

ULV HONORS PROGRAM REVIEW

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

By

National Collegiate Honors Council

**Evaluation Report Prepared by: Dr. Rosalie C. Otero and Dr. Melvin H. Shoemaker
October 13-15, 2003**

Materials for Review prepared by: Dr. Andrea Labinger, Director of Honors Program

Dr. Otero, Director of the Honors Program at the University of New Mexico and Immediate Past-President of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), and Dr. Shoemaker, Director of the Honors Program and Study Abroad at Azusa Pacific University and a member of the Small College Honors Program Committee of the NCHC, were invited to serve as outside reviewers for the Honors Program by Dr. Andrea Labinger, Director of the Honors Program at the University of La Verne.

Before our visit we received and reviewed numerous materials sent by Dr. Labinger both about the University of La Verne and the Honors Program including: The 2003-2004 University Catalog; the Honors Program recruitment brochure; a narrative about the history of the Honors Program; syllabi for select Honors courses; Senior Seminar guidelines, including two representative reflection papers; the evaluation instrument used by Honors; a list of recent Honors seminars; budgets for the last five years; an informal Honors handbook with FAQ; application materials; a summary of the recent focus group conducted with Honors students; and a comparison of ULV's Honors Program to the NCHC "Basic Characteristics."

Our schedule for the two-day visit included an entrance and exit meeting with the Honors Program Director; meetings with the Honors faculty and students; meetings with Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Richard L. McDowell; meeting with Lisa Meyer, Associate Vice President for Institutional Image; meeting with Dr. Al Clark, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs; meeting with Dr. Fred Yaffe, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences; meeting with Carren Acevedo, Coordinator of The College Connection and GATE Director, Azusa Unified School District; and visits to three classes, "Introduction to the 21st Century" (Dr. Al Clark and Dr. David Chappell), "Rag to Rock" (Janice Johnson and Dr. David Brock), and "Search for Self" (Dr. Barbara Jefferson).

We have divided our report into two sections: (1) A general narrative discussing the strengths of the University of La Verne Honors Program with some recommendations followed by (2) An analysis of the Program in terms of the National Collegiate Honors Council's Basic Characteristics of a Fully-developed Honors Program.

Although it is the largest national organization concerned with honors education, the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) does not serve as an accrediting body for Honors Programs or Honors Colleges. The members of the review team are NCHC-recommended Site Visitors, and they bring a range of national honors experience. This document, however, should not be construed to constitute a report from the National Collegiate Honors Council as an organization.

General Narrative

History: The University of La Verne Honors Program has a sixteen year history. This longevity indicates that it is meeting the need within the University of offering top students special academic experiences and enriched educational opportunities. The Honors Program is perceived to be an important special feature of the University of La Verne.

Director: The Program has a dedicated and well-respected Director. However, Dr. Labinger is currently only given one class reduction annually in her regular load of six courses. In addition, she is serving as the Chair of the Modern Languages Department. Most successful Honors Programs and Colleges across the country generally have a full-time director. It would be advantageous to the University of La Verne's Honors Program to lessen Dr. Labinger's teaching responsibilities. If it's not possible to appoint Dr. Labinger as the full-time Honors Director, it would be beneficial for her to have at least a half-time appointment. Successful honors program directors are not only responsible for curriculum development and appointing faculty but for student recruitment, retention, advising, and oftentimes, for assisting universities with prestigious national fellowships and international programs. In addition, Dr. Labinger does not have any professional staff. A full-time or, at minimum, a half-time administrative assistant or office manager would be very beneficial to the continuity of the program. Currently, the Honors Program relies on part-time, work-study students.

Administration: Although at most institutions, the Honors Director reports to the highest academic officer such as the Provost, at the University of La Verne the Director reports to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. This administrative and organizational structure seems to be functioning very well considering that the faculty, students, and curriculum are primarily Arts and Sciences based. The site visitors would, however, recommend that the composition of the Honors Committee be more diverse. We recommend that two faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences be appointed to the Committee, one faculty each from the colleges of Education and Business, two faculty who are teaching Honors seminars, and at least one student representative elected by the students. The Director and the Dean should also serve as ex-officio members.

The site visitors would recommend that the students form an Honors Students Advisory Council or Committee. At the University of New Mexico, for example, HSAC helps with recruitment (visiting high schools, having a table at various university recruitment activities such as Senior Day, Transfer Day, Hispanic Student Day, etc.); they organize events for Honors students, both academic and social; and it is the group from which student representatives are drawn for the Honors Council and search committees, etc. Likewise at Azusa Pacific University, the Student Honors Council serves to recruit incoming students during University Preview Days, organizing social activities, and the election of student officers and representatives to the Honors Program Council.

