

Higher Learning Commission  
**Self-Study Questionnaire/Report for Non-Instructional Units**

Non-Instructional Unit: University Honors Program

Individual(s) Completing the Questionnaire/Report: Roxanne DePaul, Ph.D.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Describe in a paragraph or two what your unit does (i.e., the services it provides).

The University Honors Program (UHP) provides highly motivated and academically talented undergraduate students the opportunity to develop their intellectual abilities to the fullest extent possible. Those who come to the university with special academic talents and/or extensive backgrounds in specific disciplines are, through the UHP, provided with instructional options which should be designed to challenge their abilities, facilitate professional and personal goals, and to increase awareness of diversity and encourage a more global perspective.

2. Who is/are the constituency/ies you serve, and approximately how many of each constituency do you serve annually? (e.g., students, academic departments, classified staff, etc.)

The UHP serves a select set of undergraduate students. Students are admitted to the honors program either as freshmen when specific academic inclusion criteria are met, or as continuing or transfer students with a minimum 3.4 gpa. Continued membership is dependent on maintaining academic performance at a minimum 3.4 gpa.

The program maintains an active computer roster or group, typically ranging from 200-250 students. The students are usually recruited as incoming freshman (90-110 new students). Active involvement begins in the general studies classes for these students. Following the first semester when general studies honors courses are not as available or when students decide not to continue in those classes involvement begins to decrease.

Approximately 10% of the honors group is very active in the program (20-25 students). As students proceed in the major their involvement in the UHP decreases as opportunities more specific to their career goals emerge. The trend appears to support that approximately 25% of the very active students actually graduate with 21 honors credits.

3. Overview and evaluate the adequacy of the human, physical, and fiscal resources your department deploys to serve students and meet other programmatic needs by answering the questions below:

**Human Resources**

Evaluate the general adequacy of the human resources (i.e., the # of employees (including student help) and their skills) relative to the unit's ability to serve the constituencies identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between "1" (**completely inadequate**) to "9" (**completely satisfies needs**).

Six student hourly employees (ranges 5 to 6 student) Rating: 7 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

The current student staff consists of three seniors, one junior and two sophomores. Each academic year new students of lower class rank are recruited, hired and trained by the senior staff. Student staff has represented 3 colleges: COE, CBE and L&S. The varied majors reflect different skills and talents and in this way they complement each other.

The rating of 7 is justified because there are positive and negative aspects of a student staff. The positive attributes include: (1) cost effectiveness (no benefits and use of work-study), (2) motivation to do well as high achievers seeking pay raises, (3) personal investment in program success, and (4) calibrating the director about student attitudes and program management.

The negative aspect is that the director must be more vigilant about many more details. If the staff is trained, the office is well-run. Inherent in rotating six students is that continuity on projects and task completion is not always as efficient due to staff shift changes. In addition, the director's part-time status may result in some staff never coming under the director's direct supervision. The other pitfall related to part-time presence of the director is that the more experience the staff accrues, the bigger the range of decision making they may exercise. Sometimes unapproved student staff decisions need to be rescinded which takes time away from other tasks.

### Physical Resources

Evaluate the general adequacy of the physical resources (e.g., office and storage space, supporting technology, other equipment) allocated to the unit relative to the unit's ability to serve the constituencies identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

Rating = 7      1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

The major contributing factor to the rating of "7" is that the UHP has the benefit of its own space. Previously the location was deemed by some to be too remote. However, as the program developed and gained an increased campus presence, the location and its quiet privacy has become a positive feature. The actual room distribution of the space is not optimal, however. For example, the seminar room is too small for an honors class. This seminar space can manage about 12 students comfortably, and is most often used for small study groups and/or quiet computer work. The outer lounge is the area of greatest usage. The director's office serves three purposes: director's office, a meeting/work space and as the main office where files are stored.

### Fiscal Resources

While recognizing that every unit would benefit from a larger budget, evaluate the general adequacy of fiscal resources allocated to the unit to serve its constituencies and achieve other programmatic goals by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

Rating = 9      1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

The rating of "9" is justified because the UHP budget is part of the Provost's budget. The UHP director has maintained spending at the target level. Access to Dwyer funds offsets some expenditures. The Provost's office has supported the program unequivocally.

