

Dean Response to Design Team Recommendations

Design Team:	Honors
Members:	Sarah Beck, (co-chair), Maria Ramos (co-chair), Lindsey Geary, Bill Hysell, Don Kelly, Jonathan Meeter
Report Submitted:	Spring 2012
Response Submitted:	Fall 2012

The academic deans have reviewed and discussed carefully the Honors Design Team's recommendations for course improvements. After discussion, we have come to consensus and propose the following outcomes.

The academic deans thoroughly appreciate the time, thought and effort that was dedicated to this task and commend the design team for its significant contributions.

Recommendation/Response/Rationale

1. "The Honors Design Team recommends a three-step Honors Program with the last step developing in two phases. Students must complete all three steps in order to earn "Graduate with Distinction. However, completed individual steps will be noted on the student transcripts, e.g. 'Intro. To Honors'."

Response: The three-step Honors Program design is supported, as well as the "Graduate with Distinction" which will recognize completion of the entire program and individual course completion for HP101, which will be listed on the student transcript.

Rationale: Individual course completion and whole program completion should be appropriately acknowledged to recognize extraordinary student achievement.

2. "Beginning in Fall 2012, all Presidential Scholars will be required to take Introduction to Honors, the first step in the Honors curriculum. They will have the choice to continue or leave the program after completing this course."

Response: Development of the Introduction to Honors course is fully supported by the Dean team.

Rationale: The course will provide an introduction to the Honors Program in the students' first semester, and so will extend this opportunity to students whose high school academic achievement qualify them for entrance into the program. The course will also, as mentioned by the Design Team, build community among Honors students and prepare them for the next step, the independent research project or enrollment in HP200—Honors Seminar.

3. "Other students, both new and matriculated, may express interest in the program by completing a simple application form available through the Registrar, Phi Theta Kappa, advisors and high school guidance counselors. The application will ask the student to check one of the four criteria that applies:
 - high school GPA or 3.5 or higher
 - SAT score of 1170 or higher

- Top 10% of high school graduating class
- MVCC or other college GPA of 3.25 or higher.”

Response: The Deans agree with the criteria, but suggest one change: minimum GPA for *entrance* be 3.50 or higher, in line with PTK criterion.

Rationale: The 3.5 minimum GPA gives a consistent message about the standard for Honors recognition.

4. “Interested students may apply to the program before the start of each fall or spring semester. If students maintain a 3.25 GPA at MVCC, they need only to apply to the program once.”

Response: The Deans support this recommendation.

Rationale: A GPA of 3.25 is reasonable for those who wish to maintain membership in the Honors Program.

5. “To enhance community-building, Honors students will be invited to one social event in the fall and one field trip in the spring.”

Response: Extracurricular events and field trips are encouraged, pending availability of funds .

Rationale: Extracurricular events and field trips extend learning experiences while providing students networking opportunities.

6. “Similar to the current Honors Program at MVCC, a student at the second stage will select a faculty member with whom to work on a two-credit independent research project...Students will meet regularly with the faculty members, and at the end of the spring semester, present their research at a formal reception for the College community. A standardized schedule, outline and rubric will be made available to participating faculty members to help organize and assess these research projects.”

Response: The second phase of the Honors program will involve the research projects as described by the Design Team. Projects will be presented to the College community when complete, and faculty members who serve as research mentors will be provided a standardized outline and rubric. However, the research projects will not be credit-bearing but will remain a extracurricular projects for which recognition will be in the form of the Honors distinction associated with a selected course as displayed on the academic transcript.

Rationale: While the Dean Team supports the Design Team’s notion that awarding credit for this phase is preferable, to make this activity a credit-bearing course would exclude students who could not “fit” the additional credits into their programs or who could not afford the additional fees if the credits in the given semester exceeded 18. Additional credits cannot be added to existing programs due to need for compliance with SUNY two-year program regulations. Moreover, addition of credits in a given semester may create an undue financial burden to students.

