**University of Denver Honors Program**

**Annual Report, Academic Year 2010-2011**

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**Summary**

During Academic Year 2010-2011, the University Honors Program continued to move forward on the goals set out in the program review and program revision, and addressed specific issues that emerged in the prior year. Notable achievements in 10-11 include:

* Admission numbers again close to the target of consistent 100-student entering cohorts, with 30% entering through application.
* Increased the diversity within the Honors cohort, including more current DU students entering the program.
* Beginning early registration for Honors students.
* Implementation of better tracking of size of cohorts and experiences of students.
* Setting up a second, new Honors Natural Science sequence for non-science majors.
* Continued balance of variety and consistency in Honors courses.
* Continued increase in number of students involved in non-course-related intellectual, cultural, and social programming.
* Finalizing/revising Distinction plans in preparation for the first cohort for whom Distinction is required.

Issues or concerns to be addressed in 11-12 include:

* Approving and implementing a revised assessment plan.
* Changing the admission essay for applicants to improve admission review.
* Continued difficulty getting the proper number of seats. (This is a success, too.)
* Better integration of Honors and WRIT.

**Annual Report, 2010-2011**

The Academic Year 2010-2011 University Honors Program (UHP) was directed by Daniel McIntosh with Assistant Director Shawn Alfrey. The activities, policies, and procedures described below were carried out with the involvement and approval of the 10-11 Honors Council (see Appendix A). Below is a summary of the status and accomplishments of the UHP in the 10-11 academic year, including plans and goals for 11-12.

**Goals and values**

As previously, we used the 2009 Program Review and the vision and processes of the 2007 Revision to develop policies, curriculum, and programs. In both the Revision and the Review, enhancement of academic quality, development of a strong Honors community, inclusive, transparent, and consistent policies, and integration of UHP with the University’s mission and other programs were consistently expressed goals. The report below is organized according to the Program Review’s five-year goals and steps to improve academic quality.

Five-year goals identified in the 2009 Program Review are:

1) Develop and implement assessment plan

2) Achieve consistent enrollment

3) Develop varied curriculum

4) Increase student engagement

5) Maintain a high percentage of students who complete University Honors

6) Integrate the Departmental Distinction Programs with the broader UHP

Steps to improve academic quality identified in the 2009 Program Review are:

1) Review courses

2) Develop application process

3) Support departments in implementation of Departmental Distinction programs

4) Use of assessment feedback

**Development, Implementation, and Use of Assessment**

In Spring 2009, Honors Council adopted a Mission Statement and associated program goals and student learning outcomes (see Appendix B), and developed an assessment plan. During 10-11, we continued work on implementing this assessment plan. Targets set in last year’s annual report for the 10-11 year regarding Assessment are listed below, with the progress towards them during 10-11 described.

Review of Goals for 10-11

*1) Develop a procedure to evaluate critical thinking that is useful both in admission decisions and in assessment of this learning outcome.*

This goal has not been met. Since adopting the assessment plan, Honors has put substantial time and effort into developing a reliable and valid assessment of critical thinking. This has involved consultations with the DU Office of Academic Assessment, attendance at local and national workshops on assessment, as well as conversations with academic units on campus regarding their methods of assessment. Options that were considered and in some cases piloted included commercial instruments, revisions of instruments and methods developed by others, and from-the-ground-up development of measures designed to assess critical thinking.

Regarding use of this evaluation in admission decisions, the Honors Council decided to cease attempting to evaluate critical thinking in high school papers submitted by applicants. Instead, we are revising the application to provide a more constrained essay that will be easier to evaluate consistently and fairly. More details are provided in the Admission section.

Regarding the use of this evaluation for academic assessment, we have determined that with the resources available, we will not be able to find a valid way to measure student critical thinking. The problems noted in last year’s annual report could not be solved. Consistent difficulties have included the inapplicability of rubrics to the full range of student papers submitted (papers vary widely in topic as well as disciplinary approaches to analysis, types of evidence encouraged, and required reader background in the specific discipline), consequent low inter-rater reliability in ratings of critical thinking, and a persistent concern that any changes in critical thinking would be impossible to attribute to participation in the Honors Program due to the lack of appropriate control groups and the degree of embeddedness of Honors in the Common Curriculum. For these reasons, the assessment procedure was tabled at the end of 09-10, and based on the experiences during 10-11, we will recommend to the Honors Council in 11-12 that we no longer attempt to assess critical thinking as part of academic assessment.

*2) Consistently request feedback from Honors instructors on whether students met learning goals.*   
  
This goal was met, but will not be continued into 11-12. Because of the difficulties with a standardized critical thinking assessment, to avoid unhelpful top-down requirements, and to facilitate assessment of outcomes relevant to the topics and goals of specific courses, we adopted a procedure of individual feedback for each course. After each quarter the Director asked faculty who taught an Honors section to indicate “whether the students achieved what you hoped and expected in the class, their preparation, and any other thoughts about the students or the class.” The feedback from instructors was positive in all cases. However, the lack of variability and detail in the instructor responses argues against continuing this process.

*3) Develop procedure for obtaining information about the program from students who leave the program before graduation*.