In a paragraph or two, overview significant changes made in your unit since 1996 (i.e., the last North Central Association Accreditation Visit). (e.g., re-organized, key staff changes, change in purposes, etc.)

Each year since the current director's tenure began, the program (academic year 2000-2001) has established initiatives. Five categories have been addressed annually in the AAS evaluation: administrative goals, public relations, academic program goals, student goals, and program development goals. Significant changes have occurred in some categories. The approach has been to build the physical and administrative infrastructure first (i.e., develop the space, office procedures, etc.), with curriculum development as the current and prospective focus. The mission and purpose have not changed, however, implementation of a viable honors program has been and continues to be the focus of development.

In another paragraph or two, describe why these changes occurred.

These changes have occurred because the UHP has not been developed to its potential. The lack of an identity for highly motivated students at UWW needed to be corrected. UWW provides a large array of programs for all types of learners; the UHP focuses on the highest achievers. The development of the UHP has been viewed as a positive contributing factor to retention and graduation rate.

**MISSION & PLANNING**

In a paragraph or two, describing any significant projects/initiatives that your unit is planning or currently has underway, but has not yet completed.

During the 2004-2005 academic year, the director has initiated the restructuring of the academic program. The proposed change is to shift the UHP to a general studies program which focuses on building this community of excellent students prior to entering course work in the major. That is, the 21 H-credits would be completed in general studies. This programmatic shift will occur gradually as we engage an honors faculty and gain support from the appropriate academic and administrative committees and/or individuals.

Below are five "core values" the University identifies as central to its purposes and operation. Please evaluate the importance of each core value in terms of how each aligns with the purposes of your unit (i.e., take a hypothetical 100 points and distribute them among the five values, with those values that align more closely to the purposes of your unit receiving more points).

| Core Value   | Importance (100 points) |
|--|-------------------------|
| Commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding                                   | 40                      |
| Development of the individual  | 20                      |
| Personal and professional integrity  | 10                      |
| Commitment to serve  | 10                      |
| Commitment to develop a sense of community, respect for diversity, and global perspectives | 20                      |
| <b>Total=</b>  | <b>100 points</b>       |

Each and every academic and non-academic unit engages in planning for the future. Review the list of variables below and evaluate the extent to which each of the following influences decision-making behind the planning

process for your unit (i.e., take a hypothetical 100 points and distribute them among the planning variables listed below, with those variables playing the larger role in your unit's planning efforts receiving more points)

| Planning Variables   | Importance (100 points) |
|--|-------------------------|
| The mission of the university or the unit  | 30                      |
| Academic assessment data/information relevant to student performance against learning outcomes | 20                      |
| Other data/information gathered relevant to performance (e.g., Audit & Review feedback)        | 0                       |
| Societal/Cultural trends (e.g., changes in demographics, lifestyles, professions)              | 10                      |
| Campus trends (e.g., changes in university-initiated needs and demands)                        | 2.5                     |
| Technology trends (e.g., technology developments that affect delivery of service)              | 10                      |
| Professional trends (e.g., changes evident at other universities/colleges)                     | 2.5                     |
| Available human resources (e.g., # of employees, talents, etc.) within the unit                | 2.5                     |
| Available financial resources (e.g., budget, available and accessible \$)                      | 2.5                     |
| Available physical resources (e.g., space, existing technology, etc.)                          | 20                      |
| Other:   |                         |
| <b>Total=</b>  | <b>100 points</b>       |

9. Does your unit have a mission statement?

Yes  No

If you answered "yes," please list the mission statement here. Also, if your mission statement can be accessed on the web, please list the URL here.

<http://acadaff.uww.edu/Honors/>

The University Honors Program (UHP) is based on the belief that each student should be given the opportunity to develop his or her intellectual abilities to the fullest extent possible. Those who come to the university with special academic talents and/or extensive backgrounds in specific disciplines are, through the UHP, provided with instructional options which will challenge their abilities and allow them to more closely reach their full intellectual potential.

If you answered "yes," please describe how, if at all, this mission statement plays a role in your unit's planning and/or decision-making.

