RE: Minutes of meeting held October 30, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 1:32 p.m. with the following members present: Pamela Bathurst, MaryAnn Boehmke, Mary DuPree, Stephan Flores, Hannah Qualls, Mark Warner, Cheryl Wheaton, and J.D. Wulfhorst.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Welcome to new committee members. Self-introductions were made by committee members and Stephan Flores welcomed new committee members.

2. Brief overview of University Honors Program/3. Bus 421 Marketing Research project on UHP recruitment and retention. Handouts were distributed to the committee to include program statistics for fall 2006 and course offerings for spring 2007. Dr. Flores noted that new to the curriculum this year was a Core Discovery section (Honors Globalization), and FLEN 420, added to provide students additional upper division coursework.

Discussion of the prepared data included mention, at several points, of the Marketing Research project (Item #3 on the Agenda) being conducted by Business 421 students of Steve Pharr. The Honors Program is a client; one section of the class will develop and analyze data regarding recruitment, the other section will examine retention. Five or six focus groups were created by selecting students from various levels of participation in the program, to include those who chose not to participate at all as a program member. Information from these focus groups will be used to identify program issues involving recruitment and retention. Data subsets will undoubtedly reveal several questions one might ask; revision of membership criteria, reached by examining student profiles, might be one result.

Some program numbers provided for committee members are as follows: total of 233 new students accepted to UHP (123 registered new freshmen) an increase of 32.4% from 2005. Dr. Flores pointed out that 366 entering freshmen met the UHP’s minimum index correlation, but that 214 of the 366 did not apply for admission. A large number of that 214 (178) were invited to apply but didn’t. Test scores and index numbers were also discussed (see enclosed handout), along with other program data. For example, the
average highschool GPA for UHP freshmen is 3.93, the average ACT composite is 29, and the average combined SAT reading and math score is 1296—these figures are higher than last year’s entering freshman class. Again, the hope is that the Business 421 Marketing Research class will be able to examine and analyze collected data and begin to formulate useable information that will help explain the raw data provided. Dr. Pharr mentioned that the trends seen in the focus groups were dramatic, particularly from the marginal and non-participating student groups. At one point in the discussion Dr. Wulfhorst wondered how participants in the focus groups had been selected. Dr. Flores explained that students were selected according to specific criteria; some were active in the program, others marginally active, and some had chosen to never be active the program. Flores noted that the most difficult group to get to participate included those who did not seek membership in the program.

Maryann Boehmke questioned how important the essay was in determining program membership. Dr. Flores replied that the essay was not used primarily as a means of excluding students to the program. She wondered what had prevented the 46 students who applied from writing the essay. Flores had no one explanation for why students choose not to write the essay and when questioned, he explained that students were asked to write about different aspects of their academic experiences in their essay. The UHP Admissions Essay Topics and Guidelines are included in the program’s annual report.

Other data observations included noting that 71 freshmen in the College of Engineering met the index correlation but did not apply for admission to the program (see handout). Although 26 UHP students (24.3% of 107 freshman) are in engineering, this is lower than in the past. Dr. Flores has had discussion with Dean Elshabini in Engineering and she has agreed to meet with Dr. Flores and with the various departments to coordinate efforts in recruiting students to the program. Dr. Flores recently learned that Mechanical Engineering has coordinated their curriculum with the honors program curriculum.

Prof. Boehmke asked Dr. Flores if there was satisfaction with the enrollment number in the program, as well as the level of funding, and if some of these concerns might be driving the need for the data collection. Flores responded that decline in enrollment had been observed for the last two years but that it was not as great as the overall university decline. He also noted that if the program’s enrollment were to increase significantly it might mean not enough seats in certain classes. Variety in course offerings is another consideration, along with reconsideration of course enrollment limits. Current limits of 30 are not aligned with optimal limits of 22–24 to closer meet national enrollment limits. Hannah Qualls reported that students would like more options with the Core Discovery courses, indicating that four courses might be a better number. Dr. Flores explained that in the past the curriculum had supported four courses, but concerns over low enrollment, scheduling problems, cost, and fewer professorial faculty instructors in those courses had lead to reducing the offerings to three courses a year.

J.D. Wulfhorst asked what the timeline for assessment by the Business 421 class was to be. Flores explained that it was a year-long process and that there would be a class presentation with recommendations by the end of this semester. The class would also be
developing a mid-range survey.

Finally, Prof. Boehmke asked if there was a critical time when students dropped away from the program. Dr. Flores said that it probably occurred most frequently after the sophomore year. Cheryl Wheaton observed that with more students working to complete the core cluster while in the program (students do not have to declare a cluster), they are likely to stay longer, perhaps through their junior year, and then remain active in the program because they have met the minimum criteria of one course on average every other semester.

4. Speaker for 2007 Honors Convocation: Dr. Rosemarie Tong. Dr. Flores distributed information about the 2007 speaker (handout included), noting that her public lecture will be held April 19, 2007 at 7:30 p.m. in the University Auditorium. Ms. Tong will most likely speak on stem cell research.

5. New Business. To date there have been seven honors seminar proposals submitted to Dr. Flores, with November 1 as the deadline to receive them. The Honors Student Advisory Board will confer by Friday, Nov. 3, to review and rank each of the proposals. Dr. Flores stated that he would be posting the seminar proposals on a website accessible by the committee members and HSAB in order to expedite the ranking and selection process.

Dr. Wulfhorst asked if everyone could make the next committee meeting, Nov. 13 at 12:30 in the Wellspring Room. Those present, as well as members not able to make this meeting, will be available.

Meeting adjourned at 1:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Wheaton

cc: Douglas Baker, Provost
    Bill McLaughlin, Chair, Faculty Council
    Don Crowley, Chair, Committee on Committees
    Doug Adams, Faculty Secretary
    ASUI President
    Special Collections, Library