Progress was made towards this goal, and efforts will continue in 11-12. The exit interview and survey implemented in 09-10 are providing more detailed information and feedback about the program from students who completed it. However, we wished to find out more about the perception of the program from those who choose not to complete the program. This information is important for program evaluation and development in general, and also for improving the Student Learning Outcome “*Students will achieve Distinction in their major.”* Students are now being asked whether they want to remain in the Honors Program during fall quarter, and we attempt to collect information from those who opt out. The opt-in email correspondence and the inactive questionnaire have resulted in some feedback from students who have chosen to leave the program. 274 of the 370 students registered as Honors students expressly chose to remain active. Only 13 of the 29 who responded that they did not wish to do so (67 did not respond after several attempts) explained why they had chosen to withdraw from the program. Of these, 3 had left DU, 5 said they wouldn’t complete a thesis, 3 said Honors requirements conflicted with their dual degree programs, and 2 said they couldn’t wait for honors courses to be offered or fit in their schedules. Twelve students completed the anonymous inactivation survey, indicating scheduling frustrations, a lack of interest in the liberal arts courses offered, or the belief that the requirements were unnecessarily burdensome.

*Use of Assessment*

Regarding the use of assessment data, the previous year’s information was presented to the Honors Council and used in programming decisions. Specific actions taken based on assessment data included continued conversations with the Writing Program regarding WRIT 1733, switching all WRIT 1733 courses to spring to ease scheduling, increase fill-levels for those classes and to provide a more unified experience for all Honors students. In addition, the Director provided individual feedback to instructors based on course evaluations and worked with individual instructors in developing and improving their courses. Feedback from instructors and course evaluations indicates that this individual approach has been helpful to both instructors and students.

Goals for 11-12

*1) Revise Assessment Plan*

Based on assessment efforts over the last few years and on feedback from the Office of Academic Assessment, we will cease reporting assessment of Program Goals in our assessment report, and we plan to recommend to the Honors Council that we abandon the two Student Learning Outcomes that rely on valid assessment of critical thinking. Because we have not been able to implement a valid direct assessment of critical thinking, we will recommend that we focus our assessment efforts on the remaining two Student Learning Outcomes: *Students will achieve Distinction in their major*, and *Students’ capstone project in their major will be an original contribution to their field.*

2) *Continue development of procedures for obtaining information about the program from students who leave the program before graduation, and use that information in curricular and programming decisions*.

**Admission: Implementation of new application process for consistent and inclusive enrollment**

Our admission activities are conducted in close cooperation with the Office of Admission. Ongoing activities include numerous meetings with prospective students, development and refinement of paper and Web publicity and information, and working with the Office of Admission, the Center for Multicultural Excellence, and academic units on campus.

For admission of the cohort beginning in Fall 2011, we again used the admission process initiated in 09-10. One goal of this was to control better the number and nature of the entering class and to be able to admit students using criteria beyond Admission rankings, focusing on standards related to the Honors Program (e.g., critical thinking, academic motivation and performance, diversity in experiences, and contributions to the program). This procedure again worked well.

The breakdown by admission and student type is in the table below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Total  Invited | Applied | Enrolled |
| Waived top 1’s | 586 |  | 69 (12% of waived; 73% of cohort) |
| Invited to Apply | 647 | 110 (17% of invited) | 20 (16% of applicants; 3% of invited) |
| Applied on own |  | 12 | 6 (4% of applicants) |
| Total Applied |  | 122 | 26 (21% of applied; 27% of cohort) |
| Total cohort |  |  | 95 (8% of total waived and invited) |

Targets set for 09-10 year continued into 10-11; these are listed below, with the progress towards them during 10-11 described.

Targets 1 and 2 are related:

*1) Have 70% of the class be students from the highest DU Admission rating via the auto-admit procedure.*

*2) Successfully implement an application process that has more input from the Honors Council, with approximately 30% of the class being admitted through application, including transfers and students entering from within DU.*

Reflecting some continuity over the last two years, our incoming class for Fall 2011 will be 27% applicants; this is a smaller percentage than last year, but still close to our goal. The changes to our application process have resulted, moreover, in a relatively large proportion of highly qualified admit rating 1s and better qualified international students among the applicant pool.

Our efforts to regularize and publicize the process – and to advise prospective current students in advance of application to the program – have also resulted in larger numbers entering the program each quarter. In 10-11, 16 current students joined the Honors Program, twice as many as the 8 students who joined in 09-10. Many of these students have become among our most active members, including among them 10-11’s Honors RA and a student who is running for Honors Council.

As part of this revised procedure, all applications were reviewed by two Honors Council members as well as the Director and Assistant Director. Even with participation by every member of the Honors Council, the problems with inter-rater reliability and extreme breadth of papers and topics continued to be a concern, so a new procedure was developed, to be started for admissions during 11-12. Instead of submitting a high school paper for evaluation, two TEDx videos will be selected, and the students will be asked to choose one and to write a response to it. Specifics of this will be worked on in Autumn 2011. We hope this will make it easier for faculty from multiple disciplines to evaluate consistently the student’s writing and thinking. In addition, we hope that this will even the playing field so that students who have had AP or IB writing courses in which they have produced the types of papers we are seeking have less of a social-structural advantage in admissions. All students will be responding to the same prompt, and the amount of support they received on the specific essay submitted will be much less variable.

*3) Have a total entering class of 100 students. The target of 100 students is approximately 10% of DU’s entering class, and is just higher than the mean of 95 and median of 97 since 2001*.

This target was met and our process reveals that, even in dynamic admission cycles Honors can achieve some consistency in numbers. In Fall 2009, 98 joined the Honors Program; 95 are slated to begin in Fall 2011. This number will likely reach 100 as current students apply for Winter and Spring quarters.

