

**Comprehensive Program Review Follow-Up Report  
For the Undergraduate Honors Program  
Dr. Liza Davis  
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**1. Provide evidence of *quality* enhancement of the program since 2003.**

Since 2003, the enhanced quality of the Honors Program and its initiatives has been most apparent in the work Honors students have submitted to fulfill their Honors requirements, in particular their Honors theses and capstone projects. These range from original research-based projects to sophisticated service-learning projects, and several of the written products have been published or accepted for publication in undergraduate research journals or their more prestigious counterparts.

Noteworthy, too, are the outstanding accomplishments of KSU Honors students. Since 2003, two Honors students have been awarded highly competitive fellowships by the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, one for study abroad in France and the other for graduate work in the Department of Biomedical Sciences at Emory University (which accepts only a handful of applicants). Still another Honors graduate was accepted to Cambridge University's doctoral program in linguistics. Our alumni also include lawyers and law students, doctors and medical students, and students in a wide variety of graduate or professional programs.

Evidence of quality enhancement has emerged as well in the range of Honors courses the program offers. Since 2003, two new courses have been added to the list of Honors offerings: Honors sections of English 2110, "World Literature," and, most recently, an Honors section of CSIS 2101, "Computers and our World." In addition, students have, for the first time, had the opportunity to enroll in Honors 4490, a more disciplinary specific and more rigorous version of the three-hour Honors Seminar (Honors 2290); two sections of this course have been offered over the last two years. Moreover, our Honors Seminars and Honors Colloquia have been taught by faculty from all seven colleges, giving Honors students a wider range of disciplinary perspectives. For example,

The interdisciplinary emphasis of Honors Seminars and Colloquia has remained consistent, as has the racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity embedded in these courses. However, the innovative use of instructional technology has been significantly enhanced: the program's first online course, "Using Academic Journals," will be offered in the spring of 2008.

In extracurricular contexts, the special programming we have added for students living in the Honors Residence—a presentation by an Honors Scholar, for example, explaining the process of completing a capstone project from a student's point of view, and biannual potluck dinners with the director—reflects quality enhancement. So, too, does the inclusion of two new events for the broader Honors community: a fall wine-and-cheese reception for Honors faculty (suspended this year because of budget limitations) and a spring coffeehouse/poetry reading for faculty and students.

Finally, the **65%** increase in the number of Honors faculty since 2003 points to the program's enhancement of the advising resources available to Honors students. Last year, the Honors Director completely revised the advising materials available to Honor mentors, collecting them in a comprehensive "Faculty Mentor Handbook" distributed to all honors faculty. A major restructuring and enhancement of the Honors website is also imminent. The Honors Director and Administrative Assistant have met with the webmaster about specific changes and additions to

the site, which should be completely revised (and much more useful to current and prospective Honors students) by the end of the spring term, if not earlier.

Student evaluations of Honors faculty teaching Honors courses also reflect the quality of the program; they are consistently very strong. The size and composition of the Honors Council also points to the program's productivity: of its **16** members (representing each of the seven KSU colleges), seven are full professors, three are associate professors, and three (including one of the five assistant professors) are department chairs. The Library is also represented by one of its most seasoned administrators. (The Council boasted only 10 members in 2003, so it, too, has expanded significantly.)

## **2. Provide evidence of *productivity* enhancement.**

Several significant indicators of the Honors Program's productivity (and therefore its viability) have emerged since 2003:

- an increase in the number of students graduating as Honors Scholars each year
- an increase in the number of ACTIVE Honors students
- an increase in enrollment in Honors courses
- an increase in the number of students seeking out information about the Honors Program on their own initiative
- an increase in the number of students wishing to live in Honors housing, and the acquisition, this academic year, of a special, free-standing Honors Residence Hall
- an increase in the number of Honors Faculty, whose work mentoring Honors students is crucial to its success

The increased productivity of the program has been most apparent in the significant increase in the number of students graduating as Honors Scholars. **Since 2003, the number of graduates has quadrupled.**

The number of active Honors students has also grown substantially, in part because we are holding more orientations for prospective members and in part because more students are, of their own initiative, asking to join the program. Through the efforts of the current Honors administrative assistant, who has carefully gone through the Honors roster and contacted students who have been minimally active in the program, we have firmly established who is on track to complete its requirements. Where in 2003, the program had 89 students, in 2007, it now boasts 262 (a **51%** increase), all of whom are actively completing Honors requirements. While about 280 students have left or been asked to leave the program since 2003 because of GPA issues, early graduation, the decision to transfer to other institutions, or simple lack of motivation, (at one point we had nearly 400 students on the roster), 362 new students have joined; in fact, we have recruited 88 new students this calendar year, and that trend shows no signs of diminishing. Furthermore, the Honors Director has recently committed to meeting immediately with each student who joins the program at one of the seven Honors orientations we hold each year. During a half-hour appointment, they establish a timeline for completing the six Honors requirements and discuss specific ways of individualizing these requirements to accommodate the student's interests and scheduling priorities. This fall, the director individually advised 86 new and over 100 returning Honors students. Experience has shown that direct and consistent contact with the director increases retention and graduation rates.

