

Strategic Operational Plan Honors College

- Vision:** To become a fully developed Honors College on a par with the best universities in the Great Plains Honors Council region
- Mission:** To offer a uniquely broad and intellectually stimulating academic, cultural, and social experience that emphasizes undergraduate research and encourages personal and professional growth

FY17 Progress: we made (and continue to make) significant and excellent progress on several of our 2016-2017 initiatives. We particularly made progress on the following initiatives:

- **Improve the honors educational experience by promoting undergraduate research.** We developed our study abroad initiative (heavily promoting it and finding and providing scholarship support), started ProfSPEAK, a speaker series in which professors share their research with all undergraduates (including honors), promoted the URS (and had our highest number of presentations yet), and expanded our interdisciplinary offerings in all seminars. We did not make progress in funding conference and research opportunities.
- **Improve Honors College retention and degree completion.** We now offer an additional seminar spring 2017, and we restructured the faculty pay scale for seminars to pay for the May study abroad seminar and an online summer seminar (to be launched Summer 2017). We offered four thesis informational sessions (two per semester) and individually advised all students wanting to pursue this option. We encouraged new transfer and current honors students (starting in spring) to participate in the life of the college by hosting a 'meet the deans' get together early in the spring semester and holding a spring assembly (in addition to our regular fall assembly), we held more advisement sessions during advance registration advisement (and advised over 475 students last fall), and we continue to revise and update all of our forms and documents.
- **Redefine perceptions of the Honors College on campus.** We revised our mission statement, met with several deans, programs, and chairs across campus, and have actively continued to disseminate information about honors across campus.

We will continue to work on and develop some of our other initiatives, begun in 2016-2017 (e.g. revising documents, increasing the number of students writing theses, developing new honors-designated courses). Academic Affairs helped us supplement the Bowers Scholarship adequately for 2016-2017, but we will require additional funds as the Honors College continues to grow (at what we estimate will be at least 17-20% per year) and as more students (as a result of other initiatives) remain on track with honors and thus retain their scholarships. We made little progress on support and funding for undergraduate student research (and in fact have cut back greatly given the loss of Let's Talk funding for 2017-2018).

Goals & Objectives for FY18

- 1. Initiative 1: Increase support for honors staff and students**
 - a. Add full-time staff member (Administrative Associate II or III)
 - b. Find additional honors-dedicated space on campus (seminar and study rooms)
- 2. Initiative 2: Address and resolve the ongoing, systematic shortage of the Bowers Endowment**
- 3. Initiative 3: Develop a Sustained Undergraduate Research Agenda**
 - a. Secure guaranteed funding dedicated to Undergraduate Research
 - b. Provide funding for student research and conference travel
 - c. Increase support for students writing honors theses
 - d. Continue to offer scholarships for students studying abroad (including for our seminar)
 - e. Offer competitive research scholarships
 - f. Work more closely with EURECA to promote scholarship opportunities
- 4. Initiative 4: Improve communication between the Honors College and students and faculty**
 - a. Convert all documents to pdf forms that can be completed and sent electronically
 - b. Create faculty information webpage
 - c. Create and revise FAQ sheets for contracts and theses
 - d. Develop our FYE Living and Learning community
 - e. Integrate the Terry Scholars (who may or may not be members of the Honors College) into the life and culture of the Honors College

New Initiatives & Budgetary Implications for FY18

- 1. New Initiative 1:** Staff support for the Honors College has not increased since 2009 and has not kept pace with growth of the Honors College student body. To address the exponential growth of the Honors College (including the addition of the Terry Scholars), and especially the need for additional office support, we propose to add a much-needed, full-time administrative associate (II or III). We currently have two full-time staff members (and the dean at 75%); in contrast, NCHC member institutions reported an average of 4.9 full-time honors staff in 2012. We have requested this position for the past three or four years. **Requested amount: \$41,000 p/year (salary/benefits)**
- 2. New Initiative 2:** Given the increased growth and improved retention in the Honors College, the shortfall in the proceeds from the Bowers Endowment continues, and worsens. We need continued supplemental funding to keep pace with honors scholarship needs (in addition to the Emerging Scholars fund, which has been a great boon). **Requested Amount: \$80,000**
- 3. New Initiative 3:** we request funding specifically targeting undergraduate research. UR is the foundation of a solid honors experience, as it prepares students for the work force, graduate school, and dedicated citizenship. While "Let's Talk" funding has been extremely valuable, much of it goes to other forms of support (such as Honors Ambassador stipends, thesis research supplies, and the medallion ceremonies, in large part because of our shortfalls in O&M and the Bowers scholarship). Moreover, as Let's Talk will not be held Spring 2017, we have no other sources of funding to support undergraduate research, studies abroad, and conference travel for FY18 (what is left must support the Ambassador program and URS). **Requested amount: \$50,000 p/year**

4. **New Initiative 4:** we see no budgetary implications for this initiative other than the need for another full-time staff member to do this work.

