SCH Multiplier Request from the UHCC

By consensus of the University Honors College Council, the following request was referred to the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate following the April 10, 2003 meeting of the Council.

REQUEST: The University Honors College Council requests that all internal university inventories of Student Credit Hour production include a multiplier (×3) that applies to all SCH generated under departmental designators and taught within the University Honors College.

RATIONALE: An SCH multiplier would help facilitate and encourage participation in Honors instruction. Departments currently perceive that the NCHC-mandated caps on class size stand as an impediment to future budget allocations within the OSU budgetary allocation model. The purpose of this proposal is to replace a perceived disincentive to Honors participation with a budgetary incentive that will leverage Honors instruction to the benefit of departments, faculty, and students from across campus.

The value of the proposed multiplier (×3) is intended to ensure that SCH generated in a UHC course with departmental designator is roughly equivalent to that which would be generated in a regular section of the same course.

PRECEDENT: The Budget Allocation Model includes a multiplier for graduate SCH. This multiplier recognizes the added value of graduate instruction to the mission of OSU.

BACKGROUND: The University Honors College is a destination college that has a disproportionately large impact on recruiting and retention of top undergraduate students at OSU. Recognition of these impacts is widespread and has included:

- commendation of the UHC as an "unmitigated success" by the 2001 NASC Commission on Colleges Accreditation Report for OSU; and
- an OSU 2007 recommendation by the Provost to increase Honors enrollment by 5% per year.

The demand and opportunity for growth of the Honors enrollment are enormous. With minimum application criteria set at the level of a Provost Scholar (1200 SAT or 3.75 GPA or 27 ACT), there were 557 applicants for 125 available spots in the Freshman class entering Fall 2003. Prior to publication of minimum criteria, applications ran more than ten times the number of available spots. Even as a leading factor in the recruitment of
top undergraduate students to OSU, Honors has the capacity to accommodate less than half of the graduating valedictorians from Oregon high schools each year—even if each high school has a unique valedictorian!

THE PROBLEM: Even at the current enrollment level, it is increasingly difficult for the Honors Dean to build a viable UHC curriculum each year. Honors classes are small, a feature that is repeatedly cited by Honors students as a principal benefit of Honors status. In compliance with standards of the National Council of Honors Colleges, enrollment in Honors courses is limited to 20 students in lower division courses and to 12 students in upper division courses. With budget allocations tied to productivity, especially SCH, department and college administrators express concern at the cost of deploying faculty in any cross-unit model where SCH production does not match that generated in their regular courses. Current SCH accounting carries a disincentive to assign faculty to Honors instruction when enrollment in regular courses might be three or more times that seen in Honors courses. The limited availability of Honors coursework is the most serious impediment to growth in the Honors College and has a dampening effect on the academic experience of Honors students who take roughly 1/6 of their required OSU coursework in the Honors College in order to receive the Honors Baccalaureate degree.

PASS-THROUGH DOLLARS: The UHC is centrally funded and the bulk of its budget passes through to departments and faculty in the form of coursework reimbursements. Efforts to maintain a viable Honors curriculum have led to increased percentages of pass-through funds. Budgetary adjustments have included: a) the elimination of discretionary expenditures (including an Assistant Advisor and Visiting Faculty positions) in favor of additional coursework, and b) adjustment of reimbursement rates to help departments recover instructional potential when faculty are seconded to Honors. Nevertheless, reluctance and/or inability of departments to support the Honors College curriculum has been a difficult issue since its inception and the effects of the problem are amplified by ongoing fiscal constraints.

IMPACT-SCH CREDIT TO FACULTY AND DEPARTMENTS: Anticipating the incipient practice of crediting SCH to faculty, the administrative design of the Honors College has always entailed that SCH credit for Honors instruction flows to the faculty member’s home department. An SCH multiplier (by a factor of three: ×3) for Honors instruction will ensure that SCH production of participating faculty and departments is not compromised. This proposal does not involve any new money. Rather, it is a realignment of administrative practice which recognizes that providers of Honors instruction should not be penalized for doing so.