**University of Denver University Honors Program**

**Annual Report, Academic Year 2013-2014**

**Annual Report, 2013-2014**

George Potts, Ph.D., Director

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**Summary**

In AY 2013-2014, the Honors Program continued to pursue the goals established in the 2009 Program Review’s Five Year Plan. In general, the work since 2009 has been characterized mostly by continuity among goals and steps taken to achieve them, as well as in the challenges we face regarding Honors course options, communication of requirements, and a general loss of student involvement in the Honors community after the first or second year.

Since the time of the Program Review, important gains have been made regarding enrollment stability and inclusivity; integration within the university community and with the individual department distinction programs; support of student projects and programs; overall student engagement; and, thanks to the establishment of priority registration in 2011 and continuing work to provide flexible options, greater ability for students to meet program requirements and graduate with University Honors.

During AY 13-14, Professor George Potts completed his last year as Director of the Honors Program, with Associate Professor of Chemistry Keith Miller taking over the role in July 2014. During AY 2013-2014, Potts and Associate Director Alfrey, with the help of graduate work study Dylan Mackie-Hernandez, maintained continuity in the program’s successes and improve it where needed. The activities, policies, and procedures described below were carried out with the involvement and approval of the 13-14 Honors Council (see Appendix A).

**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.

**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.*

**Objectives:**

The following are objectives of the University Honors Program to help meet our goals. Elements are listed with each objective where data is collected to assess how these objectives are met.

* Achieve consistent enrollment
  + *Opt-in information to track cohorts and support perseverance*
  + *Track students that graduate with University Honors*
  + *Provide timely and adequate advising*
  + *Provide priority registration to ensure that students are able to fulfill honors requirements*
  + *Provide adequate communication and information regarding distinction contacts and requirements*
* Consistency in admissions
  + *Develop and meet consistent enrollment goals*
  + *Outreach and recruitment in conjunction with efforts of the Office of Admission*
  + *Increase diversity and inclusivity of incoming cohort through*

*work with Office and Admission and outreach to FSEM and other faculty regarding current student applications*

* + *Tracking of applicants throughout process*
  + *Post review process for continuous improvement in admissions*
* Develop varied curriculum
  + Exit interviews and course evaluations
  + Evaluate course offerings each year
  + Outreach and support of new and continuing honors faculty
* Increase student engagement in University Honors Programming
  + Provide varied and thoughtful programming
  + Enhance orientation to provide ongoing engagement and mentoring
  + Support of student projects

Support of campus and course enrichment

**Honors Enrollment and Perseverance**

Our evaluation of enrollment and perseverance includes:

* Use of Opt-In Information to track cohorts
* Students graduating with University Honors
* Timely and Adequate Advising
* Integration of Distinction requirements

*1) Opt-in information to track cohorts and support perseverance*

Our opt-in process is now four years old and has provided both quantitative and qualitative information regarding individual students and cohort trends. Student responses to our email queries sent each November let us know whether a student has been and plans to continue participating in the Honors Program.

The chart below shows the total overall number of students opting out of the program. The asterisks show the large increase in the number of Honors students who opted out in 2014. This year, the Honors Program enforced the opt-in response policy much more strictly than in previous years - the number 59 denotes all those students who opted out, as well as those who simply did not reply to the Honors Program opt-in email. Please note that the opt-out numbers also include students who left DU prior to graduation (seven in 2014).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** |
| # of Honors students | 320 | 341 | 324 |
| Total Opted out | 11% (36 of 320) | 7% (21 of 341) | 18% (59 of 324)\*\* |
| Opted out as 4th years | 18% (12 of 67) | 5% (4 of 79) | 24% (16 of 67) |
| Opted out as 3rd years | 12% (11 of 90) | 7% (6 of 86) | 25% (18 of 73) |
| Opted out as 2nd years | 7% (7 of 86) | 0% (0 of 82) | 16% (13 of 80) |
| Opted out as 1st years | 6% (6 of 97) | 10% (11 of 108) | 12% (12 of 104) |

Our existing opt-in process did not provide specific information about whether a student was making appropriate progress towards graduating with University Honors. Honors students were given priority registration in 2011-2012. We felt it was important to ensure that only students who were actually staying on the track to graduate with honors got this benefit. Thus, this year the opt-in memo was modified to include a checklist that required students to indicate what Honors courses they had taken. The process has also allowed us to advise individual students in advance of possible difficulties and to learn what issues they might be having regarding honors requirements. This data will also help us determine whether we need to establish formal requirements for continued participation in the Honors program. We were pleased to learn that last year all students who opted in were, in fact, making adequate progress toward satisfying honors course and distinction requirements. We will continue to monitor the completion of formal course requirements.

