

UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM ACADEMIC STRATEGIC PLAN **University of Nebraska at Omaha**

I. Honors Program Mission Statement

The mission of the University of Nebraska at Omaha Honors Program is to provide an enhanced and supportive learning environment responsive to the educational needs of highly able and exceptionally motivated undergraduate students. This goal will be accomplished through participation of faculty noted for excellence in teaching, by providing small honor sections of regular courses, interdisciplinary Honors colloquia, special seminars, and increased opportunity for undergraduate research/creative activity.

II. The UNO Strategic Plan

The University of Nebraska at Omaha Strategic Plan sets forth three primary goals:

Goal 1: UNO will be recognized as a student-centered metropolitan university.

Goal 2: UNO will be recognized for its academic excellence as a metropolitan university.

Goal 3: UNO will be recognized for its outstanding engagement with the urban, regional, national, and global communities.

The goals of the University Honors Program are consistent with UNOmaha's three strategic goals and the goals/objectives in the plan of the Office of Academic Affairs. Indeed, the goals and action steps of the University Honors Program support the Academic Affairs goals of enhancing student academic retention and success, preparing students for professional leadership and global citizenship, maximizing the research/creative activity of our students, responding to the challenges of technology and increasing meaningful engagement with our community.

III. Goals of the University Honors Program

A. Placing the student at the center of the academic enterprise:

1. Foster students' commitment to academic success
2. Provide honors sections of general education requirements
3. Provide programs/curricular offerings that create community
4. Enhance and increase the interdisciplinary Honors Colloquia offerings
5. Provide facilities for interaction among students and for individual study
6. Offer programs/cultural activities that will enable students to achieve and grow academically, professionally, and in roles of leadership
7. Pursue funding to support book scholarships and housing awards

8. Attract, recruit, and retain high quality students of diverse backgrounds
9. Use technology as a means of improved communication with students

B. Striving to achieve academic excellence

1. Pursue funding for scholarships to attract high quality students
2. Pursue funding for research scholarships for students of color
3. Increase support for and provide opportunities for undergraduate research/creative activity
4. Provide students with facilities and resources to produce quality research
5. Increase student benefits, such as early registration
6. Seek resources to increase opportunities for Honors Program students to attend lectures by distinguished speakers and scholars and cultural activities
7. Involve students actively in program/curriculum development and assessment
8. Encourage and support faculty to increase offerings for Honors students
9. Support, identify, and publicly recognize student achievements
10. Support and increase participation in National Collegiate Honors Council Semesters, regional and national conferences, and other activities
11. Create peer support system and enhance staff support system
12. Encourage students to apply for national scholarship competitions like the Truman, Goldwater, Rotary, and Rhoades

C. Engaging with the community

1. Encourage partnerships between areas of the university
2. Promote internships and service learning opportunities for students

3. Continue and increase involvement in the Honors Program-OPS Talented and Gifted Mentoring Program
4. Promote student presentations of research and creative activity in the community
5. Continue and encourage student involvement in community organizations
6. Increase relationships with area high school students

IV. Action Steps

The following are action steps to be taken in support of Goals A. 1, 2, 3, and 4

- The Honors Program Director and Assistant to the Director will meet with students early in each semester to talk about program, first year experiences, and relevant issues. In addition, peer support groups will be created, as will upper class mentoring and an increase in Honors advising.
- Students will have explained to them the benefits of being in special community-building honors sections of general education requirements, and efforts will be made to have students work more closely with faculty early on in their careers.
- Increase staffing by adding a graduate assistant or qualified person to provide improved advising, mentoring, retention
- Increase staffing by adding a receptionist to allow professional staff time to work with students and faculty more effectively
- Development of a first year experience seminar or discussion series
- An increase in the number of interdisciplinary colloquia and other seminars, two per semester by 2001, will allow students to see connections between disciplines and foster thinking across disciplines.

The following are action steps to be taken in support of Goals A. 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9

- The improved facilities in CBA will afford students adequate space for computer facilities, study rooms, and a much needed conference-classroom.
- Develop a series of discussions on topics relevant to research methodology, local and regional cultural activities, and professional/graduate school opportunities.

- Invite area professionals to discuss current trends in fields such as medicine, law, education, commerce, and technology related areas
- Work with the administration and other divisions of the university to develop additional sources of funding for scholarships for high ability students
- Develop focus groups to help recruit a diverse student population, develop targeted mailing groups, and make personal contact with all metro area schools
- The personnel resources of the University Honors Committee and the Student Advisory Board will be utilized in recruiting efforts
- Disseminate weekly electronic newsletter, updates, program announcements

The following are action steps to be taken in support of Goals B.1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

- Work with UNOmaha administration and the NU Foundation to secure funds and/or an endowment that will produce approximately \$600,000 annually for book scholarships to allow us to be competitive with our sister campuses and to increase recruitment and retention in the Honors Program
- Provide avenues for students to present senior capstone and research experiences
- Seek both internal and external funding for undergraduate research assistance; contact local business and industry for support where research is relevant
- Develop workshops for students on methodology, as well as workshops where faculty can share their current research interests with students
- Offer a series of Research and Grant Writing workshops or a for credit class for students

The following action steps are in support of Goal B. 6, 7, and 8.

