

# *Ad Hoc* University Honors Committee

## Report to WVSU Faculty Senate

December 3, 2010

The WVSU Senate appointed a committee of faculty and deans representing the four University Colleges whose charge was to design an Honors Program for WVSU students. Following is a summary of activities and the final recommendation.

### Committee Members

- AH: Barbara Ladner, Susan Marrash-Minnerly  
BSS: Abainesh Mitiku, Billy Joe Peyton, Gerry Beller (Senate Executive Committee representative)  
NSM: Ron Baker, Katherine Harper, Mike Anderson (ex officio, EPC)  
PS: Robert Harrison, Aaron Settle

### Committee Activities

1. The committee met every Friday at 10:00, starting with an organizational meeting on October 15 and ending with our final meeting on November 19, 2010. Copies of the meeting notes are available upon request.
2. Committee members collected and discussed honors programs from other colleges and universities including Marshall University and Fairmont State University.
3. The committee drafted a "purpose" statement to guide them in the creation of the proposed honors program.
4. The committee created a survey document to poll the WVSU faculty about their ideas concerning a WVSU Honors program. The committee used this information to inform their decisions regarding the proposed program.
5. Purpose statement and Survey Instrument are attached.

### Recommendation

#### Student Criteria

1. 3.5 GPA, 26+ composite ACT (with no individual score lower than a 19) for entering students
2. 26 college credit hours with a 3.5 GPA for returning students
3. 3.5 GPA for transfer students (considered on a case by case basis)
4. If an Honors student falls below a 3.31 GPA (in all courses including Honors) then the student must meet with an Honors advisor from the Honors Committee.

Note: Two lists of students would be generated each semester:

1. list of returning and transfer students meeting the criteria
2. list of admitted high school students with 3.5+ HS GPA with ACT scores

#### Honors Committee

1. Elected representative from each College,
2. Four At-Large faculty members elected by the Faculty, and
3. One Honors student.
4. Ex Officio members: the University Registrar and Admissions Director.

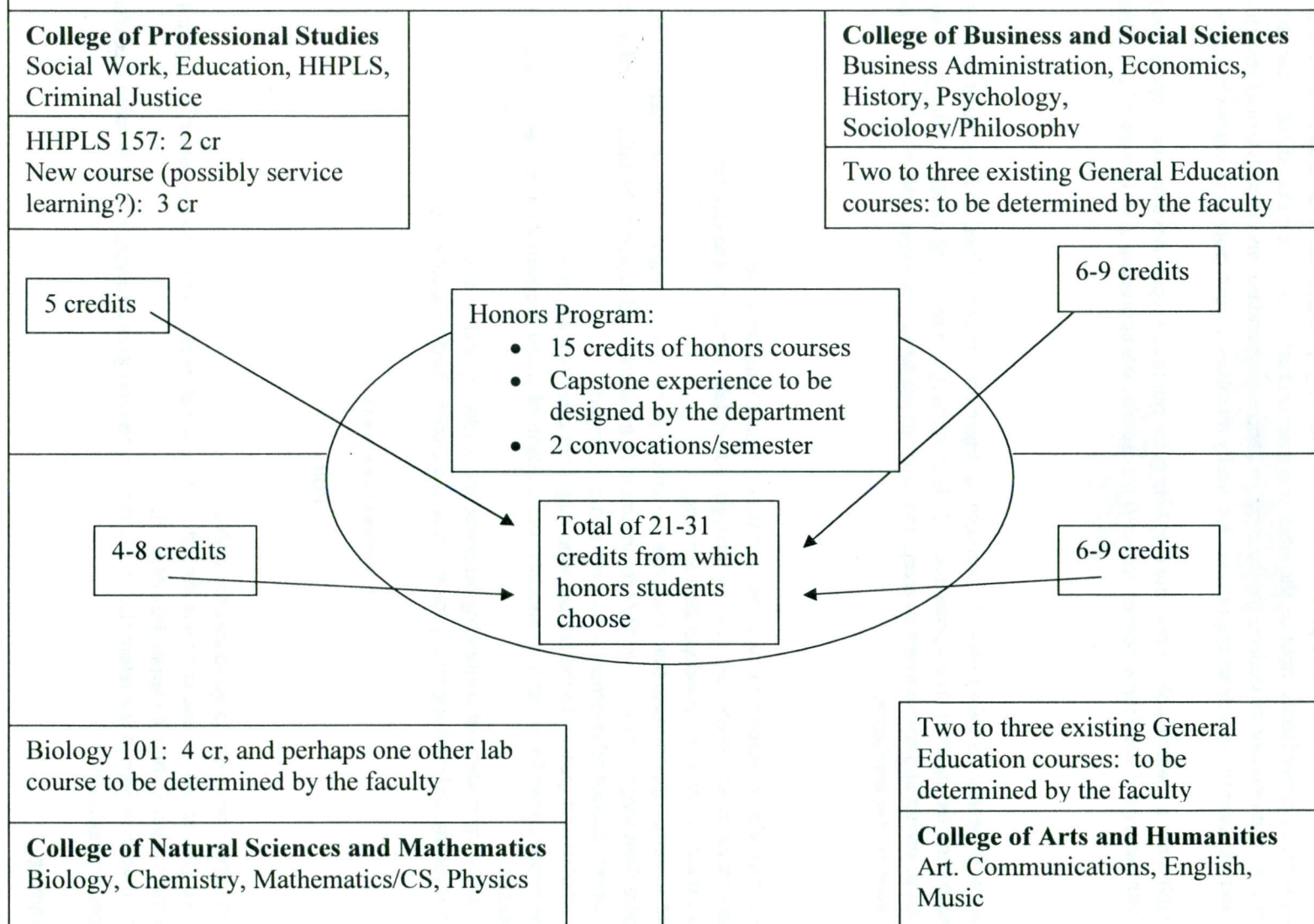
Note: Honors Committee is to work out the details of admission to program whether by invitation or application. Honors Committee decides what courses get on the Honors list of courses.

