

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Honors Program

Box 41017
Lubbock, TX 79409-1017
(806) 742-1828
FAX: (806) 742-1805

To: Members of the Faculty Senate

From: Gary M. Bell, Honors Director

Date: August 28, 1997

Dear Colleagues:

Enclosed is a copy of the proposal to establish an Honors College at Texas Tech. Such a proposal has received encouragement from various faculty, administrative and regental sources as Honors has coped with a huge influx of students, as administrative/course offering problems in Honors have become virtually insurmountable, and as Texas Tech continues to try to position itself among the premier institutions of both the region and the country.

I would solicit your suggestions and insights with regard to the enclosed proposal—which is, of course, submitted for discussion purposes only.

Some Questions Frequently Asked about the Proposed Establishment of an Honors College at Texas Tech

1. Why do we need another administrative/bureaucratic accretion at the institution?

Basically, the structure of an Honors College is already in place with the Honors Program. The re-titling would have the advantage of adding cachet, adding status to an entity that is serving Tech well in accomplishing our mission statements. In addition, the new administrative structure would allow the hiring of Honors faculty, the lack of which is quite literally on the verge of wrecking whatever progress the Honors Program has made to date.

2. Do we really need another dean?

Again, the argument can be made that this position already exists but for the name. A deanship designation would add another primary voice to that of the existing deans in arguing for the interests of the academically-motivated, accomplished student.

3. Could we not accomplish the same ends of providing Honors classes and expanding the Honors Program by simply adding designated Honors faculty to existing departments?

The answer is unequivocally no! The reason is four-fold:

We have tried doing this in the past, and when a crunch comes, the departments will always (appropriately enough) look to their interests first. We have some departments who have been given a faculty position for Honors classes, and who have systematically refused to honor that commitment. In other cases, departments have had no compunction about switching faculty in Honors classes, about dumping weaker teachers on Honors, about dropping Honors classes with no warning to Honors, etc.

There are departments who simply will not offer Honors classes.

The Honors College has a strong interdisciplinary mission and component, and thus special faculty and courses are needed that do not fit in the traditional departmental structure.

Honors will have a teaching emphasis and a teaching mission to lower division students that currently does not exist in most departments on campus.

4. Will not an Honors College siphon off good students from traditional programs and colleges?

This will not happen since there is no proposal for students to major in Honors (such as they do in Plan II at U.T.). The Honors College will be supportive of, not competitive with existing departmental and college structures.

5. But won't an Honors College sap our existing college leadership?

Again, the answer is no. Students are currently and typically denizens of both Honors and their colleges/departments (and their fraternities/sororities, and their special interest organizations, etc.).

6. Are you not being naive to believe that developing an Honors College will solve all your problems?

No one believes that developing an Honors administration will solve all of Honors problems. What it will do is solve the problems that are threatening the Honors students and the Honors ideal on

campus—a lack of classes, shifting and dropped classes, lack of interdisciplinary possibilities not to mention expansion of interdisciplinarity, and a lack of concentrated focus on the high-achieving students.

7. Will not an Honors College take resources away from existing colleges and programs.

Funding at Texas Tech is not a zero sum experience. Funds will be made available, but from a variety of sources. For instance, Honors Colleges have traditionally proven to be magnets for outside funding. As you bring more and better students to campus, the size of the pie will expand. Already, much of the expense of a college is encompassed in what it takes to run an Honors Program. And lastly, Honors will take some of the burden off of the existing service courses.

A Proposal for an Honors College at Texas Tech University

It has long been the mission of Texas Tech University to provide the best possible education to the student/citizens of the state of Texas. It is also the declared objective of the university to become the best educational institution in the state—a goal which we have every realistic ability to achieve in providing undergraduate education. Finally, it is clear that styles of learning vary by student, and that the more motivated, the more able, the more achievement-oriented students have special needs that should be accommodated as: they contemplate where to enroll; as they begin matriculation, and then as they reflect on their record upon graduation. All of these goals and considerations have either been addressed or enhanced by the activities of the Honors Program—first begun in 1959, and substantially re-vitalized in 1993. It is now time to move towards an even fuller implementation of a superior education for outstanding students by the establishment of an Honors College at Texas Tech University.

