University of Idaho Honors Program
External Review Report
October 5-8, 2008

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I. Introduction

Rosalie C. Otero and Tamara Valentine were invited to evaluate the Honors Program at the University of Idaho by Dr. Jeann Christiansen, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. Dr. Otero is the Director of the Honors Program at the University of New Mexico, a past president of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), co-chair of the NCHC Assessment and Evaluation Committee, and co-author of the NCHC monograph *Assessing and Evaluating Honors Programs and Honors Colleges: A Practical Handbook* (2005), and an NCHC-recommended site visitor. Dr. Valentine is the Director of the Honors Program at the University of Nevada, Reno and an NCHC-recommended site visitor.

II. Overview of the Site Visit Process

Approximately 4 weeks in advance of the visit, the reviewers received over 200 pages of documents and informational materials related to the University Honors Program and commenced reviewing the materials compiled and forwarded by the Honors Program Director, Dr. Stephan Flores:

- *University Honors Program Self-Study and External Program Review Materials* for 2008, a document that contained narratives on the Value of Honors Education, Program Strengths, and Constraints on the Honors Program Development
- *Fall 2008 UHP Statistics and Information*
- *UHP Annual Reports 2004-2008*
- *UHP UI Catalog Entry for 2008-2009*
- *Director’s Memorandum and Materials for Teaching in Honors*
- *UHP Student Handbook for 2007-2008*
- *Sampling of different issues of the student publication “The Looking Glass”*
- *Supplementary Compilation of Materials*, a spiraled document that contained sample recruitment and acceptance letters; writing topics and guidelines; sample course descriptions and syllabi; budget planning documents; senior exit surveys and responses; Honors faculty interviews; 2007 CIRP Freshman Survey Profile; Program Advisor’s Annual Log of Tasks and Processes; and UHP and UI website information
- *UHP Course Offerings 2003-2009*
- *University of Idaho Vision, Values, and Directions: Strategic Action Plan 2005-2010*
- *University of Idaho Organizational Chart*, August 2008
Our schedule for the two-day visit included an entrance and exit meeting with Jeanne Christiansen, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs; an exit meeting with Douglas Baker, Provost; a series of meetings with current and former Honors students and members of the Honors Student Advisory Board; Honors Program Committee faculty, Honors teaching faculty, and Honors staff; current and former Honors Associate Directors; Academic Deans and Associate Deans; Departmental Chairs; other individuals who have had or currently have involvement with the Honors Program; and the Director of Housing and the Director of Admissions and Financial Aid.

We have divided our report into five sections: (1) Introduction, (2) an Overview of the Site Visit Process, (3) an Executive Summary, (4) a general narrative discussing the strengths of the University of Idaho Honors Program with some recommendations followed by (5) an analysis of the Honors Program in terms of the NCHC Basic Characteristics and to the University of Idaho Strategic Plans. The review team was comprised of two NCHC-recommended site visitors, and they bring a range of national honors experiences. This document, however, should not be construed to constitute a report from the NCHC as an organization, nor does it serve as an accreditation report.

III. Executive Summary

We are happy to report that our overall impression of the Honors Program at the University of Idaho was positive. We think that the Honors Program students are getting an excellent education that matches or surpasses what they could get at the most prestigious (and most expensive) universities in the country. They are also getting the kind and quality of personal attention from the faculty and staff of the Honors Program that are rare in higher education.

We were impressed by all the students of the program, and we met a large number of them. They clearly appreciate and take full advantage of the special opportunities and privileges the program affords them. Their respect and affection for each other, for their teachers, for the program and its administrators are evident in the remarks we heard from every single one of them. The students struck us as smart and as a dedicated collection of distinct individuals who, at the same time, enjoy a real sense of community.

The curriculum of the Honors Program is well conceived and corresponds to the University of Idaho’s general education requirements.

The Honors Program is in good hands with a well-respected and committed Director and an equally dedicated and respected Associate Director as well as an appreciated Program Advisor. The Honors Program Committee is a valuable asset to the Director. The function of the committee is to recommend policies for the program. It is composed of six faculty members that represent a broad spectrum of the University community, an academic dean, and the chair of the Honors Student Advisory Board.

The three most important recommendations we are making that involve additional funding are the addition of a staff member, additional funds to the Honors budget, and,
most urgently, the repositioning of the director to a full-time position. Successful Honors Programs across the country have full-time directors. Honors Program directors, and Dr. Flores is no exception, are responsible for a myriad of activities from recruitment to curriculum development to alumni relations. There are some recommendations that we will be making in this document that cannot be implemented neither with a part-time director nor without additional staffing and resources.

