

Program Review

Non-Instructional

Overview of the Program

I. Description of the Program Components

A. The Mission

The mission of the Western Wyoming Community College Honors Program is to--

1. improve the institution by--
 - a. attracting students with high academic potential
 - b. encouraging innovative teaching,
2. challenge these students by--
 - a. encouraging creative learning communities within the classroom
 - b. providing opportunities for intellectual growth outside the classroom

B. Honors Program Students

Twenty students are selected each year for the Honors Program on the basis of ACT score, GPA, essay, and recommendations--ten in-coming freshmen and ten returning sophomores. In addition, students returning after one year in Honors, added to the new additions, make up a total program of about 30 students. These students are given special opportunities and special classes because they have been selected for the Honors Program.

C. Honors Colloquiums

Honors Program students are required to take the fall and spring Honors colloquiums during their first year. The fall Introduction to Humanities colloquium and the spring Honors colloquium are the only two classes at the college that are restricted to Honors Program students. Like the regular Honors classes, the colloquiums are also small and innovative, but because enrollment is selective, the Honors Program students bond as a learning community in these two classes. They form friendships, study together, take field trips together, and work on class projects together. They learn that they are not alone, that WWCC has a strong core of excellent students like them who are intellectually curious and motivated.

D. Honors Classes

Honors Program students are required to take the two honors colloquiums their first year and two general honors courses their second

year. In addition, every student who has an Honors Scholarship (based on a 3.5 GPA from high school) is required to take one honors class per academic year. We offer five general honors classes each semester. Any qualified students may take as many honors classes as they like. This requirement opens these classes to more than just the Honors Program students, and allows us to “spread the wealth” of innovative learning experiences. These honors classes have limited enrollments of 15-20 students, which allows more interaction with the instructor and allows the instructor to try innovative techniques in teaching. The promise of small classes, innovative learning, and personal attention from faculty all work together to attract good students to enroll at Western, whether they have accepted an Honors Scholarship or been selected for the Honors Program.

E. Cultural Field Trips

As part of the Honors Program, students participate in cultural field trips that broaden their learning experience and increase their friendships and sense of community. Museums, operas, plays, symphonies, arts festivals, ballet and modern dance are just a few examples of the field trips these students experience. Because the college pays for these field trips, students are highly motivated both to apply for the Honors Program and to continue at Western for a second year.

F. Honors Teaching Workshops

Although this has not been a highly structured component of the Honors Program, it has offered Honors faculty the opportunity to share innovative ideas and problem solving techniques across the curriculum. The faculty meets twice a year to exchange insights and solve problems about Honors teaching. The director brings materials from the National Collegiate Honors Council meetings and publications to share with faculty.

G. Friday Honors Issues Forums

As a service project to the campus, the Honors Program students organize and conduct monthly issues forums open to students, faculty, staff, and community during the lunch hour. The goal is to encourage projects where students work together, take leadership roles, learn about social issues, and provide opportunity for campus-wide discussion on major issues in the news. For example, the issues in the fall of 2003 were the legality of public display of the Ten Commandments, copyright issues in internet downloading of music, and how long the U.S. should remain in Iraq.

H. Faculty Mentors for Honors Projects

Each Honors Program student works with a faculty mentor on an individual research project the first semester in Honors. The result is a 10- to 20-page paper and a 15-minute presentation in class. Students choose

their own topics and are paired with an appropriate research mentor. These projects mimic the larger Honors senior projects they may do at a university. The mentor relationships give students the opportunity to know faculty one-on-one, develop a personal research interest, and learn the basics of independent research.

I. Sophomore Option

During the second semester of the sophomore year, if an Honors Program student is unable to fit an honors class into his or her schedule, faculty members can design a special honors project based on a contract as part of a regular class so that the students can count that class as an honors class.

II. Assessment: Related to Guiding Principles

A. Learning is our purpose

The Honors Program seeks to encourage life-long learning by introducing students to other ways of learning outside the classroom—public lectures, museums, concert halls, issues forums, local and regional theater, libraries etc.

The program seeks to provide support for faculty and staff to learn new teaching skills and technologies that strengthen learning through Honors faculty teaching workshops and membership in the National Collegiate Honors Council.

