Honors Program
5 Year Review: 2019
Five Year Review, Honors in General Education

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1. Program Overview

1.1 Introduction

The Honors Program in General Education currently serves 335 students. Most students apply for the Honors Program as incoming students. The program also enrolls a smaller number of transfer students. Students are eligible for the program if they have any one of the following: cumulative high school GPA of 3.5 or greater, an SAT score of 1200, an ACT composite score of 27 or higher. Students apply via an online application and are accepted on a rolling admissions basis. Students who request Honors Housing are guaranteed a place on the 2 floors of Honors Housing in Sutter Hall.

Recruitment to the program. The Honors Program participates in “Chico Preview” held on a Saturday in October and “Choose Chico” which takes place on a Saturday in April.

Our recruitment is carried out in cooperation with the Admissions Office. Information about the program is contained in promotional materials sent out by the Admissions Office. In addition, the Honors Program obtains a list of Honors eligible applicants who then receive an email invitation to apply to the Honors Program. In addition, the Honors Program sends out promotional material including our recently updated Honors Program brochure. Students are invited to peruse the Honors Program website and if interested, apply through our online application.

The Honors Program also welcomes on campus visits. Students and parents are welcome to make appointments to discuss the benefits of the Honors Program and the undergraduate experience at CSU, Chico. The Women’s Cross-Country coach, Gary Townsend, brings by a number of the student/athlete prospects to hear about the Honors Program.

Summer Orientation – The Honors Program has a daily presence at Summer Orientation with tabling and advising prior to fall registration for first time students and transfer students. Tricia Sweet, who has taught in Honors for more than 25 years and serves as Honors Advisor, as well, is the contact person at Summer Orientation.

The Honors Program has a concerted and coordinated effort to help our students with first time registration and Honors Housing starting in the fall and continuing through the end of Summer Orientation in July.

The Honor Program in GE also complements the 32 departmental Honors in the Major Programs by providing certificates and medallions to individual departments for their graduating students.
1.2 Previous Program Reviews

The Honors in GE Program has not had an external review in recent years. However, a committee comprised of CSU, Chico faculty members served as the Honors Review and Redesign Committee during the revamping of the Honors curriculum. The Honors Program Review and Redesign Report (this document can be found in the 5 Year Review folder) was submitted to the Academic Senate in spring of 2012 outlining the new Honors Program Curriculum. This review and redesign of the Honors Program General Education took place the year following the overall redesign of General Education at CSU, Chico. The redesign goals were to make the 24 units of Honors courses fit as well as possible into the existing 10 Pathway structure, facilitating students who were interested in completing their Honors course requirement while pursuing Pathway minors. The Honor in GE Planning Sheet shows the association between Honors courses and Pathways.

1.3 Mission Statement

Mission:
The University Honors Program provides an interdisciplinary approach to the University Education through challenging, engaging and enriching learning experiences that enable students to become responsible, imaginative, and engaged global citizens. Our program fosters a strong sense of intellectual community characterized by reason, respect, artistic growth, academic excellence, and openness of expression. We are open to students of all academic, cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds who have the ambition, curiosity, and passion for academic and intellectual growth and excellence. Our courses reflect our mutual understanding that experiential education is essential for true learning, and we therefore offer opportunities for study inside and outside the classroom including co-curricular experiences, service engagements, and social interactions. We hold dear the values of multicultural respect, awareness and understanding and we adhere to the principles and practices of sustainability through nurturing a keen sense of place and stewardship of the natural world.

Goals & Objectives:

1. To become a model program of interdisciplinary general education for other CSU campuses and beyond.

2. To create and sustain learning environments that foster high levels of student engagement, participation, and responsibility in learning.

4. To recruit driven, interested students with an aptitude and desire for intellectual growth and academic excellence.

5. To encourage community-engaged student research.
6. To promote sustainability and a strong sense of stewardship for the local environs and beyond.

