

CMU 2010 FY09 Annual Report

Project Title: Honors Program Enhancement
Project Leader: James P. Hill
Project Number: 200711 Date of Report: June 03, 2009

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 nearing the end of its three year funding, with the last semester funding committed for Fall 2009 classes but not yet expended. This period finds that Honors Program actions have been met or exceeded for all of its 2010 related goals; specifically,

1. Increasing the number and variety of honors courses:
 - **Increased number of honors classes from 52 in 2005-2006 to 110 in 2008-2009, and**
 - **Increased the number of 300 or above honors classes from 8 in Spring/Summer of 2006 to 20 in Spring/Summer 2009.**
2. Enhancing the scheduling of honors courses and department stakeholder involvement in honors activities
 - **Developed a pre-planning process with all department chairs which enhances the ability of the Honors Program to impact the timing and marketing of honors classes each semester.**
 - **Every College and over 80% of all departments now participate in the process and receive financial compensation for their assistance in the early identification and marketing of honors courses**
3. Identifying and increasing honors involvement in the selection of honors faculty
 - **Developed an Honors Faculty Selection and Application Process (approved by the Senate) for identifying honors faculty**

- **220 faculty from all colleges have been approved as Honors faculty through this process**
4. Maintaining honors academic quality and increasing honors program academic expectations
- **Increased the minimum ACT and GPA admission standards to the Honors Program**
 - **Adopted a higher minimum grade in order to receive Honors credit for a class**
 - **Expanded diversity learning experiences to meet protocol requirements**
 - **Increased the number of Honors classes needed to graduate from the Honors Program**

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

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 at the 300. 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 three years of 2010 funding, we have more than doubled our year 2000 level number of honors courses, exceeding a 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 because of this funding, moving the Honors Program from a largely two year general education honors program with a senior project to a

fully-developed¹ four year honors program. This increase is also reflected in the new offerings in 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 2010 funding addressed is the creation of an early 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.

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

From CHSBS:

- “Very effective- we’ll continue to participate.
- “The incentive works for us; we hope it can continue.”
- (Increasing 300 level classes) was a worthy goal and I am glad to know it has succeeded in adding classes.”
- “ I hope you are able to figure out a base funding model for this program after CMU 2010 funds are gone.”
- “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.”
- (The increasing 300 level classes goal) “Makes sense to us.”

¹ 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)

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 number 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. All CMU faculty were invited to apply for honors faculty status. The faculty selection process was handled by a three person 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 over 220. 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 raising the 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 in 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

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 2007. 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.

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, Italy, England, 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.

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

KPI 10: Study Abroad: As part of our 2010 funding, the Honors Program helped create Honors courses with international study components to China, Mexico, Ireland, and England, as well as developing a funding assistance application process which assisted 96 Honors students to study abroad in 2007-2009. 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 2009, the honors student participation percentage was 26% and the number of honors projects to over 100.

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.

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. Our 2009 hours audit is not yet complete, but graduating Honors seniors put in over 16,000 reported hours of community service.

Outcome/Milestone	Status (Complete, in Progress, or Not started)	Date Measured	What are the next steps to achieving this outcome?
1 Create a course selection early consultation process with department chairs	Complete	March, 2009 by department chair survey	We have now completed five 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. Most recent survey results show no major concerns about the now established process. 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 strong incentive for this honors-department collaboration. We continue working 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 completed a Business 397H course in China, a team-taught HON 150 course on Racism in America, and courses in England, Ireland, Mexico, and Italy.
2	Create an Honors Faculty Selection Process	Complete	March 2008	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 the applications. We are pleased that over 220 Honors faculty have been 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 in our honors freshman class and for senior project purposes.
3	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	Complete	June, 2009	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. The number of 300 or above honors courses increased has almost tripled due to pre-2010 funding
4	Increase the total number of Honors courses offered to 100	Complete	June, 2009	The Honors Program offered a historic high 75 Honors courses in the year prior to the availability of 2010 funding.

				<p>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. In 2008-2009, 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.</p>
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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 planned to seek base funding for this honors project this Spring, as the underpinnings of all of the innovative and progressive honors efforts listed above depend upon continued funding at the CMU 2010 level. However, no opportunity was made available to make such a request. Due to changes in HON 100 and increased tuition revenue expectations, it is projected that we can continue this progress in 2009-2010, but will need approximately \$132,000 in one-time funding the following year before we can become self-sufficient without the need for 2010 funding.

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 receive one-time funding in 2010-2011 of \$132,000, one or more of the following may occur:

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

How can the ISPC assist you with those plans?

We think we have shown outstanding progress to justify one-time additional funding in 2010-2011, but we do not know what criteria will be used to determine whether we qualify for such funding.

- 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 additional funding for this project.

