

Honors Program Review: Action Update September, 2005

Prepared by: Dr. Andrea Labinger, Director of Honors Program, ULV

History: In October, 2003, an external review team from the National Collegiate Honors Council was invited to visit ULV for the purpose of evaluating the Honors Program and making recommendations for its continued expansion and development. A full report of the team's findings was submitted to Dr. Andrea Labinger, Honors Director; Dr. Richard McDowell, former Provost and Academic Vice President; and Dr. Fred Yaffe, Dean of Arts and Sciences. Following is a summary of the recommendations made by the team members, Dr. Rosalie Otero, Director of the Honors Program at the University of New Mexico, and Dr. Melvin Shoemaker, Director of the Honors Program at Azusa Pacific University, as well as the ULV Honors Director's response.

Recommendation 1: Reduce Honors Director's teaching load to half-time.

- **Response:** This recommendation has been implemented as of 2005-06.

Recommendation 2: Hire a half-time administrative assistant or office manager.

- **Response:** The program still depends entirely on work-study students for clerical support.

Recommendation 3: Increase the diversity of the composition of the Honors Committee by including two faculty members from Arts and Sciences, one faculty member each from Education and Business, two current Honors teaching faculty, one student representative, with the Director and Dean as ex-officio members.

- **Response:** These changes were implemented in 2004-2005.

Recommendation 4: Seek a larger, more central facility to house the Honors Program in order to showcase undergraduate academic excellence.

- **Response:** This recommendation remains a long-range goal, since our current campus construction project and the resulting shortage of space preclude taking immediate action.

Recommendation 5: Add a third seminar each semester, possibly including a discipline-based seminar as an alternative.

- **Response:** One additional interdisciplinary seminar has been added each semester. The Honors Committee will consider the advantages and disadvantages of creating discipline-based seminars this year.

Recommendation 6: Consider criteria for admitting transfer students from other Honors Programs.

- **Response:** The ULV Honors Program has always welcomed transfer students, a few of whom have done Honors coursework at other

institutions. Whenever possible, these students have been granted Honors credit for comparable work completed elsewhere. The Honors Committee will explore the possibility of establishing formal articulation agreements with community colleges with compatible Honors Programs in order to facilitate transferability.

Recommendation 7: Conduct a faculty orientation workshop each semester, or at minimum, each academic year in order to provide new faculty with information about the Honors Program.

- **Response:** This fall, for the first time, an orientation workshop was held for new and returning Honors faculty. It was a very successful event, from all reports, and many helpful ideas were shared.

Recommendation 8: Have the Director prepare an annual report.

- **Response:** A report was submitted to Provost Mc Dowell following the team's visit. Additionally, this Action Recommendation document will serve as an ongoing assessment tool.

Recommendation 9: Consider raising admission criteria from the current minimum SAT 1150 or ACT 25 and increasing the minimum high school cumulative GPA of 3.50 to a higher standard.

- **Response:** This year's incoming Honors freshmen present average SAT scores greater than 1150. However, given the nature of ULV's student body, it does not seem reasonable to raise Honors admission standards dramatically at this time. Some students who fall slightly below minimum Honors admission standards fare very well in the program nonetheless, while some academic "superstars" do not succeed. ULV's holistic approach to evaluating the potential success of applicants seems to be working quite well for us.

Recommendation 10: Provide opportunities whereby students may earn Honors credit by contract, or through study abroad, research projects, and/or an Honors thesis.

- **Response:** Currently, students are able to earn Honors credit through courses taken abroad that contain a reasonable interdisciplinary component. ULV introduced contractual Honors coursework years ago and found the process to be flawed. The Honors Committee might wish to reconsider this option with modifications.

Recommendation 11: Designate a floor or wing of an existing residence hall as the "Honors Floor" (or "Honors Wing") in order to encourage more propitious conditions for scholarly engagement and community development.

- **Response:** This recommendation will be brought to the attention of the Honors Committee.