Strategic Plan for the University Honors College
2008-2013

I. MISSION STATEMENT

The University Honors College (UHC) provides an excellent and compelling educational experience that utilizes the strengths of a public research university to serve the needs of motivated, high-achieving, and highly credentialed students. The UHC serves as a beacon to attract top-tier students to OSU and provides a reason for them to stay in Oregon. The UHC benefits all members of the University community as its students model the highest levels of academic achievement, thereby bringing luster to the entire University. The UHC impacts society as our graduates depart leadership-ready, prepared not just for a job, but also for a career.

Through partnerships with other academic units and campus groups, the UHC provides students with opportunities for academic growth, leadership development, and community engagement. As “dual citizens”, UHC students are also students in an academic major, which can be any major offered by OSU. Honors students experience the best of the small college and the large research university. Their educational experience features small classes taught by OSU’s most talented and dedicated faculty. A thesis experience provides one-on-one interactions with leading faculty and culminates in a student’s contribution to the well of knowledge. Additional enrichment activities let students grow as inquisitive, mindful, and engaged citizens. Faculty members who participate in the UHC adopt and develop the best educational practices and include students in research and creative collaborations. Honors students earn the Honors Baccalaureate, OSU’s most prestigious undergraduate degree.

II. VISION STATEMENT

Since its inception in 1995, the UHC has grown into a robust and vibrant college. UHC students are recognized across campus for their commitment and abilities. They are frequent recipients of honors and awards (e.g. National Merit, Fulbright) and are often held up by the University as examples of achievement. Honors students graduate from OSU at a rate that far exceeds institutional norms and which contributes tangibly to institutional aspirations. Dedicated faculty and staff support the mission of the UHC and enjoy opportunities to teach honors courses and work one-on-one with talented and dedicated students. The distributed model of honors education at OSU, in which professors and students from all disciplines can participate, engages the full spectrum of individuals for whom excellence in education is more than just an abstract concept. The UHC attracts and retains top-tier students, providing a “high touch” environment that addresses student needs, provides enrichment opportunities, and fulfills the promise of an excellent and compelling education. From this solid foundation, the UHC is poised to boost its reach and impact by focusing in the next five years on the following three areas.
**Enrollment Growth:** Currently only 3% of the undergraduates at OSU are UHC students, and these students are not distributed evenly across the academic colleges. This low percentage limits the potentially transformative effect of the Honors community on the campus academic community. In addition, the pool of qualified UHC applicants far exceeds current enrollment capacity. As a result, many qualified applicants are not admitted to the UHC and are therefore less likely to choose OSU. To address these issues, the UHC proposes to double the size of the incoming class over the next five years from 150 (07/08) to 300 (11/12), leading to a doubling of college enrollment over an eight-year period from 500 (07/08) to 1000 (14/15). Enrollment growth will provide the opportunity for more qualified students to experience an Honors education and thereby to amplify the impacts of the UHC on OSU, Oregon, and society. Through enrollment growth, the UHC can target growth in colleges with low UHC enrollments without lowering enrollment in other colleges. Enrollment growth also provides an opportunity to increase diversity, especially with regard to underrepresented minorities, including students across the spectrum of socioeconomic status and geographic diversity.

**Undergraduate Research and Scholarship:** Completion of a thesis a fundamental hallmark of the Honors experience. Energizing the thesis experience will be a focus of the next five years. The thesis experience will follow a clear progression from introduction of the concept to freshmen to completion of the thesis by seniors. A cadre of “Thesis Advisor Matchmakers”, professors representing all disciplines, will facilitate pairing Honors students with appropriate research/scholarship advisors. Greater satisfaction of students with the process and a greater number of students completing a thesis and earning the Honors Baccalaureate are expected outcomes. One advantage of attending a research-intensive university is the opportunity for all students to participate in the research and scholarly enterprise of the faculty. As the only undergraduate college with campus-wide reach, the UHC has a unique opportunity to provide leadership in facilitating scholarship and research opportunities for all undergraduates on campus. The UHC will partner with the Research Office to contribute to the institutional goal of an enhanced undergraduate role in the institutional research enterprise. The UHC will also continue to partner with graduate programs to develop “plus one” programs in which UHC graduates enroll in Masters programs at OSU and use their thesis as the foundation for their graduate work, thereby allowing the students to complete their masters thesis in one year.

