Montana Board of Regents
CURRICULUM PROPOSALS

1. Overview

The University Honors Program (UHP) at Montana State University seeks designation as an Honors College. This proposal is, in essence, a request for a name change, as the Honors Program at Montana State University already meets or exceeds the characteristics of the Honors College at University of Montana, as well as the characteristics of fully fledged Honors College as outlined by the National Collegiate Honors Council in 2009. The UHP currently has 1,112 students representing all of the academic colleges at MSU. Honors students have brought great distinction to the MUS system: by serving as ambassadors, tutors, organization leaders, agents of outreach and service; by gaining admittance to the nation’s top graduate schools (Yale, MIT, Stanford, etc.); and by winning major scholarships such as the Rhodes, Marshall, Truman and Goldwater Awards (54 awards, 12th in the nation). We have the full and enthusiastic support of our colleagues at the Davidson Honors College at the University of Montana for this name change.

2. Provide a one paragraph description of the proposed program. Be specific about what degree, major, minor or option is sought.

The Honors College at Montana State University will provide opportunities for students to study, conduct research, and exchange ideas in a challenging and supportive interdisciplinary academic environment. In addition to taking small enrollment classes with outstanding faculty members, honors students may enroll in honors seminars and courses, and engage in independent study and research opportunities. Honors students may elect to complete the requirements for their Honors degree, which will be indicated on their academic transcript and indicated on the University Commencement program. Honors graduates also receive a separate diploma, which has been our practice since the inception of the program in 1981.

3. Need

A. To what specific need is the institution responding in developing the proposed program?

Honors Programs nationwide are transitioning to Honors Colleges; the Honors Program at Montana State University, with the full support of the Davidson Honors College at the University of Montana, requests to do the same. The designation of an Honors College at MSU would more accurately represent the scope and size of the program, in terms of number of students served (1,112), and the range of courses offered. The designation of an Honors College on the academic transcript of graduates will more accurately represent the quality and rigor of their undergraduate education in an increasingly competitive market. Finally, an Honors College at MSU will increase our market share of out-of-state students (59.5% of the out-of-state fee paying students at MSU are in the UHP), while also providing a great opportunity for highly motivated Montana students with to gain a superb undergraduate education without leaving our state.

B. How will students and any other affected constituencies be served by the proposed program?

The University Honors Program (UHP) currently serves 7.5% of the student population at MSU. The proposed Honors College will continue to provide high potential students with the opportunity to enroll in challenging courses taught by distinguished faculty in smaller class settings. Honors Colleges at the University of Montana and Montana State University will provide Montana University System students with an education equal to that offered by private institutions. We will, as we have for the past 32 years, remain an attractive choice for high achieving Montana students. We have also attracted highly motivated out-of-state students: half of the students in the UHP are out-of–state students. The impact of the
program can be measured in number of prestigious awards received by Honors graduates (see appendix), and by the elevated graduation rate (UHP 6-year graduation rate, between 71-75%) and second-year retention rate (UHP 95%). By providing for an educational experience of distinction, we advance student recruitment, retention and graduation rates, and success, and thus serve the interest of students and the state.

Furthermore, faculty afforded the opportunity to teach an honors course or seminar, are routinely invigorated by the experience. Every year, tenure and non-tenure track faculty are invited to submit proposals for Honors seminars, or Great Expeditions courses. In addition, faculty may apply to teach “Texts and Critics”, contingent upon the approval of their academic department head and dean. Access to Honors is by design, open to all faculty and students at MSU.

Overall, Honors advance the institution’s ability to recruit, retain, and cultivate the excellence of both high potential students and faculty.

C. What is the anticipated demand for the program? How was this determined?

We expect that the demand for an Honors College will be the same, or even greater, that what it has been for the Honors Program at MSU. We have seen a dramatic increase in quality and quantity of applications to the UHP in recent years. In the fall of 2005, our freshman class numbered 140 students. F2006=167; F2007=193; F2008=186; F2009=230, F2010=306; F2011=318; F2012=317. The average ACT of the entire freshman Honors class in 2012 was 29.21. We are confident that our market share will increase with the designation as an Honors College at MSU. The number of applicants for the Presidential Scholarship is always a key indicator of the quality and size of the incoming class. We received 319 applications in 2013. All indications are that the freshman class of 2013 will be extraordinary: the 148 semi-finalists had an average ACT of 32, GPA of 3.98 and 75 had ACT’s above 33; 35 candidates had ACT’s above 34. 41% of the semi-finalists were in-state students.

