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| Honors Institute Program Review |
| **Program Dean: Mark Gonzalez** |
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| **David Hendricks** |
| **4/10/2013** |

1. **Name of Program**: The Honors Institute
2. **Honors Institute Mission Statement**

The Honors Institute is designed to bring together students and faculty who share a demonstrated commitment to academic excellence. The Honors Institute is intended to challenge the superior student to produce quality scholarship and to achieve intellectual development within the general education program.

**Evergreen Valley College Mission Statement:**

With equity, opportunity and social justice as our guiding principles, Evergreen Valley College’s mission is to empower and prepare students from diverse backgrounds to succeed academically and to be civically responsible global citizens.

We meet our mission through a wide spectrum of educational experiences, flexible methodologies, and support services for our students.

**3. Program Description**

The Honors Institute provides support and enrichment to high-achieving, academically motivated, socially conscious students. The Honors Program offers an intellectually stimulating environment with curricular enrichment through Honors contracts, community service, leadership opportunities, cultural events, and collaboration with faculty and other Honors students

Student Participation Criteria:  
The Evergreen Valley College Honors Institute serves high achieving students in all majors and interests on our campus. In general, students need a GPA of 3.25 or above. However, students with a GPA between 3.0 and 3.24 can be admitted on a provisional basis. So long as the provisional student demonstrates improvement in their GPA and continues to complete at least one contract per semester, they can remain in the program and enjoy all of its benefits.

STUDENT BENEFITS

Working closely with faculty to custom design their own projects:

The Institute offers Honors credit for academic courses to our students by way of individual class contracts. These contracts are negotiated with, and approved by the instructor to ensure that the projects are discipline appropriate. Students are able to work closely with their instructors to design and execute their projects.

Honors Credit on Transcripts:

Upon completion of their projects, students receive an “H” designation on their transcripts that indicates that the course was taken for Honors credit. Students who accumulate over 15 units of Honors coursework are additionally recognized in the graduation program. The academic challenge provided by the Honors institute helps to “empower and prepare students from diverse backgrounds to succeed academically”.

Priority Registration:

In addition to receiving academic recognition for their participation, students receive Priority Registration so long as they remain active Honors students in good standing with the program. This benefit allows Honors students to get the courses they need in order to complete their general education requirements at EVC and graduate in a timely manner. Honors students also are eligible for the annual scholarships offered by the Institute.

Special Counseling:

Students also have access to specialized counseling. The Honors Institute works with Bev Stewart from the Transfer Center to help keep Honors students on track for graduating and transferring to a four-year college or university. We are hoping to work with at least one and perhaps two more counselors in order to expand the range of counseling expertise available to Honors students.

Leadership and Cooperation Opportunities:

The Honors Institute also offers Honors students opportunities to demonstrate their leadership and cooperation skills. In the past year, the Institute has worked to expand leadership activities

Honors Club:

Beginning in Spring 2012, the Institute backed a student initiative to create a formal Honors Club as part of the ASG. The Honors Club provides students with significant leadership opportunities with regard to the Honors Institute. The Club is comprised primarily of active Honors students who are interested in shaping the program, but accepts anyone who is interested in becoming a member. The Club meets weekly and elects its own President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, and is active in planning events and activities. Honors students are generally involved in events such as Club Rush, the Spooktacular, Day on the Green, and Night on Caffeine, among others. The Club also is active in fundraising for the Institute’s annual scholarships. Prior to the creation of the Honors Club, Honors students advised the Coordinator through an informal Student Advisory Board. The ASG-charter allows the Club to be a more active part of the wider campus community and to partner with other clubs.

Student-Directed Activities:

In the 2012-2013 school year, the Club in conjunction with the Honors Institute sponsored a few campus-wide activities. It sponsored the annual Constitution Day, organized a mock Presidential Debate, and for Spring 2013 is organizing another debate, this time around the topic of gun control.

The creation of the club and its sponsoring of these kinds of activities is in line with the college’s mission to promote civic involvement by our students.

Volunteer Service:

Beginning in Spring 2011, the Institute, following the recommendation of the Student Advisory Board added a five-hour per semester volunteer hour requirement. The intent of the service hours is to build a more robust campus community and to help foster an ethic of mutual support. By providing leadership and volunteer opportunities, the Institute helps EVC students “to be civically responsible global citizens.” While most Honors students complete their volunteer hours on campus, those who have a difficult time committing the extra time to campus life can request to complete their service hours in the community.