1.4 Program Learning Outcomes

Honors students will engage in multidisciplinary approaches to subjects of varying degrees of scope, from the broad lower division seminars to the focused and in depth upper division seminars.

Honors students will develop their writing skills as a result of the rich writing intensive curriculum.

Honors student will practice critical thinking in the context of complex ideas and concepts that are rife with ambiguity. In other words, Honors student will learn how to handle deep questions with no simple answers.

Honors students will demonstrate original scholarship in their writings that will culminate with the completion and presentation of their year-long Honors Thesis/Project during their senior year.

Honors students will learn self-directed learning practices and habits to encourage life-long growth and continued curiosity to lead a rich life.

1.5 Program Diversity

The flexible admissions process for the Honors in General Education Program is designed to allow a diverse range of students to participate. The admissions criteria are based on high school GPA, standardized test scores, and essays. Students are eligible to apply if they have any one of the following: a high school GPA of at least a 3.5, an SAT score of 1200 or higher, an ACT composite score of 27 or higher. Highly motivated applicants who might not meet these criteria are encouraged to apply and are reviewed based on the quality of their essays. This typically accounts for only a couple of students per class.

CSU, Chico was recently recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institution and has seen a significant increase in the number of applications from of 1st Generation students. The increase in student diversity in the Honors in GE Program reflects the trend at CSU, Chico in general. The data below reports the number of URN, Hispanic and 1st Generation student in recent years.
1.6 Curriculum

The Honors Program requires that students complete 24 units of Honors credit (half of their General Education unit requirement) taking 12 units of both lower and upper division Honors courses. This includes the yearlong capstone HNRS 399, Honors Thesis/Project of 6 units. Syllabi for Honors courses are posted on the Honors website.

Lower Division Courses
HNRS 200, Honors Survey of Civilization
HNRS 201, BEAUTY
HNRS 202, NATURE
HNRS 203, TRUTH
HNRS 204, JUSTICE

Upper Divisions Seminars
HNRS 310, Agents of Change
HNRS 320, Science & Human Values
HNRS 330, Mind in the Machine
HNRS 340, Men, Women, and the Land

Honors Thesis/Project
HNRS 399, Honors Thesis/Project presentation takes place in Colusa as the end of the year celebration of student scholarship and achievements.
Course Assessment:
Honors courses are not all assessed in the same way, but types of assessment instruments include attitudinal surveys, reflective writings, and competency based on pre- and post-tests. The Honors Survey of Civilization (HSC) has been particularly consistent with the assessment of this 9-unit course link. The assessment of HSC from last fall shows a significant improvement in general knowledge about Western Civilization from the pre- and post-tests. Samples of the reflective writings from the end of the semester demonstrate a variety of impacts and transformations associated with the course.

Here is an excerpt from a student's reflective writing for the Honors Survey of Civilization at the end of Fall 2018:

Goldstein: “I feel much more intellectually confident after taking this course. I have always felt that I am reasonably smart, but have had a difficult time articulating my ideas. A lack of basic background information really held me back from reaching my potential, but now that I have learned about the history of civilization, I feel more capable. I am now able to fully formulate educated opinions on cultural subjects and expand further on underdeveloped ideas.”

Here are additional student reflections from HNRS204, TRUTH, HNRS202, NATURE, and HNRS320, Science & Human Values.

1.7 Data for applications, admission, retention, graduation GPA, and 4, 5, & 6-year graduation rates.

The number of students applying to the Honors Program in General Education (HGE) has dropped, especially after 2011. This decline in the number of applications is in spite of increased recruiting efforts, including extra mailings and phone calls to Honors eligible students to encourage them to apply. It is not clear all the reasons for this recent decline in interest in Honors, but quite a number of students comment that they are burned-out after their high school honors or AP experiences. Many of them see participation in Honors as just more busy work. It has been a challenge convincing them that our Honors Program is not intended to be more work (although they do have to take an additional 3 units in their upper division GE), but a more coherent, multidisciplinary, and team-taught approach to their General Education.