We are also recommending additional budget to the Honors Program to provide incentives for departments to release good faculty to teach in the program. Currently, departments have only disincentives and must sacrifice credit hours as well as funding whenever a department member teaches in the program. It is essential for the central administration to continue its support for the role of the Honors Program within the institution, and improvement will require additional planning and support. Quality obviously needs to be preserved even in times of budget constraints. Currently the Director of the Honors Program is always dependent on departments for faculty staffing, and thus, at the mercy of budget cuts and faculty losses. In addition, the Director is required to negotiate every semester to ensure Honors Program priorities. He is thus put in the position of going hat-in-hand to ask that faculty members be allowed to teach in this excellent program. Every time a faculty member teaches in the Honors Program, his or her department should receive (1) all the credit hours and (2) funding from the Honors Program budget (usually the cost of a replacement teacher).

The pass-through instructional budget we are recommending is the national norm in honors programs. It will create stability for the Honors Program; it will allow the program to attract the best faculty; it will create good will for the program throughout the academic departments; and, perhaps above all, it is the fair way to handle honors instruction. Faculty members very much want to teach in the Honors Program because it truly is a strategy for faculty development, generating new skills and excitement about teaching that they then take back to their regular classes. An honors program should be an incubator for innovation and excellence in teaching; the Honors Program is exactly that, but its future is threatened by an inappropriate and inadequate budgeting structure that penalizes departments for cooperating with the program.

These recommendations—full-time director, an additional staff member, and a pass-through instructional budget are our most pressing recommendations. We need to conclude this summary, however, by reaffirming our exceptional respect for the Honors Program and for the outstanding job that Dr. Stephan Flores has done in maintaining and strengthening it. He has created a curriculum and community of scholars that will long be the pride of the University of Idaho and of honors education in the United States.

IV. Structure and Operation of the Honors Program

A. Budget and Staffing
As mentioned earlier in this report, the budget is woefully inadequate. We can’t imagine trying to provide the best possible opportunities for your best students with the current budget. The University of Idaho administration is committed to recruiting more National
Merit Scholars. This is the caliber of student that should be in the Honors Program, but obviously, the growth of the student body in Honors would necessarily mean additional courses.

At the time of our visit, the Honors Program staff included a Director (60% FTE), an Associate Director (50% FTE), and a full-time Program Advisor. We believe this level of staffing is insufficient. Within the national honors community, it is well known that serving as honors director is an all-consuming task. Directors are responsible for staffing, facilities, curriculum, faculty recruitment and development, public relations and student recruitment, general administration, advising and mentoring students, extracurricular programming, and alumni relations. It should be understood by all concerned that the position of honors director is a full-time commitment. It is vital to the future of the UI Honors Program.

The Program Advisor’s chief duty is to organize the annual Convocation. Although this event is appreciated by those who participate, it is time-consuming and not solely an Honors Program endeavor. Cheryl Wheaton spends an enormous amount of time arranging and coordinating this annual event. She has little time, especially in the spring semester to assist with other Honors Program concerns. Her role should properly be to assist the director of the program. Since the Convocation is a university-wide event, it should be handled by another office on campus such as that of the Provost or Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

An additional clerical staff position would be helpful in disseminating information on the honors experience for recruiting purposes and keeping other units on campus abreast of the activities and successes of Honors students cannot now be done with the current staffing. This position could also be responsible for developing and supervising a system for tracking and maintaining records on honors students and honors alumni as well as responding to administration requests for honors information, statistics on the program, students, scholarships, and potential recruits.

Appointing a part-time faculty member to groom students from the freshman year to be competitors in national scholarship competitions (Rhodes, Truman, Fulbright, Goldwater, Madison, Udall, and Phi Kappa Phi) would certainly improve the University of Idaho’s prospects for success. UI certainly has outstanding students, but even top students need mentoring with the arduous application process.

Based on the significant goals of the institution (including the recruitment of more National Merit Scholars and top students), the number of honors students at UI, the amount of work expected of the current honors staff, and the additional duties proposed in this report, we make the following recommendations:

1. We recommend that the Honors Director’s position be made full-time, twelve-month appointment.
2. As soon as possible, the Associate Director should also be made a full-time, twelve month appointment.
3. An additional clerical staff position should be established.

4. The Convocation duties of the current Program Advisor should be transferred to another office on campus.

5. The budget should be increased in order to compensate departments and faculty more fairly and to make the recruitment of faculty for teaching Honors courses less problematic.

6. A commitment to hiring work study qualified students (one or two) would be a welcome advantage to the Honors Program.

7. A faculty member should be appointed to serve as the Coordinator of National Fellowships and Scholarships for the campus.

