

## **HONORS PROGRAM**

### **Program Review 2009**

#### SECTION I -- Description and Mission of the Program

- IA. The Honors Program's mission is twofold: (1) to provide academically and transfer-oriented De Anza students with the opportunity to take some of their classes for honors credit; and (2) to foster and support intellectual curiosity and exploration on our campus. All De Anza students are welcome to enroll in an honors course, where they have the opportunity to undertake more challenging assignments, interact more closely with faculty, and engage with other honors students. Students taking honors courses are required to spend at least ten additional hours per course on the honors coursework, which may include reading, writing, and presentation assignments. If students wish to take more than one honors course, they are encouraged to apply to the Honors Program. After Program members complete six or more honors courses, they earn an "Honors Scholar" designation on their transcripts, which is a source of pride and achievement for the students and which many four-year institutions recognize. Honors Program members are also invited to participate in social events outside the classroom, such as campus tours, panel discussions with De Anza alumni, and brown-bag lunches with the Program coordinator. The Program has been striving to create a sense of community on campus among students who enjoy academic challenge and high-achievement goals.
- IB. The Honors Program's main strength is the faculty who serve the program without pay or financial reward for their efforts. These faculty members devote themselves to spending additional time in their offices and their classrooms working with honors students, as well as time creating, supporting, and grading the supplemental honors assignments. The number of faculty involved with the Honors Program has increased from approximately fifteen in 2006 to more than fifty in 2009, and each quarter more faculty inquire about teaching for the Program. Honors Program members are encouraged to help recruit faculty by talking with their instructors about how much the students benefit from the opportunity to take honors cohort courses.
- Another key strength of the Program is its steady and impressive growth in student involvement and enrollment in honors cohort courses in the past three years. Program membership has grown from approximately 80 students in 2005-06 to nearly 250 in 2007-08. In the 2005-06 academic year, 265 students enrolled in honors courses; in the 2007-08 academic year, nearly 700 students enrolled; these numbers do not represent a unique headcount, but rather a count of course enrollment. The Program's presence and reputation improves every year, despite funding challenges.
- IC. Ironically, the Program's main strength also points to its greatest weakness, which is that many faculty members cannot--or sometimes choose not to--regularly contribute to the Program because of the lack of additional pay or support for their work. The Program is exploring ways to reward the faculty for their work, including providing Professional Growth or Service credit in a system based on students served.

Another great challenge facing the Program is the lack of resources necessary to allow time for faculty members and the Program coordinator to meet and collaborate on standardizing honors cohort requirements. Many students find that the honors requirements vary too greatly from course to course.

- ID. The Honors Program has three outcome goals: (1) to see its members develop a greater sense of belonging to a community of academically oriented students and supportive faculty while on campus; (2) to provide ample opportunity for all Program members to complete six honors courses and receive an honors designation on their transcripts; and (3) to see all of its members successfully transfer to four-year institutions.

## SECTION II—Retention and Growth

- IIA. The Honors Program has grown significantly in the past three years and has maintained strong retention rates. In 2005-06, the Program enrolled a total of students in its courses (not a unique headcount); in 2006-07, 464 students; and in 2007-08, 684 students. Its retention rate for that entire period was 94-97%. The Program continues to grow at this impressive rate, admitting more than 150 new students in the 2008-09 year. This growth is largely the result of improved sense of access and success in recruitment efforts by Program coordinators, faculty, and active members.

- IIB. The Honors Program is comprised of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds and ages, but slightly more than half (393 out of 684) of its members identify themselves as Asian, and many of them are international students. The Program membership for 2007-08 includes 12 African American students (2% of the total Program membership), 54 Hispanic students (8% of the total), and 23 Filipino students (3% of the total). The Program acknowledges that these numbers are too low, and the Program is making every effort to broaden its membership to include more African American, Latino, and Filipino students in particular. To that end, we now coordinate with other programs that serve underrepresented students, such as Puente and First Year Experience, to recruit students. These efforts combined with word of mouth and a commitment by faculty to encourage and invite more underrepresented students will, we hope, increase participation in the Program.

- IIC. A central goal of the Honors Program is to foster and support intellectual curiosity and exploration among all students on our campus. To that end, Program coordinators have worked closely with students enrolled in basic-skills courses to develop a vision and plan for future participation in the Honors Program. The coordinators strive to provide the resources necessary to include students who are working at the basic-skills level. The Program's brochure and Web site both also state that even if students do not meet the Program's criteria (maintenance of a 3.3 GPA in 15 or more units of transfer-level courses and eligibility for EWRT1A), they are encouraged to consult with the Program coordinator about their academic goals and qualifications. The Program coordinators hold regularly advise and follow-up with students, to ensure that all students who become

eligible will apply and enroll in the Program. Many current 2008-09 Program members were once enrolled in basic-skills courses and now flourish in honors courses.