Admission to the Honors Program seems to be an effective recruiting tool, or factor for deciding to come to CSU, Chico. Approximately 85% of students who apply and are accepted in the Honors Program, ultimately decide to enroll at CSU, Chico.
There has been a significant decline of applications in the 2010s compared with the previous decade. However, the number seems to be leveling off during the past few years.

Being admitted to the Honors in General Education Program appears to be an important factor for students to choose to come to CSU, Chico. In addition to the academics offered by the Honors Program, prospective students and especially their parents are enthusiastic about Honors Housing.
The attrition from Honors in GE is quite high. There are a variety of factors involved. More than a third of students are unable to maintain the 3.30 GPA to earn the distinction of Honors in General Education. Despite our leniency and encouragement during academic probation for students who slip below a 3.30 GPA, this remains a major source of attrition. Unfortunately, there are a significant number of students join Honors in GE to merely gain the perquisite of priority registration. When we realized how pervasive this problem was, there was discussion about eliminating our priority registration. Ultimately, we chose not to because it is a valuable way to attract the kinds of student who bring value to our program. Nonetheless, this puts us in the position of continually trying to detect the cheaters and dropping them from the program.

Many of the pre-nursing students are the biggest offenders of taking advantage of Honors priority registration. In 2015 there were 24 pre-nursing students who were admitted to HGE. Many of them never took a single Honors class and none of them continued with Honors into the upper division. Other students will take Honors courses during their first two years and then drop out of the program when the Honors priority registration does not help them as much during registration. This gaming approach is beneficial in certain majors where many of the impacted classes are at the lower division.

The other source of attrition is due to students who stop taking Honors courses and don’t respond to request for mandatory Honors advising. A low, but not insignificant, number of students transfer to other institutions or leave school altogether.

Upon graduation of the GPAs of students who participate in Honors in General Education versus Non-Honors students is significantly higher for the classes of 2010-2014. More impressively, the graduation rate for students who participate in Honors in GE is markedly higher than the non-
Honors graduation rate. This is particularly noticeable for the 4-year graduation rate, but it is also true of the 5- and 6-year graduation rates as well.
Returning to the association higher GPAs upon graduation associated with participation in the Honors Program, it is evident that this difference holds true for URM students, 1st Generation students, and Hispanic students who participate in Honors in General Education. Moreover, the GPAs of URM-HGE students are typically within 0.1 GPA or non-URM-HGE students.
Graduation Rate for URM Students in HGE

4 Year Graduation - URM-HGE vs URM Students
Graduation Rate for 1st GEN-HGE Students

4 Year Graduation - 1st GEN-HGE vs 1st GEN Students
Graduation Rates for Hispanic-HGE Students

4 Year Graduation - Hispanic-HGE vs Hispanic Students
Note: the number of HGE graduates for 2014 reflects only 4-year graduates.

In total, the graduation GPAs and time to graduation are significantly better for student who participate in Honors in General Education. In spite of these overall advantages, there is still a relatively low number of students who complete all of the requirements to earn the distinction of Honors in General Education upon graduation. There are a variety of reasons that contribute to this outcome, but the additional upper division course requirement in Honors and the year-long Honors Thesis/Project are two most reported by students. Nonetheless, it appears that participation in Honors in GE is associated with a significantly better academic experience for most students. It is important to note that there are a large number of students who are equal with respect to their high school GPA and test scores, yet choose not to participate in Honors in GE. Other high-achieving students are drawn more strongly to the Honors in the Major (HIM) experience. There are roughly the same number of HIM and HGE graduates in a given year.

2. Students and Student Learning

2.1 Student Engagement

The Honors in General Education Program is primarily centered on the unique and distinctive curriculum offered by the program. Honors students participate in – discussion centered, multidisciplinary and team taught.
Honors students complete on average 6 writing intensive courses within the Honors Curriculum. This includes the completion of a year-long Honors Thesis/Project that affords them the opportunity to engage in original scholarship with faculty mentors.