B. Facilities
The space currently occupied by the Honors Program is inadequate. Although the three offices are spacious and bright, the area could not be considered an Honors Center. The Commons is certainly a central building on campus, but the Honors offices located at the back of the building amidst Student Services offices are not conducive for Honors Program activities and community building. The students refer to the area as “the maze.” Institutions with flourishing and successful honors programs have sufficient office space, a computer room/library area, classrooms, and a large lounge.

Honors students are encouraged to live in university housing both in McCoy Hall in Theophilus Tower and in the Scholars Living Learning Community, with priority reservation arrangements for honors students in these halls. At many other institutions, residence floors or halls are restricted to Honors Program students allowing for additional programming and community-building. At some institutions, honors students are housed with International Program students to encourage exchange of ideas and diversity. Honors living learning communities are another means to building community and retaining excellent students at the university.

Recommendation:
1. That the Honors offices be expanded to include space for student activities. There are spaces adjacent to the current offices that would work, but barring that possibility, a more suitable place for an Honors Center should be explored.

C. Students
The students in the Honors Program are obviously bright and highly motivated. They are most appreciative of their honors experience. They consistently cited the quality of their honors classes and their outstanding honors teachers. They also expressed satisfaction they received from interacting with other bright, motivated students as the best part of the Honors Program. Some were a bit concerned about the “elite” label they feel may be
attached to them. We were told that was “Idaho.” Students, however, should be reminded that they are not only members of the Honors Program but members of other units on campus (their majors, for example), hence, the whole of the University benefits from having outstanding students on campus.

There is an Honors Student Advisory Board (HSAB) that is quite active. It is composed of twelve members elected by the honors students. They assist with the planning and scheduling of campus and community events, cultural trips, and enrichment and social activities to encourage interaction among Honors students. They also publish the newsletter, *The Looking Glass* each semester. The chair of HSAB serves on the Honors Program Committee. Perhaps this Board could include more members so that the burden of various activities doesn’t fall on few shoulders.

It would be beneficial to provide funding to Honors students so that they could attend the Western Regional Honors Council Conference and the National Collegiate Honors Council Conference. Students would have the opportunity to present papers or poster sessions, and they would have the opportunity to interact with honors students from across the country. The WRHC conference will be held in Spokane in the spring. The close proximity would make it less expensive and easier for students to attend. In addition, students should be encouraged to submit their essays, creative writing pieces, and art to *Scribendi*, the literary and arts magazine for Honors Students in the Western region published by the Honors students at the University of New Mexico.

**Recommendations:**
1. Honors Students should be encouraged and supported in attending regional and national honors conferences.

2. Honors Students should be encouraged to submit their work to *Scribendi*.

**D. Curriculum**

The honors curriculum at the University of Idaho has a good mix of core discovery courses, disciplinary, and interdisciplinary courses. The Honors Core Award permits students to receive credits and rewards without completing the program, while the Certificate Award rewards those students who complete the program. Certainly in the spirit of giving as many students as possible an honors experience, this reward system works well.

The students expressed their dissatisfaction with the few number of upper division seminars. Given their rigorous schedules they find it difficult to fit in one of the three seminars offered in any given semester. Just a small addition to the budget would make a considerable difference in course offerings.

The review team found it interesting that the Honors Program at the University of Idaho does not offer a senior capstone or undergraduate research experience. Most honors programs across the country require a thesis/project or something comparable such as an international study abroad experience, a design project in engineering, or an internship in
business. These special alternatives also require a paper with a focus on reflection. The students seemed to think the opportunity to pursue undergraduate research would be a good idea. Since many honors students are already doing a thesis or project in their discipline, this exercise could obviously count toward their honors certificate.

Recommendation:
1. We recommend a model in which the Honors Program is responsible for funding special topics and seminar honors courses (by providing release-time funding to the departments) but with the academic departments funding the first honors section of regular discipline-based core courses in general education as well as honors sections of Core Discovery courses. The Honors Program could provide funding for additional honors sections of the discipline-based courses and Core Discovery courses if the need arises. This cost-sharing model allows for a cooperative working relationship between the Honors Program and academic departments rather than placing the entire “budget burden” on either.

2. Having salary dollars can be extremely beneficial to the Honors Director in dealing with departments, but it is probably overly optimistic to believe that all academic units will be forthcoming with support for honors education. It will be important for the Provost’s Office to encourage and reinforce collaboration between departments and the Honors Program by citing the importance of their cooperation in order to contribute to the institutional goal of having a top-flight Honors Program.