The chart below shows the opt-out rate by cohort.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Cohort, by entry year** | **# of students** | **% opting out 2012** | **% opting out 2013** | **Total % continuing 2013** | **% opting out 2014** | **Total % continuing 2014** |
| 2010 | 105 | 7% (7 of 86) | 8% (6 of 77) | 92% (71 of 77) | 24% (16 of 67) | 76% (51 of 67) |
| 2011 | 102 | 6% (6 of 102) | 0% (0 of 96) | 100% (96 of 96) | 25% (18 of 73) | 81% (55 of 73) |
| 2012 | 108 | N/A | 10% (11 of 108) | 90% (97 of 108) | 16% (13 of 80) | 84% (67 of 80) |
| 2013 | 93 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 12% (12 of 104) | 88% (92 of 104) |

*2) Graduation with University Honors*

In Spring 2014, 39 students graduated with University Honors, 66% of the 59 graduates who had continued for the four years of the program. As the opt-out chart shows, the cohort began with 105 students, but each year sees a degree of attrition, including students transferring from DU, those who choose to graduate early, and those who cannot meet the GPA or distinction requirements.

3) *Timely and adequate advising*

In 2012 we initiated quarterly “pizza and advising” meetings which between 15 and 30 students attend each quarter. Still, student complaints continue to focus on lack of knowledge of FSEM instructors, lack of knowledge of distinction requirements, and difficulty understanding the relation between common curriculum, honors, and AP/IB requirements. The website continues to contain detailed information and students report that it is helpful and user friendly. The listserv disseminates advising notes, updates, and important deadlines. The opt-in requirement has also resulted in valuable advising opportunities. Alerting students to the priority registration timetable, is another opportunity for outreach that students do notice.

4) *Integration and Completion of Departmental Distinction*

Communication between departments and the Honors Program regarding distinction requirements and their dissemination continues to improve, with Daniels, Lamont, and Computer Science working with us on finalizing their requirements, especially viz. thesis guidelines. The thesis verification form continues to be the way this information is shared. These forms also provide information regarding the quality of the thesis produced. According to thesis verification forms provided by their advisors, 100% of them meet “all criteria” and are “of adequate quality for an Honors thesis/project.” Forty-eight percent of the Honors theses were rated as meeting “all and exceed[ing] some/most criteria for an Honors thesis project” and 27% were rated as being “of unusually superior quality, far exceeding expectations for an Honors thesis/project.” Several students produced what their advisors considered graduate or publishable quality work. One professor lauded an Honors student as being a “person who comes along once in a decade and excels at everything.”

**Consistency in Admissions**

Since 2008, when the Honors Program was overwhelmed with 124 incoming students, we have worked to maintain an incoming class size of around 100 students. This number allows us to offer adequate resources to our students in terms of course offerings and programming. In addition to consistency we strive to improve the representation within the program of traditionally underrepresented groups. Many of these students are most easily reached once on campus. We thus strive to recruit students via their FSEM advisors, and each quarter we admit several current students. These students more often come from underrepresented groups.

The admission process continues to revolve around information sent us by the Office of Admission and our own recruitment and visits with interested students. The application is on our website. Traditionally reviewed by members of Honors Council as well as the Director and Associate Director, in 2013 it was decided and supported by Honors Council that we would in future send on only applications on which Director and Associate Director could not agree. This was necessary because of the burden for those other readers and resulting lack of timeliness of application review.