Process/Effectiveness Obstacles

1. **Insufficient Staffing:** Our staff cannot adequately address the needs of our ever-expanding student population: we currently have three student workers and one work study to help with the overwhelming amount of work generated by processing and tracking applications, contracts, community service hours, thesis proposal forms, semester reviews, events management, recruitment, advising, scholarships, and budgets (in addition to daily activities of efficiently managing an office serving over 650 students). We are increasingly finding it more challenging to manage all office duties effectively and efficiently with our small staff.
2. **Insufficient Funding:** one of the vital functions of an Honors College is to provide opportunities and support for undergraduate research; we need funds to achieve this basic goal. The funds from Let's Talk have allowed us to launch this initiative. Due to the budget shortfall of not holding Let's Talk in 2017, we did not increase funding for student research and conference travel (we in fact decreased it to a flat \$200 amount, which should cover us through Spring 2017). There will be little, if any, money to support this initiative out of Let's Talk for FY18.
3. **Insufficient Space:** we currently have over 650 Honors students sharing the same spaces as we did when we had 300 students. These spaces, including a computer lab, library room, and lounge, are all still excellent facilities, but we have outgrown them. We need a seminar room for the great number of informational meetings and small scholarly events we hold every semester (currently held in the lounge) and a dedicated quiet space larger than the NGL study room for students to study and read.

O&M Essentials for FY18-FY21

As the Honors College continues to grow in enrollment, so do our office expenses. With our enrollment number at the highest and projected growth (47% by 2021), our current O&M can no longer cover our office expenses and events for current and prospective students. Aramark prices have increased and the number of Honors students who utilize the Honors Lab and Honors Lounge continue to increase, therefore, increasing the need for additional resources. We have not had an increase in our O&M budget since at least 2011 (when we had 300). Below are our FY16 O&M expenses:

- Honors events for both prospective and current students: \$43,844.71
- Coffee for the Honors Lounge: \$ 3,195.94
- Ink and paper for Honors Office and Lab: \$11,557.95
- Internal postage fees and advertising: \$11,122.74
(postage fees to increase this year as we continue to target larger numbers of prospective students through the ApplyTexas prospective student report)
- Seminar support: (outside speakers and seminar outings): \$ 3,000.00
- Student employee salaries: \$10,160.00
- Other office costs: \$15,006.05

In order for the Honors College to function effectively, we **request an annual increase of \$50,000 for O&M**

Mission, Goals, and Objectives FY18-FY21

- Vision:** To be recognized as a top Honors College among the best universities in the Great Plains Honors Council region
- Mission:** To offer a uniquely broad and intellectually stimulating academic, cultural, and social experience that emphasizes undergraduate research and encourages personal and professional growth

Goals & Objectives for FY18-FY21

- 1. Initiative 1: Have an Honors College sufficient to provide exceptional service and support to the Honors College students and Terry Scholars**
 - a. Hire a full-time staff Administrative Associate II or III
 - b. Hire a full-time staff member for Communications and Marketing
 - c. Get an Honors-dedicated advisor at the SamCenter (see 1.g)
 - d. Secure new offices that provide adequate space for deans, staff, and student employees
 - e. Secure honors and Terry Scholar facilities in addition to those we already have, including two seminar rooms (for our ProfSPEAK series, council meetings, advising, and seminars) and at least two dedicated study spaces. *NB:* within the administrative offices, deans' offices were carved out of storage areas; in 2007, a classroom was repurposed to form the Honors Lounge that is now too small to accommodate the larger number of honors students
 - f. Offer increasing number of seminars per semester (by FY2021 we will need to offer 10 per fall/spring semester and 2-3 per summer to service the growing number of students: currently, we offer 7 per long semester, with an average enrollment of 21 (rather than the ideal 15), and one summer seminar (in addition to the studies abroad seminars in May)
 - g. Have designated faculty (perhaps Visiting Professors and Instructors) teach some seminars and advise at the Sam Center
 - h. Offer more honors-designated courses in departments across campus
- 2. Initiative 2: Resolve the ongoing, systematic shortage of the Bowers Endowment**
 - a. Secure an additional endowment that is sufficient to meet the needs of a large and growing Honors College. Our student body growth projection in 2021 is 1,352 students; competitive scholarships is projected to be an annual commitment of (\$946,400)
 - b. Use endowment scholarships for all scholarships awarded through Honors, including Ambassador scholarships and scholarships awarded at various events (FYE poster contest and URS contests)
- 3. Initiative 3: Expand our Undergraduate Research Agenda**
 - a. Secure guaranteed annual funding dedicated to Undergraduate Research
 - b. Offer competitive fullride scholarships to exceptional Honors students (\$8,000 p/year)
 - c. Partner with EURECA to offer competitive research grants to Honors students and Terry Scholars
 - d. Provide adequate funding for student research and conference travel
 - e. Increase advisement and support for honor theses (writing circles, dedicated research librarians, progress meetings)
 - f. Continue to offer scholarships for students studying abroad (including for our seminar)
 - g. Officially partner with all Colleges and relevant programs (e.g. PACE and EURECA) to coordinate, maintain, and run the URS
 - h. Re-engage in the GPHC annual conference

4. Initiative 4: Update the Honors College's communications with students, faculty, and the university

- a. Have a communications and marketing staff member whose primary job will be to maintain and update the Honors website and Facebook page and coordinate events
- b. Increasingly move to electronic documents and paperwork
- c. Raise campus-wide awareness of Honors events and activities in addition to publicizing honors students' and Terry Scholars' achievements