The program emphasizes active learning experiences that require higher levels of thinking. Honors faculty members are encouraged to develop seminar-style courses that require more student-student and student teacher interaction and encourage student leadership in the classroom.

B. Students are our focus

Every component of the Honors Program seeks to enhance the educational experience of the students at WWCC. Providing for student-life experiences and learning inside and outside the classroom is one of the main goals of the Honors Programs and the cultural fieldtrips.

C. Employees are our most important resource

The Honors Program offers growth opportunities and seeks to increase employee satisfaction for faculty through opportunities to teach Honors courses. They are encouraged to be innovative, experimental, and imaginative in their honors classes and to interact with students in the learning experience. (See Appendix p.15)

D. The community is our partner

The Honors Program sponsors the Honors Issues Forums on the last

Friday of every month, inviting students, faculty, staff and community members to gather during the lunch hour to discuss issues of community, state, and national concern. Also students attend community lectures and performances as part of their educational experience. The community and its institutions (libraries, museums, galleries, concert halls) become a place to continue a lifelong learning process.

E. Ethical principles guide our actions

In keeping with the “dialogic” ethical code of Martin Buber (the Nobel Prize winner whose book *I and Thou* is renowned in philosophy, theology, and communication), the Honors Program strives to treat its participants as unique persons rather than replaceable objects. Small classes, issues forums, mentor relationships, and field trips encourage dialogue in which diverse perspectives are respected and carefully considered. The Honors Program is built around the idea that it is in dialogue that we grow, learn, and become fully human. The Honors Program, in sum, makes every attempt to relate to students as persons with potential for enriched lives rather than FTE’s.

III. Assessment: Related to Goals for Student Success

The Honors Program applies the goals for student success on a program level in the following ways:

A. Communicate competently—

- Students participate in a seminar format in Honors classes.
- In Honors classes, students express their thoughts in writing more than they do in regular classes, especially in the major research project required in the honors colloquium.
- Honors students organize public forums where they will lead discussions about significant issues
- Honors Program students design a semester-long research project; then they make a 15-minute oral presentation of their research to an audience of students and faculty.

B. Retrieve information—

- Colloquium students produce extensive academic research for the semester project.
- Students, overseen by research mentors, utilize a variety of research sources from original materials to the Internet.
- Students inform themselves about significant issues and present them in a public Issues Forum.
- Students in Honors classes frequently present student research

C. See issues from multiple perspectives—

- Students hear the perspectives of fellow students during the discussion format of honors classes.
- During Issues forums, students hear campus-wide perspectives on the issues.

- As a course goal, students examine issues from multiple perspectives in Honors classes.
- The new global studies colloquium is required for all honors Program students
- Students analyze their own thoughts about issues in Honors classes.

D. Solve Problems—

- Students evaluate various sides of social problems in public forums in an attempt to find solutions.
- Honors class students solve assigned problems collaboratively because classes encourage small group projects.

E. Developing Life Skills—

- Students demonstrate leadership skills when organizing the Issues Forum.
- Students are exposed to controversial materials and ideas.
- Students increase interpersonal collaboration in seminar-style honors classes.
- Students attend various cultural events and visit various cities, with the supposition that this type of exposure builds self-confidence in new places.
- Students demonstrate they can cope with increased competition and study stress.
- Students actively contribute to oral discussions in class.

IV. Assessment: Regulations Compliance

The National Collegiate Honors Council publishes a list of “Basic Characteristics of a Fully-developed Honors Program” to guide colleges as they develop their Honors Programs. This list [see appendix] demonstrates that the Honors Program at WWCC has complied with 13 of the 16 basic characteristics. The following three characteristics, with which we do not comply, are not particularly useful or relevant to an institution and program of our small size.

- The program should occupy suitable quarters constituting an honors center with such facilities as an honors library, lounge, reading room, personal computers and other appropriate décor.
- 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 them fully informed on the program and elicit their cooperation in evaluation and development.
- There should be provisions for special academic counseling of honors students by uniquely qualified faculty and or staff personnel.

V. Assessment: Staff Development

A. Director's professional development activities

1. National Collegiate Honors Council annual conferences:
1998 – Chicago 2001—Chicago 2003—Chicago
1999 – San Antonio 2002—Salt Lake City
2. Western Regional Honors Council annual conference: 2001--Portland
3. Sabbatical – spring semester 2000
Traveled to the west Coast following the NCHC “City as Text” theme in San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle; studied each city in depth for 2-3 weeks each, preparing for “City as Text” field trips and courses with students.

