

Report from the Joint CAFA-CEP Honors Subcommittee
July 1, 2013

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The goals of the subcommittee were to assess which aspects of the pilot First Year Honors Program (FYHP) appear to be working and which are not yet working well; to consider the tasks that need to be accomplished each year, who should be responsible for each task, and how best to coordinate efforts; and to generate a draft FYHP charter. After several meetings, we realized that writing a charter is premature, as the FYHP is evolving in response to problematic aspects of the program. The committee instead generated a timeline of tasks and deadlines for an incoming cohort of Honors students, and a “working plan” document describing the student experience, the responsibilities of a faculty Director of Honors, the responsibilities of a staff Program Manager, and a budget. Those two documents are attached.

The subcommittee considered several additional issues, especially as they relate to increasing the attractiveness of the FYHP to incoming students and improving the experience for students in the program.

1) How many Colleges should be involved in the FYHP? To offer breadth of College themes to students, we think that 4-6 Colleges should participate. To streamline the logistics of running a FYHP, we think that 2 Colleges should participate. We considered possible mechanisms to offer a FYHP that is not based in the Colleges, so that students from potentially all Colleges could participate without the logistical burden of involving all Colleges and Provosts in overseeing the program. We did not come up with a satisfactory non-College-based proposal. Next year’s Honors Subcommittee may want to revisit this important issue.

2) Should students have to be ELWR-satisfied to be invited into the FYHP? The current Director and participating Provosts consider ELWR satisfaction to be an important indicator that students can handle the reading and writing required in the FYHP. However, the subcommittee’s sense is that the ELWR requirement precludes some high-performing students, including some Regents Scholars, from being invited into Honors. More importantly, it is critical that the FYHP include more non-resident (NR) and international students, many-most of whom cannot be ELWR-satisfied by the date when we invite students to join the FYHP. Consequently, if we retain ELWR satisfaction as a requirement for CA residents, and invite NR and international students without ELWR, we will have a problematic double standard. We encourage next year’s Honors Subcommittee to consider alternative “creative” solutions to identifying students who will be able to handle the reading and writing expectations of the FYHP.

3) Should FYHP students get priority enrollment? We think priority enrollment would be a big draw and would likely improve the yield.

4) Should FYHP students have an “Honors” designation on their transcript? We only considered this at the end of the year and did not come to any consensus. We encourage discussion of this point next year.

We think the strongest draw for high-achieving students, including NR and international students, would be a multi-year Honors program, across numerous Colleges, that offers priority enrollment to participants. If Honors is to succeed and thrive here at UCSC, we encourage the VPDUE and participating faculty to consider various avenues to enhance recruitment to the program and satisfaction with the UCSC experience.