**Engagement:** The success of the UHC is built on engagement of students, faculty, staff, administrators, and stakeholders. Interactions between the individual members of these groups shape the rich tapestry of engagement that is the UHC. For example, instructors connect with their students in small classes, research advisors engage students in their programs, donors interact with scholarship recipients, and students build community through service projects. The UHC will continue to build opportunities for engagement by members of all of these groups, which will lead to greater opportunities for students and faculty and greater relevance of the UHC. For students, the UHC will provide enrichment activities that build community and allow students to develop leadership skills, acquire global perspectives, and engage in their communities. The UHC will work with faculty and administrators to increase the level of faculty, department, and college participation in course instruction and in engagement of students in their scholarly activities. The UHC will further engage stakeholders and alumni as partners in meeting the goals of the UHC.
By focusing attention on these three areas of enrollment growth, undergraduate research, and broad-based engagement, the impact, relevance, and visibility of the UHC will increase. A greater number of students will have access to the benefits of an Honors education and a higher percentage will earn the Honors Baccalaureate degree. More Honors students will generate more opportunities for direct impacts on the teaching and scholarship missions of the University. More of these students will graduate with the Honors Baccalaureate and take their place in society as engaged citizens with diverse perspectives. Students who are not in the Honors College will benefit from having Honors students as classmates and from UHC leadership in expanding the role of all undergraduates in the research enterprise of OSU. Faculty will have access to excellent students in classes and as partners in their scholarly pursuits.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The last strategic plan for the UHC covered the period from 2003-2008. New leadership and emerging opportunities are significant drivers for this strategic plan, which covers the next five years. There are many approaches to strategic planning (e.g. goal-based, alignment model, scenario planning, etc.). This plan uses a goal-based model that relies heavily on an opportunistic approach to planning and development. A set of general goals is identified that builds on existing strengths and current opportunities, but it is accepted that additional opportunities will emerge and may displace other goals. The current plan focuses on guiding principles followed by broad goals. A flexible approach to developing and executing the plan permits adaptation as circumstances evolve. It is also important that the plan be aligned with the University and College plans, and that it be aligned with current resources and reasonable expectations for increases in those resources. To provide an assessment of the current state of the UHC, landscape and SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analyses are included.

IV. LANDSCAPE AND SWOT ANALYSES

A strategic plan should be informed by an assessment of the current situation. The following “landscape analysis” provides a succinct summary of key indicators. The “SWOT” analysis provides a listing of key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Landscape analysis:

Number of students in the UHC (Fall 2008): 533
Number of 2008 UHC graduates: 73
Number of new students to the UHC (Fall 2008): 180
Average high school GPA of admitted students: 3.98
Average SAT score of admitted students: 2013

Number of courses offered (2007/2008): 101 Total (23 Electives, 43 Bacc Core courses, 35 Colloquia)

Staff: Dean, Associate Dean, Writing Instructor, Office Manager, Advisors (2), Admissions Specialist, Office Specialist, Graduate Teaching Assistant, Student Workers

Facilities: Honors-Themed Residence (McNary), Honors Classrooms (McNary, Strand), Honors Student Computer Lab (SLUG I), Honors Student Lounges (SLUG II, Banana SLUG), Student/Staff/Faculty conference rooms (Strand), Staff Offices and Reception Area

SWOT analysis:

Strengths:

Excellent students: Intellectual curiosity, energy, competence, passionate, driven
UHC model works: small classes, dual citizens, student-teacher-advisor connections, engaged
Good facilities: SLUGs, classrooms, McNary and GEM
Supportive staff and engaged faculty
Good statistics: incoming GPAs, test scores, University graduation rates
Engaged Board of Regents

Weaknesses:

Resources: small endowment, require resource fees, limited scholarships, indistinct donor pool
Limited visibility, profile
Loss of student engagement: low UHC graduation rates, thesis problems, and few upper div. courses
Limited number of faculty lines in the UHC

Opportunities:

Growth of the program: more effective recruiting, greater impact, and greater access
Improve thesis experience
Diversify resource base: Statewide Policy Option Package, grants, and endowments
Enhance student experience: international, new programs, courses, and activities
Engage alumni and stakeholders
Partner more closely and effectively with Admissions, Financial Aid and Scholarships, and the other Colleges at OSU

Threats:

Rising costs and decreasing resources
Institutional perception: Ag and engineering focus, state school, limited humanities
Limited university engagement: No faculty to teach UHC courses in some departments
Lack of resources to support growth
Lose relevance if not perceived as valuable to University
V. CORE VALUES

The core values in the 2003 OSU strategic plan are Accountability, Diversity, Integrity, Respect, and Social Responsibility. We include an additional core value that permeates through all other values and has guided the development of the UHC since its inception:

Excellence

We seek excellence in all endeavors, and this is reflected in our mission, vision, and goals. We recognize that there will always be more goals and opportunities than we can attend to, but for those activities we do take on, we will strive for excellence.

VI. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS

The following Guiding Principles and Goals are organized under six headings that reflect the primary functions of the UHC.

1. Recruitment and Admissions

1. Guiding principles: Recruit motivated, high achieving, and highly credentialed students (the “best and brightest”) to the UHC from Oregon, the Pacific Northwest, other states, and other countries. Accept highly credentialed students who compare favorably to those recruited to top universities. Strive to build a diverse UHC student enrollment by all measures of diversity but with a particular focus on underrepresented minorities, inclusion of students across the spectrum of socioeconomic status, geographic diversity, and diversity of academic interests.