E. Faculty
The students think that the faculty who teach honors courses are outstanding. They believe that their instructors truly believe in their abilities and, therefore, the students, in turn, want to do their best for fear of disappointing them. The faculty with whom we met were enthusiastic about teaching honors courses. They say that teaching an honors course is a place where they can be innovative. They did express dismay that their departments are not always able to accommodate releasing faculty to teach in core discovery and Honors classes. There is no “training” for those who teach honors courses. Many of the faculty also expressed the desire to meet with each other a few times during the semester.

Recommendations:
1. Pass-through funding should be provided to the Honors Program (as mentioned above) to ensure that an appropriate number of faculty are available to teach honors courses.

2. That the Honors Program should develop an orientation session for honors faculty especially those new to teaching honors courses. In addition, two or three informal meetings should be scheduled during the semester. Faculty were pleased to have the opportunity to meet with the visiting team because it also afforded them the opportunity to meet with each other.

F. Recruitment and Application Process
Out of necessity the Honors Program has a fairly limited recruitment effort. The Honors Students Advisory Board does participate in Vandal Friday, and the Director sends letters to qualified high school students. The Honors Program should be a significant component of the recruitment efforts at UI. The Director does not have enough time to visit high schools and talk with prospective parents and students. The University has an office and well-trained staff devoted to recruitment efforts. Duplicating the efforts, particularly by a part-time, already overloaded Director is not practical.

Currently students must apply to the University and to the Honors Program for admission to the program. The criteria were clearly cataloged and the admission process seems to be straightforward. Our understanding is that the names and application information of those students who apply to UI and qualify for the Honors Program are sent to the Honors Director and Associate Director who communicate with the students and requests an essay. The visiting team was struck by the individualized attention given to each applicant.

There was some discussion about automatic admission to the Honors Program especially for National Merit Scholars. It is useful to require a separate, albeit simple, application process to the Honors Program because not all bright students want to participate, and there is something to be said for having students who proactively seek to be a member of the Honors Program. These bright students tend to want choices and an automatic admission process may make them think it is a requirement.

Recommendations:
1. We recommend that the Vice President for Enrollment continue to cooperate with the Honors Director to realize the best methods for recruiting excellent students to the University.

2. The Director of Admissions, Dan Davenport, is willing to work with the Director to streamline the admission process to the Honors Program. We recommend that this be done.

G. Development and Alumni

The Honors Program does have an alumni database and updates the alumni office with the list of graduates each year. With the current staff, developing ways of staying in touch with alumni would be an impossible task. With additional staff, the Honors Program could develop an alumni newsletter, for example, (on-line to avoid mailing costs) in order to remain in contact with former honors students and cultivate donors. Alumni can serve as mentors and recruiters and an obvious resource for fundraising. Their successes can reflect favorably on the Honors Program and the University.

A number of institutions have found that providing the opportunity for a named Honors Program or Honors College has led to generosity on the part of donors. The Honors Director, if given additional staff support, could work with the Development Office at UI to establish an annual gift-giving campaign for the Honors Program.
V. The University of Idaho Honors Program in the Context of the National Collegiate Honors Council’s Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program

Although it is the largest national organization concerned with honors education, the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) does not serve as an accrediting body for Honors Programs or Honors Colleges. The members of the review team are NCHC-recommended Site Visitors, and they bring a range of national honors experience. This document, however, should not be construed to constitute a report from the National Collegiate Honors Council as an organization.

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF A FULLY-DEVELOPED HONORS PROGRAM

No one model of an Honors Program can be superimposed on all types of institutions. However, there are characteristics, which are common to successful, fully-developed Honors Programs. Listed below are those characteristics, although not all characteristics are necessary for an Honors Program to be considered a successful and/or fully developed Honors Program.

- A fully developed Honors Program should be carefully set up to accommodate the special needs and abilities of the undergraduate students it is designed to serve. This entails identifying the targeted student population by some clearly articulated set of criteria (e.g., GPA, SAT score, a written essay). A program with open admission needs to spell out expectations for retention in the program and for satisfactory completion of program requirements.

The University Honors Program (UHP) casts a wide net of invitation letters to prospective University of Idaho students encouraging them to visit the UHP website to determine whether they meet the minimum criteria to apply for admission to the Honors Program: a correlation between the student's unweighted high school GPA and SAT/ACT test score. If a student meets the criteria, the student is sent an additional letter requesting that the student submit a two-page writing sample based on one of four writing topics. The Director and Associate Director of UHP review the essays, and accept or reject each application. Continuing and transfer students with a 3.5 or above may apply to UHP on the basis of academic performance in college-level work. In order to remain in UHP, the student must maintain a 3.3 cumulative GPA; complete a minimum of three graded honors credits in the first semester, and at least six graded honors credits by the end of the second semester; thereafter, students must complete one honors course every second semester. Students who earn at least 19 credits in required honors courses receive the Honors Core Award; those who earn 27 honors credits in required courses receive the University Honors Program Certificate.