Facilities: The new Honors Center is certainly comfortable and inviting for students. The classroom, computer lab, and office space for the Director are sufficient for the time being. However, in the future, the university should seek a better site for the Honors Program that is

more central to the campus. A prominent campus location would make an institutional statement in support of undergraduate scholarship and academic excellence. Additional classroom space and office space as well as storage would be desirable. We know there is currently no plan for an Honors residence hall, but perhaps a floor or wing of an existing residence hall could be made available to Honors students which would support this small community of academically gifted, disciplined and aspiring scholars.

Financial: The Honors Program has the potential to become a stronger component in continuing the institution's reputation for teaching and student intellectual development. There are interested and capable faculty as well as qualified motivated students. The first step is for the central administration to continue to support the future and role of the Honors Program within the institution. Quality obviously needs to be preserved especially in times of budget constraints. Currently the Honors Program is always dependent on departments and colleges, especially the College of Arts and Sciences, for faculty staffing and budget. In addition, the Director is required to negotiate every semester to ensure Honors priorities.

Budgetary resources for the Honors Program are just adequate. More funding would assist the College in recruiting more outstanding students, offering incentives to departments for the best faculty to teach in the Honors Program, and allow for more interdisciplinary and varied curriculum for Honors students, as well as adequate compensation for Honors staff. As noted earlier, this latter might include the hiring of a full or part-time administrative assistant to free the Director for more important work. The Honors students would like more choices rather than just two seminars each semester. One recommendation would be to make use of some discipline-based courses, but the Honors Program would have to administer the budget that would compensate the faculty in order to ensure quality. The Director and the Honors Committee would have to approve all proposals for interdisciplinary and disciplinary honors courses.

Curriculum: The students are most appreciative of their Honors experience. They consistently cited the quality of the required interdisciplinary Honors classes and the satisfaction they received from interacting with other bright, motivated students as the best part of the Honors Program. Students and faculty greatly praised the fact that the interdisciplinary courses were team-taught. The students believed that they were able to gain more insight and perspective from two faculty who were in different fields. These team-taught seminars are certainly a unique feature to the Honors Program at the University of La Verne.

As the Program grows, however, it may be important to include an additional seminar so that students may choose from among three each semester. One option would be to add a discipline-based Honors class each semester. The class would be open to all Honors students and would count toward core or group requirements. For those students whose major the course fits, it would count toward that student's major requirement. For example, in the fall semester, an Honors fine arts course could be offered (approved by the Director and the Honors Committee) open to all Honors students especially fine art majors. For non majors, the course would count toward the fine arts general education requirement. In the Spring semester, an Honors mathematics course could be offered with the same parameters as above. So, the Honors

Program would offer two interdisciplinary, team-taught seminars and one discipline-based class each semester. This recommendation would have two benefits: (1) All Honors students could participate in a discipline-based course which would give them an additional choice and General Education credit and (2) Disciplines could offer Honors courses with the probability of sufficient enrollment. If disciplines offer Honors courses only for majors, the chances that these classes would make is very small since in the Honors Program there are currently only one or two majors in distinct disciplines.

The Honors Colloquia, activity-based classes that explore contemporary issues in various fields through reading and discussion organized around attendance at events, are considered outstanding. Students said that through the Colloquia, they were made aware of many campus and community events. They were able to attend lectures and theater productions, visit galleries, and participate in other intellectual and artistic events that they might not have attended or perhaps even learned about without the Colloquia. The students believe that the best part of the Colloquia is the opportunity to discuss the various events with faculty and other Honors students.

The College Connection during the January interterm is an excellent introduction to service-learning and should be continued. It may be worthwhile to consider the expansion of the program to a semester-long experience. The visiting team was very impressed with the capstone seminar. Dr. Barbara Jefferson does an outstanding job with the “Search for Self” theme of the seminar.

Recruitment & Admission of Transfers: The site visitors recommend that the Honors Program consider criteria for admission of transferring Honors students. Two-year institutions can be an excellent source for recruitment of Honors students. The current structure of the Honors Program does not allow for transfer students to participate in Honors. It may be advisable to examine how other similar programs manage the transfer dilemma. Some institutions accept six to nine hours of credit from Honors Programs in community colleges. Some institutions provide independent study options or contract opportunities so that students may complete requirements and be eligible to graduate with the Honors distinction.

Faculty Orientation: The site visitors recommend that a faculty orientation workshop be inaugurated each semester or, at minimum, each academic year. The orientation would provide faculty with information about the Honors Program, expectations of Honors students, seminar-teaching pedagogy (seminar vs. lecture-based classes), requirements of Honors students (writing proficiency, number of papers, projects, etc.), evaluation and grading criteria, etc. *See Appendix A.*

Annual Report: Although the tradition of the University of La Verne may not include annual reports, the site visitors recommend that the Director write an annual report. Most Honors Programs find that an annual report is the best way to realize the progress of the Program in any given year and to assess its needs for the future. The report can also be used to solicit support from potential donors, alumni, or administrators. *See Appendix B.*

Summary: Drs. Otero and Shoemaker agree that the Honors Program at the University of La Verne is excellent. Dr. Labinger is doing an outstanding job of fulfilling the Program's stated mission "to provide an interdisciplinary curriculum enriched with specialized and innovative courses, opportunities to integrate skills gained in diverse disciplines, more individualized attention, outreach and extracurricular activities for participants, and greater access to study facilities." The few recommendations that we are offering concerning budget, staff, and curricular emends would enhance an already strong Program.

