

# CMU 2010 FY08 Annual Report

Project Title: Honors Program Enhancement  
Project Leader: James P. Hill  
Project Number: 200711 Date of Report: June 30, 2008

Refer to your *Outcome Evaluation Worksheet* to complete the information below. Insert additional rows if needed. Rows will automatically expand as you type. You are welcome to attach additional documents to supplement – but **not** substitute for - the information provided below.

## INTRODUCTION

The Honors Enhancement Project is at the halfway point in its three year funding, with the fourth semester funding committed for Fall 2008 classes but not yet expended. This midpoint period finds that Honors Program actions have met or exceeded all of its 2010 related goals a year in advance; specifically,

1. Increasing the number and variety of honors courses
2. Enhancing the scheduling of honors courses and department stakeholder involvement in honors activities
3. Identifying and increasing honors involvement in the selection of honors faculty
4. Maintaining honors academic quality and increasing honors program academic expectations

2010 funding has been crucial for our efforts to promote an environment that supports teaching and learning as the university's top priority and for promoting academic excellence through the recruitment, retention, and development of high ability students. The higher academic profile of newly recruited Honors and Centralis students establishes a higher bar for CMU academic standards and learning standards campus-wide.

Current 2010 funding is and will continue to be used to address the **major issues** hindering the realization of the academic excellence mission of the Honors Program and in turn the academic excellence vision in CMU 2010; namely,

- limited honors course offerings for honors students to enroll,
- better scheduling and marketing for honors courses needed so they do not conflict with other honors or required courses,
- lack of honors involvement in the selection of honors course instructors and research supervisors, and
- raising the academic standards in the CMU Honors Program in order to match national (NCHC) expectations as well as the honors protocol requirements of honors programs at other CMU benchmark institutions

Specific outcomes are summarized in the table at the end of this report. However, more details are provided below for each of these issues. Specifically, the following outcomes are a direct result of this 2010 funding:

- 1. Increasing the number of Honors courses and expanding the three year Honors Master Course List:** A decades-old concern with the CMU Honors Program was the small number of honors classes that the Program was able to offer annually, particularly 300 or above level honors classes. At the start of this decade, 2000-2001, only 50 honors classes were offered, and they were primarily at the 100 and 200 level, making the Honors Program primarily a two year intensive honors program with a senior project. The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) recommends that between 20-25% of student required coursework (25-31 credits) be taken in honors courses for honors programs, but the old CMU Honors Protocol only mandated 18 hours of honors coursework (17%) before the 2010 funding was provided. The reason for this small number of total honors classes and honors course Protocol requirements was largely financial: departments could not afford to offer many low enrollment honors classes when they could earn more student credit hours with larger lecture classes. This 2010 funding has enabled Honors to negotiate more overall honors classes as well as more 300 level or above honors classes without departments bearing a larger financial burden. Indeed, after the two years of 2010 funding, we have more than doubled our year 2000 level number of honors courses, exceeding a third year goal established by the Provost created Honors Task Force of offering 100 honors courses. We also have dramatically increased the number of 300 and above level honors courses, so a total of 52 such upper division Honors classes will have been offered over this two year time period because of this funding, moving the Honors Program from a largely two year general education honors program with a senior project to a fully-developed<sup>1</sup> four year honors program. This increase is also reflected in the new three year Honors Master Course List, which now has grown in size and diversity as departments now are willing to commit to offer more competency, general education, and 300 and above level courses because of the promised 2010 funding.
- 2. Improved Honors course scheduling for all Honors courses:** Another Honors issue that this 2010 funding has addressed is the creation of an early department chair-honors director communication process to establish honors class time and instructors. Prior to this funding, honors scheduling and faculty assignments were not a high priority for most departments, and some honors courses were offered at inflexible and unpopular times or with instructors who were picked at the last minute with little time to prepare a unique honors course. Honors-department collaboration was very informal with Honors having little negotiation power with departments. A portion of this 2010 funding now is used to compensate departments for early decision-making on honors courses to be offered, identification of instructors, creating the opportunity to negotiate course times to avoid scheduling conflicts, and providing instructor and course description information to help honors advisors and students in scheduling classes. The 2010 funding is used by many departments to support their departmental professional development efforts or to reduce the cost of offering low enrollment honors classes, while the advanced communication process between honors and departments which has resulted from this funding has made honors advising and the process of filling honors courses much more effective.