B. Honors Faculty professional development

Brown-bag teaching workshops once per semester for all faculty who are teaching Honors courses.

VI. Assessment: Program-Level Assessment

The components of the Honors Program are assessed through a variety of methods. The general focus is to gather specific suggestions to improve the program. [Actual forms are available in the appendix of this report].

Focus groups – every other year we organize a focus group of sophomore Honors Program students who meet together with a focus group facilitator. The group is videotaped discussing a series of questions about the Honors Program.

Course evaluations—Every Honors course is evaluated using a specially designed format that asks about effective techniques for Honors teaching.

Honors faculty questionnaires—Those instructors who teach Honors courses receive a questionnaire asking for suggestions about the overall management of the Honors courses.

Honors Research Mentors' questionnaires—Faculty who volunteer their time to act as mentors for Honors Program students are asked to evaluate the process.

Colloquium special evaluations—Honors Program students are asked to evaluate their experiences in the Honors Colloquium and the Honors Program in general.

Honors Program Alumni evaluations—for the first time in November 2003, we gathered a mailing list of former Honors Program students and polled them about their perspectives on the WWCC Honors Program after being out of school.

Honors faculty workshop—Honors faculty met as an advisory group to suggest changes and adjustments to the Honors Program. Their suggestions were recorded and kept for reference.

VII. Review of Printed Material and Web Site

The Honors Program brochure, application, and web site need to be up-dated to eliminate inconsistencies and reflect recent changes in the program. Although students report that the web site is easy to find and provides the necessary information, it needs more visuals, more eye-appeal, more color, quotes, photos and captions. Too much text is dull to experienced internet users.

VIII. Recommendations from the Previous Program Review

Non-fiscal (Plan for making improvements according to assessment information.)

Task	Action	Comments
Develop an Honors Program procedures manual	Not yet accomplished	Very important
Devise a system to evaluate non-traditional prospective honors students who enter college in the spring and have not yet developed an academic record	Deemed not necessary	Faculty recommendations are adequate to accomplish this
Expand types of evaluations	Accomplished	Added focus groups, faculty evaluation of director, mentor evaluations of project process
Begin to collect honors syllabi for evaluation and planning purposes	Accomplished	Now available for reference for new or returning Honors faculty
Increase the number of universities who agree to accept our Honors Program students directly into their program.	Not a priority	This is becoming less important because our Honors students are usually accepted into programs based on their WWCC GPA rather than just having been part of our program already. UW agreement is still useful and active.
Begin discussion of ways to expand the program	Not a priority	This is not seen as vital with decreasing demographics. We already try to convince every student with a 25 ACT or above to apply, and they do not all do so.
Collect extensive evaluation forms for next program review	Accomplished	Evaluated for 2003-04 review
Further encourage selection	Not accomplished	Not a successful project.

of the Honors Hall in the dorms for Honors Program students.		Students don't want to be segregated as Honors students
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Fiscal (Plan for making recommendations that involve budgetary decision-making.)

Task	Action	Comment
If the program expands to include more students, more money for field trips will be needed so students have opportunities for cultural experiences both in the honors classes and the Honors Program.	Accomplished in fiscal year 2003-04	The Honors budget was increased by \$2400
Find space for an honors center where students could meet, study together, and feel they are part of a centered program.	Not a priority	This seems like an impossibility on a campus where everyone is fighting for space. The new program review committee did not see it as an important goal
Expand the program to attract more students with high academic potential	Not a priority	Expanding the program would not attract more students. We are already attracting as many as we can and even then we are not getting all those who are eligible because they choose not to apply.
Increase opportunities for honors faculty development	Not accomplished	We applied to a special grant to take faculty to NCHC meetings, but we did not receive the funding.

IX. Summary of Strengths and Limitations

A. Strengths

Helps recruit good students. Both parents and students express a high level of interest in the Honors Program during recruiting days in the spring. In the survey of former WWCC Honors Program students conducted in 2003, 30% said that they decided to come to Western because of the Honors Program.