I. Justifications

Above all, an Honors College would enhance our ability to attract increasingly large numbers of academically superior students. This has the singular benefit of enhancing the status, reputation and educational positioning of the entire university since so many current measurements of institutional academic quality rest upon the credentials of the student that an institution can claim. Moreover, this is not just an advantage of which the Honors College can boast, for all of these good students will of course find their way into the departments and colleges of Texas Tech. They will enhance the student clientele that we all serve, they will increase the college leadership upon which the individual colleges justifiably place a great deal of emphasis, and they will add to the morale of the faculty, who clearly benefit with an increased leavening of first-class students in their classes.

The specific benefits accruing to the university by the establishment of an Honors College might be specifically summarized in the following:

- ♦ In institutions where such an entity has been developed, the creation of an Honors College has been seen to increase institutional reputation. It shows that Tech is serious about academics.
- ♦ Moreover, an Honors College, which often has strong Arts and Sciences connotations, would counteract the Texas *Tech* name and image (which was apparently a criticism the last time that the Phi Beta Kappa organization considered our application).
- ♦ It would enhance our Phi Beta Kappa prospects.
- ♦ An Honors College would attract more and better students—Honors colleagues who have converted to an Honors College claim that it has added significantly to their

drawing power of the more academically competitive and motivated students in their areas.

- ◆ It would allow us to compete more effectively with sister institutions—it would give us a competitive advantage in recruiting students from both the region and the country as a whole.
- ◆ Such a structure as an Honors College could provide faculty with a setting in which Honors objectives, rather than departmental and disciplinary objectives, are met. Most importantly in this regard, it would provide the faculty that are necessary to cover the increasingly large numbers of students who need Honors classes.
- ◆ It can provide a home for interdisciplinary work in general. As this style of education becomes more widespread (consider, for instance, the demands of dealing with environmental studies), and this is indeed the educational wave of the future, Honors can serve as the focal point for interdepartmental and multi-disciplinary efforts.
 - ◆ The creation of the College would especially provide a setting for General Studies. This particular program has long desired an appropriate administrative structure within the university for its interdisciplinary emphases, and an affiliation with an Honors College would provide an admirable framework.
- ◆ It can provide a more effective administrative structure not only to attract, but also to retain and serve truly outstanding students. It would, most importantly, provide a specific advocate and champion of these students.
- ◆ An Honors College would focus on quality undergraduate education and would thus help to place this university function back in the center of attention and public perceptions about Tech.
- ◆ The establishment of Honors Colleges is most decidedly a national trend—the University of Oklahoma, University of Texas (de facto in Plan II), proposed for Texas A&M (according to Dale Knobel), Louisiana State, University of Nevada--Las Vegas, Western Michigan University, Boise State, Northwestern, University of Utah, University of Colorado (where the Honors College movement started), Washington State University, University of Oregon, Arizona State University—are just a few who have inaugurated such colleges. Expectedly, it seems to be a movement most strongly embraced by major state rather than private schools.
- ◆ A college structure can provide additional incentives for contributing money to the university, and could be an special magnet for big money during the up-coming capital campaign. One can envision, for example, a donor contributing \$10,000,000 to have such a structure named after him/her.
- ◆ It would assure the Honors Program of a base of institutional support on an on-going and permanent basis.
- ◆ An Honors College, with its necessary emphasis on teaching, would be a catalyst for innovative teaching techniques, a vehicle for faculty interaction, and a source of curricular experimentation.
- ◆ An Honors College would enhance the major programs of most departments as more and better students are attracted to Texas Tech, students who will ultimately find their way into traditional programs.

II. Faculty

One of the key reasons that an Honors College seems both imperative and timely is that the traditional college\departmental structure is proving insufficiently expansive and flexible at just the time that the Honors Program is experiencing explosive growth. We have been severely limited in the classes that we can offer, and some classes—history, computer science, political science, English, some life and physical sciences, etc.--simply must be available if we are going to service the large numbers of strong students who are making application and deserve inclusion.

From a larger perspective, however, an Honors College would accomplish one of the objectives toward which both Texas Tech and national trends in higher education have been moving for several years now. The avowed emphasis in the new college would be, emphatically and thus in part uniquely, on teaching undergraduates in the best possible manner with the best possible faculty. This includes teaching survey and lower division, multi-disciplinary courses, courses now traditionally turned over to graduate students. In these courses, an emphasis on maximum quality, innovation, creativity and interactive education would be the rule. The establishment of the Honors College would send the strongest possible message that undergraduate education is a top priority for Texas Tech University.