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**Assessment of the University of La Verne Honors Program by
THE BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF A FULLY-DEVELOPED HONORS PROGRAM
As Developed by the National Collegiate Honors Council**

No one model of an Honors Program can be superimposed on all types of institutions. However, there are characteristics which are common to successful, fully-developed Honors Programs. Listed below are those characteristics, although not all characteristics are necessary for an Honor Program to be considered a successful and/or fully-developed Honors Program.

- 1. A fully-developed Honors Program should be carefully set up to accommodate the special needs and abilities of the undergraduate students it is designed to serve. This entails identifying the targeted student population by some clearly articulated set of criteria (e.g., GPA, SAT score, a written essay). A program with open admission needs to spell out expectations for retention in the program and for satisfactory completion of program requirements.**

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

- a. Admission criteria to the University of La Verne Honors Program include:
 - For incoming freshmen: a combined minimum SAT score of 1150 or ACT of 25; a cumulative academic GPA of 3.5 or above; recommendations of two high school instructors; completion of an application form, including a 250-word essay; and a personal interview (telephone interview may be substituted for students who live outside the area).
 - For currently enrolled or transfer students: a minimum academic GPA of 3.5 or above; recommendations of two college instructors; completion of an application form, including a 250-word essay; and a personal interview (telephone interview may be substituted for students who live outside the area).
- b. Retention criteria include maintenance of a 3.3 GPA as a full-time student enrolled at the University of La Verne.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

- ✓ It is recommended that some consideration be given to raising the criteria for admission of incoming freshmen from the current minimum SAT 1150 or ACT 25 score and also to increasing the minimum cumulative high school GPA from 3.50 to a higher norm of selectivity. Special consideration may be given to applicants of diversity, especially to those whose first language is other than English. The minimum cumulative 3.50 GPA for matriculating ULV applicants

provides a higher standard and provides a secondary opportunity for currently enrolled students to gain admission to the Honors Program.

- 2. The program should have a clear mandate from the institutional administration ideally in the form of a mission statement clearly stating the objectives and responsibilities of the program and defining its place in both the administrative and academic structure of the institution. This mandate or mission statement should be such as to assure the permanence and stability of the program by guaranteeing an adequate budget and by avoiding any tendency to force the program to depend on temporary or spasmodic dedication of particular faculty members or administrators. In other words, the program should be fully institutionalized so as to build thereby a genuine tradition of excellence.**

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

While the ULV Honors Program has an articulated mission statement (below), this statement is more philosophical than practical in nature. The administration has provided a dedicated budget for the Honors Program since the program's inception in 1988. There is no discrete cadre of Honors faculty or administrators; rather, the honors faculty is determined by the seminars being offered during any given academic year. The Honors Program aims to be inclusive, drawing faculty from a wide range of academic disciplines and interests. Faculty members teach honors seminars either on-load or as overload courses with the consent of their department chairs.

ULV Honors Program Mission Statement:

The University of La Verne Honors Program is predicated on two principles: the interrelatedness of knowledge and a lifelong educational imperative both within and outside the formal classroom environment. These principles derive from the University Mission Statement, with its emphasis on values orientation, community and diversity, lifelong learning, and community service.

For students who have demonstrated exceptional academic achievement and motivation, the Honors Program provides an interdisciplinary curriculum enriched with specialized and innovative courses, opportunities to integrate skills gained in diverse disciplines, more individualized attention, outreach and extracurricular activities for participants, and greater access to study facilities.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

Currently the Honors Program is dependent on departments and colleges, especially the College of Arts and Sciences, for faculty staffing and budget. In addition, the Director is required to negotiate every semester to ensure Honors priorities. Budgetary resources for the Honors Program are minimal, at most. More funding would assist the University in recruiting more outstanding students, offering incentives to departments for the best faculty to teach in the Honors Program, and allow for more interdisciplinary and varied curriculum for Honors students, as well as more adequate compensation for Honors staff.

- ✓ It is recommended that the Honors Director position become a half-time appointment, thus reducing the teaching and other administrative responsibilities currently engaging the Director.
- ✓ It is recommended that consideration be given to hiring a full or part-time administrative assistant to free the Director for the administrative enrichment of the program.

