Honors Program
Program Review Report

Prepared by the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee
November 16, 2004

The Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee (CEPC) reviewed the Honors Program on November 16, 2004. Dr. Larry Thorsen was present to provide an overview of the Program and answer questions from the members of the Committee. This report presents a summary of strengths, observations, concerns and recommendations as identified by the CEPC.

Strengths

- The Honors Program has recently experienced significant increases in the numbers of students and overall retention rates.
- For courses in most disciplines the Honors Program offers smaller class sizes and opportunities for increased student-student and student-faculty interaction.
- The Honors Program Director is very dedicated.
- According to student surveys, Honors Program students are graduating with a higher overall level of satisfaction with their education.
- Honors Program students report in the senior surveys that they have experienced stronger growth than the regular students in ten of the fifteen areas of academic ability.
- Students are provided with the experience of meeting and having small group discussions with the authors of some of the books that are read as part of the Honors Program requirements.
- The Honors Program clearly provides an opportunity for a more personalized general education program for the students.

Observations

- The gender imbalance in the Honors Program greatly exceeds the gender imbalance on campus.
- Some students who have the appropriate qualifications are excluded from the Honors Program due to scheduling and other issues related to major and minor program requirements.
- Almost half of the students in the Honors Program said that the program was not the reason they chose to attend St. Norbert College.
- Some Honors Program students are using the Honors Program to secure early registration and have identified this as a significant benefit for continuing in the Program.
- As with the General Education Program as a whole, the SNC faculty do not appear to be proportionately represented according to divisions in the Honors Program faculty.
The Honors Program Review was conducted by only one person – the Program Director.

The General Education Task Force’s recommendations may impact any changes to the Honors Program.

Concerns

Assessment:

- The Honors Program does not have any pre- and post-testing data that verify the value-added characteristics of the Program.
- Program goals and objectives need to be better defined and stated in terms of educational outcomes.
- Assessment needs to address the intended outcomes of the program over time.
- Indirect measures of intended student learning outcomes are not linked to direct measures.
- No external assessment of the achievement of outcomes has been completed.
- Faculty are not assessed as a part of the Honors Program separate from their other teaching.
- Broad-based input from faculty and alumni into assessment of the Program has not occurred.

- Honors Program policies and procedures are not publicly available.
- Some Honors Program courses that are being held are seriously under-enrolled.
- Special arrangements made to provide Honors courses to individuals who are out of sequence result in phantom courses and individual directed study courses that may or may not fulfill the objectives of the program.
- Current materials do not include a clear three-year course rotation and a paradigm for the Honors Program.
- The College has not provided enough resources to adequately run an Honors Program.
- The Honors Program governance structure is not as clearly articulated as it needs to be.
- The faculty teaching in the Honors Program do not appear to be involved in the Program beyond their teaching responsibilities.

Recommendations

- Assess faculty teaching within the Honors Program separately from their teaching in other programs.
- Establish clearer objectives and goals for the Honors Program, including consideration of a track separate from general education.
- Bring in an outside consultant to complete an external review of the Honors Program during the 2005-2006 academic year.
• The Dean’s Office should follow standard procedures for review and reappointment of term limits for the Director as specified in the Faculty Handbook.
• The Dean’s office should establish more clearly defined responsibilities and adequate compensation for the Director.
• Design a comprehensive and appropriate assessment system for the Honors Program.
• Make all rules and procedures for the Honors Program publicly accessible (e.g., College Catalog, web site, etc.) and create a program paradigm.
• Working with the Advancement Office, develop a plan for establishing an endowment for the Honors Program.
• Publicize the process by which current SNC students are invited into the program during their freshman or early sophomore years.
• Develop a clearer statement of the governance structure of the Honors Program.