Recommendation: The Director of Admissions and Records was open and willing to work with the Honors Program to streamline the process of Honors recruitment, Honors
scholarships, and Honors admissions. The reviewers suggest that the Honors Program work with enrollment management, admissions, and financial aid a) to convert the application process from paper to electronic submission to reduce the amount of time the Director and Associate Director spend reviewing application essays, and to reduce the amount of paper and photocopying; b) to help send out Honors information and recruitment letters to 30+ ACT students, National Merit scholars, and other outstanding prospects to early identify prospective students; and c) to offer Honors scholarships and financial benefits at an early time of the recruitment efforts. Consideration can be given to students who receive four-year scholarships to receive “automatic” admission to the Honors Program. The students would still need to complete the application process so that the Honors Program would have the necessary information about each student. Since the Admissions office currently works with the recruitment of National Merit scholars, given the necessary Honors Program materials and background orientation, the office can help promote the Honors Program and its benefits. With more information about the Honors Program, its students and staff, scholarships, curriculum, and benefits, the Office of New Student Services can help recruit outstanding students not only to the University of Idaho but to the Honors Program. The Honors Program can also contribute to the university-wide recruitment efforts.

- The program should have a clear mandate from the institutional administration ideally in the form of a mission statement clearly stating the objectives and responsibilities of the program and defining its place in both the administrative and academic structure of the institution. This mandate or mission statement should be such as to assure the permanence and stability of the program by guaranteeing an adequate budget and by avoiding any tendency to force the program to depend on temporary or spasmodic dedication of particular faculty members or administrators. In other words, the program should be fully institutionalized so as to build thereby a genuine tradition of excellence.

Established in 1983, the Honors Program has established itself as an important part of the University of Idaho. Its mission is to offer “a stimulating course of study and the advantages of an enriched learning community for students from all colleges and majors.” The site visit interviews, the results of the senior exit surveys, and the transcripts from Honors faculty interviews confirm that the Honors Program has a presence on campus and that faculty and students value the quality and diversity of the curriculum, the extracurricular offerings, and the enriching experience the Honors Program offers. Although the Honors Program is not part of the institution’s strategic action plan, the program can easily be incorporated into the goals outlined in the university’s Vision, Values and Directions. The Honors Program is a natural fit to engaging “every student in a transformative journey of discovery and understanding,” provoking a “passion for knowledge, innovation and creativity,” and emphasizing “quality and access” for a meaningful educational experience. The Honors Program provides innovative curricula of distinction, offers integrative learning activities, promotes an environment that increases both faculty and student engagement in scholarly
and creative activities, and makes connections with other parts of the university and beyond—all to enhance the quality of University life.

In the context of honors education, it is essential that the institution commit to providing permanent and sufficient funding to the Honors Program and to the departments for releasing faculty for honors course offerings, increasing Honors staffing to full-time positions, providing suitable space for Honors staff and students, enhancing coordination for national scholarships advising, and strengthening ties with university-wide recruitment and advisement efforts.

- **The Honors director should report to the chief academic officer of the institution.**

The Director of UHP, currently a .6 FTE position, reports to the Vice-Provost of Academic Affairs; the current Director also holds .4 FTE position in English.

- **There should be an Honors curriculum featuring the special courses, seminars, colloquia and independent study established in harmony with the mission statement and in response to the needs of the program.**

The Honors Program provides a wide range of honors course offerings to Honors students only. Honors students can earn Honors credits by enrolling in Honors sections in the humanities, social sciences, and science core courses, enrolling in Honors sections of the Core Discovery sequences or enrolling in upper-level Honors seminars.

Honors students can earn Honors credit when they complete the Honors Elective Agreement for an approved upper-division elective, or when they participate in international study programs, the annual Vacation Reading course, or one-credit Honors offerings.

A common requirement in Honors Programs is the fulfillment of a 3-6 credit undergraduate thesis or project. Most of the Honors students we talked to were keen to get involved in undergraduate research whether it was in completing a business plan for a business degree, a design project for engineering, or fieldwork study for anthropology. Since all of the students that we talked to planned on pursuing advanced degrees, they felt that a thesis would not only set them apart from other students, but would build a stronger resume and would be valuable for preparation to graduate school. Students mentioned that their Honors awards and certificates would be more meaningful and significant if they were required to complete a senior thesis or project.

