

SINCLAIR HONORS PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT



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(From Velletri: Paris, Louvre.)

MAY 2007



Purpose

The Sinclair Honors Program adheres to the core values statement of the National Collegiate Honors Council, of which we are a longtime member: our program "values an atmosphere that promotes academic opportunity and challenge for Honors students and faculty. Within this intellectual environment, members of Honors communities demonstrate integrity, respect, and excellence. Through the Honors experience, participants realize enhanced personal, social, and intellectual development. The NCHC recognizes the importance of life-long learning and social responsibility in preparing individuals for an increasingly complex world. These beliefs and values are reinforced among member institutions through the collegiality and shared purpose of the NCHC."

History

The Honors Program at Sinclair was established in the mid-1980s at the initiative of Dean Clifford Barr at a time when many community colleges were just beginning to develop Honors curricula. Dr Mary Navarro was appointed to convene a committee and undertake to develop an academic Honors Program within the Division of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The committee drew up plans to offer a variety of course offerings, both core and special topics. The Board of Trustees approved the program and an operating budget. The Honors Committee was formally established to assist the Director, oversee the program, develop criteria for Honors course proposals, and to recruit students and faculty for the program. Dr Navarro was also advisor to Phi Theta Kappa, Sinclair's Nu Pi chapter, the international honor society for two-year colleges.

We offered our first two courses (English 112 and Math 116) as pilots during winter quarter 1987. The program soon expanded to include courses in psychology, history, biology, humanities, and physics. During the 1990s we branched out into other divisions and departments, including fine arts, business, and communications. Interdisciplinary courses were first developed under a Sinclair Foundation grant for faculty planning. Interdisciplinary courses are an essential feature of any Honors program and are a key part of articulation agreements with four-year institutions. We define "interdisciplinary" as any HUM course and/or any cross-listed course.

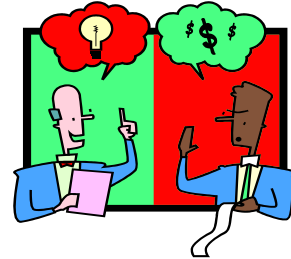
The Sinclair Honors Program is an institutional member of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) and the Mid-East Honors Association (MEHA). We have agreements with Wright State University, Miami University and Wittenberg University allowing students who complete our program to apply for special scholarships at those institutions.

Katherine Rowell became Honors Director in 2006, after serving as Phi Theta Kappa advisor for five years.



Plans and Proposals for 2007-2008

1. As Sinclair goes forward with plans to build a new campus or learning center in Warren County, both Phi Theta Kappa and the Honors Program hope to establish a presence there. In the early stages a separate Honors Program will not be necessary, but some member of the staff or faculty at Warren County should be charged with representing the Honors Program. This need not be a full-time position. The "Honors Program Deputy" would report to the Honors Director, and would have the authority to approve honors contracts, honors sections and other day-to-day 'red tape.' Honors Scholars could also be recruited and interviewed. Since the establishment of a branch campus would require more time and occasional travel for the main-campus Honors Director, release time for the Director should be increased from the current 7 to 9 or 12.



2. In summer 2007, Honors Faculty workshop held.
3. The Honors Program Director and three students attended the Mideast Honors Association Conference in Cleveland in April 2007.
4. Honors Reception to honor and thank the faculty, counselors and students for the participation in and support of the Honors Program held in May 2007.
5. We have changed the way in which section numbers are assigned to Honors classes and the way students register for Honors course work.
 - a. H1 Section numbers are given to stand alone honors courses, meaning that all the students registered for the course are honors students. Typically, there are only two courses that have this designation, English Composition I, II or III (depending on the quarter) and Psychology 122 and its corresponding seminar, PSY 124. Both departments require that students be recommended by an instructor to take the Honors course before they are given permission to register. An academic advisor or the Honors Program Director may give electronic permission to students who are recommended.
 - b. All the other courses are now listed in the bulletin as "This course is available for honors." This means that the faculty person teaching the course has agreed to teach the course for honors. For a student to take one of these courses for honors, they should:
 - i. register for the course;
 - ii. bring a copy of the fee bill listing the course to the Honors office, room 10-339;
 - iii. complete and sign the Honors Course Registration Eligibility Form in the Honors office. If the course is full, it is hoped that adding one student to the course for honors will be permitted by counselors.
 - iv. Honors designation will appear **only** on official transcripts.
 - c. For any course not listed as available for honors the student will need to contact the instructor to see if the instructor is willing to do an **honors contract**. Once the



student has an honors contract and is registered for that course, the Honors Registration Eligibility Form can be completed in the Honors office. A student can successfully register for courses not officially listed as available for honors once they are registered for the course and the completed, signed and approved honors contract is filed with the Honors director. In other words, the instructor has to agree to do an honors contract with a student first and then the student can apply for Honors credit to be added to his transcript if he earns a final grade of A or B.

