Activity of the *University Committee on Honors Programs* for AY 2010 - 2011

The UCHP consists of college reps and is advisory to the Honors College Dean, Cynthia Jackson Elmore. It met on 3 occasions this academic year (once in fall, twice in spring). Its major activities were:

1. Providing feedback to reports by the HC Dean on the current status of various HC programs. To this end it is here reported that:

   a. The HC currently consists of approximately 2700 Honors students. About 10% are students of color. There are more female than male students in the HC. The years incoming class (FS10) is currently numbered at 494 students.

   b. The HC has students from every state, with particular strength with respect to students from Texas, Chicago, Ohio, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Western PA and NY are also strong areas. New recruitment initiatives include trying to make inroads in NY City; strategic attempts in NJ and PA (Philadelphia area); targeting day schools. The HC is not expecting immediate return from these initiatives, but are laying groundwork for 2-3 years down the road.

   c. The HC Dean indicates that a major focus this year will be fundraising for scholarships. The Dean, HC alumni and HC staff established an endowment for HC students, as part of the university wide Spartan Scholarship Challenge. Another area for development this year is funding the debate team. We had a winning team last year, which makes it an especially good year to develop additional support for the program.

   d. The research seminar program continues although the number of sections offered recently is somewhat down (8 sections last year). This is currently viewed as a temporary issue due to a few faculty members who have regularly offered these seminars being temporarily engaged in other matters. UCHP members helped to review various research seminar proposals from university faculty. Faculty from the College of Engineering have provided proposals for such seminar courses and, as a personal comment, I continue to be very impressed with those COE proposals that I have reviewed.

   e. Discussion took place with respect to procedures for MSU remaining competitive with respect to success in prestigious national and international fellowships and scholarships (Rhodes, Mitchell, Marshall, Truman, Goldwater, Udall, Fulbright, etc.).

2. As per usual, UCHP members assisted the HC in evaluating various scholarship applications from HC students.

3. HC students are now encouraged to undertake a civic engagement activity (CE) in their third year. On the basis of input from UCHP, HCSAC, and advisors, the HC has decided the Civic Engagement (CE)
may be undertaken as an honors option. In particular, this does not increase the number of honors experiences required of HC students (nine such experiences remains the requirement). The Committee endorsed the document prepared for the UCHP entitled “The Honor’s Option with a Service Focus”. The HC Dean raised some additional issues for the Committee to consider related to Civic Engagement and general discussion took place. Among issues under consideration is: (a) how can HC develop specific policy guidelines for CE options without too finely constraining available options, (b) should there be some kind of assessment (as is currently done with respect to CE in the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities), and (c) whether there should be a general civic engagement conference, analogous to the UURAF program?

4. The relation of HC initiatives to broader university initiatives with respect to study abroad were discussed. Particular activities were reported upon, including new opportunities with respect to Cuba. With respect to COE, the study-abroad program currently under development between Comm. Arts and Engineering was discussed (the intent of the program is to go to Tanzania, where computer stations in elementary and secondary schools will be set up with satellite uplink).

5. The HC is looking into having students develop formal “E-portfolios”. In the current pilot version, this would be an option, not a requirement, for HC students. Issues with respect to software for developing such portfolios were discussed.

6. Certain matters with respect to specific programs that would seem to bear little relation to COE were discussed. This includes the recruiting of HC students to participate in the 4+1 BS/MS program in Public Health. Such initiatives, while interesting, are not reported in detail in this report to the College of Engineering. Please see me (Tom Pence) if you seek more information.

Submitted by Tom Pence, ME department