### SECTION III—Student Equity

- IIIA. In considering progress toward decreasing the student equity gap, the Program turns to its rates of success for students completing honors courses offered through the Program. For the years 2005 to 2008, the Honors Program overall success rate was 91-92%. For the "non-targeted" population, that rate is 92-96%. For the "targeted" populations (Hispanic, African American, and Filipino), the Honors Program has made noteworthy progress in improving success rates. In 2005-06 the total success rate for the targeted population was 76%; in 2006-07, the rate was 82%; and in 2007-08, the rate increased again to 87%. During that same time period, not only did success rates increase, but so did the population of targeted-group students: the Program had 42 students from targeted groups in 2005-06; 65 in 2006-07; and 89 in 2007-08. Thus, we are seeing not only an increase in actual numbers of targeted student group participation, but a parallel increasing success rate.
- IIIB. As discussed earlier, the Program is going to increase its coordinated efforts to work with existing programs on campus, including LEAD, Puente, the Sankofa Scholars Program, the Black Student Union, First Year Experience, and others, to engage and invite participation of targeted student groups.
- IIIC. The single greatest challenge facing the Program's recruit efforts is current reputation of the Program. That is, the Program has been viewed as "elitist" in the past. While efforts to change this image have been quite successful as can be seen by the increase in participation of targeted populations, we have still not met our goal of shedding the elitist myth entirely. Many students from targeted groups have suggested that they simply did not know about the Program and did not believe they could meet the requirements of admission to the Program (a 3.3 GPA in 15 or more transfer-level classes and eligibility for EWRT1A). In the absence of funding which will allow the coordinator to work more closely with De Anza faculty and staff who engage with targeted populations, efforts to transform the Program's reputation and to make the Program more accessible will be thwarted. Also, mention that there is no B budget to advertise more widely and provide better outreach.

### SECTION IV—Budget Limitations

- IVA. The Honors Program budget was entirely cut by the college in 2004-05. DASB stepped in to fund the program for the 2005-06 and 2006-07 academic years, providing approximately \$20,000 in monies to pay the coordinator's stipend and student office assistants. In 2007, the DASB cut its funding from \$20,000 to \$10,500 per year, and the Office of Student Services agreed to provide \$5,500 in additional stipend funds. These monies came from a "B" Budget account and will likely be terminated for the 2009-10 year. Thus, going into 2009-10, the Honors Program may only receive \$10,000 in total

funds, entirely from the DASB. This represents significant dwindling funding for the Program.

That the Honors Program is almost entirely funded by the DASB creates an inappropriate oversight by a small number of students, who may be part of the Honors Program, which creates a conflict of interest. This source of funding also presents an annual instability. From one year to the next, the Program coordinator cannot be sure if any, or how much, funding will be secured.

For the Program to continue, it must receive a guaranteed source of funding with proper college oversight. That funding should be adequate for the duties of a faculty member working approximately 10-15 hours per week, throughout the year (the equivalent of teaching one course).

- IVB. If current Student Services funding of \$5,500 in stipend monies is cut, then the Program will be wholly dependent on DASB funds, which are secure for 2009-10. However, the DASB's allotted \$10,000 for the upcoming year is insufficient to cover the coordinator's current stipend of \$16,000. Overall such a cut would represent a total of a 50% cut in stipend funding from the 2006-07 academic year, when the Program had approximately \$20,000 in funding. Meanwhile, coordination duties have increased as the Program has nearly tripled in number of students served during that same time. The coordinator will be forced to limit time spent on the Program, curtailing efforts to the most perfunctory. In the event that in 2010-11 the DASB cuts its funding, the Program will lose the ability to pay a coordinator and thus will simply cease to function.

What this means for De Anza is simple: we would be a top-ranked community college that lacks an Honors Program. By contrast, many other California community colleges maintain honors programs. Our sister college, Foothill, for example, has a thriving program, and so do City College of San Francisco, Skyline College, College of San Mateo, and West Valley College. Numerous four-year institutions, such as Stanford and San Jose State University, also have honors or scholars programs on campus.

Scholars Bulakowski and Townsend in a 1996 study, reported: "California's Master Plan for higher education stipulates that the community colleges are to assist qualified students in transferring to senior institutions. Honors programs, with their emphasis on academic preparation, can contribute significantly to that portion of the state's community colleges' missions." Following this point, without an Honors Program, De Anza would not provide our students with the opportunity to challenge themselves, engage with faculty at an advanced level, and achieve beyond the main. Losing the Honors Program would also represent a loss of the combined efforts of many faculty and coordinators in the past ten years to build and sustain a program that students benefit from and appreciate.

#### SECTION V—Additional Comments

We would like to provide a few notes on how the Honors Program has blossomed in the past few years:

Course Offerings: The Honors Program has increased its number of course offerings per quarter from approximately a mere ten courses in 2004 to more than 100 in a wide range of disciplines. In the 2007-09 period, alone, we added new courses in Mandarin, Spanish, Nutrition, Human Sexuality, and the Arts. Although we have several classes in the sciences, math, and other foreign languages, we still want to increase our offerings in these areas.

Alumni Involvement: In 2007 a former De Anza Honors Program member, John Tsai, contacted the Program to donate \$5,000. As a now-successful businessman, John wanted to return to De Anza, where he "got his start," and to provide honors students with funds to develop their program in ways the students themselves requested. Those funds, along with John's leadership and initiative, have allowed the Program to provide social events each quarter. Furthermore, John has formed a link between the Honors Program and other local Program alumni. For the past two winter quarters, for example, the Honors Program has hosted an alumni panel, at which alumni present their experiences with transferring and working in their professions. These events have been highlights for our students. The alumni has engaged with the Program because they see that the Program is thriving, growing, and providing great services to the current students.

Collaboration: The Honors Program is also working much more closely with the Honors Club on campus. Just this winter 2009 quarter, the Honors Club donated its reserve funds to the Honors Program lounge, buying a bookshelf, white board, and textbooks to create a loan program. Students have also donated their own artwork and time to decorate the lounge. These efforts represent the increasing sense of community in the Program.

Statewide Activities: The Honors Program is a member of the Honors Transfer Council of California.