

Honors Program Assessment Plan March 2005

The mission of the Honors Program is to serve motivated, accomplished students by providing them with opportunities to go beyond the learning typically available through the general curriculum. To fulfill this mission, Honors Program assesses student growth in six areas; these areas generally reflect the goals of the general education requirements. By graduation, Honors students should:

1. Think critically and creatively;
2. Understand how scholarly inquiry is conducted;
3. Understand a range of individual, cultural, international, and artistic perspectives;
4. Demonstrate a sense of efficacy as a citizen;
5. Write well in a variety of contexts; and
6. Speak effectively in a variety of settings.

For each of these goals, the program has identified four levels of achievement that roughly parallel the growth from first year to graduation. Students develop in these six areas through introductory Honors courses and Honors sections of general courses, which are generally taken in the first two years; Honors colloquia, which primarily serve students in the second and third year; and the senior thesis, which begins in the junior year and is completed by the end of the senior year. In addition to these course experiences, Honors students participate in co-curricular activities such as service projects, cultural/educational events, and leadership opportunities within the Honors Program. These experiences significantly form an integral part of the learning that takes place within Honors.

Student progress towards achieving these six goals will be assessed through several means throughout the four years: Honors assessment sheets that will also be used to grade and evaluate student work; surveys that will be taken at two points in the student's academic career; and focus groups that will occur as needed.

I. Honors Assessment Sheets

At each level, the program already has a mechanism in place for direct assessment of student learning: most first year students take an introductory course that results in a first semester portfolio; sophomores must submit a Sophomore Honors Portfolio by the end of the second year in order to become a full member of the Honors Program; juniors develop a senior thesis prospectus as part of the senior thesis approval process; and seniors complete a written thesis and present their work at the Honors Undergraduate Research Conference in April.

To collect and analyze this data in a way that also assesses the Program as a whole, assessment sheets will be completed as follows:

1. Honors Classroom Assessment Sheets. These sheets will be completed by Honors faculty who teach the first semester course taken by 80% of each incoming class of Honors students. The information will be shared with students as a means of evaluating and grading work in the course. These sheets will be filed in the individual student folders maintained by the program. In May, results will be tabulated to provide an overall picture of where these students fall in the assessment rubric for all six of the Program's goals.
2. Honors Assessment Sheet-Sophomore Honors Portfolio. To determine growth from the first to the second year, Honors Committee members will review Sophomore Honors Portfolios in October and March of each year and use the Assessment Sheet to determine the current levels under each goal, if possible, for each student. Again, the sheets will be kept in student files, and, in May, aggregated results will be calculated.

3. Honors Assessment Sheet-Prospectus Review. Honors Committee members will use the Assessment Sheet to evaluate prospecti submitted by third year students as part of the approval process for the senior thesis program. Each SHP is evaluated by at least two reviewers. For Honors Program members, these sheets will be kept in student files and the data from them compiled and aggregated in May. The data will primarily yield information on goals 1, 2, and 5.
4. Honors Assessment Sheets-Thesis/Presentation. Two assessment sheets will provide information primarily on the student achievement toward goals 1, 2, 5, and 6. Faculty who direct and evaluate the senior thesis projects will complete the sheets in April, as students submit theses and report on their results at the annual Undergraduate Research Conference. Again, the results will be used both individually to assign grades and, the aggregate, to evaluate the program.

II. Surveys.

These surveys are all intended to provide information on how students perceive their own growth and view the Honors Program (and specific experiences) as contributing to that growth. In addition to these surveys, students complete an evaluation form at the end of each Honors course that asks them to comment specifically on how the experiences of that course shaped their progress in terms of the six Honors Program goals.

First Semester Survey. Through the introductory Honors courses, the majority of beginning first year students will complete an initial survey at the start of the semester and a similar survey at the end of the first semester to assess their attitudes towards their personal and educational experiences at the University of North Dakota, and the Honors Program specifically. The goal of the survey is to determine how students view their own adjustment and what elements of University life contribute to that adjustment.

Sophomore Survey. To supplement the information obtained through the Sophomore Honors Portfolios, the program will survey students primarily to determine their development in terms of goals 2, 3, 4, and 6. The survey will be administered as part of the advising process and would include both those who intend to submit SHPs and those who don't. The Honors Program typically retains a number of students throughout their first two years who do not meet the requirements for full membership into the program or who choose not to continue in the program. Surveying this group, then, would provide the program with data on students whose learning might not be documented through the Sophomore Honors Portfolio Assessment Sheet. For each cohort group, these results would be compared in May against data gleaned from the first year Classroom Assessment Sheets and from the SHP Assessment Sheets.

Senior Survey. To supplement information obtained through the prospectus and Thesis Assessment Sheets, the program will survey students primarily to determine their growth in terms of goals 2, 3, 4, and 6. The survey will be administered when students apply for graduation through the Program. For each cohort group, these results would be compared in May against data gleaned from the Sophomore Survey and the Prospectus, Thesis, SHP, URC Presentation Assessment Sheets.

III. Focus Groups

Focus groups will be conducted in February of third year students, primarily to learn more from full members in the program of their sense of their education in Honors as they move toward their capstone project, the senior thesis. The focus group results will include those students who have

not yet had prospecti as well as those with approved projects; this data, then, will be used to supplement the results from the senior survey, which will include only those students who successfully complete a thesis project.

All of these assessment results will be compiled by the Honors Program during the summer of 2005 and reported to the Honors Committee in the Fall of 2005. These results, and the Honors Committee's response to them, including any curricular or programmatic changes that grow out of assessment are documented in the minutes of the Honors Committee meetings and noted in the Honors Committee's annual report to the University Senate and in the Honors Program Annual Report submitted to the Provost.