#### Honors Program

1. Each Department/College will propose existing GE and/or other courses to have honors sections. Any GE Honors courses would replace/count for GE requirement
2. Each Honors student will be required to
  - a. Take 15 credits of Honors courses
  - b. Participate in a long-term project of some kind leading to a “capstone” product in the major (to be determined by the department for their majors in the Honors Program with approval by the College Faculty and the College Dean).
  - c. Attend at least two College/University Convocations per semester.

Note: Please see Figure 1. for Model of the Proposed Honors Program

Figure 1. Model for WVSU Honors program



# Poll to Gather Faculty Input on an Honors Program for WVSU

November 2010

A Faculty Senate *ad hoc* committee began meeting earlier this fall to begin investigation and development of honors opportunities for WVSU students. Our first task was to draft a purpose statement and program objectives. That draft is below. Before we proceed further, we want to gather faculty input on the types of courses and activities to be included, what standards and process would govern admission and retention of students for the program, and what standards and process would govern selection of "honors" courses, and we want to provide an opportunity for faculty members to contribute ideas we might not have considered.

We recognize that this is not a scientific poll. Its purpose is to help guide our future work. Anything we propose will go through further discussion with faculty and will follow normal approval procedures. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of these issues.

## PURPOSE

The honors program at West Virginia State University promotes arrangements, opportunities, and exposures to serve the needs of talented, gifted, and committed students. Its purposes also include identifying and recruiting students of superior academic ability, potential, performance, interest and commitment to accept the designed academic challenges, and to lead West Virginia State University toward even greater excellence.

## Objectives

- To create a more vibrant academic environment at West Virginia State University;
- To stimulate creativity and intellectual curiosity through courses, labs, seminars, and forums;
- To enhance students' capacity for independent learning;
- To provide academic opportunities that challenge students to perform at the highest level at which they are capable;
- To symbolize West Virginia State University's commitment to excellence and augment the public image of the University as a place where superior achievement is honored and encouraged;
- To attract scholars and speakers to the campus who might not otherwise be here;
- To increase opportunities for students to associate with students of similar motivations and interests, and to work closely with professors;
- To assist in attracting students of outstanding academic and leadership ability; and
- To assist in attracting and retaining faculty members who are committed to quality education.

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## Poll

### Overall Opinion

1. Do you think an honors program is a good idea for WVSU?  
\_\_\_ **Yes** – If this is your answer, please complete the rest of this poll before returning it to the person who gave it to you, or to the committee chair, Dean Katherine Harper, Hamblin 101.  
\_\_\_ **No** – If this is your answer, please return this poll to the person who gave it to you, or to the committee chair, Dean Katherine Harper, Hamblin 101

### Curriculum/Programming

2. Which of the following, in your opinion, would be essential for a program to be called "honors"? Check all that you think are essential features.  
\_\_\_ Separate, new honors courses/seminars/labs  
\_\_\_ Honors project/thesis "capping" the honors experience

(continued)

Honors Poll - 2

- Honors convocations
- Honors options within existing sections (e.g., via an "honors contract" to do extra work)
- A minimum number of hours earned in honors coursework of some type (to earn "Honors")
- Space dedicated to honors students/activities (e.g., an "honors" lounge)
- Honors administrators (e.g., dean, associate dean, advisor)
- An honors committee (e.g., for setting policy, curriculum, admissions, retention)
- A "core" of separate, specifically "honors" courses
- Small(er), separate honors sections of existing courses
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which of the following, in your opinion, would be desirable for a program to be called "honors"? Check all that you think are desirable features.

- Separate, new honors courses/seminars/labs
- Honors project/thesis "capping" the honors experience
- Honors convocations (e.g., guest speakers, special forums, awards ceremonies)
- Honors options within existing sections (e.g., via an "honors contract" to do extra work)
- A minimum number of hours earned in honors coursework of some type (to earn "Honors")
- Space dedicated to honors students/activities (e.g., an "honors" lounge)
- Honors administrators (e.g., dean, associate dean, advisor)
- An honors committee (e.g., for setting policy, curriculum, admissions, retention)
- A "core" of separate, specifically "honors" courses
- Small(er), separate honors sections of existing courses
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which of the following, in your opinion, would NOT be desirable for a program to be called "honors"? Check all that you think are NOT desirable features.