*4) Review diversity in ethnicity, gender, geographic origin, and undergraduate Division and major in the entering class compared to similarly rated non-Honors students. The aim is to establish processes that enhance the range of experiences and perspectives in the Honors community, and ensure that there is no systematic exclusion of any academically prepared and intellectually motivated students in the admission process.*

We have increased the diversity of the Honors cohort. Our incoming class for 2011 will be more diverse in almost every category than the class that entered in Fall 2010. Forty-nine percent of our entering class will be male (compared to 36% in 2010), and 55% will be from outside Colorado (compared to 46%), and 2 students, compared to 0, will be international. In terms of ethnic diversity, 14 students or 15 % identify themselves as Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or multi-racial. In comparison, the 2010 cohort had a total of 10 students (10%) identifying themselves as other than white.

Review of Goals for 10-11

*1) Track applications from current DU students and continue to develop procedures to facilitate entry of interested and qualified students already attending DU and those transferring to DU.*

This goal was met. As noted above, 16 current students joined the Honors Program in 10-11, twice as many as the 8 students who joined in AY 2009-2010.

*2) Determine if there are any points in the admission process in which UHP falls behind in terms of facilitating diversity compared to a matched comparison group of students not in Honors. Then, based on this information, develop procedures to enhance diversity in Honors, including international students and members of typically underrepresented groups.*

This goal is in process. Institutional Research has provided Honors with baseline data, and we are evaluating our previous three years of admission processes to determine if there are any points in the process in which UHP falls behind (or moves ahead of) the baseline for highly qualified students.

Goals for 11-12

1) Again meet targets of 100- student cohort, with 30% coming from applications.

2) Continue to increase diversity in race/ethnicity, gender, and home state/nation.

3) Complete review of admission process and develop plans to increase racial/ethnic diversity based on review of processes.

**Curriculum and Course Review**

Course offerings are detailed in Appendix C. The 08-09 report listed several issues that needed to be considered; below each is information or progress on the issue during 10-11.

*1) Increase alternative ways of meeting the AI:SC, SI:SC, and SI:NP requirements. Students who have tested or transferred out of both university AI:SC or SI:SC requirements are being encouraged to take upper-division courses in Humanities or Social Sciences that meet departmental and UHP approval to fulfill their Honors Humanities and Social Science requirements.*

A handful of students took advantage of the two alternative ways to meet requirements for Humanities, Social Sciences, and WI-CORE/ASEM: H-contracts and approved upper division courses in a department outside the major or minor. The number of H-contracts slowly increased for 10-11 as the procedure became more established and known. Six students submitted H-contracts for courses during the 10-11 year; all were eventually approved, although in some cases revisions were required. This is an intentional part of the process. Overall, H-contracts remain relatively rare and we do not anticipate or desire it to become typical; we believe it is best used as a way to meet a particular student’s educational goals rather than as a way to meet the program’s need to offer the proper number of seats.

*2) We will need to offer more CORE/ASEM classes, as this is now a required Honors course for most of our students.*

The situation for ASEM seats continues to be variable as the common curriculum and enforcement of the Honors requirements develop. During 10-11 we met the goal of offering 75 ASEM seats, and we plan to offer 75 seats (5 courses) during 11-12. This is lower than the 100 seats needed for the lower division requirements, as there is some attrition. We want the number of seats to reflect actual needs based on attrition, but not be a barrier to completing the requirements and thus cause attrition. As noted elsewhere, we have developed a system to track better how many students are active in the Honors Program. We will continue to monitor and work with departments and divisions to offer the correct number of ASEM seats.

*3) Depending on attrition, we will need to offer more Honors Seminars, closer to 13. As these are funded by the UHP, this has budgetary implications, also.*

We offered 9 HSEM (105 seats) in 2010-2011, with a fill rate of 70% - that is, 74 seats. We plan to offer the same number of seats in 11-12, to meet the needs and offer flexibility for our more senior students. By offering enough seats, we have not needed to waive this requirement, which has the effect of students being more intentional about taking it.

*5) Early registration for Honors students would allow them more flexibility in selecting non-Honors courses to avoid conflicts with Honors classes. This could increase fill rates and ease difficulty for students in meeting their honors requirements.*

Last year’s report noted the desirability of early registration for Honors students, and obtaining that was a goal for 10-11. The Undergraduate Council recommended early registration, and the Provost approved it with ongoing evaluation of its effects for Honors and the rest of the University. This started for registration for Fall ’11. We have begun collecting information from students on whether this makes a difference, and will also monitor fill rates, attrition, and the difficulty students have completing requirements.

In addition, we have been working to increase the fill rates of Honors courses. In 10-11, the rate was 88%, a bit higher than the previous two years (85% and 85%, respectively). Whether this is random fluctuation or a positive trend is not clear.

Targets identified for 09-10 continued for 10-11; they are listed with comments below:

*1) Offer enough seats and use the flexibility allowed in the system to meet the needs of the current Honors class, without increasing section sizes beyond what is appropriate for the Honors Program, and without resorting to waivers of Honors requirements.*

This is an ongoing goal. We did not waive any Honors requirements, but to maintain this we need to offer enough seats and enough alternatives so that students can reasonably complete their Honors requirements. Early registration will help this, and changes in curriculum developed in 10-11 will also help.

In 10-11, we increased the size of Honors Geography beyond what we are comfortable with so that we could meet demand. As detailed below, we worked with NSM and Biology to develop a new section of Honors natural science (SI:NP) for non-majors. This has alleviated pressure on Honors Geography and Concepts in Biology, especially, and provided a more appropriate Honors natural science option for non-science majors. Further, by providing an alternative, it appears to have helped both in scheduling and in providing choices for Honors students.

