleges are encouraged to participate in the Honors Program. Primary efforts by college and departments will be to offer honors course in the discipline. Colleges or departments may offer Honors courses that are uniquely Honors (i.e., the course would not have non-honors sections, for example CIS 3XXH). Alternatively, Honors Sections of a course may also be offered, reserving a single section of an existing course for Honors Students only. These courses or sections would be identified using the H suffix (e.g., ANT 311H). Any Honors Student, regardless of major and prerequisites, can take these Honors Courses.

Faculty ideally will teach these Honors courses in-load. Each college will be responsible for determining how to allow for Honors teaching in the departments. For example, a college may allow faculty to teach an Honors course or section once every two years in-load. This will

provide faculty members regular opportunities to work with the best and brightest students on campus, from all majors, as part of their regular teaching.

Honors courses which carry the prefix of the department or school offering the course should be designed to challenge students in a small class format. Whether offered as stand-alone seminars or breakout sections of large lecture course, these kinds of classes should be limited to Honors students (although in exceptional cases outstanding non-Honors students can be added with permission of the professor). Honors sections and seminars in departments and schools must be taught by regular faculty, not by graduate students or temporary hires. In addition, they must have no more than 30 students, engage students in discussion (usually 25% of the final grade), offer a challenging curriculum, and include a significant communication component appropriate to the discipline (writing, spoken presentation, poster, creative project).

Honors Options

A student may receive Honors credit from a non-Honors course, if an Honors Option Contract is agreed on by the student and instructor, and approved by the Honors Program. These are not separate courses but rather individual contracts made between the professor teaching a regular departmental or college course (regular faculty or distinguished visitor) and an Honors student in the course. They are intended to build relationships between students and faculty, as well as to challenge and engage honors students beyond the requirements of the course.

The Option Contract will spell out the expectations for additional activities to be pursued jointly by the student and instructor during the course of the semester. Student and faculty should discuss and draft an agreement before the student files the contract with Honors. These types of options should involve discussions between the faculty and student outside of the normal class period and often involve supplemental reading, writing, or speaking assignments that build communication skills and knowledge in the subject area. Examples may include a student research paper or laboratory research, readings and discussion sessions sponsored by the faculty member, class presentations, and other approved activities. This will give motivated students the opportunity to craft a unique Honors activity with a faculty in an area of interest for which an Honors course may not exist. (The Honors Option Contract is analogous to the complement of "400G" courses, in which both undergraduate and graduate students may enroll in a 400G class. Graduate students earn graduate credit by contracting with the instructor to complete additional work.)

Some courses have many students who wish to take honors enrichment contracts, too many to accommodate with separate contracts. Those courses can offer a separate breakout section (see #2 above) or can be created as cross-listed courses (listed under both the departmental prefix and HON). Normally, a class that cross-lists as an HON course already affords multiple opportunities for direct interaction between the instructor and students, focuses on developing critical thinking skills, and promotes active learning for all the students. To establish the cross-listing with HON, the instructor should identify generally what the honors aspect of the course will be when submitting the syllabus. Then, during the semester, the instructor and honors

students as a group may decide about the specifics of the honors component, keeping in mind that honors credit should involve discussions between the faculty and student outside of the normal class period and often involve supplemental reading, writing, or speaking assignments that build communication skills and knowledge in the subject area. The cross-listing option can work especially well when students need the course for their major, but also wish to obtain honors credit.

An Honors Option contract form is currently being developed.

II. Proposed Relationship of Departmental and College Honors

The essential role of the central University Honors Program is to generate a challenging academic environment that enriches, broadens, and deepens the undergraduate curriculum of the various colleges and departments at UK. This can be best accomplished when University Honors complements and supplements the requirements for undergraduate degrees, particularly the distinctions earned for superior academic performance in a major. University Honors is thus committed to work with the faculty in all UK departments to make it possible for undergraduate students to earn graduation with multiple academic honors.

1. College-based honors programs and degree-based honors in a department play a particularly important role in encouraging students to intensify and extend their academic skills and experiences within their chosen discipline. For this reason, these programs can be seen to be a part of, though not a replacement for, the mission of University Honors to enrich, broaden, and deepen. Where appropriate, we encourage college and departmental faculty to create a clear articulation between their local honors requirements and the requirements of the University Honors Program so that student can more readily achieve both distinctions.
2. All baccalaureate programs should review their current honors requirements, if any, and determine how they might align with the new University Honors curriculum. Individual programs may, of course, impose additional requirements or tailor their honors to reflect the distinctive characteristics of their disciplines.
3. Because the content of the curriculum is best determined by faculty in the discipline, University Honors cannot mandate requirements for honors or graduation distinction in particular degree programs. Departments and colleges are not required to align with University Honors.
4. Departments and Colleges that wish to align their unit-level honors requirements with the Honors Program are encouraged to identify at least 12 credits of honors courses or experiences. The options should include a substantial requirement for research, service learning, or degree-based education abroad and a capstone course that usually taken during the student's senior year.
5. Any student admitted into or nominated for a department or college Honors program that aligns with requirements of the campus Honors Program are by definition members of the Honors Program. Provided that these students maintain the GPA required for good-standing, these students will be provided full Honors privileges and may register for Honors (HON) seminars and H-section courses, whether or not they

were admitted to the Honors College at the time of matriculation. They are eligible to participate in all Honors College activities and organizations. Departments, therefore, are responsible for sending a current list of all students enrolled in their Honors program, preferably at the beginning of each semester.