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) has identified 16 basic characteristics of a “Fully Developed Honors Program, a key characteristic expecting a minimum of 20-25% of undergraduate credits to be honors courses (20% x 124 = 25 credits)

Chair evaluations of this new honors course process were satisfactory, with the following specific comments offered by department chairs:

**From CHSBS:**

- “The extra funding has been important to and appreciated by my department.”
- “It has made it possible for us to offer more Honors courses than we would otherwise been able to afford to offer.”
- “The funding incentive for offering 300- level Honors courses is satisfactory and we are exploring plans to do so.”
- “The process needs to assure that appropriate financial support to participating departments remains in place. Lacking this there would little reason for chairs to support department faculty honors course participation.”
- “Having adequate funding is important.” “Funding encourages course offerings.”

**From CCFA:**

- “The current funding model for offering and developing 300-level Honors courses is satisfactory and laudable.”

**From CST:**

- “The honors experience offered through Biology is very high quality.”

**From EHHS**

- “This incentive has made us reassess whether we should consider this (adding more 300 level courses). When our faculty stabilize then we would consider adding HEV 307.”

**3. Established a formal Honors faculty approval process, enhancing the quality of honors instructors and the role of the Honors Program in honors instructor selection:**

- a. In order to increase faculty participation in the honors program, we first needed to increase the number and variety of honors courses offered, including the opportunity for faculty to offer new honors courses consistent with their expertise but not otherwise offered at CMU. Hence, 2010 funding provided an increase in honors courses as well as an increase in the number of 300 or above level honors courses, expanding the scope of faculty eligible for honors faculty status as well as the variety of courses offered.
- b. Next we created a pre-registration process to negotiate with department chairs over who would teach which honors course. In the past, faculty teaching decisions were made at the last minute, leaving little opportunity for the Honors Director to negotiate- essentially it became a take it or leave it decision by the department chair. This approach led to having either ill-prepared or temporary faculty teaching honors courses. Now, with the early communication process established through the 2010 funding and outlined in #2 above, we are provided an early decision by the department chair on faculty assignments in exchange for pre-registration 2010 honors funding, allowing Honors to negotiate not only times but instructors as well.
- c. With this added time created by this new early communication process, the opportunity to establish honors faculty qualifications has been created. Now, instead of the decision as to who will teach an honors course being made on an ad hoc basis, the Honors Council passed and the Academic Senate approved a new honors faculty policy to guide this honors faculty policy. Last summer, all CMU faculty were invited to apply for honors faculty status. The faculty selection process was handled by a three faculty member team from the

Honors Council, requiring an affirmative vote by two to approve an application (a 5 year renewable term). We expected about 60 applicants but instead approved nearly 170. A list of approved faculty is provided to each department chair. The chair may also nominate temporary faculty for temporary (1 year) Honors Faculty status, but they too must meet honors faculty qualification criteria. The result of this new policy is that department chairs will select only faculty who meet honors faculty qualification policy standards set by the Honors Council if they wish to collect the 2010 funding for their department.

**4. Raising the academic standards and diversity expectations of the Honors Program:** In addition to last year's raising of admission standards to the Honors Program, the Honors Program has also enhanced the quality of its program by increasing the rigor of the Honors Protocol, including increasing the number of Honors courses that must be completed and the number of 300 and above level Honors courses that must be taken, while also decreasing the emphasis on honors contracts (considered an inferior learning approach since it does not involve interaction with other Honors students) to meet the honors credits requirement and raising the letter grade that must be earned before honors credit can be given for taking an honors class. This more rigorous Honors Protocol (approved by the Academic Senate) was possible only because the number of Honors courses were increased through 2010 funding. We also revised Area Two of the Honors Protocol, with Academic Senate approval, to expand the diversity requirement to explicitly include study abroad, cultural diversity, and American Sign Language courses in keeping with university efforts to enhance cultural literacy.

**Note: As a result of these enhancements, it is expected that there will be an improvement honors graduation, recruitment, and retention rates:** After increasing admission standards, increasing Honors Protocol requirements, strengthening honors faculty controls, increasing the absolute number and number of 300 and above level honors classes, and strengthening HON 100 classes by decreasing class sizes, the Honors Program has seen

- a. An increase in the number of graduates from 85 in 2007 to 94 in 2008.
- b. New Honors freshman admissions increase from 305 in 2007 to 369 in 2008.
- c. The overall size of the Honors Program grow from 865 in 2007 to 903 in 2008.

**Additional note: Assessing and measuring student learning outcomes:** Although the Honors Program already had an approved assessment plan approved by the assessment council in 2004, this old plan was more of a program oriented assessment plan than a student learning outcome oriented plan. CMU 2010 funds have enabled the Honors Program to develop a more sophisticated assessment plan with the assistance of an outside consultant, create more sections of Honors 100 for improved class instruction, and form an outside panel of honors and non-honors faculty to annually analyze writing products of honors freshmen and senior in order to determine their student learning outcomes after four years in the honors program.