Many degree programs already offer students the opportunity to complete a thesis or project, e.g., environmental sciences assigns a year-long senior practicum to develop a project under the guidance of a mentor that ultimately leads to a written thesis, presentation, and poster; engineering designs a class that builds, tests and demonstrates. Initially, small steps can be made toward requiring students in the Honors Program to complete a thesis or project. At present, National Merit scholars are connected with a
faculty sponsor in the first 2 years and with a mentor the last 2 years, and Martin scholars are required to complete two semesters of research. The thesis requirement could be an adaptation of a current required major capstone, a directed-study project, a creative project overseen by a faculty mentor, a teaching/nursing/journalism internship, or an alternative to the traditional thesis that may more closely fit the needs of a UI student.

- **The program requirements themselves should include a substantial portion of the participant’s undergraduate work, usually in the vicinity of 20% or 25% of their total course work and certainly no less than 15%.**

Students can graduate from the Honors Program in two ways: students who successfully complete an honors core curriculum totaling 19 credits receive the University Honors Core Award and are recognized at the annual Honors Certificate and Core Award Ceremony. Students who complete a total of 27 credits in Honors classes with a GPA of at least 3.0 in these courses receive the Honors Certificate awarded at graduation. Students who graduate with a University Honors Core Award graduate with less than 15% of their academic work devoted to Honors; students who graduate with an Honors Certificate graduate with over 21% of their academic work devoted to Honors. To increase the number of Honors credit hours, the Honors Program could include a community service or international travel component.

- **The program should be so formulated that it relates effectively both to all the college work for the degree (e.g., by satisfying generally education requirements) and to the area of concentration, departmental specialization, pre-professional or professional training.**

The UHP offers students an Honors curriculum. The University requires that students must complete at least 33 credits of core curriculum courses; the UHP designates Honors sections for members of the program in the humanities, social sciences, and science core courses. For example, English 257 and 258; History 101 and 102; Philosophy 103; Psychology 101; Biology 115; and Chemistry 111 and 112 are 100-200-level courses that fulfill both the core and Honors requirements. Three Honors sections of the Core Discovery sequences are offered each semester. The Honors Program also offers 2-3 upper-level Honors seminars submitted by Honors faculty for approval by the Honors Student Advisory Board and the Honors Program Committee. These seminars are on varied topics and taught by faculty across departments on campus. Students commented that they would like to see more Honors seminars offered. When we asked about the strengths of the Honors Program, students mentioned the excellent professors who engaged the students in topics atypical of non-Honors classes.

It becomes difficult for students in such majors as engineering and education to fit Honors classes into their tight schedules and complete the requirements of the Honors Program.
• The program should be both visible and highly reputed throughout the institution so that it is perceived as providing standards and models of excellence for students and faculty across the campus.

The Honors Program is described as a vibrant, motivated community, contributing to raising the intellectual caliber of the university community and offering challenging classes and special opportunities to outstanding students. Honors students have opportunities to take courses with great teachers who set high expectations. The Honors Program is ideally suited for the mission of the University: providing transformative experiences and opportunities, undergraduate research experiences, and mentoring relationships. However, many faculty agreed that the Honors Program is taken for granted and woefully unsupported. It is understaffed, lacks adequate resources, and suffers from university unfairness. The International Program on the other hand, for example, appears (from the university directory) to have 11-15 or more staff members and serves 500-600 students; Academic Assistance Programs is housed in half a floor including additional space occupied by Career and Professional Planning offices. Faculty commented that if the university wants to raise the image of academic quality, it should give more resources to recruiting outstanding students and fully funding the Honors Program, which could act as a tool to sell the university as academically advanced and prestigious.

We heard from faculty who suggested that the Honors Program should receive more prominence in the institution. With the Prioritization Program and the loss of some programs, possibly the Honors Program could benefit by incorporating interdisciplinary courses and gaining additional faculty from these losses. To raise the visibility of the Honors Program central administration could encourage schools and departments to offer Honors classes year round both as core courses and seminars.

• Faculty participating in the program should be fully identified with the aims of the program. They should be carefully selected on the basis of exceptional teaching skills and the ability to provide intellectual leadership to able students.

Without doubt, the faculty that we met were enthusiastic about working with Honors students and teaching Honors classes. From 2003-2009, Honors classes have been taught by 72 different faculty, over 80% holding professorial rank. Faculty are determined by each department in consultation with the Director of the Honors Program. Although the Director does not have full authority in selecting the teaching faculty, he has good relationships with Deans and Chairs across the campus.

The document “What is Honors Teaching?” is available to first time Honors teaching faculty.

The review team did not see course/faculty evaluations. We recommend that a faculty orientation be scheduled each semester and joint-Honors faculty meetings be held. The exchange would be helpful especially to new faculty in Honors rather than just talking.
with the Director to arrange Honors courses. University-wide public recognition of honors faculty occurs primarily at the convocation.