6. The process for implementing these new college/departmental Honors requirements should not be burdensome. Departmental and college Honors programs should be developed by the appropriate faculty, reviewed vetted following the procedures of the unit and College, and submitted for comment and approval by the Honors Program. Once approved, the guidelines should be communicated to the Senate, and published in the University Bulletin. The Honors Program should also be notified in any changes or modifications to keep its advising up-to-date.
7. Every department or program that grants an undergraduate degree with honors should appoint an Honors Director or Coordinator, and possibly a standing faculty committee on Honors to advise students; supervise and coordinate faculty/student research; review policy; and act as a liaison to the Honors Program.
8. The term “Honors Program” (in capital letters) should be used only for the campus-wide University Honors Program. Departmental or College honors should be identified in a way that clearly differentiates those requirements (e.g. “Departmental honors in Biology”).

Communication with Students

The term “Honors Program” (in capital letters and as a “program”) should be used only for the campus-wide University Honors Program. Departmental or College honors should be identified in a way that clearly differentiates those requirements (e.g. “Departmental honors in Biology”).

The Honors Program staff are responsible for communicating with incoming freshmen and recruits. Any departments or units that wish to communicate with incoming Honors students should coordinate that communication with Honors staff.

Clusters or “Constellations” of Courses within Honors

Unlike previous iterations of Honors, there are no required tracks of courses in the first two years in the new curriculum. This curricular flexibility of the new Honors curriculum will allow students to tailor the classes they take to individual academic interests or, with the assistance of Honors advisors, to explore areas outside their primary field of study. It permits more faculty and more departments to participate in Honors as it is now possible to teach Honors students in-load and through a department’s own courses. It means that instead of one or two Honors “tracks” there may be eventually be over 2000 individual Honors “programs,” as each student customizes the requirements based on his or her academic interests.

This flexibility, however, also presents challenges to the coherency of the Honors curriculum. It demonstrates the need for more professional advisors who can help keep students on-track by coordinating with advisors in colleges and departments. The curricular flexibility raises the issue of what exactly makes a course an “Honors” offering and how appropriate faculty will be identified to teach them. It brings into question how these courses—potentially spread over many different colleges—provide coherency and how they combine to create and maintain a sense of Honors community. This sense of community is a characteristic that current students and alumni identify as a prized and unique element of their Honors experiences, and therefore something we must work hard to maintain.

Many other research-intensive Universities have adopted honors requirements similar to UK’s. While some tie Honors to general education or leave the choice of courses entirely flexible, other universities have sought to provide coherence and community through certificates (e.g. Texas A&M), “commendations” (U. Iowa), and clustered courses tied to living-learning programs. An interesting example of the latter is the University of Maryland which offers LLP’s ranging from the general University Honors to more focused Digital Cultures and Creativity, Honors Humanities, Entrepreneurship and Innovation , Integrated Life Sciences.

These types of grouped and linked courses offer UK a way to build coherency and community into its new Honors curriculum. Working with UK faculty, UK should adapt this concept of linked courses in ways that reflect status and mission of the University. In a recent campus-wide communication (August 13, 2012), President Capilouto noted “No university in the state or the region has the full range of liberal arts, professional and science colleges and programs that UK does. A student at UK can walk in any direction for 10 minutes and bump into a world-class scientist, prize-winning writer or outstanding artist.”¹ Our centralized Honors Program can capitalize on this and take advantage of the flexibility of our programmatic requirements by developing clusters or “constellations” of interdisciplinary courses based on the teaching and research interests of the UK faculty. These constellations should be organized around a multi-disciplinary theme or topics based on interests already present and well-developed on campus

¹ “Fulfilling our Kentucky Promise: Student Success,” <http://uknow.uky.edu/content/fulfilling-our-kentucky-promise-student-success>

such as Sustainability, Entrepreneurship, Visual Culture, though others can and should be identified. It is also desirable to have these constellations be related to themes of the living-learning communities that currently exist or are planned for new UK housing. We would develop 4-6 of these constellations based on faculty interest in order to give students an adequate and diverse selection.

Befitting our flexible curriculum, courses in a constellation may be offered through Honors (as HON seminars) or through home departments (H-Sections or H-Option courses). The clusters will ideally offer courses at different undergraduate levels, ranging from 100-level seminars designed to attract and introduce incoming students to the focus of the cluster through senior-level capstone or research-based courses. All courses should be open to Honors students regardless of their majors, though prerequisites may be suggested for junior/senior level courses as appropriate. Those developing clusters are strongly encouraged to incorporate significant service learning, education abroad, and undergraduate research into the curriculum.

These constellations must grow organically from the teaching and research interests of the faculty (more on this, below) and from the interests of the undergraduates. These interests, of course, modulate and change over time, and for that reason the constellations should remain as open and flexible as possible. To maintain this flexibility, constellations will not be mandated or required (as were the tracks in the previous Honors program). Instead, students will be provided with information about the constellations—ideally as they are being recruited—and encouraged to select one based on their interests. There are several advantages to this arrangement:

- Constellations will add an interdisciplinary dimension to Honors curriculum and will help broaden faculty participation, involving more disciplines and colleges;
- The constellations will allow faculty collaboration in designing courses and groups of courses beyond college and disciplinary boundaries;
- Attractive, interdisciplinary constellations will help attract and recruit the best students by offering them to complement the work in the major;
- The flexibility of the constellations will allow them to be more easily changed and adapted as interests of faculty and students change;
- The adaptability of the constellations will permit the faculty to “beta-test” new courses or groups of courses that they believe may develop into new majors, minors, or certificates.

In short, these constellations are the means to leverage the impact of Honors. For students and faculty alike, Honors will be seen as an academic “sandbox” or laboratory for curricular innovation that has the potential to reshape what is taught across campus. Through these constellations, Honors would meet the President’s call: “Now, through a rigorous, interdisciplinary curriculum and a stimulating living and learning environment backed by modern facilities, we must maximize the potential of our students.”