The mission statement clarifies the notion that the honors program is about providing opportunities for motivated students. This provides a goal for administering the program to grow and develop toward achieving that prime objective.

#### 10. OPERATION AND PERFORMANCE

What are the major or measurable objectives of the unit?

Graduating with 21 honors credits (H credits).

What outcome measures (i.e., data, information) provide evidence that your unit's objectives are being met?

The objective is met, but a target graduation rate does not exist because the curriculum does not provide a simple viaduct for program completion. Over the last five years, the average number of students graduating with university honors has ranged from 4-7.

Related to question #10, does the unit regularly collect data/information to evaluate how effectively it serves its constituency(ies)? (This might include surveys of constituencies.)

Yes

No

If "yes," please list specific data/information sets that the UW-W Self-Study Committees, and/or the Higher Learning Commission's Visiting Accreditation Team can access to review/consult.

We have not developed a regular assessment instrument. We have experimented with different surveys. One of the major issues has been that the very active student cohort is very small. If the assessments are distributed to all students, the comments/rating and information often reflects their lack of participation in the program. As such, we have experimented with questions that would separate the sample based on their actual involvement with the program and the director. Since the sample is very small, the director would prefer that some of the assessment questions for quantification be included on the university assessment for UHP students. We have found that running focus groups with the active students has been more productive for programmatic decision making. The director has run them casually by engaging several students in a small group discussion format with specific issues and open-ended discussion. The other venue has been through the Honors Student Association (HSA). The student officers raise questions posed by the director, other students or have open-discussion sessions about the program. In this way, specific feedback is provided. In addition, the student staff is a continuous feedback stream to administration.

In a paragraph or two, describe specific changes to the unit's operation or planning, if any, have resulted from the collection and use of the data/information identified in the preceding questions? Please be specific.

The students do not feel that the university offers a viable honors general studies curriculum. Our current initiative is focused on that point. However, the university needed to approach this weakness in a prudent way given the significant financial limits in the UWS.

Please provide a list of services, if any, that your unit provides for constituencies that are external to the university.

N/A

Please list any partnerships your unit has developed with the community (external to the campus, at the local, national, or global-level).

**STUDENT LEARNING** (COMPLETE THIS SECTION ONLY IF YOUR UNIT HAS AS PART OF ITS MISSION OR PURPOSES THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS)

If your unit serves students as its primary constituency, does the unit have learning or development-related objectives relevant to its work with students? That is, does your unit expect that students will acquire certain knowledge or skill sets as a direct result of working with your unit or its programming?

Yes x No

If "yes," please list these outcomes/objectives.

Program expectation of a 3.4 GPA

Does the unit use data/information to evaluate the extent to which these learning or development-related objectives are, or are not being met?

Yes x No

If "yes," please list specific data/information sets that the UW-W Self-Study Committees, and/or the Higher Learning Commission's Visiting Accreditation Team can access to review/consult.

We obtain data from the registrar's office reflecting the GPA status, and number of honors credits obtained several times during the year. We are in the process of completing what we will refer to as the Honors report, which is a transcript of honors credits completed by all students in the active computer group.

What specific changes to the unit's operation or planning, if any, have resulted from the collection and use of the data/information identified in question #13? Please be specific.

Active computer group enrollment management can only be achieved with a list of the active roster. This must be requested from the registrar's office. From there the director uses discretion as to which students should get removed from the program group. This list, along with the Honors report, provides accurate enrollment data. In turn, accurate data may be used use to generate and/or contribute to institutional profiles on the UHP students.

SELF-EVALUATION

Strengths

List and prioritize no more than three primary strengths that have emerged in your unit's efforts to meet its mission, goals, or objectives. To identify these strengths, you may wish to consider: What does your unit do very well? What good things do people say about your unit? How has your unit aided the campus in meeting its mission? In what ways has your unit "gone beyond the call of duty?"

After identifying each strength, specify supporting evidence that suggests that the statement is true. This may include data/information gathered relevant to unit performance, trend data, information gathered from audits or external agencies visit, etc.

Specific Strength 1: High achieving freshman are placed into a more homogeneous and competitive learning environment.