We continue to work closely with the Writing Program to offer enough seats. In 10-11, we decided to offer WRIT 1733 in the spring, only. This increased options of times the class was offered during that term, and gave us more precise control over the number of seats. We were also able to offer enough WRIT seats (nominal of 97), and we were able to fill them completely this year (with overfill, 101 students) with fewer students having trouble getting in. We believe this is due to offering WRIT 1733 in the spring only, with more options offered in one quarter instead of spread across two. We plan the same schedule for 11-12.

*2) Increase the variety of classes available for the entering 2010 students.*

This goal is being met. Beyond seat counts, we again sent a request for proposals out to all faculty to encourage those who had not previously taught in Honors (or had not taught for some time) to consider offering a class. In 09-10, we had a total of 25 non WRIT honors courses, of which 7 were new. For 10-11, we had 28 courses with 10 new instructors. The goal is to bring variety into the course offerings without sacrificing consistency. We will evaluate over time how the goals of variety and consistency are being met. Currently, the rate of turnover and consistency seem good.

For the first time, we offered in 10-11 an Honors economics course (ECON 1020). This is particularly important for DCB students. This course is a result of work with DCB and Economics to provide a way for DCB students to fulfill their Honors social science requirement even if they have tested out of a social science. We will offer it again in 11-12.

Review of goals for 10-11:

*1) Offering a second Honors natural science course for non-natural science/engineering majors.*

This goal was met. With the energy and cooperation of NSM and the Biology Department, specifically, we developed a new course that has started in fall 2011 to provide more Honors seats in natural sciences and add a choice of natural science for the honors students. This is the first time in our records that there has been a choice between Honors-only natural science courses (not Honors labs within non-Honors courses). We are excited that we now have enough natural science seats in courses specifically designed for non-natural-science major Honors students.

*2) Development and implementation of an annual “opt-in” system to track which and how many Honors students remain active in the program.*

This goal was met. For the first time in 10-11, Honors emailed every Honors student before Advising Week asking them whether they want to continue in the Honors Program, reiterating requirements, and offering advising options with encouragement to take advantage of those. The email includes a date by which the student must reply, and informs them that, should they not respond to the email indicating whether they would like to remain active in the program (or to one of its several reminders), they will be assumed to be officially “inactive”. Being made “inactive” leads to the inability to register for Honors courses, removal from lists of Honors students sent to departments, and removal from other aspects of the program, for example early registration, Honors programming, eligibility for Honors funding. When they are told they have been made inactive, they are told that to be re-activated, they simply need to meet with the Director or Assistant Director to review their progress and plan. If all looks good, then they are reactivated. The opt-in process requires students to acknowledge that they have thought about and remain interested in continuing their involvement in Honors. It encourages them to meet with their departmental or FSEM advisor for guidance and with Honors regarding any Honors concerns or for general planning. The opt-in process thus reinforces student intentionality and enhances our ability to plan for Honors courses and events.

The quantitative results were:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| year entered | # of students | % opted out | % opted in | % no response |  |
| 2007 | 54 | 4% (2) | 54% (29) | 33% (18) |  |
| 2008 | 90 | 3% (3) | 79% (71) | 18% (16) |  |
| 2009 | 130 | 6% (8) | 71% (92) | 30% (39) |  |
| 2010 | 98 | 2% (2) | 89% (87) | 9% (9) |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| total # of students | | 372 |  |  |  |
| avg. opt out |  | 4% |  |  |  |
| avg. opt in |  | 73% |  |  |  |
| avg. no response | | 23% |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

This has been helpful in course planning, and it provides a baseline for evaluation of attrition after the implementation of early registration. Anecdotally, the process re-established contact and provided advising opportunities for a number of students who might not have sought out the support.

*3) Better integration and inclusion of WRIT 1733*

This goal was partially met. Following a fall meeting with Writing Program Director Doug Hesse, it was agreed to schedule all Honors WRIT classes in the spring and to begin regular meetings between Honors WRIT faculty. Scheduling all WRIT 1733 sections in the spring provided students with more choices and opportunities to fit WRIT in their schedules. The classes are developed according to different themes, and this variety seemed to appeal to students and allowed writing faculty to pursue areas of their own passion and expertise. Further, for the first time in many years, because of the number of options, students were not turned away from WRIT, and WRIT sections were not left with empty seats. Unfortunately, there was not much opportunity for Honors faculty discussion, and only once did all Honors faculty get together. Just what constitutes “honors” writing, and how it should build on 1622 or other student experience remains an issue to be resolved.

For 2011-2012, Alfrey will again teach a section and will pursue more regular meetings with Honors faculty in order to establish the best ways to make Honors WRIT a distinct educational experience for our students. Because Honors WRIT is the one course all Honors students must take, and because it is now provided only in spring quarter, there could be opportunities to provide enrichment across the sections that would both strengthen the cohort and enhance their academic experience. The possibility of having a speaker or colloquium was discussed last year. In 11-12 it will be pursued more energetically with the goal of providing such an experience for our 2012 Honors WRIT sections.

*4) Continued attention to course seat caps and total seats offered*

The University’s decision to lower seat caps to 100 and push for general reductions in the size of large classes has the effect of increasing seat counts in smaller classes. Combined with higher total enrollment in the last years, this is making it generally more difficult for Divisions and Department to offer the smaller sections required by Honors.

During 10-11 we met the goal of offering 100 Social Science seats, as well as the 75 ASEM seats. However, we lost a scheduled Humanities class at the last minute, meaning we offered only 80 seats, out of 100 needed for the cohort. However, with the cooperation of AHSS, we are offering 120 seats in 11-12 to meet the back log from last year. Moreover, as described above, additional seats have been added in NSM, so for the first time we can accurately say we have enough seats to meet the entering classes projected needs.