Goal 1.1. Partner with Admissions to expand and further diversify the applicant pool

Goal 1.2. Partner with University Marketing and Advancement to develop additional recruiting tools for recruiting and to build program awareness

Goal 1.3. Secure additional UHC scholarships to support recruitment and retention goals

Expected Outcomes: Develop applicant pool of highly credentialed students to support 20% yearly growth of the incoming class over the next five years. Increase yield of top students. Develop a more diverse student body. Increase the visibility of the UHC.

2. Curriculum/Course Offerings

2. Guiding principles: Honors courses will involve engaged and compelling educational experiences in small classes taught by knowledgeable, motivated, and enthusiastic professors. Diverse course offerings will meet degree requirements and provide enrichment opportunities beyond requirements of the major. Honors students will be able to take a substantial portion of courses in honors format.
Goal 2.1. Expand course offerings to keep pace with growth and increase instructional opportunities.

Goal 2.2. Engage more professors and senior instructors, especially among professors recognized for excellence in teaching; increase reimbursements

Goal 2.3. Develop support for Eminent Professors

Expected outcomes: Additional course offerings to keep pace with growth, expanded disciplinary coverage, and greater opportunities for students. Increase recognition of and compensation for teaching Honors courses.

3. Research/Scholarship and the Thesis Experience

3. Guiding principles: The thesis is the capstone experience for UHC students. Students complete an independent project under the advice of a professor or senior instructor. Students generate new knowledge and develop a skill set that is useful well beyond the completion of the thesis. Research advisors can draw on the contributions of Honors students in their own scholarly pursuits.

Goal 3.1. Energize the thesis experience, e.g. earlier and more frequent touch points, role models, identify student/advisor matchmakers, plus one masters programs

Goal 3.2. Engage students throughout their undergraduate career in research and scholarly pursuits of faculty members

Goal 3.3. Partner with graduate programs to develop more “plus one” masters programs

Goal 3.4. Develop additional sources of funding to support undergraduate research, including research costs, student support, and stipends for advisors

Expected outcomes: Higher thesis completion rate; greater satisfaction among students with the thesis experience; higher quality of theses produced by students; enhanced undergraduate role in the institutional research enterprise; enhanced relevance of UHC

4. Student Engagement Beyond the Formal Requirements

4. Guiding principles: Honors students come into the UHC with high levels of engagement and seek opportunities to grow in new directions; Educational and community-building experiences outside of the classroom allow honors students to grow as leaders and develop as engaged citizens; Additional experiences can provide opportunities for networking and expose students to diverse viewpoints.

Goal 4.1. Develop activities with a primary goal of building community among students
Goal 4.2. Promote mindful, external perspectives through service, outreach, and international experiences

Goal 4.4. Promote and celebrate leadership experiences in the UHC, OSU, and the community

Expected Outcomes: Students will develop leadership skills, develop diverse and informed viewpoints; demonstrate growth as informed and engaged citizens.

5. Building the Honors Community

5. Guiding principle: The UHC model at OSU is built on the premise of support from and participation by many and by diverse members of the university community. As members of the Honors Community, colleges, departments, administrative offices, and students are participants in and beneficiaries of the Honors experience. As a college with campus-wide responsibility, the UHC is also in a unique position to provide leadership in teaching pedagogy and research experiences for undergraduates. Honors classes are rewarding for instructors and can serve as a test bed for innovative pedagogy. Our stakeholders and alumni are a source of guidance for program development, inspiration to current students and faculty, and of current and future philanthropy.

Goal 5.1. Partner with individual faculty members, departments, and colleges to expand and strengthen the Honors Community, including enhanced support for and recognition of instructors of Honors classes and thesis advisors, expansion of the Honors Community into currently underrepresented colleges, and development of activities that build on the campus-wide reach of the UHC and benefit all members of the community

Goal 5.3. Partner with Research Office and others to enhance role of undergraduates in the research enterprise on campus, including developing a cadre of research advisor matchmakers

Goal 5.1. Explore mechanisms to engage, not just inform, alumni and stakeholders in the Honors Community, e.g. role models, social and career networks, philanthropy

Expected Outcomes: Increased numbers of OSU community members who know about, value, and have benefited from the UHC. Enhanced visibility and relevance of the UHC. Greater opportunities for students and faculty. Engaged alumni and stakeholders who support the UHC with guidance, inspire current students, and provide philanthropic support.


6. Guiding principles: An Honors education pays dividends to OSU as current students excel in the classroom, engage in scholarly pursuits with faculty, and model leadership and engagement for all members of the University community. An Honors education pays dividends to society as our graduates take their places as engaged citizens in our communities. Realization of these dividends requires an investment. Therefore, the UHC must continue to expand its resource base, both in terms of sources of support, as well as the size of the support.
Goal 6.1. Develop the diversity and size of the resource base of the UHC, e.g. Education and General Fund of OSU, Policy Option Package to the legislature, government and private grants, philanthropy

Goal 6.2. Develop additional classroom facilities, learning spaces, and living spaces to support growth

Expected Outcomes: An enhanced and more diverse resource base and expanded facilities to support the mission and goals of the UHC.