



UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE
Office of Academic Affairs
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February 13, 2007

To: UAA Faculty Senate
Through: UAA Faculty Senate Executive Board
CC: Ron Spatz
Dean
From: Michael Driscoll
Provost
Subject: Honors College

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Driscoll', is written over the 'From:' field of the email header.

Conversations over the past couple of months have helped all of us to clarify in our minds and on paper the definition and direction of academic honors and undergraduate research at UAA. The comments and insights of faculty, staff and administrators, and the open discussions in the academic boards and various other venues have helped us to refine our proposal for an Honors College to one that will best serve the institution that UAA has and will become. We greatly appreciate the thoughtful consideration and the support for the honors experience that was shown by individuals and groups alike.

As we plan to proceed with the approval and implementation of the Honors College at UAA it is apparent that all who review the proposal will be influenced more strongly by faculty support than by any other characteristic. We therefore ask that the UAA Faculty Senate consider a resolution of support at its next regular meeting for the proposal that has been shared with the UAA community over the last several weeks. Such a show of support will take us one step closer to an academic unit that is more capable of developing and delivering to students the kind of experiences that we all value, and that is more completely integrated into the academic structure of UAA.



The 2000 Accreditation Report from the Northwest Association commended the University of Alaska Anchorage for launching the University Honors Program. Since 1998, enrollment has grown from 20 students to 180 students and disciplinary honors options have grown from 2 departments to 18 departments. Honors graduates have gone on to some of the best graduate and professional programs in the nation, and awards made by the Office of Undergraduate Research & Scholarship have increased by 143%. It is now time to move from Program to College status. This change will bring coherence to undergraduate research and honors education. It will highlight the value that UAA places on excellence in undergraduate education and on student success. The Honors College will strengthen the culture of active learning and foster student/faculty and community partnerships. It will improve the overall quality of UAA. It will also bolster the public image of our campus thereby helping us attract and retain better students and assist in successful extramural fundraising to support the activities of UAA students.

FUNCTIONS

The University Honors College focuses on undergraduate education. *The Honors College mission is to be a catalyst for scholarly excellence.* Students enrolled in the University Honors College are also enrolled in the disciplinary school or college in which they complete their degree program. Students who complete the requirements of their school or college and the University Honors College graduate with the designation of *University Honors Scholar* on their transcript and diploma.

The University Honors College supports the UAA disciplinary schools and colleges and their students in the following ways:

- Assisting the disciplinary schools and colleges through the recruitment of exceptional students and in the retention of those students.
- Advancing, coordinating and administering active learning and undergraduate research opportunities for students and faculty across the campus.
- Developing and delivering multi-disciplinary Honors curricula.
- Providing leadership in determining the criteria for honors education at UAA (including admission, course work, and transcribed academic Honors designations).
- Aiding the disciplinary schools and colleges in the development of their own disciplinary honors options.

- Providing extensive academic advising and student support.
- Aiding the disciplinary schools and colleges by helping UAA students to compete for local and prestigious national scholarships requiring nomination.
- Providing interdisciplinary professional development opportunities for faculty.
- Providing an academic home for cross disciplinary curricular options (e.g. 49th State Fellows and Complex and Natural Systems).
- Partnering with the Office of Student Affairs in implementing retention strategies related to undergraduate research and scholarship experiences.
- Partnering with the Office of the Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Studies to bridge undergraduate research experiences with post graduate opportunities.
- Partnering with the Office of Community Partnerships to support student opportunities in the community.
- Leading the Freshman Convocation planning to welcome and promote research and discovery as part of the undergraduate experience to new students.

ADVISORY BODIES

The University Honors College has five advisory bodies:

- The University Honors Council advises the Dean on all major matters pertaining to University Honors in areas of curriculum, policy-making, strategic planning, outcomes assessment and Honors College design.
- The University Honors Student Advisory Board advises the Dean of all matters of student concern.
- The Undergraduate Research Task Force, chaired by the Faculty Associate for Undergraduate Research, advises the Dean in all matters regarding the promotion and advancement of undergraduate research and engagement on the campus.
- The University Honors College Advisory Board advises the Dean on matters external to the College and provides advocacy for College initiatives. The Board is comprised of accomplished citizens from all walks of life and will include an ex officio member from the University Honors Council.
- The University Honors College Chapter of the UAA Alumni Association advises the Dean on Alumni matters and activities in support of the College.

STRUCTURE

Development of the University Honors College curriculum is the responsibility of the University Honors Council which will in turn submit curriculum changes through the Dean to the Undergraduate Academic Board. The University Honors College curriculum will be based on a goal of increasing overall quality of honors education within the institution while also (a) increasing the participation of faculty teaching honors across the disciplinary schools and colleges, and (b) increasing the number of faculty working with students in undergraduate research and scholarship.

Currently, the Honors curriculum consists of a core curriculum using the HNRS prefix and individual student contracts with faculty in independent study/research/internships or regularly offered classes. In addition there are various mechanisms for identifying honors sections in disciplinary classes and for implementing departmental honors. Under the Honors College, the core curriculum will continue in its current form. In addition the Dean of the Honors College will work with the Honors Council and the Undergraduate Academic Board to develop consistent policies for honors work in disciplinary courses and for departmental honors.

As implied by the functions described above, the University Honors College has five distinct areas of responsibility, in addition to offering the University Honors curriculum:

- Recruitment and student support (including Honors student life and leadership activities).
- Major scholarships and other student merit-based financial support.
- Undergraduate research and scholarship, including a comprehensive awards program, the Undergraduate Research Symposium, and Freshman Convocation.
- Fostering disciplinary honors development.
- Providing leadership for undergraduate research and honors education at UAA