- ✓ It is recommended that the Honors Program be given a salary line to provide for Honors instruction by full-time faculty which could be disbursed to the respective school and department of the Honors instructor, thus providing for a standard adjunct replacement. This would lessen the departmental reluctance to have a full-time faculty member teach an Honors course.

3. The honors director should report to the chief academic officer of the institution.

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

The ULV Honors Program possesses an idiosyncratic governance structure in that the founding (and current) director has always reported to the Dean of Arts and Sciences, despite the fact that the program encompasses colleges other than Arts and Sciences (specifically, the College of Business and Public Administration). As this document is being written, a new Dean of Arts and Sciences has just been appointed. The Honors Program, in collaboration with higher administration, will determine whether or not to continue this tradition.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

Although at most institutions, the Honors Director reports to the highest academic officer such as the Provost, at the University of La Verne the Honors Director reports to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. This administrative organization seems to be working quite well, considering that the faculty, students, and curriculum are primarily in the Arts and Sciences. However, if the program is to become more inclusive of students and curriculum in the College of Business and Public Management and the College of Education and Organizational Leadership, perhaps the present administrative relationship should be reviewed and possibly changed.

- ✓ It is recommended that the Honors Committee and the University review the present governance structure and consider the merits of having the Honors Director report to the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. This would give importance to the program and provide for greater inclusion of the schools of Business and Education.

4. There should be an honors curriculum featuring special courses, seminars, colloquia and independent study established in harmony with the mission statement and in response to the needs of the program.

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

Students wishing to complete the entire ULV honors sequence are required to take four interdisciplinary seminars, a capstone senior seminar, and a minimum of three colloquia, as described below. There is also a community-based, service learning experience, "The College Connection," offered under the aegis of the Honors Program. Students may, under extenuating circumstances, substitute an interdisciplinary independent study project for one of the four seminars, with the approval of the Honors Director.

The four honors seminars (4 semester hours each) are usually taken during the first two years of a student's undergraduate career. These seminars are team taught by two instructors from different disciplines and may be used to satisfy a choice of general education requirements in lieu of more traditional classes. The topics vary widely; since the program began in 1988, almost every discipline has had an opportunity to participate. Some representative recent seminar titles include:

Religion and the City (Sociology and Religion)

Introduction to the 21st Century (Natural Sciences, History, Economics)

Decolonizing Africa (Francophone Literature, Film, and Rhetoric)
Modeling Abstraction: The Art-Mathematics Bridge (Art History and Mathematics)
A Century of Hype and Stereotype (Marketing and Popular Culture)

The capstone senior seminar (1-4 semester hours) has been taught for the past three years by Dr. Barbara Jefferson, whose expertise is in Higher Education Administration. Her course, *Searching for Self*, offered to honors students in the fall of their senior year, is particularly appropriate as it is a retrospective of their own undergraduate experiences as well as a glimpse into the experiences of other ULV graduates, both recent and remote. Dr. Jefferson incorporates both theoretical and practical dimensions into this class.

The honors colloquia (1 semester hour) provide a co-curricular dimension to the Honors Program. Coordinated by Dr. Al Clark, the colloquia are activity-based classes that explore contemporary issues through the collective viewing and/or hearing and discussions of lectures, videos, plays, concerts, museums, student project presentations, art exhibits, and other topical events.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

The Visit Team highly commends ULV for the adoption of the interdisciplinary seminar model for the primary curriculum in the Honors Program. Students and faculty alike expressed great appreciation for the interaction and integration of ideas which is facilitated by this pedagogical paradigm. There was similar unanimous affirmation of the Honors Colloquia, which cultivates intellectual appreciation for lectures, theatrical productions, art exhibitions, museum visits, and other cultural events, which otherwise would be passed up by the Honors student. The College Connection has an excellent history of success in service learning due to the energetic and creative administrative leadership of ULV alumna Carren Acevedo and perhaps also in some measure to the limitations provided by the January interterm, which creates a concentrated focus upon the experience and activities with the GATE students.

The Program provides an academic cultural setting which serves to develop *critical thinking abilities* that enable students to analyze, synthesize, apply and connect ideas; *social abilities* of collaboration, negotiation and service in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural human story and cosmos; and *personal qualities* of confidence, curiosity, discipline and moral values.

- ✓ It is recommended that some discipline-based Honors seminars be considered in addition to the current two interdisciplinary, integrative, team-taught seminars available each semester. This would satisfy the frequently heard comments of the Honors students, and, if the courses were upper division, they would satisfy the Honors requirements desired by transferring Honors students. It would be imperative that the Honors Director and the Honors Program Committee approve all interdisciplinary and disciplinary honors courses and the instructor(s), maintain the characteristic Honors distinctives, and administer the budgetary compensation of the instructor in order to ensure the academic quality of the program.
- ✓ It is recommended that junior and senior non-Honors majors who have a minimum cumulative 3.50 GPA or higher be permitted the opportunity to enroll in discipline-based Honors seminars to receive the academic enrichment and to provide a sufficient enrollment to warrant the instructional cost.