The number of Honors students enrolling in Honors courses has also increased significantly. For example, in 2003, 52 students enrolled in Honors 3000, the required Honors Colloquium. In 2006, that number rose to 129—a nearly **68%** increase. At the same time, more and more students are expressing an interest in special Honors housing, which became available in a special wing of University Village, Building 2000, in the fall of 2004. That year, fourteen students lived in the Honors wing; in 2005 and 2006, 25 and 22 students lived in the Honors Wing, respectively. This year, the number of Honors residents has risen to 34 (a **70%** increase), in part because the 5000 Building in University Village, a separate structure with 36 beds in 12 spacious three-bedroom apartments, was designated exclusively for Honors students at the beginning of the fall term.

Of note, too, is the nearly **40%** increase in the number of Honors Faculty since 2003.

### **3. Identify the action plans and priorities from the 2003 Follow-Up Report that have been accomplished.**

Of the nine “action plans and priorities” in Section I of the “2003 Follow-Up Report on the Continuous Improvement of the Undergraduate Honors Program,” seven have been fully or partially realized.

The first initiative on the list, “To design and implement an Honors Faculty workshop on incorporating environmental themes and concepts into existing courses or creating new courses in environmental sustainability,” came to fruition in October of 2004, when faculty from across campus, as well as several students, came together on a Friday and Saturday morning to participate in discussions of “Sustaining a Green University.” Presenters included the director of a national consortium of scholars and consultants committed to advancing environmental education across the curriculum; a faculty member in the Emory School of Public Health and expert in the environmental impact of urban sprawl; and KSU faculty who were already incorporating sustainable themes into their courses. In addition to hearing these presentations and participating in the discussions that followed, workshop participants paired off and brainstormed ways of weaving environmental sustainability into courses as disparate as English 1101 and Accounting 2100. The follow-up to the workshop was a “Green Lunch” held the following semester and attended by an even greater number of faculty and students, some of whom had begun implementing the action plans they had outlined at the workshop.

It is worth noting that one of the Honors students who attended the workshop, Robert Phillips, was so inspired by what he heard that he subsequently focused his general interest in biology on environmental science. For his Honors capstone project, Mr. Phillips did extensive research and, with the support of his Honors mentor, Dr. Bill Ensign (who also attended the workshop), created a curriculum and supporting materials for a sophisticated college-level course in environmental sustainability.

The second initiative, “To distribute travel funds in the Honors Program budget more equitably so that students can travel to state, regional, and, when possible, national honors conferences and give presentations,” has been realized, though not consistently. In the spring of 2004, six KSU Honors students presented at the annual meeting of the Georgia Collegiate Honors Council, and the following spring three presented at the annual conference of the Southern Regional Honors Council. In the fall of 2006, the Honors budget was able to pay registration and food expenses for one Honors student who made two presentations at the National Collegiate Honors Council’s annual meeting; this student covered her own airfare and shared a hotel room with the Honors director. In 2007, the Dean of University College kindly covered travel expenses for two honors

students to attend conferences in their disciplines; the Honors budget remains an erratic source of funding for student travel.

Other initiatives that were realized included the creation and appointment of an Honors Student Council, more ample provision of scholarship information and advising to Honors students (though not in the formal packet described in the 2003 follow-up report), the development of a survey assessing the success of Honors graduates (not yet implemented), and an increase in the number of study abroad experiences through which Honors students were allowed to earn Honors credit.

**4. Identify the action plans and priorities from the 2003 Follow-Up Report that still need to be addressed and indicate a timeline for their completion. If specific action plans and priorities have changed since 2003, please explain.**

Of the action plans not yet implemented, or only partially fulfilled, the most significant is to administer a special survey assessing the success of Honors graduates (this data has been collected informally, primarily through conversations with the graduates themselves), ask current graduating seniors to fill out the exit survey the director has designed, and to revise the general Honors assessment instrument so that it more accurately measures the degree of satisfaction Honors students feel in completing their Honors requirements. As already noted, consistently providing travel funds for Honors students attending Honors conferences has also been a challenge, in part because of budget restraints across the university and in part because KSU's Honors Program has lacked external financial support.

The assessment issues are to be addressed by the end the spring 2008 semester; in fact, we hope to provide all the students graduating this fall with an exit survey. Other Honors students will receive with a revised assessment questionnaire or survey in the spring.