1. **List of Staff and Titles**

Honors Institute Coordinator: David G. Hendricks, Ph.D. (.30 F.T.E. release time)

1. Factors Affecting the Honors Institute

Willingness of faculty to offer contracts. Since the Honors Institute runs on a contract basis, there is a great deal of flexibility for students. However, the downside is that the system relies on the willingness of faculty to sponsor Honors contracts. This requires extra non-compensated work on the part of the instructor above and beyond their contracted work load. While most are willing to do so out of a sense of professional responsibility, students sometimes run into difficulty in finding a willing faculty sponsor for their projects.

Paperwork completion and submission by faculty. Another consequence of the contract system is that individual instructors need to confirm that a student project has been completed before the student receives Honors recognition for the course on their transcript. While most faculty are diligent about reporting contract completions, there is always a number of contracts that remain in limbo until the Coordinator can get confirmation from the faculty. Most of the time, faculty who do not report the completion status of a contract neglect to do so since the student failed to complete the contract. However, there are also cases in which the faculty member became busy and neglected to report. The Coordinator generally spends a portion of the beginning of each semester accounting for contracts from the prior semester for which the completion status is uncertain.

Continued support for offset time for Coordinator. Currently, the only faculty member compensated for working with the Honors Institute is the Honors Coordinator. The Coordinator traditionally was provided with 40% reassign time plus a part-time administrative assistant who worked a limited amount of hours, ranging from 10-15 per week. Currently, there is no administrative assistant specifically dedicated to Honors, and the reassign time was reduced to 30% in Fall 2008. As a result, the Coordinator is the primary employee responsible for all of the Institute’s administrative and academic functions. While some students have complained about the limited number of hours that the Coordinator is available, most have accommodated to the limitation. With limited support and dedicated hours, most of the Coordinator’s time is taken up with administrative tasks, including processing program applications, updating e-mail lists, maintaining communication with Honors students, recruitment, running meetings with the Honors Club,, helping with special events, evaluating scholarship application files, creating Honors student files, overseeing contract submission, monitoring contract completion, working with Administration and Records to establish a priority registration list each semester, reviewing the list of graduates each year to ensure that eligible students receive proper recognition in the graduation program, contacting faculty to verify completed contracts, and other day-to-day tasks. In most weeks, the number of hours dedicated to Honors by the Coordinator exceeds the number of hours allotted in the offset time. As a consequence of these conditions, the success of the program is very heavily dependent on the performance of the Honors Coordinator.

Support for administrative assistance. Since the Honors Institute currently receives no formal support, the Honors Coordinator is responsible for most administrative functions. In the past 3 years, the Administrative Assistants for Language Arts and Social Sciences Humanities and Physical Education have both been very supportive and have provided students with basic program information and forms. The Language Arts Administrative Assistant also has been willing to conduct grade verification for student applications. While this has been very helpful to the success of the program, students would be better served if there were a part time assistant who could be in the office for at least a few hours per week.

Professional development/conference funds. There currently is no budget for professional development, conference, or association fees. It would be helpful to develop the skills of the Coordinator if they could receive support to go to Honors-based conferences, sponsored by such organizations as the Honors Transfer Council of California, the Western Honors Regional Council, or Phi Theta Kappa. There also should be funds available to maintain memberships in HTCC and WHRC.

Professional affiliations. Related to the necessity for better professional development, it would be helpful to have annual funds available to maintain memberships in the Honors Transfer Council of California and the Western Honors Regional Council. Each membership costs less than $100 per year.

Willingness of students to support the Honors Institute through student organizations. In Fall 2008, the Honors Coordinator created a Student Advisory Board to help plan and execute fund raising events and participation in campus activities. Over the past four years, student volunteers have been invaluable in keeping the program active on campus. They have been the driving force behind participation in such events as the annual Club Rush, the Spooktacular, Day on the Green, and the Tutoring Center’s Night on Caffeine. They have sponsored or co-sponsored campus speakers and events that have highlighted such issues as the use of child-soldiers in Uganda, the economic and political challenges facing Haiti, Constitution Day, and most recently, a mock Presidential Debate. They also have been active in fundraisers, such as the annual Garage Sale, a Rootbeer float sale ,and Hot Chocolate sales. In Spring 2012, the students petitioned the Associated Students to create an Honors Club, which would in part help advise the Honors Institute. The Institute has been fortunate that so many of its members have been interested in volunteering to keep the program active. However, there is always the potential for a decline in student interest, which would result in less participation in or sponsoring of campus events.

Limited electronic resources. Currently the Honors Institute has a computer for the Coordinator and three other computers that are intended for student use. However, the computers are several years old (at least eight years), and have limited speed and processing power. As a result, students rarely use the computers to study.

