

EXTERNAL CONSULTING REPORT
FOR THE HONORS ACADEMY TASK FORCE
RADFORD UNIVERSITY

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as much as they do to the Honors Academy as a campus academic unit. As is often the case in honors programs and honors colleges that have grown rather informally over the years, the collection of longitudinal data may not have been mandated by the university administration. In this context, it will be noted that the Honors Academy does not have formal policies and procedures document that has been approved at the Provost level, and the lack of such a mandate can well lead to less than enthusiastic support by other campus units that may view the Honors Academy as peripheral to their own missions in particular or the university's academic mission in general. Similarly, the Honors Academy does not have a formal comprehensive strategic plan approved by the central administration that contains measurable success factors, nor does it prepare and disseminate a comprehensive annual report for each academic year.

The reports shared with me were succinct and no doubt accurate in terms of the picture that they painted, but they were not particularly data heavy in their content (although the Honors Academy Accomplishments 2002-2009 presents some comparative data over this time period) readers

III. THE RADFORD UNIVERSITY HONORS ACADEMY IN THE CONTEXT

while expressing support for the Honors Academy, seemed to be that "honors" simply means "more difficult." Within the National Collegiate Honors Council, there is widespread agreement that honors means "different" rather than "more difficult." Typically, honors courses are expected to be interactive, involve a great deal of discussion, and facilitate close student and student-faculty interaction. Fortunately, Dean Oert (Business and Economics) was able to comment on the successes achieved by the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College at the University of Mississippi as it has employed the NCHC approach of "different, rather than just more difficult."

While walking through the university bookstore and the food court area in Dalton Hall, I asked six students and two faculty members not on my schedule meetings about their perceptions of the Honors

One searches in vain for exterior signage at Radford University that directs a visitor (or prospective student) to the Honors Academy Office. Once the office has been located, however, it provides a very welcoming setting. In addition to the Director's Office, there is an open reception area, storage and work spaces and a spacious conference room. The furniture is relatively new, quite attractive and well maintained. One drawback of current office space is that the Associate Director's office is located in a different building. When the Associate Director is not in that office, the best he can do is post a note on his door indicating where he can be found. Another drawback is that there is no indoor gathering space for honors students, but because it is located in a residence hall at least the students who live there have alternative gathering space.

The classrooms allocated for some Honors Academy classes are not nearly so attractive or suitable. The classroom that I visited was in the basement of the residence hall where the Associate Director's office is located. The computer equipment appeared to be significantly behind the times, broken tables were stacked against the back wall of the room (something that I was told is a rather common occurrence). Materials belonging to residential life were stacked in the windows, giving the room a disorderly appearance. The Associate Director related that he frequently finds that residence students have completely rearranged the room's furniture in the evening or over the weekend so that he must do his best to put the room back into its intended configuration as a classroom before the next honors class can meet. A question that seems appropriate at this point is whether Radford University would be proud to show this classroom to prospective honors Academy freshmen as part of a campus recruiting visit.

There was mention of the possibility of moving the Honors Academy to a recently acquired building across the street from the new College of Business and Economics building. At a later date, I would

just over 1,000 active participant honors students, we have three full-time professional honors academic counselors who each advise approximately 250 honors students and both the Honors Director and Assistant Director advise approximately 100 honors students.

Regardless of the approach adopted, those providing honors advising should be committed to the goals of the Honors Academy and fully conversant with its policies and procedures. It is important that the Honors Director be able to influence the selection of honors advisors and have full access to the results of evaluations of honors advisors.

I am not aware of instances at Radford University in which honors courses or pedagogies have spread beyond the Honors Academy into the wider campus community.

The Honors Academy has engaged in assessment activities on a periodic basis, and the appointment of the Honors Academy Task Force by Provost Minner indicates strong university commitment to more extensive assessment and evaluation. Similarly, although less regularly, NCHC Recommended Site Visitors have been brought to campus to serve as outside consultants.

