

Honors Committee Meeting—16 August 2016

In Attendance:

Diane Dixon
Charla Hall
Margaret Cotter-Lynch
Stan Alluisi
Clifford Cox
Josh Nannesad
Randy Clark
Morgan Pierce

(In meeting notes, all committee members are abbreviated by their initials)

Meeting was called to order at 1:33. Copies of the agenda and the function of the committee were distributed. Dr. Dixon & Dr. Hall were affirmed as chair and vice chair respectively.

Dr. Cotter-Lynch (MCL) discussed the past infrastructure of the program and systems of support, looking toward creating new mechanism of support.

(MCL) The Role of the Honors Committee and the Honors Director—According to the Faculty handbook the Director handles the administration of the program, including distribution of money and implementing curriculum and student programs. While the purpose of the committee is to decide curriculum, including designating Honors Faculty, teaching Honors courses, and the broader pedagogy of Honors curriculum.

(MCL) 2016 Scholarships—We have recruited two additional Presidential scholars since the end of the Spring—we only had three Presidentials remaining, which we reapportioned to upperclassmen at an additional \$375/semester.

When students refused scholarships (especially room scholarships) we moved those monies to award 1-yr room scholarships to freshman and sophomore students who wanted to live on campus. Going forward, if a freshman lives on campus, and we pay for their room, we would like them to live in North Hall on the Honors floor as a stipulation to receiving the scholarship.

(MCL) Things that have become clear over the summer and looking ahead, we have lost faculty. Lisa Coleman retired, and Alistair Maer has left. Glenn Melancon asked about the possibility of another faculty member teaching honors philosophy since his department is so understaffed; he is teaching seven courses this term.

Randy (Clark) had 28 students enrolled in his COMM 2213 Honors course. Shannon (McCraw) agreed to teach a second section (as an overload), which is a band-aid to the situation.

What is the appropriate size of the program?

We need more faculty if we are going to have more students.

We can comfortably run a program at 25 (incoming) students.

Some stop-gap measures have been put in place.

The co-taught course (ENG 3893 & HIST 4973) is being taught by Becky Jacob-Pollez and myself (MCL). Becky is a trained medievalist from Murray State College, who is adjuncting at SE for this

course. And Dr. McCraw is teaching Honors Orientation.

For the Spring the questions are:

Who is teaching the City as Text class (HUM 4983 Native America)?

Skip Robinson has expressed interest.

I (MCL) am ambivalent about teaching it. I would like to get all the kids their first year, but I'm not certain I am the best fit for that course.

(CH) Is it after the course is offered three times that we have to assign it a permanent course number?

(MCL/MP) Yes, I think so. We'll have to address that.

(MCL) Next year the Honors Senior Seminar is being offered, which we will have to create. We created this curriculum three years ago, and have been rolling out each year as it has come up. So, we will have to determine what we want our students to do for the senior seminar course.

(MCL) Other problems:

Advising—students are getting inconsistent advising within their major. We would like to take the 4-year degree plans for each major and map Honors onto that. (e.g. If a biology major comes in we can say “this is what it would look like if you were an Honors student doing a biology major.)

Schedules—we need to confer with departments on when honors course are scheduled to try to minimize conflicts. We would like to create a designated Honors advisor in each department if Department chairs are amenable.

(CC) I like the idea of a sequence sheet for Honors, because we (advising) often have trouble with schedules for Aviation, Music, and Bio/Chem majors.

(MCL) The Honors Curriculum is designed so that the time-commitment in actual curriculum hours tapers off as the student progresses in their degree plan. Basically, fewer honors hours are required per semester for seniors than they are for freshmen.

Role of the Committee

DD- I was unsure of the way this committee was run when I took over as chair last year.

CH- It has always been run differently than other committees. The committee relied on the director.

SA- It was my understanding that we ran it that way since the Honors Committee wanted more stability than a typical committee.

MCL- When I served as chair, I was never elected. From 2006-2014 there was never a chair election.

RC- Is there a reason why the Director and the Chair are not the same person?

MCL- The Director is not a voting member of the committee. There is a division of authority between the committee and the director.

DD- I can provide a little bit of history. The Honors committee was previously an ad hoc committee created by Faculty Senate, and Lisa (Coleman) wanted a more dedicated committee.

MCL- To run a successful program we need multiple perspectives.

RC- I agree. It seems there is a redundancy in the duties of the Director and the Chair.

DD- In the past it was always that administrators were chairs.

RC- I see the role of a committee member being to serve the student of the program. I would advocate to change the language of the committee function for the usual duties, protocols, etc.. to be done by the Director.

MCL- One historical difficulty has been a disconnect between the department chairs and Honors in scheduling courses. It has been difficult to assess if a potential conflict might be better mitigated by the committee making the decision on scheduling.

CH- In some ways you being the new director puts you in a good position reaching out to each department.

DD- I think it would be a good idea to go to the academic council meeting and discuss how best to incorporate the Honors Program in each department.

MCL- We need to work together. There are some serious conflicts. If you look at Elementary Education and Honors, they are essentially incompatible.

DD- We used to use contracted courses to address that problem.

MP- Several years ago—when we changed the curriculum—that was one of the goals. We had a high proportion of students contracting courses, and the new curriculum was designed to mitigate that by concentrating on gen-ed overlap.

MCL- We want to radically reduce the number of contracts, and foster a community of students who make connections between classes and the outside world. We want to work on scheduling to avoid those conflicts.

CH- It would be useful to have a little seminar with faculty to teach the program requirements.

MCL- I want to have lunch with all Honors faculty to informally get input about where the program should go or ideas they might have.

CH- How can we be helpful to you?

MCL- The most immediate concern is the course offerings for the Spring and maybe the Fall, which we need to address so that the program can move forward. In the Spring the City as Text class is the pressing issue.

The City as Text idea is an NCHC (National Collegiate Honors Council) pedagogy based on Clifford Geertz's idea of reading the world around you as if you had never been there before. I did the course in New Orleans, and the intention is to get the course on the books with a designated course number.

RC- I would consider teaching it. Is there funding for travel for the course?

MCL- There is some funding, but not much. Last year they did the Choctaw Cultural Center.

CH- So Randy is an option. Skip Robinson, Meg, and Randy Prus are also options?

CH- Why don't we start with Randy and see if it works since he is full-time faculty, and then maybe go to Skip since Meg and Dr. Prus are not as interested?

RC- Could Honors talk to Shannon (McCraw) about that offering?

MCL- Yes. We are right on the cusp of being too big as a program. 20 students is good. 25 is on the edge—30 is really too big because at that point we need more than one section of a course. We have money for more kids than seats.

RC- That has been the problem with Business and Professional Speaking (COMM 2213). Students get four speeches each—if you add more students it affects the curriculum.

MCL- In order to do the things the course teaches, you have to have a certain amount of time.

RC- Getting on a rotation would be good—maybe I could teach City as Text every other year. We could account for that in the COMM Department by scheduling me for an Honors Course every other year.

CH- So maybe Skip should teach it this year?

RC- Yeah. I'll broach the topic with Shannon, and we'll see how it goes.

MCL- Looking forward then:

RC-Skip will teach it this year, and I'll talk to Shannon about teaching it next year.

MCL- When should we meet again?

DD- I'm not usually available on Tuesdays. Today was an exception

JN- I could send around a doodle poll to see when everyone is available.

Adjourned