6. Most Honors courses are in the Liberal Arts & Sciences and Fine & Performing Arts divisions, with only a few in other divisions. This year, we have expanded to include all divisions.
7. Plan to finalize an Honors Program Student Handbook to provide all the details of the program to current and potential students over the summer.
8. Currently, Honors designation only shows on official transcripts. We would like to figure out a way for honors to be recorded on the unofficial transcripts printed from Web Advisor and campus kiosks.

Our websites



The Honors website (first set up in 1996) is one of the most complete, and most frequently updated, at Sinclair. It includes course listings and syllabi, and handbook for faculty, various forms, full descriptions of the program's activities, and links to related programs such as Phi Theta Kappa and Ohio Fellows. We have recently added a "testimonials" page with comments and news from former Honors Scholars who have moved on to graduate school or the working world.

When the my.sinclair website went online, the Honors Program also established a presence there. Honors Scholars, students in honors courses and others who scored high on the Accuplacer test are members of the Honors "organization" and receive updates and news via e-mail and announcements on the student homepage. This has proved to be a valuable recruiting tool for Honors courses. We will be converting and updating this website for the new Angel Learning software.

Recruiting

As with most Honors programs – particularly at nonresidential schools – our greatest challenge is informing students about the availability of Honors courses and persuading them to register. The most effective method of recruiting Honors students is through faculty announcing the availability of Honors course work in their classes and allowing students to add the Honors component after the first class has met. Other effective methods of marketing the Honors program

include a new Honors brochure featuring real Honors students from Sinclair. Additionally, we include a list of Honors courses in each quarterly bulletin, on our website, and email that list to all the students in our my.sinclair groups.

Participation

Students may elect to participate in Honors two ways:

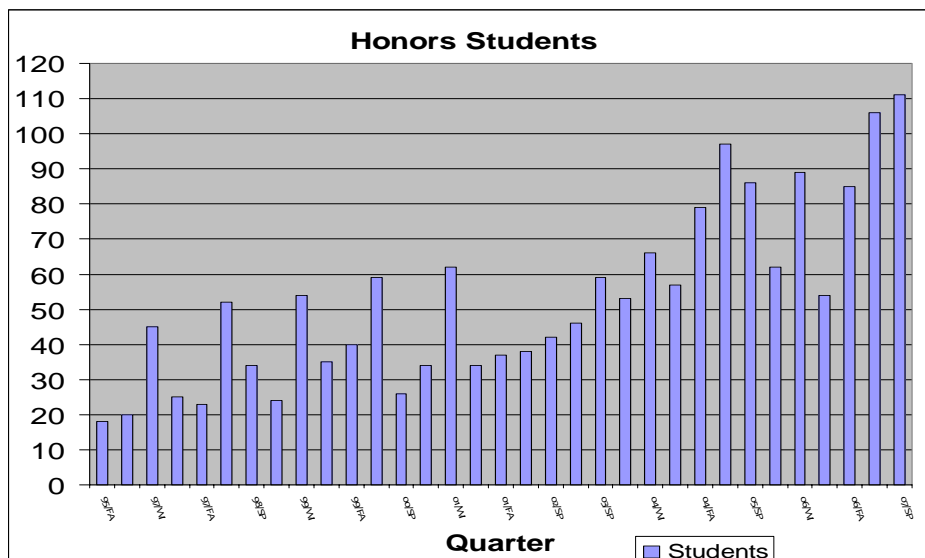
1. Honors Scholars Program

Students may apply to become Honors Scholars. Upon acceptance, scholars undertake to complete five honors experiences while maintaining an overall 3.25 GPA. Three of the five honors courses must be in different disciplines and one course must be Interdisciplinary Honors. In addition to other financial aid and scholarships, Honors Scholars may apply for up to six Honors Program Scholarships on a per-quarter basis during their time in the program. Honors Scholars are required to fulfill a Service Learning requirement before completing the program. Students will perform unpaid community service as part of a selected Honors course or through an Experience-Based Education (EBE) course.

2. Individual Honors Courses

Qualified students may enroll in individual Honors courses whether or not they plan to become Honors Scholars. To receive Honors credit, a student must earn a minimum of "B" in the course.