Size and Nature of Honors Faculty Pool

It is proposed that within the first twenty-four months of establishing an Honors College, a total of five faculty will be added to the new College. The specializations of that faculty will be determined by the Honors Council, but the emphasis would in general be on interdisciplinarity and upon teaching skills.

Hiring, Tenure and Promotion

The Honors faculty will be hired under the direction of both the Honors College and the involved departments. Honors will advertise for specific areas where expertise is deemed needed. It should be understood, however, that among the criteria for employment in the new University Honors College is an ability with multi-disciplinary perspectives—which are not typically among the traditional criteria utilized by departments when selecting new professors. Relevant departments will be consulted, and will have a 40% vote in whom to hire. Honors will also have a 60% weighted vote in the hiring process.

These faculty will be tenured under established university guidelines. They must have established a good record of teaching, service and, to a lesser extent, publications or the disciplinary equivalent. They will undergo the university-mandated process of annual

review during their probationary period, with a substantial review occurring after year three.

Their tenure and promotion shall be heavily contingent (80% is proposed) on their teaching and service responsibilities (teaching, advising in Honors, mentoring, perhaps being a participant in a residential program, etc.). Honors instructors shall have the same faculty status and the same possibilities for promotion that all faculty at TTU possess.

The Honors College shall have a substantial responsibility to evaluate teaching. The mechanism used shall consist of student evaluations, peer evaluations, portfolios, demonstrated creativity and innovation in the classroom, effective and carefully orchestrated syllabi and course hand-outs, effective use of supplementary and audio-visual materials, and mastery/currency over/of the material for which they are responsible to teach. *The objective is to create a college of scholars in the broadest sense of the word*, where excellent teaching is a given, and some creative disciplinary, interdisciplinary or honors involvement is also expected.

The Nature of Employment

The professors hired will have primary responsibility to the Honors Program, although they may teach, at times, classes in their affiliated department (this would be a rare event). The normal university workload policy shall apply to these professors. It is not envisioned that they would have graduate faculty status, and it is anticipated that they would have the primary emphasis placed on their teaching and service (mentoring, advising and facilitating in Honors) functions at the university. Some summer teaching would be desirable, with appropriate compensation paid.

III. Administration of College

The new structure will be a college in the fullest sense of the word. It will be expected to hire and administer faculty, it will determine an Honors curriculum, there will be a support staff, and it will maintain relations with the other colleges. It will be called the University Honors College, with the potential for a specific name (of a donor, a historical figure, etc.) attached in the future.

At the same time, the costs and the administrative creation in the formation of the college will be minimal because an existing structure exists in the form of the University Honors Program. It is anticipated that the structure of the Program will evolve naturally into the structure of the college, with little or no additional support personnel envisaged at this point.

Administrators/Staff

The head of the newly created college will be a dean, will have dean status, will answer directly to the Provost, will sit on the Provost's Council, and will interact with other college deans. There will, at a future date, be an associate dean (one to two years hence), chosen from faculty ranks and with tenured or tenurable status. That associate dean will sit on the Academic Council.

The staff of the college will vary as the demands placed on the college are established. Similarly the budget of the Honors College will be subjected to the same formulas, constraints and opportunities as currently exist with established colleges.

General Studies

It is proposed to incorporate the current General Studies Program into the Honors College, where experience with sister institutions plus the philosophical emphasis on interdisciplinarity both argue that this program might find a suitable home. The particular justification for this transfer is that the unusually capable students that the new college will attract will be, more than is the case with more traditional students, especially interested in exploring unique and creative courses of study. Thus, the ability to structure their major, or, for that matter, create some of their own courses, will be part of the objective of the Honors College.

The General Studies office—advisor, director and files—will be transferred to the Honors College. General Studies would function under a two track system, where Honors students would constitute one track, and where non-traditional/regular students would constitute a second track.

The General Studies Program would continue to function with its own director and its own advisory council.

It is suggested, because of currently mixed connotations, that another name be found for the General Studies program.

Students

Students will meet the same criteria to join the Honors College as currently exist to join the Honors Program. Due to unexpected enrollment pressure, minimum criteria may be raised.

Students will not, but for one exception, acquire a major in Honors (such as currently occurs at UT with Plan II).

That exception shall be the General Studies degree, an interdisciplinary degree that will be administered by the Honors College.