Learning communities – faculty mentors were paired with the Honors Houses in Konkow until University Housing and Food Services decided to move the Honors Housing to Sutter Hall in 2017. The move was made despite objections from the Honors Program regarding the impact to our program. The housing in Sutter Hall is significantly more expensive that Konkow and there are no kitchen facilities in Sutter Hall for the residents.

*Note:* There will be 2 quadruple occupancy rooms for Honors Housing in Sutter Hall for the 2019-2020 academic year. This means that 8 spots in Honors Housing will be more than $3,000 less expensive for the year.

### 2.2 Student Success and Diversity

A GPA of 3.30 upon graduation is required to earn the distinction of Honors in General Education. Students who achieve this are recognized in the Gradation Program and are awarded an Honors in GE medallion, a certificate, and acknowledgment of this accomplishment on their diploma and transcript.

Here are the Honors students who made their Honors Thesis/Project Presentations in the spring of 2018.

### 2.3 Student Advising

Student advising in Honors in GE has a longstanding tradition of excellence. Students typically cite the advising they receive as one of the most outstanding benefits of the program. Professor Zanja Yudell, Philosophy, served as Honors Advisor for 8 years and received the University Outstanding Advisor Award in 2014. Tricia Sweet has advised in the Honors Program since 2012 and is currently the main Honors Advisor. Heather Altfeld also served as an Honors Advisor from 2013 to 2017.

[Honors in General Education Planning Sheet](#)

### 2.4 Student Support Resources

Honors Program Student Center in UHUB 178 (this facility is shared with the students in the residence halls). The center offers relatively new Apple and PC computers, printers (free printing), and a scanner for student use. Beverages and snacks are also available for students. The Honors Program Student Center The use of the center is tracked with a student sign-in sheet.
Note: there has been a precipitous decline (approximately 50%) in Honors Student usage following the move of the Honors Student Center from our previous location in MLIB to the new space in the UHUB.

3. Faculty

3.1 Faculty Overview

List of Honors Faculty, courses and years taught.

- Heather Altfeld, coordinator of BEAUTY (2013-present), Honors Thesis/Project (2013-present)
- Cameron Kelly, small group instructor, BEAUTY (2014-present)
- Sara Pike, Professor, Comparative Religion and Humanities, small group instructor, BEAUTY (2013, & 2017-2018)
- Joseph Pechkis, Instructor, Physics, small group instructor in NATURE (2016-present)
- Daniel Veidlinger, Professor, Comparative Religions and Humanities, Science & Human Values, (2018-present)
- Susan Roll, Associate Professor, Social Work, Agents of Change (2016)
- Ann Schulte, Professor, Education, Agents of Change (2016)
- Stephanie Hamel, Professor, Communication Studies Program, course designer of Agents of Change (2013-2015)
- Brandon Fry, Instructor, Psychology, small group instructor for TRUTH (2018-present)
- Jesse Dizzard, Professor, Anthropology, Agents of Change, (2017 & 2018)
- Eric Gampel, Professor, Philosophy, Mind in the Machine, (2013-present)
- Don Miller, Professor, Biology, Men, Women, and the Land (2013 – present)
- Kristen Mahlis, Instructor, Muticultural and Gender Studies, Men, Women, and the Land (2013-present)
Former Honors faculty
Becky White, Professor Emerita, Philosophy, NATURE & BEAUTY
Joel Zimbleman, Professor, Comparative Religions and Humanities, VIRTUE
Chris Gaffney, Professor, Physics, NATURE
Dan Worthen Associate Professor, Psychology, TRUTH
Sally McNall, Honors Advisor, Honors Connection, Men, Women, and the Land
Scott McNall, Provost, Professor of Sociology, Men, Women and the Land

3.2 Pedagogy

The distinctiveness of the curriculum is based on team-taught multidisciplinary. Honors courses emphasize class discussion and critical thinking and 7 of the courses are writing intensive. The lower division seminar, TRUTH, HNRS 204 counts as a Critical Thinking (A3) Foundation course. One of the substantial changes to the Honors curriculum in 2013 was the extension of the single semester thesis/project to a 6-unit, year-long Honors Thesis/Project, HNRS 399. Heather Altfeld has capably guided the Honors Thesis/Project course which is structured with weekly meetings throughout the year. The fall semester meetings are largely devoted to research methodology.