- **The program should occupy suitable quarters constituting an Honors center with such facilities as an Honors library, lounge, reading rooms, personal computers and other appropriate décor.**

A prominent concern was the lack of suitable quarters for the Honors Program. When the Honors Program was located on the ground floor of the psychology building, it had a large student lounge, office space for a secretary and two directors. Currently the Honors Program, known as the Honors Center, is housed in the northeast corner on the third floor in the Commons Building amidst other student service-type organizations. The present Honors space is essentially three offices held by the Honors staff, and a small waiting area where students have books and magazines, and three computers available to them. Many faculty and students we met commented that they have never visited the Honors Center nor do they know where it is located. Students commented that the path to the Honors Center was mazelike. Honors students do not have a sense of place to meet and belong. The current student space is small and “puts students on display.” Faculty and students think that a student lounge would build a sense of community and increase communication between the Honors office and the students.

The review team discussed with the Director of Housing the possibility of initiating an Honors living learning community similar to the International House design. Suites could be converted to offices, a common space, and a student lounge to accommodate the Honors Center.

The university should make immediate plans either to expand the present Honors quarters in the Commons to include a lounge and conference room, or to move to more suitable quarters that are more student-centered.

- **The director or other administrative officer charged with administering the program should work in close collaboration with a committee or council of faculty members representing the colleges and/or departments served by the program.**

UHP works closely with the Honors Program Committee, a standing committee of the University Faculty. The function of the committee is to recommend policies for the program, including admission requirements; act on changes in the program; act on petitions for exceptions to the requirements of the program; and approve Honors seminar proposals. There is a cross-representation of faculty who sit on the committee: 6 faculty representatives, an academic dean from one of the colleges, the chair of the Honors Student Advisory Board, and the Director, Associate Director, and Program Advisor of the UHP. The Honors Program Committee is active and meets regularly to discuss the operations of the Honors Program.
• 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 the student group fully informed on the program and elicits their cooperation in evaluation and development. This student group should enjoy as much autonomy as possible conducting the business of the committee in representing the needs and concerns of all Honors students to the administration, and it should also be included in governance, serving on the advisory/policy committee as well as constituting the group that governs the student association.

The Honors Student Advisory Board (HSAB) acts as the liaison between the Honors Program and its students. With its own by-laws and constitution, HSAB consists of 12 members elected each year by Honors students. One of its main functions is to help select Honors seminar offerings each semester. HSAB assists with the planning and scheduling of campus and community events, cultural trips, and social activities. This past year its members helped plan and organize ice cream socials, scavenger hunts, movie nights, open houses, and ski trips; sponsored fundraising events; and assisted the Honors Program in recruitment events. The HSAB writes and produces the 6-8 page bi-annual student publication, *The Looking Glass*. The chair of HSAB serves on the Honors Program Committee to advise the Honors Program Committee on matters of curriculum and policy. Students in HSAB are highly motivated and involved in the Honors Program.

• There should be provisions for special academic counseling of Honors students by uniquely qualified faculty and/or staff personnel.

The Honors Program averages 485-500 students each year. The Honors Program accepts between 120-150 students into its program each year; this past year included 18 new National Merit Scholars, with a total of 43 National Merit Scholars in the program. The Director, Associate Director, and Program Advisor participate in the orientation of incoming students, and in advising all other Honors students. Although all UI students are required to be advised by their academic unit, Honors students are not required to receive Honors advising. There is insufficient evidence to support the number of Honors students advised each semester. Approximately 50-56 students graduate in the Honors Program annually. Retention is a by-product of good advising. Given the minimal Honors staff, it becomes almost impossible for Honors students to receive personalized Honors advising.

• The Honors Program, in distinguishing itself from the rest of the institution, serves as a kind of laboratory within which faculty can try things they have always wanted to try but for which they could find no suitable outlet. When such efforts are demonstrated to be successful, they may well become institutionalized thereby raising the general level of education within the college or university for all students. In this connection, the Honors curriculum should serve as a prototype for education practices that can work campus-wide in the future.
In faculty interviews, Honors instructors mention that their honors courses entail more reading, writing, and discussion. They feel that they can take more chances as a teacher and be more flexible in the course design and pedagogy. Faculty have the opportunity to submit seminar proposals on topics of their choice each academic year. Faculty did say that teaching Honors courses and the Core Discovery classes was one of the most rewarding teaching experiences of their careers.