Undergraduate research is certainly encouraged at Radford University, as is participation in conferences by its students. There is less indication of support for international study and campus internships engaged in by Honors Academy students, and further there is no direct link between such valuable experiences and Honors Academy requirements.

Although I understand that a significant number of Radford University students are transfer students, no such articulation agreements exist with the year institutions from which these students come. Such articulation agreements are extremely useful in spelling out how transfer honors credit will be counted

enough, the same term had been used in this student's high school. I understand that it may very well be that there is a persuasive argument to be made for the use of the term "Academy," but it is at least worth considering whether having terminology outside the "honors mainstream" might be detrimental to the recruiting of future honors students.

- (4) Coordinating the junior and senior level college and departmental/college honors experience, including meeting with departmental personnel (who are clearly the backbone of this experience, and whose function has continued with much support from the central office), and encouraging honors courses in the departments and colleges.
- (5) Disseminating information on the honors experiences for recruiting purposes and to assist students to graduate with honors by being an authoritative central clearinghouse for honors information.
- (6) Supervising a parallel honors advising system for students with regard to honors requirements, honors courses, and transition from General to Departmental/College Honors in a manner that supplements the academic advising already provided in departments with regard to the major and degree requirements.
- (7) Developing and supervising a system for tracking and maintaining records on honors students as well as responding to administrative requests for honors information (including statistics on the programs, students, scholarships, and potential recruits).
- (8) Certifying students for all honors awards on the transcript and diploma.
- (9) Providing the staff to groom students from freshman year to be competitors in national scholarship competitions (Rhodes, Truman, Fulbright, Goldwater, Madison, Udall, etc.).
- (10) Serving as the spokesperson and advocate for the ability students in the appropriate councils and forums.
- (11) Preparing the honors narrative and data for the [Regional Accrediting Agency] self study and accreditation efforts.
- (12)

number of years have a greater rate of success and national visibility than those whose commitment to Honors is only for a short period. Longevity is important for continuity and community. A Director/Dean must establish close working relationships with students, other faculty, administrators, the community, alumni, and other state, regional and national honors organizations in order to thrive. In addition, he/she must ~~not~~ develop curricula, policies, traditions, and many other facets of honors education that take time. (For this reason, I would encourage the Honors Academy Task Force to explore the possibility of changing the Honors Director's term from a three-year renewable appointment to serving at the pleasure of the Provost for an indefinite term while retaining the 12-month full

accomplishments of Honors Academy students are clearly communicated to hometown newspapers, both to recognize those students and also to provide a subtle form of recruitment for additional outstanding students. Similar efforts should be undertaken with the campus newspaper. In addition to the annual research day, other events might be considered. For example, President Kyle volunteered that she would be willing to host Honors Academy students (perhaps those completing their honors requirements) in her home as a way to celebrate their achievements. If the Board of Visitors were so inclined and the university's administration were supportive, it might be advantageous to have exemplary Honors

APPENDIX A

CHECKLIST FOR AN EXTERNAL HONORS PROGRAM OR HONORS COLLEGE REVIEW

1. Please provide a self-study containing a brief history of the Honors Program or Honors College. As part of your self-study, use of the National Collegiate Honors Council's "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program" and (if applicable) "Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College" to help the site visitors assess how the Honors Program or Honors College meets or does not meet each of the characteristics. Please specify any short-term or long-term goals with regard to these characteristics.

