

Academic Report for 2015-2016
Honors College

Oregon State University

The Honors College (HC) is at the center of the university's mission to bring the most engaged and high-potential students in the state and beyond to Oregon State and provide them with high-impact, transformative experiences in research, coursework, service, and global engagement. The HC pursues innovation in undergraduate education, leveraging the university's programmatic strengths. HC students are leaders on campus, and HC graduates are prepared to be leaders in Oregon and around the world.

2015-2016 ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

1. Provide a transformative educational experience for all learners

A core element of the Honors College's mission is the commitment to offer outstanding students of all backgrounds transformative learning experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, that incorporate research, global service, and co-curricular activities. This year, the HC launched a number of initiatives designed to improve access to the full honors experience for all learners and increase honors graduation and retention rates, one of the college's primary strategic goals.

- Following careful analysis and projection of the Honors College budget and consultations with student focus groups and university administration, the differential tuition associated with HC enrollment will increase from \$341 to \$431 per term (fall, winter, and spring terms) in the 2017 academic year. Additional increases are anticipated in 2018 and 2019, raising the tuition to an estimated \$500 per term. This increase is necessary in order to continue offering a broad range of small classes, and student focus groups expressed support for higher tuition to maintain current opportunities and curriculum. However, internal research has indicated that the cost of attending the Honors College is already one of the most significant factors in student attrition. In an attempt to address the potential challenge of affording the HC differential tuition and **enhance the learning environment to raise and equalize student success** for all learners, the college convened a working group of current honors students to help design a new scholarship to assist students with financial need in payment of the honors tuition. This group met over the course of spring term, 2016, developing an application process that was, with few modifications, adopted by the college for implementation in the 2017 academic year. The first awards will be made in fall term, funded primarily by contributions from the Honors College Parent Leadership Circle.
- The Honors College continued to improve its methods for tracking student progress through and adherence to HC retention milestones and requirements in the 2016 academic year in an effort to **enhance the learning environment to raise and equalize student success**. Using a Salesforce.com student lifecycle management database, the college developed a satisfactory progress system that tracked student GPA, thesis stage completion, and honors coursework and sent automated communications to students at risk of falling behind in college requirements. Reporting and analysis has then facilitated individual

interventions when appropriate to support the college's goal of increasing retention and honors graduation rates.

- A new peer-mentoring program for transfer students enrolling in the Honors College in the fall of 2015 was also intended to **enhance the learning environment to raise and equalize student success**. Research has indicated that transfer students can experience unique challenges that increase rates of attrition and can contribute to academic difficulties. Transfer students were matched with mentors to assist in easing the transition. Of the seven students that participated in this first year, all remained in the Honors College, and this program will be expanded in fall, 2016 to include incoming rural and out-of-state students.
- The HC collaborates with units from across the university to offer a rich and diverse set of courses that **make high-impact learning a hallmark of undergraduate education** in the college. In the 2016 academic year, the honors curriculum included 242 distinct honors sections. The HC supports the development of substantial new experiential learning opportunities in honors courses through the Margaret E. and Thomas R. Meehan Experiential Learning Course Development Grants, awarded annually. This year's awards are supporting the development of an honors section of WR 121 using materials from the Special Collections and Archives Research Center, as well as honors colloquia exploring local activism and power; the historical, economic, and environmental value of the Willamette River; and the modification of ride-on toys for children with disabilities.
- As part of our ongoing efforts to **advance learning through course design, assessment, and faculty development**, the HC developed and offered a Professional Learning Community focused on implementing honors pedagogy and **high-impact learning practices**. Faculty from four different colleges met for five weeks during fall term to discuss strategies and workshop assignments from an interdisciplinary perspective.
- The HC strives to ensure that all students are aware of the Honors College when applying to Oregon State University and that every eligible student has the opportunity to apply. This year, in an effort to **enhance and ensure the success of international students**, the HC worked with the Division of International Programs to improve the mechanism for international students to apply to the Honors College by broadening the HC application timeline and allowing TOEFL scores to replace SAT and ACT test scores. These changes will allow international students who do not have SAT/ACT scores or who have not completed the documentation phase of international admission to apply for the Honors College. In addition, targeted outreach will invite eligible international applicants to apply to the Honors College, and applications will be reviewed outside the normal application cycle, on a rolling basis.
- Funding provided by the Bringing Theory to Practice Well-Being Seminar Grant allowed the HC to offer two new opportunities designed to **enhance our**

comprehensive Healthy Campus Initiative. Two seminars in winter term, 2016 explored the relationship between well-being and achievement in small-group settings. The first seminar, led by Don Johnson from Student Leadership and Involvement, focused on positive psychology/PERMA theory. The second explored mindfulness issues with Dr. John Edwards of the School of Psychological Science. All twenty-four participating students also received a free book and other well-being resources.