This new Honors assessment plan was approved by the Assessment Council in April, 2007 and the first formal assessment is currently underway. As part of this assessment plan, a panel of six faculty- three honors and three non-honors- have reviewed 20 freshmen and senior papers according to a pre-established rubric to measure student learning outcomes. The results of this assessment will be taken by the Director to an NCHC assessment conference in July where it will be critiqued by NCHC experts

prior to submission to the CMU Assessment Council. This new assessment plan will also help us formally measure for the first time the learning outcomes of the honors program for high achieving honors students in addition to an Honors Program evaluation.

**KPI related objectives achieved under 2010 funding for the Honors Program Enhancement Project:**

**KPI 1: Academic Expectations:** Increased Honors Protocol honors coursework requirements from 17% of total undergraduate coursework to 20%, putting our Honors Program in compliance with NCHC recommendations of a 20-25% coursework protocol. Upon implementation of the higher academic credentials of Honors students decreased the number of students dismissed from the Honors Program for falling below a 3.25 GPA from 77 in 2007 to 61 in 2008.

**KPI 2: Student Engagement with Faculty:** Increased the number of honors seminar style classes by more than 30 per year compared to pre-2010 funding years, providing more small class opportunities for faculty- student engagement, offered more off-campus class opportunities for faculty and students (Beaver Island, Appalachian trail, Ireland, Mexico, New York City, etc.), and developed a faculty research interest data base to better and more quickly link students to faculty with similar research interests. Also increased the number of individual faculty supervised undergraduate honors student research projects from 139 to 155 over the past year, an increase of 12% over 2006-2007. A 2008 honors senior exit survey of 88 honors senior graduates indicate that 73 (83%) reported that the Honors Program enhanced their learning abilities by providing a greater amount of student interaction with top CMU faculty compared to non-honors classes.

**KPI 3: Student Faculty Ratio:** Increased the number of classes with 20 students or less, thus contributing to a more favorable student-faculty ratio

**KPI 4: Undergraduate student enrollment:** Despite increasing admission standards for the Honors Program last year, the Honors Program admitted 369 new honors freshmen for Fall 2008, an increase of 17% (54 students) over 2007, and total enrollment in the Honors Program for 2008 increased by 4%. Students identifying themselves as minorities increased from 54 to 70 in the honor program in 2008, raising the percentage of minority students in the Honors Program from 6% to 8%. and the number of students graduating from Honors in 2008 increased to 94 from 85 in 2007.

**KPI 10: Study Abroad:** As part of our 2010 funding, the Honors Program helped created Honors courses with international study components to China, Mexico, Ireland, and England, as well as developing a funding assistance application process which assisted 57 Honors students to study abroad in 2007-2008. A senior exit survey of 88 Honors seniors found that 35 of them studied abroad (about 40%) compared to about 2% of the non-honors on-campus students (FY 06).

**KPI 12: Student Research Activity:** Enhanced Honors faculty research links to Honors students developed through the Honors faculty application process and new Honors courses funded by 2010 have increased both the number and percentage of Honors

students participating in SRCEE. In past years, Honors participation in SRCEE hovered at 25% and nearly 90 projects. In the Spring of 2008, the honors student participation percentage jumped to 28% and the number of honors projects to over a 100 (107 to be exact) for the first time since SRCEE began. The number of faculty sponsored Honors research projects totaled 155 in 2008.

**KPI 13: Research Expenditures:** Through funding from the Honors Faculty Policy and sharing Honors HON 499 Senior research project tuition revenue with departments whose faculty supervise honors senior projects, the Honors Program has contributed over \$60,000 to department professional development funds to assist in faculty professional and research activity campus-wide. In addition it has funded

**KPI 16 Student Public Service:** In part due to changes in HON 100 aided by 2010 funding, all Honors freshman in 2007 engaged in student public service projects. The average total of student community service hours recorded by Honors seniors in 2008 was 160 hours, 40 hours above the required 120 in the Honors Protocol.