The strain is more evident in social sciences, in large part because these departments tend to have larger introductory class sizes than humanities. For 10-11, Psychology was required to drop the enrollment cap on regular PSYC 1001 classes from 125 to 100; the seats lost from the regular PSYC 1001 classes were moved to what was to be the Honors section, making it too large for Honors. We are successfully working with departments and divisions to offer the proper number of seats. However, there is no margin in the seats planned for the entering classes of ’10 and ’11. Especially given the pressure for seats in the entire University from the large entering cohorts and the lower cap on large classes, it is unlikely that additional seats can easily be obtained. Divisions and departments have been supportive of the need for Honors seats; however, meeting the multiple demands with limited resources in all these areas means that we continue to operate on the edge. Success so far has been achieved because faculty, departments, and divisions have made extra efforts to support the UHP.

**Student Engagement: Community Programming**

Honors community programming is designed to support informal interactions among Honors students and faculty, provide intellectual and cultural enrichment, and facilitate Honors students’ participation and engagement in the wider community. To increase these opportunities and make them more valuable for our students, we focused on improving communication with students, expanding our programming in type of event and campus reach, increasing faculty involvement, and encouraging more use of Honors spaces like the seminar room and “cave.”

Community Space and Cyberspace

The website has been helpful in communicating with both current and prospective students. It is meant to help students navigate with ease to related academic sites, and it provides prospective students more information about the application process and our student profiles. It also includes student highlights intended both to share student accomplishments and telescope the types of achievement students might pursue. The Home Page includes a list of upcoming activities. The Honors website also houses information regarding Extreme Academics. Both Honors and Extreme Academics are Facebook groups. Facebook is a time-consuming venture, however, and we will look to our work study to help make them livelier in 11-12.

Since spring 2010, we have worked closely with Student Life and have been able to help our honors students secure the kind of housing they request. This might mean a space on the Honors floor, or it might be a match with a fellow Honors student in housing elsewhere. In the second year transition to Nelson Hall there is frequently a fair amount of confusion. This year, despite record numbers and thanks to good communication and some juggling by Student Life, almost all honors students requesting it will be in the Honors section of Nelson Hall. The relatively large number of students requesting this next iteration of honors housing is testament to the cohesion among this cohort of honors students.

Thanks also to close communication with Student Life, Honors also has input in the assignment of RAs for Honors housing. Assuring that Honors students are Honors floor RAs has resulted in much improved coordination between Honors programming and that for the Honors floor in Halls and in Nelson. Abrehet Gebremehdin and Hayley Tuitman were our RAs in Halls and Nelson, respectively, and they designed enriching programming (such as a trip to the Museum of Nature and Science, supported by the Honors Program) and spread the news regarding Honors sponsored events. They also proved yet another source for general honors information. For 2011-2012, we plan also to bring Honors to Halls; our pizza and advising get-togethers, and perhaps some others, will take place in the community room of our Honors floor. This will reinforce community and communication between different members of the UHP.

Programming and Student Engagement in 10-11

Programming in 10-11 benefitted from the feedback we’ve received from student questionnaires as well as the experience and momentum gained from programming in previous years. Our offerings included events that can now be considered traditions as well as those that were more experimental. The September picnic, the Honors banquet (again with an Honors faculty speaker), the DCPA Shakespeare production, and the graduating senior reception were again popular and successful and have become fixed elements on our calendar. The Honors Retreat, while it did not attract as many students as hoped, was clearly a great opportunity for members of the Honors community, and another is planned for 2011. For the second year we hosted an Honors dance; this time as a “tacky prom” with PLP. The event was lots of fun, and some kind of spring dance – perhaps with the input of the Voltaire Society – will again be offered. Our programming year ended with the traditional ice cream social and graduating senior reception. The reception was an especially lively event, with parents, grandparents and spouses joining our graduates to celebrate their many achievements and read over the fascinating thesis projects our students produced. A complete list of activities and number of recorded attendees is included as Appendix D.

In 09-10 we had greatly improved numbers over the previous year, with 340 students attending all events, at least 170 of whom were unique Honors students. In 10-11 this trend continued, with 529 students - 195 different individuals – attending Honors events. Nine faculty members, not counting Alfrey and McIntosh, also participated in Honors programming.

Our experience this year mostly indicated that we are on a good trajectory in terms of student involvement. Our decision to abandon cohort-only events and the ongoing effort to improve both or scheduling and our communication – through email, Facebook, the bulletin board outside the Honors seminar room, and, importantly, the honors RAs –helped us continue to increase involvement. For example, the Banquet this year was scheduled in January instead of September and included all honors students, not just the first years. Such timing and inclusiveness resulted in a very engaged and enthusiastic group. Similarly, our efforts to publicize the Retreat during Orientation helped us energize would-be participants in part by securing parental support.

Since 2009 we have also worked to support and strengthen our student-run book group and Voltaire Society, and both of these groups gained real momentum in 2010-2011. By mid-year the book group co-presidents were communicating with the group of readers and hosting book discussions on a regular schedule. The Voltaire Society also organized a number of successful events, including a speaker series composed of favorite DU faculty. *Dining Out for Life* at Washington Park Grill attracted 20 students, and the club used its remaining budget on a performance at DCPA of *Billy Elliott*.

