MEMORANDUM

TO:        Randall Ryder
            Interim Secretary of the University

FROM:      Mike Allen, Chair
            Academic Program and Curriculum Committee

RE:        Approval of Proposal from the College of Letters and Science for a Name Change for the University Honors Program

At their June 21, 2005 meeting, the Academic Program and Curriculum Committee approved the proposal from the dean, faculty and L&S Academic Planning and Governance Committee of the College of Letters and Science to change the name of the “University Honors Program” to the “Honors College.” A copy of the proposal is attached. The APCC would appreciate a written confirmation of all actions taken.

Professor Mike Allen will present the proposal to the Faculty Senate.

Attachment

c:  (all w/o attachment)
    Rita Cheng, Provost and Vice Chancellor
    G. Richard Meadows, Dean, College of Letters & Science
    Mark Harris, Associate Dean, College of Letters & Science
    Lawrence Baldassaro, Director, University Honors Program
    Connie Jo, Assistant Dean, College of Letters & Science
    Dev Venugopalan, Associate Vice Chancellor

/kmb
TO: Professor Mike Allen  
Chair, APCC
FROM: G. Richard Meadows  
Dean
DATE: 1 June 2005
RE: Recommendation of the L&S Faculty to Approve a Name Change for the Honors Program

At its recent meeting, the L&S Faculty recommended approval of a proposal to change the name of the “University Honors Program” to the “Honors College.” The L&S Academic Planning and Governance Committee reviewed the proposal and recommended it to the Faculty. I am endorsing the Faculty’s recommendation and forwarding the proposal to you for consideration by the APCC.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please feel free to contact Professor Lawrence Baldassaro, Director of the University Honors Program, Associate Dean Mark Harris, L&S Assistant Dean Connie Jo, or me. We would appreciate your action on the request at your earliest convenience.

GRM: cj
Enclosure
cc: Vice Chancellor and Provost Rita Cheng (w/enclosure)  
Associate Dean Mark Harris (w/enclosure)  
Professor Lawrence Baldassaro, Director, University Honors Program (w/enclosure)  
Assistant Dean Connie Jo (w/enclosure)
c:\committee\fac\transapcc.fac
Recommendation:

That the L&S Faculty recommend to the Dean approval of the proposal of the Honors Program Committee to change the name of the University Honors Program to the Honors College.

Rationale:

The Honors Program Committee believes that an Honors College at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee will provide several advantages to the institution. For example, it will:

- increase the visibility and prestige of the Honors Program;
- enhance the University's ability to attract and retain academically accomplished students;
- make the Honors College and its activities attractive to potential donors.

The Honors College will remain a unit (college within a college) under the administrative authority of the College of Letters and Science. The name change does not involve nor imply any changes to current administrative, budgetary, or programmatic arrangements. The unit will continue to be administered by a director.

The name change follows a trend for honors programs across the country. A number of these honors colleges have secured sizeable donations that allow them to expand their membership and services. Any such changes in the Honors College at UWM will be undertaken only if new monies become available from outside sources. The Honors Program director and the members of the Honors Program Committee are optimistic that the name change is a first step in attracting more students and donors to the program.
Proposal to Establish an Honors College

April 2005
A Proposal to Establish an Honors College at UWM

Introduction

Building on the Honors Program’s long history of success in providing a unique educational opportunity for outstanding students, this proposal seeks to expand the program and restructure it into a fully developed Honors College.

An Honors College at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee will provide several advantages to the institution. For example, it will:

- increase the visibility and prestige of the Honors Program
- enhance the University’s ability to attract and retain academically accomplished students
- provide mentoring for all UWM students (not just Honors students) seeking national fellowships
- expand Honors course offerings to include faculty members and subjects from all UWM schools and colleges, and
- create philanthropic opportunities to name the College, improve facilities, and support Honors students’ educational and experiential needs.

I. Background

The UWM Honors Program began modestly in the College of Letters and Science (L&S) in the early 1960s, making it one of the oldest programs in the nation. Honors students do part of their work in the Program, but, like all UWM students, they choose majors and earn degrees in particular fields. Honors classes are discussion seminars that enroll a maximum of 15 students, leading to a lively discussion of fundamental issues in the disciplines covered by the courses, and are particularly effective in teaching students to read with close attention and mastering the ability to articulate their ideas both verbally and in writing. By providing small classes, individualized instruction, and a curriculum that is especially focused on traditional liberal arts topics (arts, mathematics, sciences, history, etc.), the Honors Program offers both students and faculty the advantages of a small liberal arts college within the framework of a large, research-oriented university. Honors course work also provides students with an engaging, seminar-based alternative to the general education requirements needed to graduate.