1. Student Learning Outcomes
2. Student will be able to work with instructor to develop an academic project

ILO: Information Competency

This measure will be assessed through data collected by the contracts submitted each semester. Each semester’s performance will be compared to historical data from earlier semesters. The ability of each student to be able to approach their instructor and work to design a project is reflected in the percentage of students who register as Honors students and submit a project contract. On occasion students apply for and are admitted to the program, but fail to submit a contract and never become active Honors students. By charting the rate of success of this measure, we can determine whether there is a need to intervene in the contract process or if there needs to be greater mentorship available to new students. We will need to compare the actions of newly enrolled Honors students in their first semester.

Data for this is collected every semester but can be specifically collated to chart historical trends.

Successful Contracts/Newly Accepted Members

Fall 2012: 69%

Spring 2012: 53%

Fall 2011: 50%

Spring 2011: 70%

Fall 2010: 79%

Spring 2010: 65%

Fall 2009: 60%

Spring 2009: 41%

1. Student will be able to complete the work for their academic project

ILO: Inquiry and Reasoning

This measure will be assessed using data on completion rates for contracts submitted by students. An annual review will establish trends in completion rates and identify areas for improvement.

Completion data are gathered every semester and can be used to determine whether there is a need for improved mentoring or training for students and faculty to improve on the percent of contracts completed.

Completion Rates:

Fall 2012: 74%

Spring 2012: 88%

Fall 2011: 84%

Spring 2011: 80%

Fall 2010: 85%

Spring 2010: 88%

Fall 2009: 78%

Spring 2009: 92%

1. Student will develop a commitment to service through regular volunteer service hours

ILO: Social Responsibility

This measure will be assessed by gathering data on student completion of volunteer hours each semester.

Data on completion of the volunteer service component are gathered every semester and will provide a way of tracking student success in this measure.

Percent of Active Students who completed Volunteer Hours:

Fall 2012: 52%

Spring 2012: 71%

Fall 2011: 43%

Spring 2011: 45%

1. Student will learn to develop a capacity for independent learning

ILO: Personal Development

This measure will be assessed by analyzing data on number of contracts initiated and completed by students by the time they graduate, and the percentage completed.

The data for this measure are gathered on an ongoing basis, but can only be generated for individual students at the point at which they graduate. There also needs to be a way to generate aggregate data for students. Perhaps aggregating the data for those Honors students who are transferring would provide a way to create a meaningful measure.

1. Review Available Data and Baselines

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Semester | Active Students | Contracts | Completed Contracts | Acceptances | Conditional Acceptances |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Spring 2013 | 47 | 65 |  | 21 | 4 |
| Fall 2012 | 54 | 68 | 50 | 32 | 3 |
| Spring 2012 | 45 | 56 | 49 | 30 | 2 |
| Fall2011 | 37 | 44 | 37 | 23 | 1 |
| Spring 2011 | 51 | 61 | 49 | 29 | 8 |
| Fall 2010 | 47 | 59 | 50 | 25 | 3 |
| Spring 2010 | 40 | 56 | 49 | 37 | 3 |
| Fall 2009 | 33 | 54 | 42 | 24 | 1 |
| Spring 2009 | 39 | 53 | 49 | 20 | 2 |
| Fall 2008 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Spring 2008 | 30 | 28 |  |  |  |
| Fall 2007 | 26 | 25 |  |  |  |
| Spring 2007 | 37 | 30 |  |  |  |

As it stands, there is very little consistent data available to examine the Honors Institute’s performance. Since Spring 2009, the Coordinator has made an effort to collect and maintain limited data related to the Institute’s performance. However, reconstructing comparable data from earlier semesters has been a challenge.

There is a high level of turnover among active Honors students. While there is generally a core of students who are around for 3-4 semesters, thus ensuring some consistency, there also is a great deal of turnover of students who join for only one or two semesters.

In general there are roughly 40- 50 FTES active in Honors in any given semester. An active Honors student is defined as someone who is enrolled in the program and has at least one active contract for the current semester. In general, the program accepts between 20-30 FTES per semester, most of whom become active members for at least one semester. There also are about 20-30 FTES per semester that become inactive. While some students inform the Coordinator of their intention to withdraw from the Institute or graduate, the vast majority simply fail to contact the Coordinator and disappear, leaving the Coordinator to deduce their intentions. As a result, there often are far more students on the e-mail distribution list and who have files on record than are active in any given semester. As a result, while the composition of students is in flux, the number of active students has been fairly consistent over the past 6 semesters.