- ✓ It is recommended that the Honors Director and Committee develop worthy standards and a process whereby students may earn Honors credit by means of credit-by-contract, study abroad, research, and thesis or project.

5. The program requirements themselves should include a substantial portion of the participants undergraduate work, usually in the vicinity of 20% or 25% of their total course work and certainly no less than 15%.

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

In order to complete the entire honors sequence at the University of La Verne and receive the designation “Honors Program Graduate,” students must earn a total of 20-24 semester hours of credit in honors work. This is the unit equivalent of a minor (A bachelor’s degree requires a minimum of 128 semester hours). Students who wish to be designated as “Honors Program Participants” (partial recognition) are required to complete a minimum of 10 semester hours of honors work, eight of which must be in the form of interdisciplinary seminars.

Both Honors Program Graduates and Participants are recognized at a special honors commencement ceremony, and both groups receive distinctive honors certificates upon graduation. However, only Honors Program Graduates receive golden honors medallions and have the designation “Honors Program Graduate” printed on their diplomas and final transcripts. Honors Program Graduates are also noted in the Commencement program.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

The present minimum requirement for the distinction, “Honors Program Graduate,” is 20-24 of the 128 semester units required for graduation. This translates to 15.6-18.7 percent of the student’s academic program, which is certainly acceptable; however, it is considered a low standard.

- ✓ It is recommended that the Honors students be encouraged to enrich their undergraduate educational experience by means of credit-by-contract, study abroad, research, thesis or project of such a nature as to be worthy of Honors recognition.
- ✓ It is recommended that with additional discipline-based courses and the foregoing options becoming available to the Honors students that consideration be given to raising the minimum requirement for the “Honors Program Graduate” to 24-26 semester hours and the minimum qualification for recognition as an “Honors Program Participant” to 12 semester hours of Honors work.

6. The program should be so formulated that it relates effectively both to all the college work for the degree (e.g., by satisfying general education requirements) and to the area of concentration, departmental specialization, pre-professional or professional training.

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

All honors interdisciplinary seminars may be used to fulfill general education requirements. At mid-semester, students are provided with a choice sheet and must elect which one of a selection of G.E. options they choose to fulfill with the current seminar. Students are permitted to modify these choices when the graduation evaluations are completed. The Honors Colloquia, collectively, fulfill a general education Humanities requirement, and the Senior Seminar, as currently constituted, satisfies an interdisciplinary Social Science requirement for general education. The College Connection

(service-learning class described above) may be substituted for one Colloquium class and may be repeated for service-learning credit.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

The present interdisciplinary and integrative seminars provide an excellent Honors curriculum paradigm primarily in General Education in the arts and sciences. The supplementary curriculum provided by the Honors Colloquia and Capstone Senior Seminar extend the Honors educational enrichment beyond the freshman and sophomore years. The Program also requires the academically gifted students to engage in reflective service learning through their activities with the GATE students of the Azusa Unified School District, which serves to nurture a responsible citizenship.

- ✓ It is recommended, as stated in characteristics 4 and 5, that discipline-based courses and other means of including the student's studies in the area of her/his academic specialization and professional career preparation would serve to better satisfy this objective.

7. The program should be both visible and highly reputed throughout the institution so that it is perceived as providing standards and models of excellence for students and faculty across the campus.

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

As of this writing (summer 2003), enrollment in the Honors Program exceeds 75 members, with several new applications pending. This record number suggests that the program's reputation has become more widely disseminated throughout the campus and among incoming students. Being featured in the first edition of the *Peterson's Guide to Honors Programs* certainly provided us with greater national and regional visibility. Our newly-created website has also generated interest, as has the establishment of the Honors Center. At this point, we may need to seek authorization to increase the number of seminars offered each semester. Assessing reputation is more subjective; however, inasmuch as the General Education Committee long ago adopted the honors interdisciplinary model for some of our Core classes, making this model mandatory on a limited scale for all undergraduates, it would appear that the University at large views the Honors Program as a model of excellence.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

The creative influence of the ULV Honors Program upon the institutional pedagogical methodology in General Education Core, which appears to be in some transitional development, is a very common benefit. The ULV Honors Director and General Education Committee permitted the freedom for experimentation and interdisciplinary learning, and the value of the model has been verified as worthy of broader implementation. This will serve to lessen the distinctiveness of the Honors Core, however, the reputation and quality may be maintained by the selection of Honors faculty who are known for excellence in teaching, facilitating discussion and critical thinking, integration of ideas, and scholarship in her/his academic field.

The current enrollment represents approximately five percent of the undergraduate student body.