Supporting Evidence:

The Honors preview demonstrates that high achieving incoming freshmen are interested in a more competitive learning environment. Since the advent of English 105 two years ago, we have enrolled to maximum capacity (20 seats) 5 sections. Speech 110 honors sections are always filled and frequently over-enrolled. Fall 2005 new freshmen enrollment was 102.

Specific Strength 2: The Director provides individual student support, advising and professional mentoring and goal setting for students actively involved in the program.

Supporting Evidence:

The UHP director works directly with individual students who request scholarship assistance, opportunities for travel abroad, projects for presentation at NCHC or NCUR, apply to graduate and/or professional schools. As a result of these relationships, letters of recommendation can be personal and specific.

Evidence: Consistent high acceptance rate to the NCHC (11 presentations at NCHC 2004), UWW campus scholarships, PhiEtaSigma scholarships, premed and pharmacy shadow experiences, Washington Center Interns, medical, law school and graduate school application support.

**Specific Strength 3: The UHP program enrollment provides insight into how high achieving incoming freshmen influence retention and graduation rates.**

**Supporting Evidence:**

With the fairly recent availability of the honors computer group in Peoplesoft, institutional research (IR) can determine the specific retention and/or graduation rate of students who were active in the UHP. For example, the most current program data (Spring 2005) following the first freshman semester showed that of the 102 freshman enrolled, 23.4% (24) freshman fell below the 3.4 gpa (37.5% [3.385-3.118 gpa] and 62.75% [2.813-2.313 gpa]) criterion, while 26.5% attained a 4.0gpa. IR can track this type of cohort to determine its effect on retention and graduation rates.

### Concerns

List and prioritize no more than three primary concerns that have emerged in your unit's efforts to meet its mission, goals, or objectives. To identify these concerns, you may wish to consider: What could be improved? What is done poorly? What do we, as a unit, avoid doing, even though we know it's important?

After identifying each concern, specify supporting evidence that suggests that the statement is true. This may include data/information gathered relevant to unit performance, trend data, information gathered from audits or external agencies visit, etc.

Finally, identify one or more recommended actions to address the area of concern. This may include actions that your unit has already begun, actions being planned, or preliminary thinking about how to address the area of concern.

**Specific Concern 1: Strong leadership and program development and excellence.**

**Supporting Evidence:**

The current director has a 50% appointment, with the other 50% primarily engaged in graduate education and off-site clinical (medical) training. As such, time is limited for the honors program and limited time also impedes strong completion of annual goals. Progress is slow and many smaller initiatives are left undone or forgotten.

One of the major contributing factors to this limitation is the responsibility of a physical space for a part-time faculty member with a student staff. The levels of accountability and responsibility are physically challenging. The balance of the two very separate professional responsibilities demands strict time management.

**Recommended Actions:**

The action that would be most prudent but also comes with a cost is the integration of the physical space with other programs. Previously, the UHP director has expressed the view that a more cost-effective approach and more collaborative approach would have been to combine or congregate the physical space to include the UHP, Undergraduate Research and International Study Abroad. Student staff resources could be shared, supervision could overlap providing more flexibility and collegial support, and technological upgrades would be shared. The current divided set-up (UHP and the other two programs) has underutilized space.

**Specific Concern 2: The UHP does not have an honors faculty.**

**Supporting Evidence:**

Only one current faculty member has taught an honors section for more than 3 years in a row.

**Recommended Actions:**

Develop a viable curriculum and a faculty to support it. This is a current initiative.

According to NCHC: Faculty participating in the program should be fully identified with the aims of the program.

They should be carefully selected on the basis of exceptional teaching skills and the ability to provide intellectual leadership to able students.

**Specific Concern 3: Should there be a target completion rate for UHP?**

**Supporting Evidence:**

A completion target rate can only be achieved if there are viable honors courses offered to support program completion. For example, there is only one upper division honors course offered this semester and no freshmen courses. A sustainable program depends on consistent offerings independent of financial constraints. According to the NCHC: there should be an honors curriculum featuring special courses, seminars, colloquia and independent study established in harmony with the mission statement and in response to the needs of the program.

**Recommended Actions:**

Develop a general studies program that consists of a prescribed curriculum with enough opportunities to retain and maintain involvement of high achieving students. Develop a faculty committed to honors teaching.