- Separate, new honors courses/seminars/labs
- Honors project/thesis "capping" the honors experience
- Honors convocations
- Honors options within existing sections (e.g., via an "honors contract" to do extra work)
- A minimum number of hours earned in honors coursework of some type (to earn "Honors")
- Space dedicated to honors students/activities (e.g., an "honors" lounge)
- Honors administrators (e.g., dean, associate dean, advisor)
- An honors committee (e.g., for setting policy, curriculum, admissions, retention)
- A "core" of separate, specifically "honors" courses
- Small(er), separate honors sections of existing courses
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. Which of the following, in your opinion, would be doable for an "honors" program at WVSU? Check all that you think are doable features.

- Separate, new honors courses/seminars/labs
- Honors project/thesis "capping" the honors experience
- Honors convocations
- Honors options within existing sections (e.g., via an "honors contract" to do extra work)
- A minimum number of hours earned in honors coursework of some type (to earn "Honors")
- Space dedicated to honors students/activities (e.g., an "honors" lounge)
- Honors administrators (e.g., dean, associate dean, advisor)
- An honors committee (e.g., for setting policy, curriculum, admissions, retention)
- A "core" of separate, specifically "honors" courses
- Small(er), separate honors sections of existing courses

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. If there is honors programming at WVSU in the future, in what way(s) might your department actually participate? Please describe things that you think are doable and would be stimulating/appealing to faculty and students.

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**Eligibility/Admissions/Retention**

7. How should students be selected for inclusion in an honors program at WVSU? You may check more than one.

- All students with a set high school GPA and ACT/SAT score should be notified of acceptance  
 All students with a set high school GPA and ACT/SAT score should be notified of eligibility to apply  
 Qualifying GPA and ACT/SAT score should be publicized with information about how to apply  
 Returning students with a set WVSU GPA should be notified of acceptance  
 Returning students with a set WVSU GPA should be notified of eligibility to apply  
 Qualifying WVSU GPA should be publicized with information about how to apply  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

8. What process should be used to select students for admission for an honors program? Check all you endorse.

- Registrar should request list of students w/qualifying GPA (and scores, for new students) and notify them  
 Registrar should request list of students w/qualifying GPA (and new student scores) and send to committee  
 Honors committee should review list and send notification of admission  
 Honors committee should review applications received by a set date and select/notify students  
 Honors administrator (e.g., dean or advisor) should review applications and select/notify students  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

9. How high should admission standards be?

- Extremely high, to keep the program very selective  
 Moderately high, to maintain quality while admitting enough students to make the program workable  
 High, with additional admissions materials to inform selection of students (e.g., recommendations, admissions essay)

10. What criteria should govern students' continuation in honors? Check all you endorse.

- Students must maintain a set overall GPA to continue  
 Students must maintain a set GPA in honors courses to continue  
 Students must take a set number of honors hours each semester to continue  
 Students must participate in some "extra" honors activities to continue  
 Departments may add required items for their majors who seek to be/remain in the honors program  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

11. What steps should be taken when students do not meet criteria for continuation in honors? Check all you endorse.

- Students who do not meet criteria are discontinued  
 Students who do not meet criteria are put on "honors probation" and must meet criteria following semester  
 Students who do not meet criteria are put on "honors probation" & must develop plan with honors advisor  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Faculty Selection and Role**

12. Should a designation recognizing “honors faculty” (or similar terminology) be created?

Yes  No

13. If yes, what should govern selection of “honors faculty”? Check all you endorse.

- Faculty should apply, based on a specific honors course/lab/seminar
- Faculty should apply, based on teaching quality (e.g., teaching statement, observations, student evaluations)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

14. If yes, what role should “honors faculty” play in the honors program? Check all you endorse.

- Honors faculty should teach/direct honors courses/activities
- Honors faculty should serve (in “rotation”) on honors committee
- Honors faculty should direct/supervise honors projects
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

15. If yes OR no, what role should regular faculty (non-“honors faculty”) play in the honors program? Check all you endorse.

- Regular faculty should teach/direct honors courses/activities
- Regular faculty should enter into “honors contracts” with students in regular sections, if desired
- Regular faculty should serve (in “rotation”) on honors committee
- Regular faculty should direct/supervise honors projects
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

16. What duties should an honors committee have? Check all you endorse.

- Honors committee should select students for admission
- Honors committee should review status of students on “honors probation”
- Honors committee should review and select “honors courses”
- Honors committee should review and select “honors faculty”
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

17. Please feel free to add other comments or suggestions.

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*Thank you very much for your thoughtful input.  
 Please return this poll to the person who gave it to you,  
 or to the committee chair, Dean Katherine Harper, Hamblin 101.*