- ✓ It is recommended that the Honors Director and Honors Committee establish an enrollment goal which is an appropriate percentage of the institutional undergraduate enrollment, and which can be supported by the available facilities, budget, curriculum, and quality instruction.
- ✓ It is recommended that future recruitment and admission to the Honors Program be competitive and selective, and therefore enhance the reputation for quality, scholarship and excellence.

8. **Faculty participating in the program should be fully identified with the aims of the program. They should be carefully selected on the basis of exceptional teaching skills and the ability to provide intellectual leadership to able students.**

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

Many of our honors faculty are “repeat performers.” These individuals are fully familiar with the goals and objectives of the program and subscribe to its underlying philosophy. Honors faculty members serve on the Honors Committee while they are engaged in honors teaching or during the semester prior to commencing their honors teaching. This allows them to become familiar with program aims and with new developments in the Honors Program. All seminars are co-taught by at least one (and preferably two) full-time faculty members. Occasionally, when we are unable to meet our staffing needs with full-time faculty (because of departmental obligations, scheduling conflicts, etc.), selected adjunct professors are invited to co-teach seminars. However, there is always at least one full-time faculty member involved. Whenever an honors seminar proves unsuccessful (based on student evaluations and anecdotal evidence), it is withdrawn and not repeated.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

The Honors Director and Honors Committee are to be highly commended for requiring at least one instructor in a team-taught, interdisciplinary course to be a full-time faculty member. Likewise the process of including the teaching faculty in the Honors Committee serves to provide philosophical orientation for new faculty and wise enrichment for the “repeat performers.”

9. **The program should occupy suitable quarters constituting an honors center with such facilities as an honors library, lounge, reading rooms, personal computers and other appropriate decor.**

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

In Fall 2002, we became the fortunate recipients of our own dedicated space, the Honors Center, located in a historic building on the periphery of the campus. The Honors Center contains a smart classroom; a computer lab with four computers, a printer, and a photocopier; an informal reception area with workspace for student workers; a pleasant porch; a kitchenette area; and a spacious backyard. We have not yet established a library; it has been suggested that such a library might contain published books by ULV faculty as well as senior projects completed by honors students.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

The new Honors Center is certainly comfortable and inviting for students. The classroom, computer lab, and office space for the Director are sufficient and quite commendable for the time being. The Center provides a much needed campus “home” for the commuting Honors students. Additional classroom, office and storage space is certainly desirable.

- ✓ It is recommended that a central campus location and a more commodious facility be foremost in the thinking and planning of the administration for future campus development. A prominent, central campus location would make an institutional statement in support of undergraduate scholarship and academic excellence.
- ✓ It is recommended that consideration be given to the designation of a floor or wing of an existing residence hall as an optional residence for Honors students. This would create and support a context for greater peer interaction, commitment to scholarly engagement, and community development among these academically gifted, disciplined and aspiring scholars.

- 10. The director or other administrative officer charged with administering the program should work in close collaboration with a committee or council of faculty members representing the colleges and/or departments served by the program.**

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

Since its inception, the Honors Program has benefited from full faculty participation on the Honors Committee. Although the structure of the Honors Committee is fluid – *i.e.*, no external University body determines its composition, and no elections are held for membership – it continues to function quite well. As mentioned above, faculty engaged in teaching honors classes during any given semester, or prospective honors faculty anticipating teaching during the following academic year, sit on the Honors Committee. In addition to this rotating membership, there is a cadre of permanent members of the Committee, self-selected, for the most part, by people who have a commitment to the Program. We have faculty representation from the College of Arts and Sciences as well as from the College of Business and Public Administration.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

The site visitors recognize that the Honors Committee, though somewhat ad hoc in nature, has apparently functioned quite well for the 15-year history of the Program. The composition has provided continuity, commitment and some term limitations.

- ✓ It is recommended that the composition of the Honors Committee be more diverse and the membership consist of two faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences, one faculty each from the colleges of Education and Business, two faculty who are teaching Honors seminars, and at least one student representative elected by the honors students. The Director and the Dean (and/or the Provost) should also serve as ex-officio members.

- 11. The program should have in place a committee of honors students to serve as liaison with the honors faculty committee or council who must keep the student group fully informed on the program and elicit their cooperation in evaluation and development. This student group should enjoy as much autonomy as possible conducting the business of the committee in representing the needs and concerns of all honors students to the administration, and it should also be included in governance, serving on the advisory/policy committee as well as constituting the group that governs the student association.**

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

We do not have a student organization at this time. In the past, there has been an Honors Society, led by elected student representatives, but this group collapsed years ago because of lack of interest. It would be desirable to rebuild a student organization. This goal would be much more easily attainable with the appointment of an Assistant Director of Honors or even part-time clerical staff to assist with student organization activities. Similarly, we have in the past offered students the opportunity to attend Honors Committee meetings. This arrangement also proved to be less than successful, as students found it difficult to attend the scheduled meetings. However, the introduction of the Honors Colloquia has helped ameliorate this apparent problem. Students enrolled in Colloquia are expected to attend a minimum of ten on- or off-campus cultural events and participate in discussions following the events. Often, the discussions are student-led. While an administrator directs the Colloquia, there is a great deal of student input, and these event-based classes are the closest approximation to a student organization we have at present.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

The site visitation team highly endorses the laudable aspiration of the Honors Director and Committee to resurrect the deceased student Honors Society. This will likely require either the reduction in the Director's work load, the addition of administrative assistance or both.