- Seek reallocation of effort within university areas to adopt policies that will provide incentives for increased student participation and retention in the program. Specifically,
 1. Early registration
 2. Housing priority
 3. Extended library check out privileges

- Seek support within university community for invitations for honors program students to series such as ABC and seek support to provide tickets for concerts, community theatre performances, special events
- Through the Student Advisory Board and representation on the University Honors Committee, students will be able to affect the direction of curriculum and other Program avenues
- Seek resources or equitable arrangement that will allow departments to replace faculty involved in honors teaching, creating increase in honors sections which builds community and fosters peer learning

The following action steps are in support of Goal B. 9, 10, 11, and 12

- Make known the accomplishments of students, both in and out of the university setting; recognize performance in public settings such as the First Year Recognition Ceremony, an annual banquet, Honors Symposia, Newsletter coverage, and coverage on the Honors Website
- Seek university support or reallocation of some student funds for students to participate in national and international Honors Semesters, regional and national conferences
- Develop a system of “peer buddies,” study groups, and tutoring teams, both among students and staff
- Develop a system for early identification of students who would qualify for national scholarships and create a support family of faculty and staff who will mentor and work with the student over a period of at least two years in all aspects of preparation

The following action steps are in support of Goal C. 1, 2, 3, and 4

- Share in events which attract students in common, such as joint Orientation with the IST Scott Scholars Program, cultural events of like interest, recognition ceremonies for students in common
- Increased student involvement on university committees
- Encourage students to participate as interns in the Omaha Public School Gifted Mentoring Program and recognize those involved in a public forum
- Encourage students to submit papers to local, regional, and national competition; offer financial support for students to attend if papers are accepted; list student presentations on website

- Enhance and continue with efforts such as Honors Program students preparing and taking lunches to the Francis Sienna House; bringing reverse trick or treat gifts to children with terminal illnesses; making and taking May baskets to retirement homes; serving as tutors for Boys and Girls Clubs, and volunteering in a myriad of activities
- Develop a system of student ambassadors to area high schools to serve as liaisons for the Program and to help recruit students

V. Assessment Measures

GOAL A

The following are examples of assessment measures for Goal A. 1, 2, 3, and 4

- Evaluate effectiveness of peer groups, upper class mentoring, advising by surveying 10% of participants each semester
- Evaluate Honors projects in Honors Option courses by surveying both students and faculty involved for degrees of satisfaction
- Create instrument to survey satisfaction rate of students in honors only sections with those in option sections
- Administer Honors class evaluation instrument to students in honors only sections and interdisciplinary colloquia and administer a special portfolio evaluation to instructors of such sections
- Evaluate Honors projects in Honors contract courses by student evaluations and comments and faculty evaluation and comments

The following are examples of assessment measures for Goal A. 5 and 6

- Assess rate of use and kinds of use of Honors Lounge, Study, and Computer Rooms by students, faculty, and committees
- Evaluate social and cultural events and seminars by participation: per cent of growth; satisfaction checklist; event evaluation
- Survey students for leadership positions in campus and off campus activities

The following are examples of assessment measures for Goal A. 7, 8, and 9

- If scholarships are awarded, develop an instrument to survey retention rate increase

- Compare targeted results with a controlled non targeted group of high ability and students of diverse ethnic backgrounds
- Measure effectiveness of electronic newsletter by percent of responses, event participation

GOAL B

The following are examples of assessment measures for Goal B 1, 2, 3, and 4

- Administer an alumni survey at years 1, 3, and 5 to evaluate merit of undergraduate research and overall advantages of Honors Program participation
- Follow college career of students of color engaged in Research scholarships and measure number who graduate and go on to professional/graduate programs
- Administer evaluation instrument to audiences at Senior Symposia

The following are examples of assessment measures for Goal B. 5, 6, 7, and 8

- Administer evaluation surveys of each event
- Student brown bag presentations of events attended
- Evaluate student recommendations for courses and programs by involved faculty and students
- Evaluate the support offered faculty for honors teaching by surveying faculty involved and student evaluations of courses

The following are examples of assessment measures for Goal B. 9, 10, 11

- Chart the percentage increase in participation at recognition events
- Survey students to assess value of attending events and/or participating in semesters; ask students to present to targeted groups
- Survey peer buddies and students for degrees of satisfaction/academic performance
- Develop a series of programs, such as Shadow Day and Career Day to foster support for students

GOAL C

The following are examples of measures of assessments for Goal C.

- Chart the increase in participation across the university

- Survey students and employers for satisfaction, performance standards and areas for improvement
- Administer evaluations to students, parents, teachers, and mentors involved in the OPS program to measure satisfaction of all parties involved
- Document the numbers of presentations locally, regionally, nationally
- Document the increase in submission/acceptance of manuscripts, projects, research findings to journals and other venues
- Continue with publication and dissemination of The Survey of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity at UNO

The assessment aspect of this plan will, generally, attempt to evaluate the educational achievements of students in the University Honors Program, the outreach efforts and partnerships developed, the increase and quality of undergraduate research, and the increased recognition of UNOmaha and its students through acceptance rates into competitive graduate and professional programs; receipt of national scholarships; and participation in national and international programs.

The goals will be evaluated and revised continually to provide for a growing and improved program that addresses the needs of the Honors Program students, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and the Omaha metropolitan community.

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