As of spring 2007, we have 43 active Honors Scholars, "active" meaning "enrolled this academic year, all requirements not yet completed." The term "active" is relative, however – some of these students attend full time and are conscientious about staying in touch with the Program; others are part-time and/or not enrolled every quarter; some we rarely hear from. In addition, there are about 20 students who were accepted into the program but have not completed the requirements and have not been heard from in several quarters: we consider them "inactive." Since 1998, about 40 Scholars have completed all requirements and moved on to four-year institutions.





Honors Program Leadership

The Director's responsibilities include:

- maintaining and supervising the Honors Program Office, room 10-339
- recruiting Honors faculty
- recruiting students for courses and for Honors Scholars Program
- coordinating Honors courses
- maintaining student records
- handling applications for Honors Scholars and Honors Scholarships
- developing in-service programs for Honors Faculty
- planning the quarterly Honors Symposium
- working with Honors programs at our transfer institutions including Wright State University, Wittenberg University, Miami University, and University of Dayton

The Honors Council member is expected to:

- oversee the development of new Honors courses
- help recruit faculty to teach honors courses
- help identify students as potential Honors Scholars
- interview students applying for admission to the Program
- support and assist the Honors Director and Phi Theta Kappa advisor
- review applications for Honors Scholarships
- help identify new Service Learning opportunities
- serve on a subcommittee

The members of the Honors Council are:

- Director of the Honors Program
- Advisor to Phi Theta Kappa
- a representative of the Admissions Office
- an academic counselor
- faculty members who teach, or may teach, Honors courses
- a student member of Phi Theta Kappa
- up to three (3) Honors Scholar students

The Program Aide

Our office manager and secretary, Linda Schock, is shared with Phi Theta Kappa and Ohio Fellows. This arrangement benefits all three programs, helping them to work together more closely – all three serve similar student populations, and there is overlap in membership and participation. Besides answering student questions and handling drop-in visitors to the Honors Program office, Linda maintains the website, tracks statistics, and takes care of routine office tasks like filing, typing and copying. Currently, Linda works ten hours a week in the Honors program office and there is no summer coverage for the Honors program. This is an issue that will need to be addressed in the future.

CRITERIA FOR ALL HONORS COURSES

Regardless of the type of Honors course, it must meet the following minimum criteria:

1. A significant portion of the grade must be based on research, writing and presentation. Some form of presentation should be required in every Honors course.
2. Students will be expected to interact and participate fully. Percentage of grade to be based on participation is at the instructor's discretion (unless there is a departmental rule).
3. Examinations and assignments that require students to demonstrate a command of the vocabulary and concepts of the subject; critical analysis and synthesis skills; problem solving; and mastery of the English language.
4. A class presentation by the student. This may take any number of forms. If special equipment is required, the instructor will make the arrangements.
5. For interdisciplinary courses, integration of two or more disciplines.

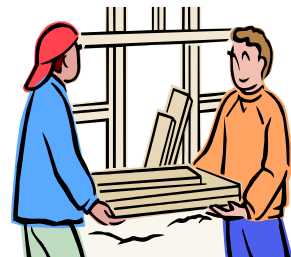
Financial Aid



We currently offer Honors Scholars Academic Excellence scholarships valued at up to \$400 per quarter for six quarters. These scholarships are also available to non-Honors students with the necessary 3.5 GPA, as long as they have completed 36 credit hours or more. This arrangement has worked well for us; we are almost always able to award some money to Honors Scholars who request it.

Service Learning

Beginning in January 1998, each student admitted to the Honors Scholars Program must complete a Service Learning project before "graduating" from the program. The Honors Council believes that Honors students, as leaders of tomorrow, should make a commitment to community service. You might volunteer at a local homeless shelter, work with the Lincoln School mentoring program, participate in a service project at your church, volunteer at a museum or outdoor education center, at the Park District, join a Habitat for Humanity project, serve on the board of a nonprofit organization -- the possibilities are endless.