Students are admitted to the Honors Program based on their high school record, ACT Composite, and English placement test scores. Currently the admission requirements are top 40% of high school graduating class, 26 or greater ACT, and a score of at least 525 on the English placement exam which indicates the student can bypass both semesters of freshmen English. Continuing or transfer students with fewer than 40 credits are also eligible if they have at least a 3.4 cumulative grade point average and have completed English 102 or its equivalent.
In the last 20 years alone, the Program has grown from 175 students into a campus-wide effort that serves more than 450 students from all schools and colleges who are enrolled each academic year in more than fifty Honors courses covering a wide array of topics and disciplines. There were 174 new freshman students admitted to the Program this fall, a 45 percent increase over five years ago. Approximately 50 students have graduated with Honors degrees in each of those years, with 3/5ths majoring in L&S disciplines and the balance from other campus schools and colleges.

Upon graduation, students receive the degree designation “Honors” or “Honors with Thesis” on their diplomas and transcripts, along with their traditional degree and major descriptions. Some Honors graduates go directly into the work force, while others go on to earn advanced degrees in the arts and sciences or in the professions. Honors is committed to educating students who have the breadth, flexibility, analytical abilities, and communication skills to make significant contributions to their fields.

The current student benefits of the Program include priority class registration, availability of the Honors House arrangements at the Sandburg dormitory, membership in the Honors Program Student Association, and use of the quiet room study facilities in the Library and the Honors Program Student Center in Garland Hall.

The Program, while functioning University wide, is administratively housed within L&S. However, it currently performs some typical college functions in that it sets and implements its admission, retention and graduation requirements. It also provides academic advising to its students, and has its own structure to review and approve courses offered.

The most recent assessment revealed that graduates highly value the Honors Program. Comments, such as “I couldn’t ask for a better introduction to the college experience...” and “there is a sense of community, of oneness”, capture the typical Honors students’ perspective about the Program. Furthermore, recent L&S research indicates that seminar experiences have a significant positive impact on the retention and success of UWM students who take such courses in their freshman year.

The current program staff includes a Director (0.4 FTE), an Assistant Director (1 FTE), two academic staff advisors (1.75 FTE), five instructional staff comprised of lecturers and visiting professors, a classified program assistant and some student help. The annual supplies and equipment budget is $12,000. Total support from the College of Letters and Science is approximately $440,000 per year.

For more Program information, please see: http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Honors/

II. The Proposal

The proposed name change from Honors Program to Honors College follows a national trend of public universities making this transition as part of an effort to strengthen their attraction and service to students of exceptional academic quality. The number of honors colleges nationally has more than doubled in the last decade. The very success of the
UWM Honors Program provides some of the strongest evidence for making a similar shift here.

This name change requires few administrative modifications since this new entity would remain within the L&S organizational structure. The director would be appointed at half time for 12-months, rather than the current 10 month appointment, to accommodate the expanded recruitment activities.

To attract outstanding students across the entire range of disciplines, a broad plan to increase the visibility of the Honors College is critical. Additionally, the efforts detailed below will help advance UWM's status as a first choice destination for high achieving students seeking an outstanding undergraduate learning environment. Major new components within the vision for the Honors College are:

- proactive recruitment
- enhanced academic opportunities and benefits
- assistance in post-graduation academic opportunities, and
- greater participation of academic units outside L&S.

The goal of attracting and enrolling more high achieving students at UWM can best be met by involving Honors in the recruitment process. Currently, only students who have already applied to the University are recruited into the Program. Possible new strategies include summer sessions aimed at high school students prior to their senior year; the involvement of Honors staff in off-campus recruitment activities; and, a direct mail outreach to top high school juniors. Additional staff time will be required to support this effort and coordinate it with the University's overall recruiting operations. The addition of a classified program assistant who can help maintain student records and perform office functions will free up academic staff time to implement these new strategies.

As the University strives to recruit more high achieving undergraduate students to this campus, offering helpful workshops, academic awards, scholarships and study abroad support are critical to successfully attracting and retaining this particular student population. Such enhanced student benefits and academic opportunities are vital to the success of both the new Honors College and its students.