- 12. There should be provisions for special academic counseling of honors students by uniquely qualified faculty and/or staff personnel.**

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

Because of ULV's small size, the Honors Director provides academic counseling for all students enrolled in the program. As students become more firmly entrenched in their majors, they receive additional advising from qualified faculty in their major disciplines as well. This dual-advising system has proven to be very effective in most cases, offering the added advantage of increased communication between the Honors Director and faculty throughout the university.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

The students are quite appreciative of the academic counseling service provided by the Honors Director and Dr. Labinger is to be commended for her commitment to the Honors students.

- 13. The Honors Program, in distinguishing itself from the rest of the institution, serves a kind of laboratory within which faculty can try things they have always wanted to try but for which they could find no suitable outlet. When such efforts are demonstrated to be successful, they may well become institutionalized thereby raising the general level of education within the college or university for all students. In this connection, the honors curriculum should serve as a prototype for educational practices that can work campus-wide in the future.**

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

As stated earlier, the Honors Program initiated the concept of team-taught, interdisciplinary education at the University of La Verne in 1988. With the most recent restructuring of General Education, the team-taught, interdisciplinary model was introduced campus-wide in the form of two core classes, "The Human Condition" (humanities based) and "The Sustainable Planet" (natural sciences based). Many of our "retired" seminars (we usually run each seminar for three consecutive years unless student reaction is negative) have been retooled and offered to the general student population as General Education core classes. Our service learning class, "The College Connection," was featured in the *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin* and has attracted a good deal of positive local publicity.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

As was stated in response to Characteristic Seven, the ULV Honors Program has had a significant, creative influence upon the institutional pedagogical methodology in the General Education Core and the development of curriculum. This is a very common benefit for the institution at large. From the beginning the ULV Honors Director and General Education Committee adopted a program design permitting a freedom for experimentation and interdisciplinary learning. The value of the model has been verified as worthy of broader institutional implementation. This will serve to lessen the distinctiveness of the Honors Core, however, the reputation and quality may be maintained by the selection of Honors faculty who are known for excellence in teaching, facilitating discussion and critical thinking, integration of ideas, and scholarship in her/his academic field.

- 14. The fully-developed Honors Program must be open to continuous and critical review and be prepared to change in order to maintain its distinctive position of offering distinguished education to the best students in the institution.**

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

Remaining on the cutting edge is a constant challenge. One change that was implemented early on was the introduction of the Colloquia. These classes were developed as a response to a perceived lack of student involvement and participation in the extra-curricular cultural life of the institution. The Colloquia, coordinated and taught by Dr. Al Clark, are extremely popular. Dr. Clark has adapted these classes to technological advances by conducting them via Blackboard. Thus, the Colloquia not only encourage students to explore the many cultural offerings of this campus and the surrounding community, but also help students acquire technological skills. The cohesion that is developed through the Colloquia can be seen, in a limited sense, as a substitute for a more formal student organization.

The upcoming external review (for which this document is being prepared) is our attempt to obtain the most objective, comprehensive feedback possible for our program's future development. All previous reviews of the Honors Program were internal and considerably less extensive.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

The very invitation to the external evaluation team is profound evidence that the Honors Director, the Honors Committee, and the University Administration are open to the critical review and the consideration of new ideas for the future enhancement of the Honors Program. This evaluation was not required by an accreditation body, but was requested from within ULV, and our visit was given thorough preparation. During the two-day visitation, we were most cordially received and ideas were continuously elicited from us and the ensuing discussions frequently expanded beyond the Honors Program. There was a contagious spirit de corps among the Honors faculty and administration, and a broad appreciation for the leadership of the Honors Program. This is to be highly commended, and the foregoing recommendations are given, not as mandates, but rather in the very spirit of openness to new considerations and possibilities for further enhancement of academic scholarship and excellence.