2. Additional documents to be provided in advance of the visit if not contained in the self-study report:

- a. college (university) catalog
- b. mission statement of the Honors Program/College
- c. Honors Program (Honors College) strategic plan [if applicable]
- d. position descriptions for Honors director (dean) and Honors office staff
- e. recruiting materials for the college (university) in general and the Honors Program (Honors College) in particular
- f. Honors Program (Honors College) budget for the past five years, including salary for Honors director and an average salary figure for assistant or associate deans and directors across campus (or of the Honors dean and an average salary figure for deans across campus)
- g. Honors Program (Honors College) policies and procedures documents
- h. Honors Program (Honors College) annual reports for past five years
- i. listing and description of Honors courses offered in past five years (if not included in annual reports)
- j. longitudinal data of Honors course offerings and student participation in the Honors Program (Honors College) over the past five years (if not included in annual reports)
- k. participation in NCHC and Regional Honors Council activities (if not included in annual reports)
- l. evaluation materials used for Honors classes
- m. evaluation materials used for Honors advising
- n. Honors Program (Honors College) assessment approaches and results
- o. information about any scholarships or scholarship programs dedicated to Honors students
- p. information about links between Honors and overseas programs
- q. guidelines or manuals for thesis or creative projects
- r. information about any privileges (early enrollment, etc.) that Honors students receive
- s. information on role, if any, of the Honors Program (Honors College) in promotion and decisions
- t. structure of and administrative policies concerning the student Honors organization
- u. facilities of the Honors Program (Honors College)
- v. prior review reports, if applicable.

3. Conversations while on Campus

- a. college (university) president and the chief academic officer of the college (university)
- b. vice provost for academic affairs
- c. deans of undergraduate colleges involved with Honors program (Honors college)
- d. Honors Program (Honors College) director (dean)
- e. Honors Program (Honors College) office staff
- f. open meeting with faculty for Honors courses [limited to these faculty]
- g. faculty and student Honors committees
- h. open meeting with Honors students [limited to these students]
- i. representatives of honors alumni organization (in person or by proxy) [limited to these representatives]

APPENDIX B

POLICIES & PROCEDURES OF THE HONORS COLLEGE
Oklahoma State University

Approved by the Provost on December 9, 2010 [All previous editions are superseded.]

- 5-2. Grades Required in Honors Work
- 5-3. Top Ten Percent Option for College
- 5-4. Honors for The Honors College Degree Candidates
- 5-5. Community Service Option
- 5-6.

University Student Honors Council to establish and review policies and procedures for The Honors Colleges. Consistent with these policies and procedures, The Honors College shall:

- (1) disseminate information about Honors requirements, benefits, awards, and Honors College Degree recipients to prospective Honors students and other interested publics through direct communication, university publications, teleconferencing, and the news media;
- (2) admit students to The Honors College, maintain records concerning their continued eligibility for The Honors College and their progress toward Honors College awards, and certify their Honors College awards and Honors College Degrees to the Registrar;
- (3) provide special Honors academic advising through The Honors College Office by faculty and professional staff who themselves have earned Honors Program or Honors College degrees;

for regularly-accepted freshmen, and anticipated number of continuing College students. Conditionally admitted freshmen may enroll for honors classes during the summer enrollment period as long as space is available.

3-1-2. Entering Freshmen by Petition.

Entering freshmen who fall just short of the criteria specified above may submit a written petition for admission to The Honors College, using a form provided by the College at the request of the student. The Director shall review the petition and supporting documents provided by the student and, in consultation with University Honors Council faculty representative from the undergraduate college in which the student proposes to major (if a faculty representative is available), determine whether the student appears to demonstrate high potential for success in The Honors College and merit admission under this section. The number of new freshmen entering by petition shall be limited to no more than approximately five percent of the number of entering freshmen admitted to The Honors College.

3-1-3. Transfer and Continuing Students. Transfer and continuing students who have earned at least seven (7) college credit hours will be eligible on the basis of a cumulative college grade point average which meets eligibility requirements for honors course enrollment. [See 2-1.] Students other than new freshmen who do not meet the OSU and cumulative grade point average requirements because of grades earned at least two years prior to application for admission to the College may petition for provisional admission on the b

4-9. TRANSCRIPT ENTRY. Upon completion of the College or Departmental Honors Award, a transcript entry shall be made indicating College Honors

10-3. HONORS COLLEGE STUDY LOUNGE. Active participants in The Honors College are entitled to use The Honors College Study Lounge in Old Central.

10-4. EXTENDED LIBRARY CHECK -OUT PRIVILEGES.