An additional academic staff member is needed to help qualified students compete in prestigious national scholarships, such as the Rhodes, Mellon, Truman, and Marshall, which bring significant recognition to both the recipients and their University. Such assistance would be available to all UWM students beyond those enrolled in Honors. The advisor would help students in developing stronger graduate and professional school applications as well and be engaged in recruiting potential UWM students (see above). A major limitation on the current program is its ability to recruit faculty to teach upper-level (300 and above) departmental-based Honors seminars. Despite the participation of students from all the schools and colleges, some units do not offer an Honors seminar course. Two steps are proposed to increase the participation of faculty across the entire campus. First, all UWM academic disciplines will be encouraged to engage in the process to create an Honors seminar course within their field. This will allow students to
access a broader scope of learning opportunities and provide electives in a wider range of non-liberal arts interests. Second, to encourage this much-needed faculty and departmental participation, a modest stipend program to support course design and teaching is critical to this expansion of opportunities in schools outside of L&S.

Additional introductory instructional staff will also be needed as enrollments grow. Currently, there are five Honors lecturers/visiting professors who teach all the Honors 200 entry-level courses, work closely with students on their academic inquiries and needs, and help students hone their writing proficiency. To provide the entry-level Honors courses and associated student support, on average one additional instructional staff member is needed for each 60 additional students.

III. Space Needs

The Honors Program is located currently in just under 3,000 assignable square feet (ASF) on the third floor of Garland Hall where it competes for space with the Department of Psychology and the Cultures and Communities program. The guidelines published by the National Collegiate Honors Council recommend that such centers should include appropriate office space and seminar rooms and facilities such as a dedicated library, lounge, reading room and computer room. This suggests that the space for UWM’s Honors College should include:

1. Office with space for two program assistants (500 ASF)
2. Twelve offices for the Director, Assistant Director, Lecturers and Visiting Professors and the National Scholarship Advisor (1,440 ASF)
3. Two seminar rooms (1,000 ASF)
4. Student Center (400 ASF)
5. Computer room with 15 computer stations (400 ASF)

The current location cannot currently house this type of facility, so alternate locations need to be identified within the university’s overall space plan. This will require either relocation of other programs and remodeling of existing space or relocation of the Honors College.

IV. Measuring Results

As currently constructed, the Program is served by the Honors Program Committee, which is comprised of faculty, staff, and students affiliated with the program. This committee has responsibility for evaluating new course offerings; reviewing the operations, curriculum, and requirements of the Program; and recommending modifications. The Committee will be actively engaged in the transition to the Honors College, as proposed here, and will review its goals, needs, and activities throughout the process.
The progress of this transition and results achieved can be measured by new course offerings, new faculty participation, increased enrollment and retention of high achieving students, and tracking its graduates’ success in professional or graduate school admissions and scholarships. In addition, student evaluations and assessments of course offerings and instructors will help advise the progress toward the Honors College’s goals.

V. Conclusion

The transformation of the Honors Program to an Honors College will benefit the entire University and its undergraduate student body and demonstrate UWM’s success in balancing its role as a graduate and research institution with its deep commitment to superior undergraduate teaching and learning. Additionally, the activities proposed here will increase the visibility and prestige, both on- and off-campus, of UWM’s rigorous and academically challenging environment for highly motivated and accomplished students. When combined with an energetic recruiting effort, the Honors College will help bring more outstanding students to the University and advance its status as a first choice destination for undergraduate learning.

UWM has a long-standing and hard earned reputation as a vital and visible community resource. The campus is acknowledged as an accessible and affordable site for baccalaureate degree seeking students in the metropolitan Milwaukee area and many other communities through its College Connection partnerships with two-year and technical college campuses across the state. The Honors College proposed here will not revolutionize that UWM tradition, but rather craft a balance between access for everyone and improving the college experience for those students who seek greater intellectual challenges along the way.

Expanding Honors to be more available and inclusive of students in disciplines outside of the traditional liberal arts will enhance undergraduate experiences and post graduate opportunities for a wider audience of the University’s very best students. This transformation can serve as a model and, indeed, an opportunity for both teachers and students who seek to either deliver or receive an outstanding undergraduate educational experience. Although a bit of a cliché, it is nonetheless true...a rising tide does lift all boats.
August 22, 2005

Dr. Allen Zweben
455 Central Park West
New York, NY 10025

Dear Dr. Zweben:

With the approval of your emeritus status by Chancellor Carlos Santiago, I want to express to you my deep appreciation for your many years of service as a colleague at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Without the commitment and professional contributions of individuals such as you, UWM would not have been able to establish its stature and viability as a leading higher education institution.

We are most grateful that you chose to devote a substantial portion of your career to UWM and wish you a productive retirement. You will be fondly remembered.

Sincerely,

Rita Cheng
Provost and Vice Chancellor

cc: Carlos Santiago, Chancellor
Stan Stojkovic, Dean, Helen Bader School of Social Welfare
Dev Venugopalan, Associate Vice Chancellor
Randall Ryder, Interim Secretary of the University
Human Resources