Increases innovation in teaching. Faculty reports positive experiences trying innovative teaching techniques in Honors classes. On the Honors Faculty Survey, respondents were asked to rate the statement-- "Teaching an Honors class has

enabled me to try new teaching methods” on a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being best). The average score was 3.7. In informal self-reporting, Honors faculty indicate that they are trying some of these innovations in their regular classes. . The science faculty finds it most difficult to integrate seminar and lecture styles.

Students express satisfaction with classes. Students’ evaluations of Honors classes have consistently revealed a high level of satisfaction with Honors classes. They often mention that these classes are more challenging, more interesting, and more student-centered.

Retains good students.

The goal of the Honors Program is not only to attract good students but to retain good students for a second year. Our hope is that the ten freshmen selected each year will return for their sophomore year before transferring and that the ten sophomores selected will choose to stay at Western for their sophomore year. Although it is harder to measure whether a sophomore would have left if not for being selected, we do know how many Freshmen return. The following is the rate of return for the years from 1997 to 2003:

97-98 = 130% *	01-02 = 100%
98-99 = 110% *	02-03 = 100%
99-00 = 60%	03-04 = 120% *
00-01 = 100%	

*Indicates sophomores who opted to return for a third year.

Creates long-term satisfaction with WWCC. On the survey of former students, graduates writing back after having left WWCC and the Honors Program express a high level of satisfaction with their experiences here, often regarding it as the highlight of their experience at Western Wyoming Community College. On eight questions measuring their attitudes towards the Honors Program, a low of 89.3% and a high of 95.7% responded with strongly agree or generally agree. (See appendix).

Helps faculty morale. Teaching an Honors class has become a desirable assignment that adds to our ability to motivate faculty. Faculty has a very positive experience teaching Honors and look forward to getting another chance to do so. They report mostly positive experiences in the classroom, with one commenting that the honors courses were his/her “consistently most rewarding.”

B. Limitations

Need for a procedures manual.

This is important for any future staff turnover.

Need for Honors faculty professional development.

Honors faculty has no opportunity to interact with others teaching honors in their fields. It would be a very valuable experience if a few of our Honors faculty could attend the National Collegiate Honors Council meetings. Science honors

faculty in particular find it difficult to integrate innovative teaching techniques. They would greatly benefit from interaction with other science honors faculty from other colleges and universities in the teaching workshop that is offered at every annual convention of the National Collegiate Honors Council.

X. Future Directions

A. Recommendations for Improvement

1. Fiscal

- a. Honors faculty professional development money
- b. In Honors workshops Honors faculty frequently suggests we increase teaching load credit for Honors courses to 1.33 and for Honors colloquiums to 2.0. Their experience shows that honors classes require more time.

2. Non-fiscal

- a. Write a Procedures manual
- b. Up-grade web and printed materials
- c. Brainstorm with science faculty about effective honors teaching in the sciences
- d. Create an Honors alumni newsletter
- e. Restructure Honors faculty workshops

B. Vision for the Future

The Honors Program is an excellent program with clear goals and focus, appropriate to the size of the institution. We would like to see a high level of quality and continuity maintained in the future even though personnel may change due to individual retirement, etc.

APPENDIX Contents

1. College Catalogue pages on Honors Program
2. NCHC Recommendations for “Basic Characteristics of a Fully-Developed Honors Program”
(from National Collegiate Honors Council—*A Handbook for Honors Administrators*)
3. Description of Academic Leave for program director in 2000
4. Final Academic Leave Report
5. Questions for Honors Focus Group: April 11, 2001
6. Questions for Honors Focus Group: April 29, 2003
7. Summary of Focus Groups’ Discussions
8. Honors Course Student Evaluation (sample)
9. Summary of Honors Course Student Evaluations (1998-2003)
10. Honors Faculty Evaluation (sample)
11. Honors Research Project, Mentor’s Evaluation (sample)
12. Honors Colloquium Evaluation (sample)
13. Summary of 10, 11, and 12 above
14. Honors Faculty Evaluations for Program Review—November 2003 (sample)
15. Summary of Honors Faculty Evaluations for Program Review
16. Alumni Survey (sample)
17. Alumni Survey results—November 2003
18. Honors Program Web Page print-out
19. Web Page Assessment
20. Honors Program Brochures
21. Honors Program Application
22. Sophomore Option Contract
- 23. FTE data from Enrollment Services**