Student involvement in the Honors Council also improved. While in 09-10 no one ran for the two spots, we had several candidates in 2010-2011. The two student representatives contributed, when their course schedules allowed, in meaningful ways. In advance of the 2011-2012 academic year, there have already been students inquiring about participating. The election will be announced at the September 15 picnic, in time for student members to participate in our first Honors Council meeting of the year in early October.

Our support for the Honors community has also evolved. Continuing our efforts at co-programming with other units on campus, we helped host Phi Beta Kappa visiting scholar Egyptologist David Silverman, and our prom was co-organized by PLP. In order to be responsive to our diverse student interests and to support the larger DU academic community, we also publicized and purchased tickets for our students and faculty to attend a September talk on Karl Jung, and provided support for Noam Chomsky’s visit to campus, the Diversity Summit, the Women’s Conference, and the Pedagogy of Privilege Conference. Sponsorship of these events allowed us to support the interests of both students and faculty and made the Honors brand more visible across campus, hopefully enabling more collaboration in the future. We also redoubled our efforts to educate honors students regarding their opportunities and requirements, instituting “Pizza and Advising” get-togethers and a “Study-Abroad Café.”

While our support of DU programs and honors student groups is now known to our students, our ability to support individual projects has not yet attracted many applicants. Last year, the Preisendanz-Schmid Scholarship was folded into need-based financial aid, and that loss left students and us unsure about how we would support our students’ academic projects. We thus decided on a two-pronged approach to publicize and encourage our students’ to seek Honors support. The Preisendanz-Schmid Scholarship was converted to a single prize, and Honors faculty and students were invited to nominate the student they considered exemplary in terms of academic and community participation in the program. While this occurred late in spring, it is hoped that publicity for this recognition might reinforce our students’ commitment to and appreciation for our honors community. In order to provide support for actual student work, we had decided to increase our support for student-initiated research and academic projects. During AY 2010-2011, however, this opportunity was not yet universally known, and we only had a few applicants.

Programming Planned for 11-12

We are excited about the programming and opportunities we have arranged for our students in 2011-2012. Our calendar will again include the picnic, retreat, banquet, Shakespeare performance, ice cream social and senior reception. We will again visit the Denver Art Museum and a Colorado Symphony “Inside the Score,” performance.

Based on our experience last year, however, our retreat will include two nights instead of one, and we will be at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, where hiking and grilling will be supplemented by readings and a student-developed program. Our guest at the banquet this year will be Professor Don Sullivan, whose work in the natural sciences will round out our previous two discussions regarding the humanities (Bin Ramke) and the social sciences (Tracy Ehlers).

Both the book group and the Voltaire Society have begun work planning the year’s activities. The book group made their first books, by Salman Rushdie, available over the summer and have already scheduled early October meeting dates that will allow new-comers to participate as well. The Voltaire Society has sent an introductory email to the Honors listservs and has planned an organizational meeting for late September. Honors students have also taken on the task of designing an activity for Constitution Day. As always, Alfrey will be on hand to help with planning, logistics, communication and encouragement.

Other opportunities for individuals and the larger Honors community have also been developed. Thanks to outreach from the Chancellor’s Office and that of Colorado Senator Michael Bennet, members of the Honors Program have been invited to apply for two internship opportunities, one in Washington, D.C., and one here in Colorado. The Honors Program will help identify these students, and provide financial support and possible academic credit for their work. Based on our good relationship with Teach for America, we have also been able to guide our Honors students to a new Campus Coordinator position, and based on Alfrey’s recommendation an Honors student will probably have this position beginning this fall.

Larger-scale enrichment opportunities will include our sponsorship of the Keynote Speaker, Temple Grandin, at the Undergraduate Bioethics Conference here at DU in the spring. DU will host this conference because of the proposal developed by a group of students in response to their experience in Candace Upton’s honors seminar on bioethics and the support provided by the Honors Program in developing their plans and proposal. We have also helped a group of Honors students develop DU’s first Model UN delegation in several years. In October, 2011, thanks to Honors sponsorship, 8 of our students will participate in the Model UN convention in Washington, D.C., and will return to share their experience with the Honors community. Finally, we look forward to sponsoring, with other divisions on campus, a February visit to DU by local *4th Wall Theatre Company* for a performance of Athol Fugard’s play, *The Island*.

The Honors Program is also working to enhance the integration of study abroad within the Honors community and curriculum. In addition to our Study Abroad Café, we will work with Eric Gould and Luc Beaudoin of the Office of Internationalization, to identify appropriate Honors experiences abroad and to link them to our curriculum with a two-quarter Honors seminar in cultural studies meant to help them be academically and intellectually prepared for their experience abroad.

**Graduation with University Honors**

In 2011, 60 students who had begun with the Honors Program graduated, 31, or 52%, with University Honors. This is just above the historical average of 51% (for all years since 2004 with the exception of 2009, whose 41% reflected students’ disaffection with program changes). We anticipate continued good student perseverance, and look forward to Spring 2012, when the first class will graduate under the new Distinction plan requirements. We expect that this will provide continuity for students who might otherwise have left the program during the transition into their major and thesis work.

**Integration and Support of Departmental Distinction Programs**

In 10-11 we continued to work with departments in refining Distinction plans and preparing them for implementation as the 2008 entering class began moving toward entry into these programs. In particular, we worked with Korbel as they refined their Distinction program to increase Honors student exposure to tenure-line faculty. We also worked closely with Daniels as they move to students needing to complete a thesis rather than Honors Business Seminars. We also worked with many departments that had not yet submitted a plan or were finding that they needed to revise or specify as students requiring Distinction entered the programs. In all cases, departments have been thoughtful in considering what Distinction should mean in their discipline, and through this process have increased communication with students in Honors.