- In the first full year of the position, the OSU Advisor of Prestigious Scholarships provided new services that **expanded strategies to recruit diverse and high-achieving students** and **advanced student success**. Group presentations about scholarship opportunities reached 667 students, and 313 students were individually advised. This resulted in 71 applications to prestigious national awards, many completed by first-generation students, students from under-represented populations, and students with high financial needs, following partnership with the Educational Opportunities Program to encourage students representing Oregon State's full diversity to apply. Twenty students were awarded scholarships, one became a finalist, and three were named as honorable mention.
- In 2016, as part of our efforts to **expand strategies to recruit diverse and high-achieving students**, each admitted Honors College student was assigned an honors student ambassador as a point of contact. Where possible, matches were based on similar backgrounds, majors, or interests, and ambassadors initiated contact with all admitted students.
- The Honors College is also moving forward with welcoming its first cohort of students at OSU Cascades. During the 2016 academic year, the HC worked with Cascades faculty and leadership to develop a full Honors College experience for students in Bend. Applicants will be considered in the 2017 admissions cycle, with the initial group beginning in fall, 2017.
- A new series of Honors College Career Workshops in 2016 **advanced student success** by focusing on preparing students for professional life with topics including how to market an honors degree and how to network at social events.
- A variety of facilities projects came to fruition in the 2016 academic year incorporating elements designed to **advance student success**. Following several years of preparatory work with architects, faculty, students, and staff, the Honors College moved into its new home in the Learning Innovation Center in fall, 2015. The new student computer lab and study lounge offers a variety of features addressing student needs, including printing and computing, casual and quiet lounge spaces, and a private study room for group and individual work. The college also opened a renovated wing in Sackett Hall as a new honors residential option, alongside the primary HC residential community in West Hall. Renovations improved accessibility and added bathrooms with an innovative design that allowed for co-gendered floors. The college created community and

study spaces in the common areas, as well as offices for advising and tutoring. This wing reached capacity, with thirty-five HC students living in Sackett.

2. Demonstrate leadership in research, scholarship, and creativity while enhancing preeminence in the three signature areas of distinction

The Honors College is committed to providing faculty with unique opportunities to develop and implement innovative pedagogy and form mentorship and research relationships with outstanding undergraduate students. Honors students often become valuable members of research teams throughout campus, contributing significantly to publishable research, which allows faculty members to maximize campus resources.

- The opportunity to develop and teach honors courses in the Honors College can be a key factor in **attracting and retaining high-quality faculty**. In the 2016 academic year, 124 faculty members from units across campus taught honors courses. Twenty-eight were teaching their first honors course at Oregon State. To help the college ensure a diverse set of courses that provide teaching opportunities to a breadth of faculty members, the HC has memoranda of understanding or agreements with the College of Engineering; the College of Science; the College of Business; the Department of Mathematics; the School of History, Philosophy, and Religion; the School of Writing, Literature, and Film; and the School of Language, Culture, and Society. These arrangements outline the number and type of honors courses offered in each discipline during the year.
- **Transdisciplinary research** and course offerings are distinguishing features of the Honors College experience. This past academic year, the HC offered 64 colloquia exploring topics such as “The Dawn of the Anthropocene” (co-taught by a multidisciplinary team of faculty interested in environmental humanities), “Soundscaping,” “John Steinbeck’s Pacific,” “Black Europe: Diaspora, Identity, and Belonging,” “Event of the Century: The Total Solar Eclipse,” and “Blue Mind: How Oceans Enchant, Inspire, Unite, and Heal.”
- The HC has worked to **expand and increase high-profile programs in the arts and humanities** by offering a series of experiential programs where students explore literature firsthand. In addition to our annual winter break faculty-student book club program, honors students were able to attend three author lectures in the Portland Arts & Lectures Literary Arts series. In advance of attendance, students received copies of one of the author’s books and met with OSU faculty. Books this year included Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke*, Adam Gopnik’s *Through the Children’s Gate: A Home in New York*, and Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres*.
- In 2016, the Honors College created a new faculty recognition, the Honors College Outstanding Mentor Award, to **advance leadership in research, scholarship, and creativity**. Supported by the Margaret E. and Thomas R. Meehan Honors College Professorship Fund, this award acknowledges the