1. Student Satisfaction Opinion Survey results

In Fall 2011, the Coordinator conducted a survey (through Survey Monkey) of active Honors students to asses the performance of the Honors Institute. Currently there is a high rate of satisfaction by students in the program. They report that they are in large satisfied with its offerings, flexibility, administration, and faculty offered by the program. The one area of dissatisfaction was with regard to the resources dedicated to the program.

There were five multiple choice response questions and five that allowed commentary. For the multiple choice questions, students were asked about their view of the Institute’s performance and were given the choices of: Very Satisfied (VS), Satisfied (S), Neutral (N); Unsatisfied (U); and Very Unsatisfied). There were 22 overall responses, representing roughly 50% of the active students.

The multiple choice questions were:

1. How Satisfied are you with the Honors Institute? Responses were: VS: 59%; S: 31%; N: 4%; U: 4%; VU 0%
2. How Satisfied are you with the variety of classes available to Honors students? Responses were: VS: 55%; S: 32%; N: 13%; U: 0%; VU: 0%
3. How Satisfied are you with the administration of the Honors Institute? Responses were: VS: 64%; S: 32%; N: 4%; U: 0%; VU: 0%
4. How Satisfied are you with the faculty who sponsor honors contracts? Responses were: VS: 68%; S: 23%; N: 9%; U: 0%; VU:0%
5. How satisfied are you with the resources dedicated to the Honors Institute? Responses were: VS: 27%; S: 41%: N: 23%; U: 9%; VU: 0%

In general, the survey reveals that students are happy with the overall performance and administration of the program, with 90% either Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the Honors Institute, and 96% Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the administration of the Institute. They seem to believe that the variety of courses and instructors that are available to Honors students is more that adequate with an overall approval rate of 87% Satisfied or Very Satisfied. There is a high level of satisfaction with the Institute in general. The only area where students express an interest in improving the Institute regards funding for resources, with only 68% responding that they are Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the current resources dedicated to the Institute.

When asked what improvements could be made to the Institute, students responded that they would like:

“more events”

“get involved in more student activities”

“add more scholarships”

“better communication and events”

“more community service options”

“mentoring”

“partnerships with 4-year schools”

When asked about how to improve the variety of offerings and experiences for Honors students, respondents made the following suggestions”

“hold more events”

“the Honors Institute already provides a strong variety of classes”

“one on one counseling”

“more awareness for the general student body”

“none”

“more in-house functions and events to make it a tight-knit group”

“conferences or a yearly social gathering where we can get to meet everyone in the program”

When asked how best to improve the administration of the Institute, students made the following suggestions”

“have a live person, such as a coordinator in the honors office”

“have more teachers involved with the honors program”

“I think it’s fine”

“Good job already”

“the administrator is willing to help you with the program; is very dynamic and flexible”

“nothing”

When asked about how to improve the faculty’s role in sponsoring contracts, students made the following comments:

“none”

“I think it’s fine”

“make it more open and available to all students”

“I would like to see part time faculty be willing to provide honors contracts”

“explain the program in class at the beginning of each semester”

When asked about the type of resources that would improve the program, students made the following suggestions:

“have some free test supplies”

“an Honors Institute personal lab . . . should include both computers and tutors”

“Honors Institute computer lab”

“bigger office to meet in”

“more events and weekly functions”

“tutoring center”

“more money for scholarships”

A student satisfaction survey should be done once per year. This will provide some guidance in how to improve the performance of the program for students.

Program demographics:

There are not very consistent demographic data available on Honors students. By taking the information from the current files, which include students who were admitted to the program between Spring 2009 and Fall 2011, we can get a rough idea of the composition of the students in the program.

**Sex:**

Men: 47

Women: 78

**Race/Ethnicity:**

African American: 4 (3.2%)

American Indian: 1 (0.8%)

Asian: 65 (52%)

Asian Indian: 8 (6.4%)

Arab/Middle Eastern: 2 (1.6%)

Hispanic/Latino: 33 (26%)

White/Caucasian: 11 (8.8%)

Overall, there are far more women than men involved in Honors.

1. Program Weaknesses

Limited counseling. The Institute is in a transitional phase with its relationship with counseling. In the past year, the two counselors that had traditionally worked with Honors (one of whom was instrumental in forming the Honors Institute in the first place) retired. This has left the Institute with no established relationship with the counselors. As a result, the current Coordinator has begun to develop new partnerships with counselors to support the counseling needs of its students. This effort to develop a new relationship is still in its early stages, but should result in a newly developed and robust partnership with Counseling.

