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HONORS PROGRAM

University of Alaska Fairbanks

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Memorandum

Date: October 6, 2016

To: UAF Faculty Senate Curriculum Council

From: Marsha Sousa, Honors Program Director *M Sousa*
Alex Fitts, Dean of General Studies and Vice Provost *A Fitts*

Re: Changes to the UAF Honors Program

We would like to make substantial changes to the UAF Honors Program, changes that we believe will make the program have greater value and will be clearer to Honors students.

The Honors Program has remained essentially unchanged since it was first created in 1983. The program requires that students complete 27 credits of honors courses and a capstone project or thesis. Initially, that capstone thesis or project was a real distinction for the program as there were only a few opportunities for undergraduate students to conduct research, and no program required a thesis. With the changes that have occurred in pedagogy, over the last 10 years especially, we find that a majority of our Honors students are involved in undergraduate research through other pathways and that almost all degree programs require a capstone experiences or research-based thesis.

Our proposed changes still allow a student to complete 27 honors credits and a capstone thesis; however, we want to clearly define a sequence of courses for them that builds critical thinking skills and interdisciplinary knowledge, and then provide two alternatives for their capstone experience: a group project that grows out of their interdisciplinary seminar, or a significant individual research project of their design.

Two years ago we revised our mission statement and created student learning outcomes that we want to be accountable for.

Our mission statement is

The UAF Honors Program provides opportunities for students to pursue excellence in academic and personal development. We foster critical

and independent thinking and help students become informed, responsible, and active citizens.

Our student learning outcomes are:

1. **Critical Thinking**

Honors graduates will be able to

- Identify and question assumptions
- Identify common errors of logic and argumentation
- Develop alternative arguments
- Formulate substantive questions
- Articulate multiple perspectives
- Extrapolate consequences

2. **Breadth**

Honors graduates will be able to

- Make connections across broad areas of cultural and intellectual import
- Demonstrate the ability to approach a problem from multiple epistemologies
- Recognize themes and contexts
- Situate ideas and works into a theme or larger context

3. **Independent Scholarship**

Honors graduates will be able to

- Define a well-formulated question or objective
- Formulate discipline-relevant goals
- Carry out implementation
- Assess, reflect on, and revise the work
- Situate a project in a discipline and identify and engage a faculty mentor

We believe that the curriculum we propose, and the requirements that we have added to the program for participation and personal growth, will help us provide and document those student learning outcomes and create a more valuable experience for our Honors students.

A summary of the course changes, and a revised catalog description of the program follows.

1. Eliminate 3 courses:

HONR F381, Honors Capstone Development (Format 2)

HONR F382, Honors Capstone Support (Format 2)

HONR F383, Honors Capstone Seminar (Format 2)

In their place we are creating a new course: HONR F390, Honors Research Development and Support

2. Create 5 new courses:

HONR F101, Introduction to Honors, 1 credit (Format 1 + syllabus)

HONR F201, Methods of Inquiry, 3 credits (Format 1 + syllabus)

HONR F301, Honors Interdisciplinary Seminar, 3 credits (Format 1 + syllabus)

HONR F302, Honors Interdisciplinary Group Project, 3 credits (Format 1 + syllabus)

HONR F390, Honors Research Development and Support, 2 credits (Format 1 + syllabus)

New Catalog Description

Honors Program

The UAF Honors Program provides opportunities for students to pursue excellence in academic and personal development. We foster critical and independent thinking and help students become informed, responsible, and active citizens. Honors students have access to small classes, research opportunities, intensive advising, and scholarships. Students are encouraged to participate in service, leadership, research, study abroad, internships, and other opportunities that contribute to their personal growth.

Eligibility

To be eligible to join the Honors Program, entering freshmen must have a cumulative high school GPA of 3.6 and a combined SAT score (critical reading, writing, and math) of 1820 or a composite ACT score of 27. Current UAF students and transfer students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.5 that includes at least 24 credits of college courses. The Honors Program accepts applications all year. The application form is at <http://www.uaf.edu/honors/>.

Program Requirements

Honors students complete a flexible schedule of courses that includes honors sections of the baccalaureate and general education requirement courses, courses developed specifically for the honors program, and standard courses contracted for honors credit by students with individual professors. With approval by the director, students who study abroad may earn up to 12 honors credits for academic courses they take at their host universities. Undergraduate students who complete graduate courses may count those courses toward their honors course requirement. In all cases, courses will only count toward the honors distinction if the student earns a grade of B (3.0) or higher. Honors students must be enrolled full-time and are expected to complete a minimum of 6 honors credits each academic year.

The Honors Program offers students intensive advising with an opportunity to develop a personal plan for their UAF years that builds in extracurricular opportunities, research, leadership, service and more to meet the goals of each student.

The Honors House, located in the heart of campus, provides honors students a casual and comfortable home away from home. The house includes computer labs, a smart classroom, quiet study areas and a place for social gatherings.

To graduate with a distinction from the Honors Program, students must fulfill GPA and coursework requirements, honors program participation requirements, and capstone project or thesis requirements.

GPA Requirement

To graduate with a distinction from the Honors Program, in addition to the other program requirements, students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.25. Students whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.25 for two consecutive semesters will be removed from the program unless an appeal is approved by the honors director.

Specific Course Requirements

The following course **must** be taken by all Honors students.

HONR F101, Introduction to Honors (1 cr)

HONR F201, Methods of Inquiry (3 cr)

HONR F290, Honors Summer Reading Program (2 cr)

HONR F301, Honors Interdisciplinary Seminar (3 cr)

HONR F302, Honors Interdisciplinary Group Project (3 cr) **OR**

HONR F390, Honors Research Development (2 cr) followed by HONR F498 (1-3 cr), Honors Research and HONR F499 (1 – 3cr), Honors Thesis.

Students are strongly encouraged to complete ENGL 211X or ENGL F213X, and COMM F141X in honors sections.

Capstone Project or Thesis Requirement

To graduate with distinction from the Honors Program, in addition to the other program requirements, students must work with a faculty mentor to complete a capstone group project or an independent research project that includes a written thesis and an oral presentation. The Capstone group project will derive from the topic of the interdisciplinary seminar that students take the prior semester; it includes enrollment in both HONR F301 and HONR F302. The independent research project includes enrollment in HONR F390, F498, and F499.

Honors Personal Development Plan

Each honors student is expected to write a personal development plan that encompasses their academic degree plan as well as a plan to develop their personal skills in areas of their choice such as leadership, service, research, or international studies. Their plans are first developed in their Introduction to Honors class, and are revised in the fall of each year. By the time they

graduate, students will have a portfolio that clearly supports their academic and extracurricular achievements.

Honors Program Participation

Honors students must participate in at least one Honors social or service activity each semester, and must complete at least 6 honors credits each academic year.

Honors Credit Requirement

University Honors Scholar distinction is awarded at commencement to students who complete 27 or more credits of honors course work in addition to the other program requirements. Honors Program Scholar distinction is awarded to students who complete 12 credits of honors course work in addition to other program requirements. Honors Program Scholar designation is reserved for transfer students and UAF students who join the program in their junior year.

Additional Information

For more information contact the Honors Program at the Honors House, 520 Copper Lane, 907-474-6612, uaf.honors@alaska.edu or <http://www.uaf.edu/honors/>.