4. Institutional and System Fit

A. What is the connection between the proposed program and existing programs at the institution?

Over the past 32 years, the University Honors Program at MSU has enjoyed tremendous faculty and administrative support, to provide highly motivated students with an excellent undergraduate education. The program works cooperatively with administration and faculty in other academic departments to deliver Honors courses under departmental rubrics, and Honors seminars under the University Honors rubric. Currently, the program director reports directly to the Office of Academic Affairs; this arrangement will continue in the Honors College.

B. Will approval of the proposed program require changes to any existing programs at the institution? If so, please describe.

No. The proposal is, in essence, a request for a name change.

C. Describe what differentiates this program from other, closely related programs at the institution (if appropriate).

N/A
D. How does the proposed program serve to advance the strategic goals of the institution?

The Honors College is in complete alignment with the strategic goals of MSU.

• Learning: The Honors College will prepare students for meaningful careers or for graduate school. Through our curriculum, Honors students will develop the ability to think critically and independently, and as such, will contribute to the scholarly discourse in meaningful ways by providing real solutions to the world’s most pressing problems.

• Discovery: The Honors College will raise the prominence of MSU both nationally and internationally, through the research, creative endeavors, innovation and scholarly achievements of our students. Honors graduates are required to write an Honors or departmental thesis in their senior year, and to present their work in a public forum.

• Engagement: Students in the Honors College are leaders and engaged citizens, working with community partners to improve the human condition. Honors students are leaders on our campus and beyond, and have spearheaded efforts to address sustainability, social justice, economic and health disparities in Montana and beyond. Honors students serve as mentors in the public schools, and as tutors to their peers in all disciplines.

• Integration: By integrating learning, discovery and engagement, and by working across disciplines, the Honors community will improve the world. This is evident by our students working on our reservations, locally and internationally, to improve the lives of others. Honors students in all majors have integrated their course work, for example: Nursing students are making a pronounced difference in community health efforts, engineering students are addressing issues of water quality, sanitation, and sustainability, and music and education majors are actively engaged as mentors in the public schools.

• Access: The Honors College at MSU is committed to widening access to higher education and ensuring equality of opportunity for all. Students may apply to the Honors College at any point during their academic career, prior to their senior year. The written application includes an academic statement, a 500-word essay, a letter of recommendation as well as academic transcript(s) and test scores. Upon careful review by the Dean or Associate Dean, the student will gain admittance to Honors, or, will be reconsidered after one semester of college. This is truly the strength of an Honors College: Students at a land-grant state university will have access to an education equal to that offered students at elite private universities.

• Stewardship: The Honors College at MSU will responsibly manage its human, physical, economic and environmental resources in an open and sustainable manner. We take our charge, that of providing the most valuable resource of our state - our students - with the best education possible, seriously. We have used the funding allocated to us responsibly and effectively, and have been responsible stewards of the historic buildings entrusted to us.

E. Describe the relationship between the proposed program and any similar programs within the Montana University System. In cases of substantial duplication, explain the need for the proposed program at an additional institution. Describe any efforts that were made to collaborate with these similar programs; and if no efforts were made, explain why. If articulation or transfer agreements have been developed
for the substantially duplicated programs, please include the agreement(s) as part of the documentation.

We have the full and enthusiastic support of Dean James McKusick from the Davidson Honors College at the University of Montana, as well as from the Honors Programs at Montana Tech, Flathead Valley Community College, and MSU-Billings. Each Honors Program and College throughout the nation, is truly unique as it reflects the ethos and focus of each individual institution, and therefore, duplication is not possible. We have routinely accepted students from the University of Montana in the Honors Program at MSU and vice versa, and the same reciprocal arrangement is in effect with Montana Tech and the Honors Program at MSU-Billings, as well as the Scholars Program at Flathead Valley Community College.

5. Program Details

A. Provide a detailed description of the proposed curriculum. Where possible, present the information in the form intended to appear in the catalog or other publications. NOTE: In the case of two-year degree programs and certificates of applied science, the curriculum should include enough detail to determine if the characteristics set out in Regents’ Policy 301.12 have been met.

The proposed curriculum will remain the same as it is at present.

There are three levels of course offerings in Honors.