Limited access to Coordinator. With the reduction of offset time to 30% the number of hours that the Coordinator is available for office hours is limited, and some of those hours are dedicated to administrative tasks, which reduces the number of hours available to meet with Honors students to discuss their needs. Fortunately, most Honors students need little guidance and can develop and complete their projects with a great deal of autonomy. However, the limited availability of the Coordinator means that there is less ability to develop relationships between the Coordinator and the Honors students.

Greater resources, particularly providing a part-time administrative assistant, or more offset time, would allow the Honors office to remain open more hours to address student needs or field questions by students who stop by the office. An assistant would also help to take care of the necessary administrative functions, freeing up the Coordinator to recruit and promote.

Limited ability to develop an academic community (no honors sections). In addition to the limited ability to create an Honors community centered in the Honors office, there also is great difficulty in establishing an academic Honors community. With limited ability to recruit, process and retain Honors students, there is not a critical mass of Honors students to justify specific Honors sections of courses. In the past there were such sections, but they have become the victim of budget cuts. One possible solution that would take into account budget limitations would be to create a one unit course that would act as a colloquium that active Honors students could take to help them develop their projects and share their findings with a wider student academic community.

Greater resources would allow for Honors-specific section for some GE courses, which would provide a more robust academic community for our students and would also attract more students to Honors.

Limited recruitment. Another victim of limited Coordinator hours has been the ability to recruit additional students. In the past, Honors coordinators had the compensated time to go to a number of recruitment events both on and off campus. Without this extra dedicated time, recruitment efforts have been one of the casualties. A related problem is that with limited time, there also is limited ability to process a large number of applications and monitor the current number of active students and contracts. These administrative functions take up the vast bulk of the current Coordinator’s time. So, even if greater recruitment were possible, the increased numbers would force the Coordinator to spend even more time with the core administrative activities.

Greater offset time would improve the Coordinator’s ability to reach out and recruit. The Coordinator also could spend time recruiting in GE courses by visiting a number of sections. He or she could reach out more effectively to non-participating faculty to promote participation, thus increasing the pool of students who would be made aware of the program. It would also improve the ability to admit and monitor a larger number of Honors students.

Limited ability for students to share their work. Currently, students are fairly isolated and have little ability to share their work or hear about the work of their fellow students.

More offset time or administrative assistance would allow the Coordinator to establish more opportunities for students to share their work, for instance by providing an Honors colloquium on a regular basis as a showcase of student research and presentations.

1. Program Goals and Areas for Improvement

Each of the above weaknesses could be addressed fairly effectively with increased offset time for the Coordinator and a part-time dedicated Honors administrative assistant. The result would be a number of modest, yet significant improvements in the program If sufficient resources were available, it would allow for even more ambitious possibilities, such as participation in regional conferences with other community colleges. We have no funds to support travel, so currently are unable to attend any event distant from the campus. Yet, the current economic situation for the District and the State make such expanded investments unlikely.

However, should funds become available, the program could improve access to students and faculty, create Honors sections, improve recruitment, provide opportunities for highlighting student work.

Honors Colloquium course. Another option for expanding an Honors community would be to create a 1-unit Honors Colloquium course. Honors students from all disciplines could register for the course. Students would meet for 1 hour per week with an instructor and they would discuss the features of their current projects, share research results, establish timelines for reaching benchmarks for their projects, share their work and provide critique for the work of their peers. This would provide at least a minimal Honors community as well as mentorship for the students in the course. Such a course would most likely improve completion rates as well. It also might be possible to create multiple Colloquium courses depending on broad subject areas and research methodologies. (Humanities and English, versus Sciences).

Mentorship. With more release time, the Coordinator could create a mentorship program to pair an experienced Honors student with a new one. This would help build the Honors community and provide an additional resource and guide for new Honors students.

Orientations. With more release time, the Coordinator could offer multiple orientations on a regular basis for new Honors students to discuss how to initiate and complete a contract project.

1. Actions, Strategies, and Timeline

Given the current economic situation, the future plans of the Honors Institute are necessarily modest. However, it is possible that even with current restrictions that a few small improvements could be made to the program

First, we need to develop a closer relationship with Counseling to be sure we have at least 2 active counselors who can advise Honors students on courses and transfer issues. This would cost nothing, but would provide improved assistance to Honors students that specifically would take their needs into account.

Second, we need to investigate the possibility or reviving Honors sections, particularly for English sections. The largest number of contracts are in English sections, so this would be one area to target. Since such sections also would allow non-Honors student participation, it would be relatively low cost to the campus.

Third, we need to investigate the steps necessary to creating an Honors colloquium course. Creating a new course would add an expense, but if it is only a single-unit course, the expense to hire faculty to teach it would be minimal.

Each of these is relatively inexpensive, but would make the program significantly more robust. All it takes is time and money.