To facilitate communication, each department has a Distinction coordinator who receives emails about the Honors Program and annual lists of Honors students in their departments. These periodic communications seem to be increasing awareness and two-way communication between Honors and the Departments. This communication and cooperation will continue in 11-12, and become even more important as all students move to complete their Distinction plan.

With the inclusion of departmental distinction plans, the Honors Program should be able to offer its students four years of an honors experience including breadth in the liberal arts, depth in the major, and their production of knowledge through completion of the thesis or final project. Such continuity – as well as the increased perseverance of students no longer lost in the sometimes hazy transition from honors sequence to thesis in the major – is a major goal of this effort. The fruits should be reaped beginning in 11-12, when the first class under this new structure graduates.

**Appendix A: Honors Council** **for 2010-2011**

**Director**: Danny McIntosh ([daniel.mcintosh@du.edu](mailto:daniel.mcintosh@du.edu))

**Assistant Director:** Shawn Alfrey ([shawn.alfrey@du.ed](mailto:shawn.alfrey@du.ed))

**Arts/Humanities**

Allison Horsley, Theatre, [Allison.Horsley@du.edu](mailto:Allison.Horsley@du.edu), class of 11, second term

Susan Stakel, French, [sstakel@du.edu](mailto:sstakel@du.edu), class of 13, first term

**Daniels School of Business**

Joan Winn, Management, [jwinn@du.edu](mailto:jwinn@du.edu), class of 11, first term

Theresa Conley, Marketing, [tconley@du.edu](mailto:tconley@du.edu), class of 12, first term

**Engineering**

Peter Laz, Mechanical and Materials, [plaz@du.edu](mailto:plaz@du.edu), class of 13, second term

Siavash Pourkamali, Electrical and Computer Engineering, [spourkam@du.edu](mailto:spourkam@du.edu), class of 11, 1st term

**International Studies**

class of 10 – open -

Jonathan Adelman (INTS), [jadelman@du.edu](mailto:jadelman@du.edu), class of 11, first term

**Natural Sciences**

Mike Daniels, Geography, [J.Michael.Daniels@du.edu](mailto:J.Michael.Daniels@du.edu), class of 11, first term

Bob Dores, Biological Sciences, [rdores@du.edu](mailto:rdores@du.edu), class of 13, first term

**Social Sciences**

Tracey Ehlers, Anthropology, [tehlers@du.edu](mailto:tehlers@du.edu), class of 11, first term

Adrienne Russell, Media, Film & Journalism, [Adrienne.Russell@du.edu](mailto:Adrienne.Russell@du.edu), class of 13, first term

**Students**

Year 1-2: Kelli Mowrey, [kelli.mowrey@du.edu](mailto:kelli.mowrey@du.edu), and Hailey Mulder, [hailey.mulder@du.edu](mailto:hailey.mulder@du.edu) (tied in election; share one vote)

Year 3-4: McKinsie Barnes, [mckinsie.barnes@du.edu](mailto:mckinsie.barnes@du.edu)

**Appendix B: Mission, Program and Student Goals**

Approved Spring, 2009

Mission

The University of Denver’s Honors Program fosters an intellectually engaged and vibrant community of students, staff, and faculty. It promotes a distinctive broad and liberal arts education that challenges students to cultivate depth in critical and creative thought, and facilitates students’ original contributions to intellectual life, their community, and their chosen field.

Program goals

Program Goal 1: *Students will indicate that they felt challenged in Honors courses.*

Program Goal 2: *Students will report that they experienced intellectual engagement through the Honors Program.*

Program Goal 3: *Students will report that their Honors classes provided distinct educational experiences.*

Program Goal 4: *Students will participate in Honors community activities outside the classroom.*

Student learning outcomes

SLO 1) *Students’ levels of critical thinking demonstrated in their written work will increase across time.*

SLO *2) Students will accurately evaluate the level of critical thinking in their own work.*

SLO 3) *Students will achieve Distinction in their major.*

SLO 4) *Students’ capstone project in their major will be an original contribution to their field.*

**Appendix C: Revised Thesis Verification Form**

You must complete the student section of this form, and provide to your faculty sponsor in time for her or him to complete and send to the Honors Program (MRB 2, or shawn.alfrey@du.edu) by the beginning of the seventh week of the graduation quarter. This form will be used to certify to the Registrar’s Office that the student has completed the thesis and Distinction requirements for graduation with University Honors. Failure to submit this completed form in time may result in the student’s name being omitted from the University Honors list in the graduation program.

**(Student Completes First)**

**Student Name: DU ID #**

**Local Address: Local Phone:**

**Email:**

**Permanent Address: Anticipated Graduation Term:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Thesis/Project Title:**

I am a Business major who entered DU before fall 2008, and have satisfied the thesis/project requirement by taking the 6 hours of Business Honors coursework. (Also requires Business faculty signature.)

**(Faculty Completes before sending to University Honors)**

Name: Department:

Extension: E-mail:

1. Based on the standards in my department and field, I certify that the thesis/project (please check one):

does not meet criteria and is not of adequate quality for an Honors thesis/project

meets all criteria and is of adequate quality for an Honors thesis/project.

meets all and exceeds some criteria for an Honors thesis/project.

meets all and exceeds most criteria for an Honors thesis/project.

is of unusually superior quality, far exceeding expectations for an Honors thesis/project.