- Courses in academic departments, restricted to Honors students. Courses include MUSI 219 IA (Honors Music and Society), CHMY 151,153,331, 333, CSCI 111, ECNS 251IS, EGEN 221, ERTH 201, HIS 412IH, M 181, 182, 283, 284; PHSX 240, 242; PSYX 110IS, SOCI 110IS, SPNS 102, BIOB 140R. These courses are supported by the academic departments, typically in partnership with their respective academic deans, and the Honors program.

- Courses offered in Honors: UH 201,202, 310 (Texts and Critics), UH 204 (Great Expeditions), UH 210 (Mentoring Gifted Students), UH 291 (Reidy), UH 121 (Hike and Read), UH 131 (Freshman Research Symposium). These courses are funded by the Honors.


In order to graduate with an Honors Degree designation on the student’s academic transcript:

HONORS PROGRAM DEGREE REQUIREMENTS
(In effect since 1995)

- UHP Baccalaureate with HIGHEST DISTINCTION (3.7 Cumulative GPA) summa cum laude
  - UH 201 & 202 "Texts and Critics" 8 credits
  - OR UH 301 (only 4 credits) 4 credits
  - 1 Upper-Division Honors Seminar 4 credits
  - A second Upper-Division Honors Seminar (4 cr.) 4-6 credits
  - OR UH 450 Tutorial: Student Fellow (4-6 cr.) 4-6 credits
B. Describe the planned implementation of the proposed program, including estimates of numbers of students at each stage.

The Honors College at Montana State University is essentially a name change, and as such, no implementation period will be necessary. We expect a slight increase in student numbers, directly correlated to increased student enrollment at the university. As is the case with all Colleges at the University, we anticipate that demands associated with growth will be met through prevailing university resource allocation practices.

6. Resources

A. Will additional faculty resources be required to implement this program? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.
There are no requests at present. However, over the longer term we envision a small number of FTE to be located in the College, to establish long-term continuity in UH offerings, and for flexible use, such as for internal sabbaticals. Any future requests will be managed through the prevailing university process for allocation and reallocation of faculty lines.

B. Are other, additional resources required to ensure the success of the proposed program? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

Administrative resources: We plan to consolidate the increase our 0.5 Administrative Associate to a full time appointment. This increase has in effect already occurred, due to the unforeseen medical leave of our full time Program Coordinator in the spring of 2013. Over the last year, we have added a 0.5 Associate Director, as well as a student advisor, freshman seminar coordinator, and major scholarship/graduate fellowship advisor. These appointments are all part time appointments, as all these individuals have other university appointments as well. We have capitalized and leveraged the strength of our university, by drawing upon the wealth of faculty resources at our university, always in consultation with academic deans and department heads. The strong connection that Honors administrators have to their own academic departments and colleges, is a strength and unique quality of our College.

Space resources: We occupy prime university space at MSU. Our offices and classrooms are located in Quad F, in the historic Atkinson Quadrangle, designed by Frank Wilson in completed in 1935. Quad F is scheduled for extensive renovation in the summer of 2013. Twenty-two additional Honors beds will be added on the two floors directly above us. In addition, the 10th floor of South Hedges is designated as Honors, and in the fall of 2014, all the Quads will be designated as Honors housing. These measures will address the increased demand for Honors housing.

7. Assessment

How will the success of the program be measured?

Our Associate Director, Dr. Steven Swinford, will be charged with the assessment of all Honors courses and seminars. Dr. Swinford’s expertise in this regard is well established on our campus and beyond, particularly in regard to evaluation and assessment of the freshman seminars. Dr. Swinford will also track our graduation and retention rates, as well as the success of our graduates beyond MSU, in terms of admittance to graduate schools, fellowship and scholarship recipients, and career success. We have always administered rigorous course evaluations and assessments, both at the mid- and end of term, and will continue to do so. The success of our curriculum will be measured by the number of students graduating from MSU within 6 years combined with retention statistics. The data supporting the success of the existing Honors Program is outlined in 4(A).

8. Process Leading to Submission

Describe the process of developing and approving the proposed program. Indicate, where appropriate, involvement by faculty, students, community members, potential employers, accrediting agencies, etc.

This proposal will be reviewed by the Curriculum and Planning Committee, as well as the Dean’s Council. It will also be reviewed by Faculty Senate before submission to the Office of the Provost and the Montana University System Board of Regents.
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Appendix

1. Major Scholarship winners at MSU
2. Honors Course Offerings 2012-2013
3. Honors Course Offerings 2013-2014
4. Honors Program Degree Requirements