- 15. A fully-developed program will emphasize the participatory nature of the honors educational process by adopting such measure as offering opportunities for student to participate in regional and national conferences, honors semesters, international programs, community service, and other forms of experiential education.**

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

ULV honors students have participated in both NCHC and WRHC conferences, although such participation has been sporadic, due in large measure to financial constraints. We have also had two students accepted in the Honors Semester program offered through NCHC. One ULV Honors student entered (but did not win) the Portz Essay Competition. Study abroad opportunities, while not coordinated with Honors, are a long-established hallmark of education at ULV. We have been a member of the BCA (Brethren Colleges Abroad) Consortium for the past thirty years. Whenever possible, students are given honors credit for appropriate study completed at our international host campuses.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

The institutional membership and participation of the Director and students in both the NCHC and the Western Regional Honors Council is highly beneficial to the Honors Program and ultimately to the

University. The annual conferences, publications, listserv, and professional relationships serve to stimulate new ideas, refine one's Honors Program, provide valuable resources, and reinvigorate the quest for excellence.

- ✓ It is recommended that the Honors Program be granted sufficient budget to cover the annual membership dues and the registration, travel, lodging, and meal expenses for the Director and at least one student or faculty colleague to attend the national and regional conferences.

16. Fully-developed two-year and four-year honors programs should have articulation agreements by which honors graduates from two-year colleges can be accepted into four-year honors programs when they meet previously agreed-upon requirements.

Self-Assessment & Response of ULV Honors Committee:

Although ULV does not currently have a formal articulation agreement with any area community college, we are currently investigating the possibility of implementing such an agreement with Citrus College. Most local community colleges offer honors sections of traditional classes, rather than subscribing to the interdisciplinary model provided at ULV. Thus, there is no obvious correlation, either structurally or ideologically, between the honors models offered at the community colleges and the University of La Verne's approach. A growing number of transfer students from out-of-state honors programs (primarily at four-year colleges/universities) have been able to receive credit for honors study completed at their previous institutions and have enrolled in ULV's honors program with advanced status.

Comments of External Evaluation Team:

At several points in the review, there has been the mention of recruitment and admission of transferring Honors students from two-year community colleges. The community college is often the undergraduate institution of choice or necessity for academically gifted students due to convenience and affordability. It is true that the Honors Programs in these two-year programs may vary widely in requirements and quality; however, the challenges and benefits are worth consideration. If, and when, there are adequate discipline-based Honors courses and options available at the junior and senior level, some form of the following may be considered for the admission of transferring Honors students:

[Transferring] students who have a minimum SAT 1200 or ACT 27 and a minimum college or university cumulative 3.50 GPA may apply for admission to the Honors Program. Students who have a cumulative 3.75 GPA or higher will be considered for admission without limitation; however, no more than five students having a cumulative GPA 3.50-3.75 may be admitted to the Honors Program annually. All transferring Honors students and secondary applicants must satisfy the following minimal admission standards: those transferring 25-48 units must include nine college Honors credits; those transferring 46-59 units must include 12 Honors credits, and those transferring 60 or more units must include 15 Honors credits. Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate credits will not be considered for satisfaction of the minimum transfer admission requirement. A minimum of nine Honors units must be completed at Azusa Pacific University to qualify for graduation as a distinguished Honors Scholar. Honors credits earned through study abroad will not count toward the required nine Honors units in residence. The application deadline for transfer students is May 1. (*Azusa Pacific University 2003/2004 Undergraduate Catalog*, 84)

Summary: It is quite apparent to the visitation team that the Honors Program at the University of La Verne reflects the institutional character and uniquely serves the mission and purpose for which it was created. Dr. Andrea G. Labinger, Director of the Honors Program, has creatively inspired and administered an interdisciplinary, integrative curriculum which is a worthy paradigm for other institutions to study, adapt and implement. The Honors Program truly fulfills the institutional mission and goals, i.e. to provide a learning experience for academically gifted students which is founded upon two principles: “the interrelatedness of knowledge and a lifelong educational imperative both within and outside the formal classroom environment.” Dr. Labinger’s 15 years of excellent service and passionate commitment to the Honors Program is worthy of institutional recognition.

The visitation team was most cordially received by everyone, for which we thank Dr. Labinger for creating a full schedule and the preparation for our meetings with administrators, faculty, staff, and most importantly students. New ideas and suggestions were continuously elicited from us and the ensuing discussions frequently expanded beyond the Honors Program. There was a contagious sprit de corps among the Honors faculty and administration, and a broad institutional appreciation for the leadership and quality of the Honors Program. This is to be highly commended, and the foregoing recommendations are given, not as mandates, but rather in the very spirit of openness to new considerations and possibilities for further enhancement of academic scholarship and excellence. This document is our external evaluation, and only those persons who know the institution from within have the wisdom and vision to initiate and adapt any steps of implementation. It is our hope that this evaluation will stimulate further discussion and cultivate an enhancement of scholarship and excellence in learning in the Honors Program and more broadly throughout the University of La Verne.

The External Evaluation Team:

Signed: _____ Dated: _____
Dr. Rosalie C. Otero, University of New Mexico

Signed: _____ Dated: _____
Dr. Melvin H. Shoemaker, Azusa Pacific University