Writing a grant and seeking an endowment for the enhancement of the Honors Program are more long-range projects. The Honors Director plans to meet with the Assistant Dean of University College in the spring to discuss grant opportunities and the possibility of approaching the KSU Foundation regarding the establishment of a permanent endowment.

One final goal not yet realized is to work with the Director of the Sturgis Library to provide special check-out privileges for Honors students; this should be fully realized by the fall of 2008.

A new (or renewed) priority for the Honors Program, which is now a mid-sized program almost 300 strong, is to upgrade the Honors Administrative Assistant so that she can assume more advising duties, especially since the Honors Director is also the co-coordinator (and will next year be the sole coordinator) of the Interdisciplinary Studies Program. If the Honors Program is to grow, serving 500 students by 2010, advising support will be essential, and the advising structure, which now rests exclusively on the shoulders of the director and volunteer members of the Honors faculty, will need restructuring (a process that would eliminate the personal, hands-on quality of student-mentor relationships at the heart of Honors at KSU) unless the program has additional advising support.

A second priority is to find a source of funding for special events, from speakers series to coffeehouses where Honors students and faculty can mingle informally. Social activities are central to the success of any Honors Program and can significantly increase its visibility. In addition, we need additional funding for Honors publications, especially those we use in marketing the program to entering students.

- 5. Address the current status of the program's *viability*. If it is viable, justify whether the program should be sustained, reconfigured, or enhanced.**
  - a. Indicate how the program advances specific goals and action steps of KSU's strategic plan.**

KSU's Honors Program is crucial to the RPG initiative described under Goal 2 of KSU's strategic plan, not, perhaps, in terms of the sheer number of graduates it produces, but certainly in terms of their quality and their potential to enhance KSU's reputation as an outstanding academic institution. Many of these students will soon be poised to become significant benefactors to the program. The Honors Program also addresses Action Step 4 under Goal 3, increasing participation in internships and other career-building activities, through its applied learning requirement. Recently the students chosen for the "Presidential Leadership Program" also joined the Honors Program, and that collaboration will continue, helping to advance Action Step 7 under Goal 3. Finally, Goal 5, Action Step 9, creating a campus culture that "assures an appreciation of diversity and ethical behavior," is already being realized in a number of the Honors courses, many of which incorporate cultural and ethnic diversity into the curriculum, and a concomitant emphasis on ethics. In Honors English 2110, for example, students study literature from Africa, North and South America, Europe, and Asia under the theme "Resisting, Negotiation, and Expanding Boundaries," a topic that brings ethical, as well as cross-cultural, issues to the fore.

- b. Identify resources need to strengthen the program's ability to meet the goals of KSU's quality enhancement plan.**

Kennesaw State's Honors Program has addressed Goal 8 of the Quality Enhancement Plan, promoting global learning and its value, since its inception, largely through Honors courses such as "The Defense of Western Values vs. Multiculturalism," "Structure of International News Media," "Australia: An Interdisciplinary Focus on Biodiversity," "Shrinking the Global Village: Perception and Identity in Technology-Mediated Intercultural Communication with China," "Africa Presented by its Oral Historians: A Study of West Africa's History, Music and Oral Traditions," "An Exploration of Cultures: Toward Cultural Competence," and "Folio Thinking for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Global Citizen: What? Why? How?" However, finding faculty to teach these classes is becoming more and more challenging with the precipitous rise in KSU enrollment. Department chairs are understandably less and less inclined to give course releases for faculty wishing to teach innovative Honors courses. More funding is needed, then, to enable department chairs to replace faculty who have been released to teach Honors courses—a common practice in many Honors Programs. Enhancing the program's global learning initiatives through Honors scholarships for study abroad would also strengthen its response to the QEP, a long-term goal that will require working with the KSU Foundation to find a donor and endowment for the Honors Program.

- c. Not applicable**
  - d. Identify the resources needed to sustain, reconfigure, or enhance the program's quality and productivity.**

**While the Honors Program is viable in most respects, its resources need significant enhancement.**

As mentioned above, the advising responsibilities the Honors Administrative Assistant has already assumed make her upgrade to an Administrative Coordinator essential. Since those responsibilities have increased this year with the introduction of the Interdisciplinary Studies major, and will be amplified next year when Dr. Chan, the IDS Co-Coordinator is on leave, Ms. Lerner's salary should be increased to at least \$30, 000 a year.

Given the program's special emphasis on faculty-student mentor relationships, providing the funding described in Action Step 8 of the Strategic Plan's second goal, "To improve retention, progression, and graduation rates, while maintaining high quality," is essential. We need some means of rewarding Honors faculty who give extensive time and energy to mentoring Honors students, whether through additional travel funds, research stipends, or course releases.

Finally, as suggested above, more funding is needed for Honors publications that can more effectively market the program, as well as Honors social events and travel for Honors students wishing to present at state, regional, and national Honors conferences.