7. “For the final step of the Honors Program, students will take a course outside of their majors beyond the 101 level by choosing from a list of challenging three-credit classes. Some examples include: EN256—World Literature 1 or 2, BM206—Business Ethics, AN205—Forensic Anthropology, CJ202—American Constitutional Law, BI202—Microbiology. Ultimately, however, the Honors Design Team foresees the third step as the completion of a three-credit Honors Seminar. Seminars will be intimate (capped at 12 students), interdisciplinary and discussion-based. They will emphasize deep learning, specifically critical reading and writing. Three different Honors Seminars will be offered every semester and taught by a variety of faculty.

Response: The final (or second) step of the Honors Program will be HP200—Honors Seminar, which is currently in development.

Rationale: Requiring a three-credit Honors Seminar is not advisable since most programs do not include a free elective; thus, students in most program would have to add three credits in programs that already meet or exceed SUNY program credit limits. Making this course an option will allow those students who have electives in their programs to choose it, while those Honors students without electives in their programs may opt to do an additional Honors Project.

8. “A simple but effective first step for the College to embrace a more comprehensive Honors Program is to become a member for the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). An institutional membership costs \$500. Membership provides access to critical information about developing an Honors Program and opportunities for Honors students, such as inter-collegiate trips and classes.”

Response: The Deans endorse this suggestion.

Rationale: Membership in the NCHC will provide our Honors Work Group with best practices and networking opportunities.

9. “MVCC can also show support for the budding Honors Program by devoting some campus space, such as a classroom, to an Honors lounge. NCHC recommends that this space be located in a prominent area on campus, but it would not have to be initially. ...The team recommends separating the lounge into two main areas: a place to talk ,with couches and stuffed chairs, and a place to study with tables, chairs, a few computers and a printer. Honors students will take turns monitoring the lounge.”

Response: Space for the Honors Program is not readily identifiable, but as the program grows, this suggestion will be revisited.

Rationale: At this time, the program is not expansive enough for space to be dedicated, especially given the space constraints that are currently causing scheduling and other challenges across the campus.

10. “The team feels that is it vital that an Honors Liaison be hired to oversee the Honors Program immediately, even before reaching Phase II. This position should be compensated with a reduced course load or salary...the organization also suggests that a dean (reporting directly to the Vice President of Learning and Academic Affairs) should fill the liaison

position and that the Honors Program should have the same autonomy and campus presence as an academic center. ..The Honors Liaison should also have his or her own office and be supported with a paid assistant.”

Response: An Honors Program Coordinator will be recommended for the Fall 2012 semester at a rate jointly determined by the faculty member and VPLAA.

Rationale: A salaried Honors Liaison will be considered if and when the program grows to an enrollment that exceeds 20% of MVCC enrollment.

11. MVCC instructors are paid \$160 for every independent study, and the team felt that the current stipend was sufficient for now.”

Response: Faculty members who serve as mentors to Honors projects will sign an “Honors Project” agreement and will receive a stipend to be discussed with the Center Dean in which the course discipline is housed.

Rationale: Since the research projects will not be credit-bearing, a stipend will provide a fair and equitable way to compensate faculty who agree to serve as project mentors.

12. The Honors Design Team would like to serve as an advisory board to the Honors Program beginning in Fall 2012.

Response: The Dean Team supports the Honors Design Team’s conversion to an Honors Program Work Group for the 2012-13 academic year.

Rationale: A Work Group comprised of faculty members who have already invested time thought to the Honors Program will be well versed in the research underlying new program recommendations and therefore better able to implement program improvements.

Next Steps

The Deans recommend that the Design Team members serve as a Work Group to implement (with the input and support of the Honors Coordinator) the following tasks throughout the 2012-13 academic year:

1. Prepare CWCC materials (course outline, sample syllabus, rationale, cover paperwork) reflecting newly designed curriculum for HP101 and HP200 (Honors Seminar) for vote by Centers and CWCC (in progress_
2. Develop the application for interested students who are not recruited through invitation due to Presidential Scholars status.
3. Develop a form for securing Honors Project faculty mentors.
4. Design and facilitate research mentor workshops for professional institutes (including design of outlines, rubrics and other helpful materials that will standardize the research project requirements).

5. Recommend special events and/or field trip experiences that will enhance Honors Program learning experiences.
6. Identify the population for invitation for non-Presidential Scholars with GPAs of 3.5 or higher at the end of the Fall 2013. Develop a letter of invitation for this group.