Honors courses range from Honors sections of English literature, chemistry, and psychology to the Core Discovery classes such as The Sacred Journey: Religions of the World; The Movies, the World and You; and Honors Insects and Human Health; Honors seminars such as Africa: A Developmental Trajectory, The Occult in History, and The Geography of Conflict.

Not only are faculty rewarded with small classes, but with exploring new areas of research, taking more risks, and being more innovative in the classroom.

- **The fully-developed Honors Program must be open to continuous and critical review and be prepared to change in order to maintain its distinctive position of offering distinguished education to the best students in the institution.**

The Honors Program supplied us with more than sufficient evidence that the Director is reviewing and evaluating the Honors Program regularly. Graduating seniors complete exit surveys, faculty participate in one-on-one interviews, and annual reports are published and distributed across the campus.

The last external review was done in May 1998.

- **A fully-developed program will emphasize the participatory nature of the honors educational process by adopting such measures as offering opportunities for students to participate in regional and national conference, honors semesters, international programs, community service, and other forms of experiential education.**

Honors students have participated in the Western Regional Honors Council; most recently 10 students attended the 2007 conference in Denver, Colorado. Honors students study internationally and participate in the University Study Abroad Consortium (USAC). Honors students have been awarded Fulbrights, Goldwaters, Udalls, Rotary Ambassadorials, and other national scholarships.

- **Fully-developed two-year and four-year Honors Programs should have articulation agreements by which Honors graduates from two-year colleges can be accepted into four-year Honors Programs when they meet previously agreed upon requirements.**
There are no articulation agreements with other colleges. The Honors Program, however, does accept honors students from two and four-year honors programs or colleges who have a 3.5 GPA and a grade of B or better in the equivalent of English 102 and accepts honors credit on a case-by-case basis by confirming and inquiring into the nature of the program from which they transferred.

- A fully-developed program will provide priority enrollment for Honors students who are active in the program in recognition of their unique class scheduling needs.

Honors students are eligible to receive priority enrollment.

**University Honors Program in context of the University of Idaho Strategic Action Plan 2005-2010**

**Teaching and Learning Goal**
Objective A: Build and sustain competitive advantage through innovative curricula of distinction.
Strategy: The Honors Program certainly offers innovative and distinctive curricula. It would be relatively straightforward to create outcomes for the courses and for the program. Using the mission and goals of the program, assessment tools could be developed to assess such things as critical thinking, persuasive writing and so on. The program as a whole could also develop benchmarks:
For example:
- 80% of students completing honors courses will earn grades of “B” or higher
- 20% of Honors sections be limited to fewer than 20 students
- 90% of eligible Honors students will avail themselves of priority enrollment
- 50% of Honors graduates will enter graduate or professional school

Objective B: Develop effective integrative learning activities to engage and expand student minds.
Strategy: With additional staffing and funding, the Honors Program could expand its opportunities for students including undergraduate research, service learning opportunities, engagement in professional societies such as the WRHC and NCHC, and international programs.

**Scholarly and Creative Activity Goal**
Objective A: Promote an environment that increases faculty engagement in interdisciplinary scholarship.
Strategy: The Honors Program is in a position to continue to be a place where faculty can participate in interdisciplinary activities particularly teaching. With the addition of a thesis/project dimension to the UHP, faculty can also become more involved in mentoring students which could coincide with their own research interests. It is
important that faculty are encouraged to and rewarded for designing and teaching Honors courses.

**Outreach and Engagement Goal**
Objective A: Build upon, strengthen and connect the University of Idaho Extension with other parts of the University to engage in mutually beneficial partnerships with stakeholders.
Strategy: In this area, the Honors Program is well-suited to attract donors because of the high quality of student work and the innovative activities and courses it offers. With assistance from the Alumni Office and the Office of Development, the Honors Program could connect with their alumni who are potential donors as well as resources for such endeavors as mentorships, internships, and job opportunities for students.
Objective B: Deliver undergraduate, graduate, continuing professional education and Extension programs and opportunities for lifelong learning.
Strategy: The Honors Program is the best area to provide resources to accomplish this goal. The UHP students are your National Merit Scholars and other high achieving students who are most likely to be the leaders of business, education, technology, politics, and so on. By providing resources and opportunities for these students, the University is investing in its future and is furthering its goal to build partnerships.

**Organization, Culture and Climate Goal**
Objective A: Sustain and enhance a positive work climate to enhance the quality of University life.
Strategy: Generally honors students are the ones who will take full advantage of the opportunities that are offered by their University. They are most appreciative of learning in a safe, socially healthy and welcoming environment and, most important, they increase the best aspects of the university environment. In addition, the faculty who teach honors courses are often the most innovative and generous. It makes sense that the Honors Program should be a top priority for UI.