| Outcome/Milestone  | Status<br>(Complete, in Progress, or Not started) | Date Measured                          | What are the next steps to achieving this outcome?   |
|--|---|--|--|
| <b>1</b> Create a course selection early consultation process with department chairs | Complete  | March, 2007 by department chair survey | We have now completed three rounds (semesters) of the new prior course and faculty selection process with 22 departments. Surveys from the first round suggested a few minor modifications but the second and third rounds of surveys did not yield any negative findings, except a concern about what will happen if the 2010 funding is not continued after the next two years. Overall, this funding has helped ease the financial costs to departments of offering honors courses as well as creating a more proactive communication channel in terms of the timing of courses that previously was impossible due to the last minute course timing decisions made by chairs. The funding has created a tremendous incentive for this honors-department collaboration. We are currently working with a few prominent honors faculty members and their chairs to develop new interdisciplinary honors courses that are needed at CMU but cannot be offered at this time due to individual department, particularly in the area of diversity and study abroad. We have made inroads already, having just completed a Business 397H course in China, and confirmed a team-taught HON 150 |

|          |   |             |            |   |
|----------|---|-------------|------------|---|
|          |   |             |            | <p>course on Racism in America to be taught in Spring 2008. After we develop a data base of honors faculty teaching and research interests, we plan to identify honors faculty and support their efforts to create additional honors courses in these areas to further expose students to international and diversity issues of such importance to the university and for their future careers.</p>   |
| <b>2</b> | Create an Honors Faculty Selection Process  | Complete    | March 2008 | <p>As mentioned above, a major issue in terms of the quality of the program is to enhance the ability of Honors to participate in the selection of Honors faculty. The Honors Council developed and adopted such an Honors Faculty Qualifications Process in light of the opportunity the prior department consultation process in #1 created for such engagement. The Academic Senate approved the policy in April, 2007. We conducted an Honors application process using a rubric established in the Honors Faculty Policy, and three faculty members of the Honors Council reviewed nearly 200 applications. We are pleased that nearly 170 Honors faculty were approved to teach or supervise honors projects. In addition, faculty research interests were identified which has aided in the early linkage of honors students to faculty research projects.</p> |
| <b>3</b> | Increase the number of 300 and above level Honors classes and increase the number of such classes on the three year Honors Master Course List | In Progress | June, 2008 | <p>After the Fall 2008 registration process was completed, we have offered 50 Honors courses at the 300 level or above. Thus, 300 level or above Honors classes constitute more than 25% of all Honors course offerings for this period, moving the Honors Program to a truly 4 year as opposed to primarily two year Honors Program.</p>   |
| <b>4</b> | Increase the total number of Honors courses offered   | In Progress | June, 2008 | <p>The Honors Program offered a historic high 75 Honors courses in the year prior to the availability of 2010 funding. The past average number of Honors courses per year in recent years was between 50-60 honors courses. In order to meet minimum course requirements recommended by the NCHC and the Academic Senate in past Honors Program evaluation reports, that number should be around 100 honors courses. It is projected that because of department</p>   |

|  |  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|--|---|
|  |  |  |  | commitments arising from 2010 funding, the Honors Program will offer over 100 Honors courses, an historic benchmark never before approached in the 47 year history of the CMU Honors Program. |
|--|--|--|--|---|

**What are your plans for sustaining support for your project beyond the CMU 2010 funding period?**

We sought base funding for this project initially, and this three year funding was our opportunity to show the value of this investment of 2010 funding. We plan to seek base funding for this honors project this fall, as the underpinnings of all of the innovative and progressive honors efforts listed above depend upon continued funding at the CMU 2010 level. As was pointed out in our 2010 proposal, after extensive analysis and expert consultation by the Provost’s ad hoc Honors Task Force, the task force concluded that the CMU Honors Program “is woefully underfunded. Comparable programs with a similar Honors population have working budgets of as much as \$150,000 to \$325,000 more in resources.” It should also be noted that the Honors Program was stripped of the \$120,000 Provost supplement in 2003, so the Honors Program funding of \$250,000 per year in reality was only an increase of \$130,000 per year over previous CMU support.

If we do not maintain 2010 funding as part of our base budget, we:

- cannot maintain the current number of honors classes offered,
- cannot continue the early honors class consultation process with department chairs to schedule classes,
- cannot enforce increased honors program protocol student requirements, and
- cannot continue to rely upon honors faculty teaching honors courses.
- cannot maintain current recruitment, graduation and retention gains.

With 2010 base funding, we will show through assessment data and the performance of our students that the value added of this money is inextricably tied to honors and CMU’s vision of enhancing academic excellence and national prominence goals.

**How can the ISPC assist you with those plans?**

We think we have shown outstanding progress to justify base funding but we do not know what criteria will be used to determine whether or not base funding will be awarded.

- Please provide the Honors Program with additional milestones or other guidance as to what additional types of evidence the university expects in order to justify base funding for this project.
- Is the information in this report and the past next year sufficient to justify base funding, or is additional information needed by the decision-makers?
- If additional information is needed, please specify what is necessary to convince funding decision makers that this project is worthy of base funding?