Student credit hour production will continue to be allocated to departments when departmental personnel are used to teach an Honors course; to the Honors College when Honors personnel are used.

Students will be encouraged to major in their traditional majors, participate fully in their traditional college programs and generally continue much as they currently function at TTU. The Honors College is seen as an adjunct to, and complement to, not a competitor with established colleges.

Miscellany

The Honors College would continue to rely upon departments to provide the majority of Honors classes, and would continue to provide a stipend for Honors classes offered by departments

The Honors College will continue to provide personalized service to Honors students, much as is the case at present.

The Honors College will not move students from traditional general education courses as are currently defined by TTU, and students will continue to take classes from the departments that currently enroll them. With respect to the often voiced concerns that an Honors College (or Program for that matter) will shift the good students out of a faculty member's class and concentrate them only in Honors classes, this would not happen except in freshman- and some sophomore- level classes. Since many of these freshman classes (the service classes as it were) are taught by teaching assistants anyway, the impact of Honors College offered, lower division classes would be minimal on the tenured faculty. Salutarily, it might even take some pressure off beleaguered departments by offering service courses for them.

IV. Curriculum

The Honors College will require and at times offer a curriculum to Honors students that consists of general education courses, as defined by TTU, and specialized courses, such as interdisciplinary science, that are crafted and staffed by Honors lecturers. But for the seminars, it is not envisioned that a large number of upper division courses will be taught. Courses taught by the Honors College will have a traditional departmental classification (i.e., HIST 2300) or an HON classification for specialized and interdisciplinary classes (as is currently the case).

In conjunction with the Honors Council, the College will implement some additional classes in an Honors core curriculum, that will supplement and in some cases fulfill, but not supplant the current general education standards (this might consist of a humanities/history of civilization. sequence, the interdisciplinary science series, a life

sciences course [from the College of Human Sciences] and an interdisciplinary fine arts course, just as examples) .

V. Financial Requirements

The establishment of the Honors College will not be as expensive as might be the case for establishing a newly autonomous college. Many of the staff and collegial positions already exist under the current Honors Program. Thus, at least for the first year, the existing budget of \$350,000.00 (which includes salaries, student assistants, M&O, and approximately \$130,000 to either compensate departments for classes, or to pay for instructors directly) will be sufficient to carry on operations.

The administrative structure is largely in place; the necessary faculty are not. It is proposed that within the first twenty-four months, a contingent of five faculty members be hired. At an average of \$35,000 salary per faculty member, plus the standard one-third for benefits, this will amount to \$46,550 per hire, or a total of \$232,750 for faculty salaries. Combined with the existing budget of \$350,000, the total expenditures for the proposed college would amount to \$582,750. It may be prudent to allocate another \$30,000 for summer Honors classes,. **This would lead to a total Honors budget of approximately \$612,750 per annum for at least the first and probably the second year. New funds would amount to \$262,750.**

Subsequent years will undoubtedly see an increase in the budget as the College grows. Faculty and staff will be needed, but the expenses of the College will be a bargain when taking into account the enhancements for the university that will occur.

VI. Future Directions

Several elements bear consideration as we consider an Honors College. At present, our space needs are partially satisfied with our move to the attractive quarters in 103 Holden Hall. The only liability with the area is that there is really no student meeting\studying\ library area, which most experts on honors education agree is necessary (see the 10 characteristics of Honors Programs, addendum no.1). An accommodation for the students needs to be determined in the near future.

It is also clear that, as the constituency of the College grows, faculty must be added. The size of the faculty will depend in large measure on the size of the Honors student cadre, but for comparison purposes, the University of Arizona, with more than 2,000 Honors students, uses six to eight full-time faculty members (hired at that school on continuing contracts).

Faculty need to be housed, and an immediate problem that must be addressed in the officing of the new Honors faculty. One would hope that room could be found for them within the confines of Holden Hall. Ultimately, it is not unreasonable to assume that an Honors College Building might be constructed, a situation that exists in many institutions that have established honors colleges. The costs of this step are indeterminate. Another direction in which Honors may want to go is to consider a "residential college" model, a situation where there is a combination of living and learning environment. In some cases the faculty also reside in the residence. This may deserve exploration at Texas Tech.

Ultimately, it would be desirable to establish several endowed chairs for Honors, where the emphasis would be upon superlative undergraduate education. This could be filled by a distinguished retired faculty member from the university or from another campus who would bring his/her insights to the campus in a particularly effective manner.