contributions of Oregon State faculty to the mentorship of HC undergraduate research, particularly through the honors thesis experience. Nominations were solicited from current honors students and recent HC alumni, and a recipient was selected by the Honors College Curriculum Committee. The winner of this first award was Dr. Viktor Bovbjerg from the School of Biological and Population Health Sciences in the College of Public Health and Human Sciences.

3. Strengthen impact and reach throughout Oregon and beyond

The Honors College creates unique opportunities and programs designed to attract the very best students in our region and beyond to Oregon State University and produce graduates prepared to assume leadership roles in their fields and communities. This is the most significant impact of the college on Oregon, keeping outstanding students in the state and attracting those from out of the state to the university and to the Pacific Northwest. The college, though, has also initiated a number of programs to increase outreach and engagement with external partners and supporters.

- Working in partnership with Cort Brazelton, a member of the HC Board of Regents, the college's development advisory group, and his family, the Honors College held an event in Eugene during the spring of 2016 designed to contribute to **economic development** by building connections with business and civic leaders in the region and creating relationships that will provide mutual benefit to students and companies through the establishment of internship and career partnerships. Following this event, several companies expressed interest in coming to campus to meet individually with students, and the Honors College is planning similar events in Bend, Portland, and, again, in Eugene for the upcoming year.
- In the 2016 academic year, the HC worked to **increase study abroad** by developing a new short-term program in London with honors courses offered by faculty in literary studies, physics, and civil engineering. Twenty-one students, including 18 incoming first-year students, participated in the program this summer. The college also planned and offered coursework related to an honors international service learning experience with The Community Project: Ethiopia; ten students were scheduled to work on building a school outside Debre Birhan, Ethiopia in September, 2016, but the program had to be canceled due to political unrest in the region.
- 2015 was the 20th anniversary of the Honors College, and the HC **engaged alumni and other external partners** through a celebratory event on October 23rd, 2015. Almost 150 guests, including 36 alumni of the Honors College, participated in a day of activities that included lunch, tours, "mini-colloquia" offered by HC faculty, and an evening reception.
- The Honors College's Dean and Friends program **engages alumni and other external partners** by bringing them to campus to speak about their careers and experiences with small groups of current honors students over lunch. In the

2016 academic year, the college held nine Dean and Friend lunches with both HC and non-HC alumni.

- A new event in 2016 for scholarship donors and recipients also added to the college's portfolio of **alumni and external partner engagement** opportunities. The Honors College invited the supporters of all HC scholarships and all Oregon State Presidential Scholarships awarded to honors students to a reception to meet the recipients of their awards. Faculty members with historical ties to the college were also invited in an effort to cultivate awareness of the impact of scholarships and build connections with current donors. This event was hosted by Dr. Ken Krane, an emeritus faculty member who is now on the HC Board of Regents.
- The HC has developed an innovative model for supporting students through the undergraduate thesis process. An article describing this was published in the inaugural issue of the open-access and peer-reviewed journal *Honors in Higher Education* (<https://journals.psu.edu/heru/article/view/60072>), thereby **advancing the impact and reach** of that work.

4. Commitment to three essential features of OSU

The Honors College is committed to enrolling a diverse student body and creating opportunities that maximize opportunity and success for all learners. As interest and enrollment in the college has grown, HC leadership has worked to develop admissions processes that encourage a diverse set of applicants with wide-ranging interests and backgrounds. In addition, in order to expand the opportunities and programs we can offer our students, the college has increased its focus on fund development and the creation of new efficiencies in its operations.