**Honors Curriculum**

*1) Offering high quality honors courses*

Honors courses are proposed by faculty and reviewed by Honors Council. Each year we strive to offer a variety of courses, representing both continuity and change. New courses in 13-14 included two courses in the natural sciences, Mass Extinction (which was subsequently rescheduled for 14-15) and the Scientific Literacy of the Citizenry, and an ASEM, Thinking. The overall fill rate was 79%, as listed below.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Course** | **Term** | **Instructor** | **Fill Rate** | **Percentage Fill** |
| Philosophy: Perception and Reality | 201370 | Reshotko | 19 of 20 | 95% |
| English: Global Cultural Texts | 201370 | Gould | 13 of 20 | 65% |
| Communications: Foundations In Communication | 201370 | Wood | 25 of 25 | 100% |
| Nazi Germany | 201370 | Wilms | 14 of 15 | 93% |
| Occupied France | 201370 | Pap | 7 of 15 | 47% |
| Impact of Technology on Society | 201370 | Connolly | 10 of 15 | 67% |
| Memories of Atrocity | 201370 | Gil | 8 of 15 | 53% |
| Religious Studies: Religions of China and Japan | 201410 | Ishimatsu | 20 of 20 | 100% |
| History: War and the Presidency | 201410 | Schulten | 20 of 20 | 100% |
| Economics: Introduction to Micro and Macro | 201410 | Yasar | 18 of 25 | 72% |
| Sociology: Understanding Social Life | 201410 | Adler | 21 of 25 | 84% |
| Development in Latin America | 201410 | Ioris | 12 of 15 | 80% |
| Murder in America | 201410 | Pasko | 14 of 15 | 93% |
| Che Guevara | 201410 | Taylor | 12 of 15 | 80% |
| Pets, Partners, and Pot Roast | 201410 | Brower | 14 of 15 | 93% |
| Migration and Diaspora Narratives | 201410 | Nwosu | 9 of 15 | 60% |
| Engaging the Bard I | 201410 | Alfrey | 4 of 9 | 44% |
| Mind of a Leader | 201410 | Loeb | 10 of 15 | 67% |
| English: How to Live: in the City or Not? | 201430 | Ramke | 8 of 20 | 40% |
| History: American History Since 1865 | 201430 | Philpott | 17 of 20 | 85% |
| Public Policy: Hard Choices in Public Policy | 201430 | Lamm | 23 of 25 | 92% |
| Psychology: Foundations in Psychology | 201430 | Potts | 12 of 25 | 48% |
| Thinking | 201430 | Reichardt | 15 of 15 | 100% |
| French Revolution | 201430 | Karlsgodt | 15 of 16 | 94% |
| Engaging the Bard II | 201430 | Alfrey | 6 of 6 | 100% |
| Scientific Literacy of the Citizenry | 201430 | Miller | 10 of 15 | 67% |
| The Literature of Truth and Reconciliation | 201430 | Alfrey | 9 of 15 | 60% |
| Geography: Global Environmental Change I | 201370 | Trigoso | 34 of 45 | 76% |
| Geography: Global Environmental Change II | 201410 | Sullivan | 32 of 40 | 80% |
| Geography: Global Environmental Change III | 201430 | Fielding | 30 of 40 | 75% |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Douglas | 13 of 15 | 87% |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Alfrey | 15 of 15 | 100% |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Picard | 17 of 15 | 113% |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Hill | 7 of 15 | 47% |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Stacks | 17 of 15 | 113% |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Taczak | 15 of 15 | 100% |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Parrish | 14 of 15 | 93% |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Course evaluations for Honors classes were rated on a six-point scale with one corresponding to extreme disagreement and six corresponding to extreme agreement. For all Honors curriculum, excluding the Honors Writing sequence, we examined student responses to the prompt: “The course was intellectually stimulating and challenging,” as this most captures the vision and mission of the Honors Program. For the Honors Writing classes, the most appropriate student prompt for our needs was: “I learned a great deal in this course,” responses to which are listed below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Course** | **Term** | **Instructor** | **Course Evaluation** |
| Philosophy: Perception and Reality | 201370 | Reshotko | 5.8 |
| English: Global Cultural Texts | 201370 | Gould | 5.3 |
| Foundations In Communication | 201370 | Wood | 5.1 |
| Nazi Germany | 201370 | Wilms | 4.3 |
| Occupied France | 201370 | Pap | 5.4 |
| Impact of Technology on Society | 201370 | Connolly | 5.2 |
| Memories of Atrocity | 201370 | Gil | 5.5 |
| Religious Studies: Religions of China and Japan | 201410 | Ishimatsu | 5.2 |
| History: War and the Presidency | 201410 | Schulten | 5.9 |
| Economics: Introduction to Micro and Macro | 201410 | Yasar | 4.3 |
| Sociology: Understanding Social Life | 201410 | Adler | 6 |
| Development in Latin America | 201410 | Ioris | 4.8 |
| Murder in America | 201410 | Pasko | 5.8 |
| Che Guevara | 201410 | Taylor | 5 |
| Pets, Partners, and Pot Roast | 201410 | Brower | 4.6 |
| Migration and Diaspora Narratives | 201410 | Nwosu | 4.4 |
| Engaging the Bard I | 201410 | Alfrey | 5 |
| Mind of a Leader | 201410 | Loeb | 4.8 |
| English: How to Live: in the City or Not? | 201430 | Ramke | 5.2 |
| History: American History Since 1865 | 201430 | Philpott | 5.3 |
| Public Policy: Hard Choices in Public Policy | 201430 | Lamm | 4.6 |
| Psychology: Foundations in Psychology | 201430 | Potts | 5.5 |
| Thinking | 201430 | Reichardt | 4.5 |
| French Revolution | 201430 | Karlsgodt | 5.2 |
| Science Literacy of the Citizenry | 201430 | Miller | 4.8 |
| Engaging the Bard II | 201430 | Alfrey | 5 |
| The Literature of Truth and Reconciliation | 201430 | Alfrey | 4.6 |
| Geography: Global Environmental Change I | 201370 | Trigoso | 5 |
| Geography: Global Environmental Change II | 201410 | Sullivan | 4.6 |
| Geography: Global Environmental Change III | 201430 | Fielding | 5.3 |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Hesse | 4.2 |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Alfrey | 4.8 |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Picard | 4.4 |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Hill | 4 |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Stacks | 4.8 |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Taczak | 5.3 |
| Honors Writing | 201430 | Parrish | 5.3 |