Finally, it is a hope at Tech, as well as a practice at sister institutions, that Honors will pay full value for any classes that are taught in behalf of Honors—that is, the honors college or program "buys out" a professor's time. It is hoped that this is a direction in which the new College will move, for the subject of offering Honors classes has and will continue to present problems in departments where the small enrollments and the high quality faculty needed by Honors presents on-going difficulties.

VII. Implementation Procedure

It is suggested that this proposal be first presented to the Provost's Council, and that its recommendations and modifications be incorporated.

Simultaneously, it is suggested, this proposal should go before the Faculty Senate, for its input and response.

After the above two entities deal with the issue, it is suggested that the proposal go before the President's Council.

From that point, it would seem logical to carry the proposal to the Board of Regents.

After due deliberation by interested and affected parties, it is suggested that this newly devised Honors College be functional by the start of the new fiscal year, or Sept. 1, 1998-9.

Revised 8/28/97

Basic Characteristics of a Fully-Developed Honors Program

No one model of an honors program can be superimposed on all types of institutions. However, there are characteristics which are common to successful, fully-developed honors programs. Listed below are those characteristics, although not all characteristics are necessary for an honors program to be considered a successful and/or fully-developed honors program.

1. A fully-developed Honors Program should be carefully set up to accommodate the special needs and abilities of the undergraduate students it is designed to serve. This entails identifying the targeted student population by some clearly articulated set of criteria (e.g., GPA, SAT score, a written essay). A program with open admission needs to spell out expectations for retention in the program and for satisfactory completion of program requirements.
2. The Program should have a clear mandate from the institutional administration ideally in the form of a mission statement clearly stating the objectives and responsibilities of the program and defining its place in both the administrative and academic structure of the institution. This mandate or mission statement should be such as to assure the permanence and stability of the program by guaranteeing an adequate budget and by avoiding any tendency to force the program to depend on temporary or spasmodic dedication of particular faculty members or administrators. In other words, the program should be fully institutionalized so as to build thereby a genuine tradition of excellence.
3. The honors director should report to the chief academic officer of the institution.
4. 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.
5. The program requirements themselves should include a substantial portion of the participants undergraduate work, usually in the vicinity of 20% or 25% of their total course work and certainly no less than 15%.
6. The program should be so formulated that it relates effectively both to all the college work for the degree (e.g., by satisfying general education requirements) and to the area of concentration, departmental specialization, pre-professional or professional training.
7. The program should be both visible and highly reputed throughout the institution so that it is perceived as providing standards and models of excellence for students and faculty across the campus.
8. 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.
9. The program should occupy suitable quarters constituting an honors center with such facilities as an honors library, lounge, reading rooms, personal computers and other appropriate decor.

10. The director or other administrative officer charged with administering the program should work in close collaboration with a committee or council of faculty members representing the colleges and/or departments served by the program.
11. The program should have in place a committee of Honors students to serve as liaison with the honors faculty committee or council who must keep the student group fully informed on the program and elicit their cooperation in evaluation and development. This student group should enjoy as much autonomy as possible conducting the business of the committee in representing the needs and concerns of all honors students to the administration, and it should also be included in governance, serving on the advisory/policy committee as well as constituting the group that governs the student association.
12. There should be provisions for special academic counseling of honors students by uniquely qualified faculty and/or staff personnel.
13. The Honors Program, in distinguishing itself from the rest of the institution, serves as a kind of laboratory within which faculty can try things they have always wanted to try but for which they could find no suitable outlet. When such efforts are demonstrated to be successful, they may well become institutionalized thereby raising the general level of education within the college or university for all students. In this connection, the Honors curriculum should serve as a prototype for educational practices that can work campus-wide in the future.
14. The fully-developed Honors Program must be open to continuous and critical review and be prepared to change in order to maintain its distinctive position of offering distinguished education to the best students in the institution.
15. A fully developed program will emphasize the participatory nature of the honors educational process by adopting such measures as offering opportunities for students to participate in regional and national conferences, honors semesters, international programs, community service, and other forms of experiential education.
16. Fully-developed two-year and four-year honors programs should have articulation agreements by which honors graduates from two-year colleges can be accepted into four-year honors programs when they meet previously agreed-upon requirements.

From

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