

Question Concerning the Honors Program

I acknowledge the huge amount of work involved for the Curriculum Committee in keeping track of 56 items as in the current Curriculum report. I want to focus in a moment on one of the three new programs being proposed - one which potentially affects all students and faculty – the new Honors Program listing. In general I would suggest that new programs or substantially revised programs should be explicitly presented to Senate rather than being simply included in the consent agenda. At the very least this will draw our attention to the new possibilities for our students. Let me focus on the old versus the new honors program. (Added: see the Note below on “new” as “substantially revised”).

The “old” as opposed to the “new” Honors Program featured the following:

- 1/ The possibility of full scholarships for suitably achieving students based on GPA.
- 2/ Four credit classes for students, including a debate, poster presentation or panel discussion as a group work component.
- 3/ Full three load credit for each faculty team teaching a course for coordinating and providing an interdisciplinary content to students in those courses.
- 4/ Covered all of general education except for the language requirement if not satisfied in high school, and the mathematics and science lab requirements, constituting an (almost) complete honors alternative to general education.
- 5/ A required undergraduate thesis, which to my knowledge has an over 90 – 95% on time completion for students in all departments and schools, including SEST.

All of the above elements of distinction are eliminated in the new program. To be as open ended as I can, I'll simply ask why are such drastic and to my mind excessive measures needed in order to increase student enrollment by 50% and recruit students from encumbered majors, something which has been up for discussion, to my knowledge, since 2017?”

In response to Kris Larsen’s reply to my question (I leave it to her to accurately reproduce that if desired), I concluded:

- 1/ The honors thesis is not the same as a departmental capstone course, and involves a substantial writing experience equivalent to that offered at major liberal arts colleges. I hope it will be restored as a program requirement as the new program is itself revised.
- 2/ The program should request of the BOR an increase in the current scholarship allotment (at 7/10 of 1% of FT student tuition) to at least 1% to allow for additional and more complete scholarships. I said I am available (as an ex-officio member of the Board and member of the Finance Committee) to assist as best I can.

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Nov. 28, 2022