2) *Providing diversity and availability of honors courses and flexibility in meeting course requirements*

Thanks to care in scheduling and priority registration, students reported no difficulty in registering for or making room in their schedule for honors courses.

Honors contracts, and substitution of HSEMS and ASEMS for upper level honors credit were helpful for several of our students in meeting their scheduling needs.

**Student Engagement**

*1) Fostering Involvement in the Honors Community*

The Honors Program continued with a menu of traditions and new events. Honors student-run groups, including the Voltaire Society and the Pioneer Book Group, continued, and many honors students participated in Extreme Academics. In total, 440 students attended honors events in 13-14 (233 distinct participants). Thus, over 70% of our 320 active students participated in at least one event. The list follows:

9/19/13 - Honors Picnic (77)

9/24/13 – Euro Scholars Info Session (8)

10/16/13 – Pizza and Advising (25)

10/18/13 – Death of a Salesman at Space Theater (24)

10/24/13 – Just Like Us at the Denver Center (2)

10/26/13 – CSO Bride of Frankenstein at Boettcher Concert Hall (20)

10/30/13 – El Pomar Information Session (3)

11/6/13 – “What to do with a degree in AHSS” (3)

11/14/13 – Electra Onion Eater at Buntport Theater (18)

11/14/13 – Voltaire Game Night (14)

1/13/14 – Honors Banquet (76)

1/20/14 – “Lincoln” Screening (14)

1/27/14 – Study Abroad Café (13)

2/7/14 – Passport to Paris at DAM (23)

2/20/14 – Hamlet at DCPA (27)

3/1/14 – Book Club: Lake of the Woods (13)

4/2/14 – Honors Seminar pizza (8)

4/18/14 – Good People at Curious Theater and dinner at Racine’s (18)

4/24/14 – Dining out for Life (12)

5/28/14 – Ice Cream Social (25)

6/1/14 – Graduating Senior Reception (51)

*2) Support of Student Projects and Programs*

The following students were awarded Special Honors Funding for Individual Projects:

Lanna Giauque- Geography major

* Attended and presented at the American Association of Geographers’ annual conference in Tampa, Florida
* Funds awarded: $1000.00

Maggie Waldner - International Studies major

* Traveled to Uruguay to complete on-site project investigating the link between neoliberalism, education and development in the Southern Cone
* Funds awarded: $1000.00

Kathleen Bird- Studio Art major

* Purchased art and framing supplies to complete her thesis project and obtain distinction in her major
* Funds awarded: $1000.00

**Exit Interviews and Surveys**

In order to assess student experience and satisfaction of our goals, the Honors Program relies on course evaluation, fill rates, numbers of participants in honors programming, diversity of course offerings and programming, student knowledge and use of special honors funding, as well as amount of support we are asked and able to provide student groups and other campus programs. We also rely on exit interviews and anonymous students surveys. In 2013, our surveys were sent out too late to be of significant value. Exit interviews, however, did reveal some consistency regarding student experience and issues.

Exit interviews conducted with our graduating seniors indicate that most Honors students find their involvement with the Honors Program an important aspect of their DU experience. Many students cited the engaging, discussed-based classes and consequential development of critical thinking skills as the most valuable takeaway from the Honors Program. Therefore, we can see that academic rigor continues to be of the upmost importance to the Honors experience. In addition to enjoying the classes and professors, graduating students report that the Honors community (including peers and programming/events) provided an important sense of social support and involvement. Several students state that “most of their best friends” were met through living on the Honors Floor during their first year at DU. Finally, Honors students continue to appreciate the priority registration privileges granted to them by virtue of their Honors status.

In terms of areas of improvement, students cited several components of the Honors Program; many which are ongoing areas of concern that we have been working hard to improve. Firstly, students voiced that they would like more diversity in the ASEMs offered; many students enjoyed the variety of classes available in their HSEMs and would like a similar experience for their other requirements. Additionally, students cited the need for more communication regarding gaining distinction in their major as well as the ability or inability to transfer AP and IB credits into the Honors humanities and social science requirements.

Plans for AY 2014-2015

New Director Miller came on board with a strong desire to make the Honors Program more inclusive and responsive to needs of students majoring in the natural sciences, for whom distinction opportunities and resources have sometimes been lacking; and to generally improve community engagement. Having himself taught an Honors Seminar, he has already begun reaching out to students. He also brings a level of engagement with faculty in CCESL, Sustainability, and the natural sciences that promises to be valuable for the Honors community. New initiatives and goals will be developed in accordance with the missions of the program and the university.

**Appendix A: Honors Council 2013-2014**

Director: George Potts

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

Arts/Humanities

Susan Schulten, History, [susan.schulten@du.edu](mailto:susan.schulten@du.edu), class of 14, 1st current term

Greg Robbins, Religious Studies, [grobbins@du.edu](mailto:grobbins@du.edu) , class of 16, 1st term

Daniels School of Business

Jeff Engelstad, Real Estate/Const. Management, [jengelst@du.edu](https://listserv.du.edu/mailman/options/hnrscouncil-07/jengelst--at--du.edu), class of 14, 1st current term

Engineering

David Gao, Electrical and Computer Engineering, [Wenzhong.Gao@du.edu](mailto:Wenzhong.Gao@du.edu), class of 15, first term

International Studies

Kevin Archer, (INTS), [karcher@du.edu](mailto:karcher@du.edu), class of 14, first term

Jonathan Adelman (INTS), [Jonathan.Adelman@du.edu](mailto:Jonathan.Adelman@du.edu), class of 15, second term

Natural Sciences

Mike Daniels, Geography, J.Michael.Daniels@du.edu, class of 14, second term

Don Sullivan, Geography, [dsulliva@du.edu](mailto:dsulliva@du.edu), class of 15, second term

Social Sciences

Trace Reddell, Media, Film, & Journalism, treddell@du.edu, class of 14, first term

Bonnie Clark, Anthropology, [Bonnie.Clark@du.edu](mailto:Bonnie.Clark@du.edu), class of 16, 1st term

Students

Nick Stubler, nstubler@bresnan.net (2nd year)

Samantha Kern, samkern108@gmail.com (2nd year)