- The Honors College is committed to providing employees the resources and opportunities to understand and further Oregon State's strategic initiatives advancing equity, inclusion, and diversity. An Honors College staff committee developed a new statement of expectations for inclusion in all position descriptions that stipulates that every member of the staff is responsible for advancing the university's and the college's equity, inclusion, and diversity priorities and goals.
- The HC created a new community-building activity, Honors College Community Coffees, in the 2016 academic year. Held twice each term, these informal events were designed to celebrate and build a thriving community within the Honors College that connected students, staff, and faculty. Over the course of the year, 40% of honors student took part in this activity, including over half of the first-year student population.
- Gifts and pledges to the Honors College totaled \$230,351 in the 2016 fiscal year according to the OSU Foundation. In order to build fundraising partnerships and success, Dean Toni Doolen went on 27 visits during the fiscal year, again according to OSU Foundation records.

- Building on recommendations from the Honors College Parent Leadership Circle, which began in the 2015 academic year, the HC engaged the parents of first- and second-year parents by inviting them to subscribe to a quarterly newsletter that provided information about the honors community, upcoming events and opportunities, and important deadlines and updates. The Parent Leadership Circle itself also grew dramatically in its second year, with ten parents participating in meetings, doubling the first-year membership. Contributions to the Parent Leadership Circle totaled \$25,000 in the 2016 academic year.
- The Honors College partnered with Dr. Kim Eagle, an Oregon State alumnus, to offer a 10-week summer internship at the University of Michigan with the Michigan Clinical Outcomes Research and Reporting Program. Dr. Eagle provided a \$5,000 scholarship for one honors student to participate in the program, and the college handled the application and review process, selecting Swechya Banskota, a third-year student in biology, as the intern. The college hopes to build on this model in the future to develop a set of funded internship opportunities for current students.
- The Honors College worked with Wieden and Kennedy, a Portland-based advertising agency, to create new visual branding and messaging for the college. Building from market research and focus group input, Wieden and Kennedy developed a new set of marketing tools, including a video for prospective students and their families. This work also resulted in a revision to the name of the college, shifting away from the “University Honors College (UHC)” to the Oregon State University Honors College or, simply, Honors College (HC). The HC will launch the new brand campaign this fall with updated print materials and a revised online identity.

5. Performance on college-level metrics

- Fall enrollment in the Honors College grew for the sixth consecutive year, surpassing 1000 students for the first time in the college’s history. Although three-year growth (2014–2016) in the HC’s population doubles the rate of growth in the overall university undergraduate population during that time frame, in 2016, the rate of growth was nearly identical in both groups at 3%. This is indicative of the planned leveling-off of growth in the Honors College population as it reaches 4–5 percent of the overall population of Oregon State undergraduates (it was at 4.14% of the total population in fall, 2015, or an estimated 5% of the on-campus undergraduate population).
- First-year retention rates and six-year graduation rates remain high at 98% and 93.1% respectively. These are slightly higher than the five-year average percentages of 97.2% and 87%, perhaps indicating the impact of student success programs in the college initiated two years ago. The positive differences of 13.2% and 28.8% between HC retention and graduation rates

and overall university rates are consistent with the five-year averages of 13.7% and 24.98%.

- The percentage of US minority students in the Honors College was 28.1% in 2016, representing the fourth consecutive year of growth, growth which has significantly outpaced the increase in US minority populations in the university's overall undergraduate population for the past two years. This is indicative of the college's emphasis on recruiting and retaining a diverse student body. However, the number of international students in the HC remains low; the changes in the application process for international students described earlier are designed to address this.
- After a period of growth in application numbers that, by 2013-2014, exceeded the college's ability to manage admissions and maintain reasonable acceptance rates, efforts to encourage only the most committed and dedicated students to apply – particularly through the development of a more rigorous essay question and scoring process – has resulted in a continued moderation of total applicant numbers. This allowed the admission rate to rise to over 50 percent (53%) for the first time since the 2012 academic year. The yield rate, however, decreased last year to 41.2%, continuing a five-year trend. This is likely reflective of increased competition for top applicants with peer institutions and the increase in the percentage of top applicants within the overall pool of accepted students, as students who score higher on the HC application process have historically accepted offers of admission at a lower rate.
- The Honors College had 180 graduates in 2016, a small increase from 2015. The growth in the number of graduates in the 2014-2016 period has trailed the overall growth in the HC population by 2%, which reflects the relatively higher percentage of first- and second-students within the overall population due to growth in admitted classes in the last two years.