3.3 Scholarship

Partial list of scholarly activities for some of the Honors Faculty:

Zanja Yudell


2015 “A Normative Account of the Need for Explanation” with Wai-hung Wong. Synthese 192 (9):2863-2885


2013 “How Fallacious is the Consequence Fallacy?” with Wai-hung Wong. Philosophical Studies 165(1): 221-227
Heather Altfeld

BOOK AND AWARDS


Winner, Robert H. Winner Memorial Award, Poetry Society of America for poem, “903.” Spring 2017


Winner, 2015 Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry, Nimrod Literary International, includes publication, award money, and trip/reading in Tulsa OK., Jan 2016

Five nominations for the Pushcart Prize in Poetry

PUBLICATIONS, ESSAYS/STORIES/REVIEWS

The Death of Metaphor: Living in a Literal World” for Aeon Magazine, Spring 2019


Essay, Photography, Storytelling, and the In hospitable World” in ZYZZYVA Magazine, Spring 2019


Troy Jollimore

In 2014 I had a Guggenheim Fellowship for poetry.

My book, Syllabus of Errors (Princeton Series of Contemporary Poets / Princeton University Press), which was published in 2015, was named one of the ten best poetry books of 2015 by David Orr, New York Times.
During this time I published two journal articles and five academic book chapters:

*Journal articles:*

- “‘This Endless Space Between the Words’: The Limits of Love in Spike Jonze’s *Her.*” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy,* vol. 39, 2015.

*Book chapters:*


I gave invited talks in Belfast, Sheffield, Cardiff, Pardubice, Munich, the University of Houston, and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

And I published half a dozen poems in anthologies (including *best Canadian Poetry in English 2015* and the *Academy of American Poets’ Poem-a-Day: 365 Poems for Every Occasion*), a number of poems in literary journals, and reviews in publications including the *Chicago Tribune,* the *Washington Post,* and the *New York Times Book Review.*

### 3.4 Service

*Ad hoc* Honors Advisory Groups

- The Honors Director serves on the University Scholarship Committee.
- The Honors Program Office handles the administrative responsibilities for the Provost’s Student Award for Research and Creativity (SARC). These awards, which total approximately $46,000/year, are granted in the fall, spring and summer.
4. Infrastructure and the Future

4.1. Fiscal Resources

The Honors Program budget (2018-2019) is administered through Undergraduate Education, currently headed by Interim Dean, Kate McCarthy. The majority of our budget is for the salaries of teaching faculty and staff. There have been reductions to our budget in the last few years, but we have managed to maintain the essential features that we believe to be responsible for the quality of the program.

4.2 Staff

The Honors Program has a full time Administrative Support Coordinator, Dawn Carlson, and currently employs 2 Honors Student Assistants, Madeline Oltwert and Jacqueline Matinusen. Dawn is responsible for the numerous changing activities that occur cyclically during the academic year. She manages the Honors Student Assistants and is responsible for managing the budget for the Honors Program. Moreover, Dawn plans the Honors Fall Welcome, the Finals Fuel Up, the Honors Thesis/Project Presentation Event, and organizes the Honors Program in the Fall Welcome and Choose Chico. She also manages the Honors Program office and oversees the Student Center.

4.3 Technology and Information Resources

The Honors Program maintains a stand-alone database for tracking Honors students throughout their careers at CSU, Chico. The database is run on FileMaker Pro and is integral to Honors advising. Detailed advising notes are kept as well as contact information and a record of academic progress. The majority of the data entry is accomplished by the Honors Student Assistants.