1. How much of a contribution to the student’s field is this thesis/project (check one)?

not at all;  a little bit;  somewhat;  quite a bit;  a great deal

3. Would you like this thesis to be entered in the NCHC thesis contest? Yes; No

4. All student requirements for the Departmental Distinction program will be completed by graduation (check one).  Yes;  No

5. Any comments on the quality or creativity of the thesis/project?  
  
6. I certify that the thesis/project will be completed by:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: Date:

**Appendix C: Honors Courses, 2010-11**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type** | **Title** | **Instructor** | **Actual** | **Cap** |
| **Autumn 10** |  |  |  |  |
| ENGL1110-2 | "How to Live: In the City or Not” | Bin Ramke | 18 | 20 |
| PHIL 2111-1 | Greek Moral Philosophy | Roscoe Hill | 26 | 25 |
| THEA 1862-1 | Discovering Dramatic Literature | Allison Horsley | 12 | 15 |
| GEOG 1264 | Global Environmental Change I | Erika Trigoso | 51 | 60 |
| ASEM 2661-1 | French Revolution | Beth Karlsgodt | 14 | 15 |
| ASEM 2665-1 | Occupied France in Perspective | Jennifer Pap | 5 | 15 |
| HNRS 2400-1 | The French Shakespeare | Jim Gilroy | 13 | 15 |
| HNRS 2400-2 | Revolution and Politics in the Modern World | Wellhofer | 9 | 15 |
| **Winter 11** |  |  |  |  |
| RLGS 2103-3 | Religions of China and Japan | Ginnette Ishimatsu | 17 | 20 |
| PLSC 1610-2 | Intro to Political Science: Power and Justice | Nancy Wadsworth | 24 | 25 |
| ECON 1020-2 | Micro and Macro Economics I | Yavuz Yasar | 24 | 25 |
| GEOG 1265 | Global Environmental Change II | Mike Daniels | 46 | 60 |
| ASEM 2661-1 | Murder in America | Lisa Pasko | 12 | 15 |
| ASEM 2584-1 | The Harlem Renaissance | Sidra Wahaltere | 7 | 15 |
| HNRS 2400-3 | Pets, Partners, or Pot Roast? | Gary Brower | 11 | 15 |
| HNRS 2400-2 | The Mind of a Leader | Karen Loeb | 14 | 15 |
| HNRS 2400-5 | Lessons from Business History | Paul Olk | 8 | 15 |
| HNRS 2400-4 | Engaging the Bard: DPS Shakespeare Festival | Shawn Alfrey | 9 | 6 |
| **Spring 11** |  |  |  |  |
| PPOL 1910-1 | Foundations in Public Policy | Richard Lamm | 23 | 25 |
| COMN 1210-1 | Understanding Communication | Roy Wood | 18 | 25 |
| GEOG 1266 | Global Environmental Change III | Don Sullivan | 45 | 60 |
| ASEM 2540-1 | Culture, Media, and Power | Rod Buxton | 17 | 15 |
| HNRS 2400-1 | Engaging the Bard: DPS Shakespeare Festival | Shawn Alfrey | 9 | 9 |
| HNRS 2400-4 | Literature of Truth and Reconciliation | Shawn Alfrey | 14 | 15 |
| HNRS 2400-3 | Impact of Technology on Society | Dan Connolly | 15 | 15 |
| WRIT1733-1 | Honors Writing | John Tiedemann | 14 | 13 |
| WRIT1733-2 | Honors Writing | Geoffrey Bateman | 13 | 12 |
| WRIT1733-3 | Honors Writing | David Daniels | 15 | 15 |
| WRIT1733-4 | Honors Writing | Shawn Alfrey | 15 | 15 |
| WRIT 1733-5 | Honors Writing | John Tiedemann | 15 | 15 |
| WRIT 1733-6 | Honors Writing | Jennifer Campbell | 14 | 11 |
| WRIT 1733-7 | Honors Writing | Juli Parrish | 15 | 16 |
| **Seats** |  | **86%** | **562** | **652** |

**Appendix D: Honors Events and Student Attendees, 2010-11**

9/6/10 – Honors Orientation (Approx. 100 students and their parents)

9/3/10 - lecture on Karl Jung’s *Red Book* (7)

9/16/10 – Honors Picnic (36 students and 4 faculty)

10/2-3/10 – Honors Retreat at Keystone Science School (16 students)

10/11/10 – Pizza and Advising (4 students)

10/14/10 – *The House of the Spirits* at DCPA (17 students)

10/30/10 – Voltaire: Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, with the CSO, Boettcher Concert Hall(19)

11/12/11 – “King Tut and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs,” Denver Art Museum (26 students)

11/18/10 – Pre-Release screening of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part I* (64 students)

1/7/11 - *El Pomar* Information Session (8 students)

1/13/10 – Honors Banquet with Professor Tracy Ehlers (59 students)

1/10/11 – Study Abroad Cafe (10 students)

1/21/11 – “Inside the Score: Dvoràk’s *New World*,” CSO (19 students)

2/17/11 – Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the DCPA (33 students)

4/1/11 – The Fool’s Prom (with PLP) (approx. 78 students)

4/21/11 - Noam Chomsky at DU (22 students)

4/21/11 - Lunch with Phi Beta Kappa speaker David Silverman (5 students and 3 faculty)

4/23/11 – *Alarm Will Sound* at the Newman Center (9 students)

4/28/11 - Voltaire: “Dining Out for Life” at Washington Park Grill (23 students)

5/19/11 – Voltaire: *Billy Elliott* at DCPA (17 students)

5/26/11 – Ice Cream Social (approx. 17 students and 2 faculty)

6/3/11 – Graduating Student Reception (20 students and their family members)

7/13/11 – Pre-Screening of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part II (30 students)