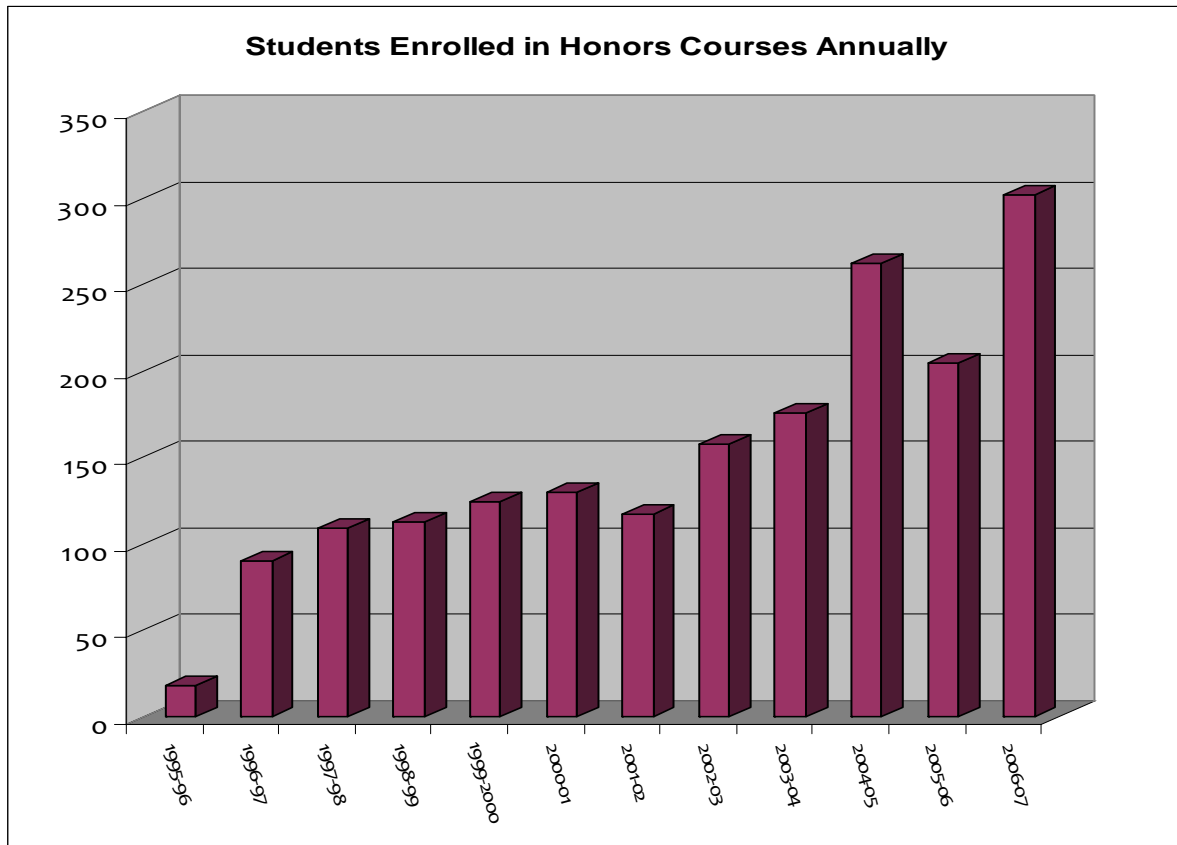


In the Honors Program, "Service learning" is defined as a not-for-pay activity that benefits the public good. The Honors Committee has the sole right to determine whether a given activity fits this definition. This activity may be an internship such as that required by Ohio Fellows, but still must be not-for pay and for the public good.



Honors Course enrollment

Enrollment in Honors sections varies considerably from quarter to quarter, but there are some consistent patterns: ENG 111 and 112 always do very well; PSY 121 and 122 and ENG 113 usually have good numbers; HIS 111-112-113 sometimes have enough students for a stand-alone section, sometimes not; others like HIS 101-102-103 and BIO 171-172-173 always have a few students, but never enough for a stand-alone. The chart below shows a small but steady gain over the past few years in total numbers. 2006-07 was a record year for the Honors Program.



Appendices

In spring 2005, Institutional Planning & research conducted a study for us which revealed several interesting facts. Here are the highlights:

1. Students in Honors courses have a higher overall success rate than students who do not take an Honors course. In 2003-2004, 86% completed their Honors course(s) successfully, and 84.3% finished all courses successfully. This compares to a success rate of 73% college wide.
2. About 52% of all students in Honors courses maintained their GPA or raised it. However, 48% showed a slight decline in GPA (averaging 0.06 points). In many cases this might be simply because the student earned his or her first B (IPR tells us that many students taking Honors courses have a 4.0 GPA). But it could also be that unqualified students self-selected themselves into some courses. This tells us that we must do a better job advising potential honors students (not to take too heavy a load, or to take 'easier' classes while they are taking an Honors course, etc), and perhaps exercise more control over whom we give permission to register for Honors course work.
3. There is a strong correlation between high GPA and success in Honors courses: that is, students who do better generally (in all coursework) also do better in Honors classes.
4. Students taking both Honors and non-Honors courses at the same time tend to do better in the Honors course (perhaps because they work harder at that course, and receive more individualized attention from the instructors). The average numeric grade in the Honors courses was 3.16, and in 'regular' courses 2.63.