4.4 Space and Facilities

The Honors Program Offices since January 2018 are located in the UHUB. The office suite consists of a reception area with a storage closet and two offices. Since the offices share a common wall with the UHUB Social Center noise from the Social Center is a persistent problem.

There is a classroom on the second floor of the UHUB for which Honors has scheduling priority for classes. This is perhaps the most up-to-date classroom on campus with respects to electronics. It has a maximum capacity of 52 students, so some of the larger lower division seminars cannot meet there for their large group meetings. The (unofficial) Honors Student Center is located in SUTR178P and is shared with all of the students who are in the residence halls. The Student Center contains 5 computer workstations with a laser printer, scanner, and digital camera.
4.5 The Future

Goals:

Increase the opportunities for the high impact practice of student research beginning with lower division courses. This should help students prepare for the culminating year-long Honors Thesis/Project.

Consider the possibility of incorporating the Honors curriculum into the General Education Pathways as a mechanism for earning a Minor in some or all Pathway.

Explore new ways to initiate and sustain fund-raising for the Honors Program. The attempts to fund-raise through the University Development Office have been repeatedly ineffectual.

Space and Facilities: The Honors Program is in University Housing and Food Services space until the end of 2020 (there was a three-year term offered when the Honors Program moved to UHFS space after being removed from our preferred space in the Meriam Library (MLIB 117). The advantages of the former space include a central location on campus, the Student Center and offices in the same location, and 4 offices rather than 2.

The current Honors Program space is sub-optimal in a number of ways. First, the offices are separated from the Honors Student Center which has fundamentally changed the way our students can interact with personnel in the Honors Program. As Director, I have always maintained an open-door policy and I welcome students to drop-in for informal conversations. This rarely takes place in the new Honors Program space, it is no longer centrally located and the fact that it is in University Housing space makes it seem like it is for the first-year students. Another drawback from my perspective is having my office directly adjacent to the Social Center in the UHUB. There is frequently a cacophony of sound since the large screen TV, the video games and even music are all happening at once - and at high decibels. The inability to work efficiently in my office was a major contributing factor in deciding to leave the Honors Program. I can only hope that there could be a new home in the near future for the Honors Program.

Honors Brag Sheet
A student’s promotion of the Honors Thesis/Project
Appendices

Appendix A, Honors Program brochure

Appendix B, Honors Program Review and Redesign, 2012 (contained in 5 Year Review folder)

Appendix C, Honors Program General Education Planning Sheet

Appendix D, Honors Student Thesis Presentations Program

Appendix E, 12th Annual CSU System-wide Honors Conference (program)

Appendix F, Honors student presentations and participation in the Annual CSU System-wide Honors Conference (picture from CSU, Bakersfield, 2017)

Appendix G, Brag Sheet
Itinerary for Professor Lee Simpson
April 3, 2019

Arrive – Wednesday morning
Parking on campus (arranged by Dawn)

8 AM (approximate time) Breakfast meeting with Dean Kate McCarthy and John Mahoney at MOMS restaurant (on the corner of 2nd and Normal St)

9 AM tour of Honors Program Offices, Student Center, and classroom with Tricia Sweet
Visit previous Honors Program suite in MLIB

10 AM, SSC 466, meeting with Honors Thesis students and Heather Altfeld

11 AM meeting with Jason Nice – Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB)

Noon, SSC 466, catered lunch with Honors Students

1 PM, classroom visit
HNRS 330 Mind in the Machine
Professors Eric Gampel and Michael Ennis
Time and place: Wednesday, 1:00-1:50, GLNN 210

2 PM, SUTR 276P, meeting with Honors faculty

3 PM, SUTR 276P, meeting with John Mahoney

Meet with students working on their Honors Thesis/Project and Heather

3 PM, classroom visit
HNRS 203 VIRTUE
Professor Troy Jollimore and Heather Altfeld
Time and place: Wednesday, 4:00-5:15, SUTR 276P

Exit interview with Dean McCarthy 5:15 PM

Dinner in downtown Chico, 6:30 PM