UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM  
Honors Committee Meeting  
318th Meeting  
2 November 2012  
1:30-3:30 PM, CL 110

APPROVED

Voting members present: Nailya Almagabetova (HHS), William Baker (UCC/LAS), Dave Ballantine (LAS), Michael Duffy (LIB), Nick Pohlman (EET), Tim Ryan (LAS), Scot Schraufnagel (LAS), Bart Sharp (BUSE) and Honors student Ben Donovan.

Voting members absent: Greg Conderman (EDUC) and Honors students Juliana Leprich, Ben Clark, Collin Thompson, and John Price.

Ex-officio present: Chris Jones, Anne Birberick

Ex-officio absent: None

Other: Honors staff Dave Changnon, Jes Cisneros, Joanne Ganshirt (Recording Clerk), Jason Goode, and Vanessa Segundo.

I. Approval of Agenda
The discussion of assessment was moved to the first item in New Business and the EYE Grant proposals were tabled. Baker/Ballantine moved to approve the modified agenda. The motion passed.

II. Approval of Minutes from October 2012
Ballantine/Baker moved to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed.

III. Introduction of New Staff Member
Jones introduced Jason Goode the new Assistant to the Associate Vice Provost for University Honors. He was warmly welcomed by the committee. Goode informed committee members he received both a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Communication—Media Studies from NIU. He has been working on campus for the past two years in the Student Academic Success office.

IV. Meeting on December 7
Jones proposed the committee cancel its meeting in December. The only business that needs to be done is approval of Enhanced Your Education (EYE) Grant proposals. Sharp said those proposals could be approved via e-mail. The committee was reminded the deadline for the University Honors Great Professor nominations is December 14. The recipient will be selected at the first meeting of the spring 2013 semester. The committee agreed to cancel the December meeting.
V. **Associate Vice Provost for University Honors Report**

Jones made the following report:

- He survived the faculty-student soccer match held on November 1. The faculty lost 11-7.

- The University Honors Program staff is very pleased to have concluded the search for a new Assistant to the Associate Vice Provost for University Honors with the hiring of Jason Goode. Jones thanked Cisneros, Segundo, and Director of the Office of Scholarships, Anne Hardy, for serving on the search committee. He also thanked Ganshirt for her administrative support and Birberick for supporting the search and important hire for the program.

Goode’s hiring and the work he will do will provide a new resource for University Honors students at NIU. A national scholarships, fellowships, and academic recognitions point person will bring our program and university in line with national best practices. Most colleges and universities have a colleague who performs this role. He will also administer the new University Honors Summer Scholars Program. In addition, he will serve as a liaison to the NIU Scholarships Office, Financial Aid Office, Admissions Office, and all NIU academic honor societies. Lastly, he will assist with academic advising and complete special projects and duties as needed.

Jones has already charged Goode with creating a portal on the University Honors website that will house extensive information about national scholarships, fellowships, and academic recognitions and another area that will list information and contacts for all the active honor societies on campus.

- Two waves of scholarship offers have been made to academically talented prospective freshmen for fall 2013. These are students with ACT scores at or above 27 and ranked within the top 5% of their high school classes or who hold a 3.75 or above cumulative grade point average. The first wave saw 184 offers being made and the second wave included 90 offers. These students have been offered automatic admission to the University Honors Program. However, they must formally accept the Honors admission.

Last year, it took 667 scholarship offers to high-achieving students to net the 226 freshmen who entered the University Honors Program in fall 2012. It is unknown if NIU can or will make that many offers this year. It is expected this will not be the case, but the situation is still unclear at this juncture. However, Jones said he has been reassured that administrators on campus responsible for this matter are monitoring academic scholarship offers carefully and will adjust the university’s scholarship plan accordingly.

- Jones is also working with some others on campus to identify other sources of funding for first-year students. For instance, Tom Bough, director of the Huslike
Marching Band and Jones met with Hardy of the Scholarships Office earlier in the week to plan a University Honors recruitment event around the Huskie Marching Band concert at the Convocation Center on Friday, November 16. Invitations will be sent to all the students (and their families) who have received academic merit scholarship offers and University Honors admission to date.

- One of the major emphases of the University Honors Program recently has been the roll out and promotion of stand-alone, University Honors-only courses for the spring 2013 semester. There are 36 offerings scheduled. Last year in spring 2012 there were only 16 such courses. Roughly two-thirds of the offerings slated for spring 2013 are Lower Division general education courses. Upper Division Honors Seminars constitute the other third of offerings.

To promote these courses, a new page has been added to the Honors Program website; information has been sent via e-mail announcements; a course poster display has been created at the University Honors Center; all college advising teams have been provided information; and advertisements will run in the Northern Star.

A course preview night was held for faculty to provide students with an overview of each stand-alone course. Segundo will provide more information during her report.

Cisneros and Jones also made a concerted effort to visit a number of University Honors courses during the past week to promote the spring course offerings. Jones asked members of the committee to get the word out, too. The Honors staff is trying to shift the culture in the University Honors Program and get students used to enrolling in at least one stand-alone Honors course each semester.

- In last month’s report, Jones detailed a great deal of outreach efforts focused on colleges, department, and other partners on campus.

Jones, accompanied by Cisneros and Segundo, delivered a presentation to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences College Senate. During that session, he noted several times how important LA&S was to the success of the University Honors Program, especially when it comes to Honors course offerings. He expressed his sincere gratitude.

Cisneros and Jones also had a productive meeting recently with Christian Spears and Liz Tovar at Intercollegiate Athletics. Despite the tremendous quantitative and qualitative growth in the University Honors Program, student-athletes are highly underrepresented. Of the 1,083 University Honors students, only 14 student-athletes are in the program. However, Intercollegiate Athletics informs University Honors there are 147 student-athletes with a 3.2 GPA or above.
Discussions will continue in the spring semester. However, it already been agreed that Jones and Cisneros will deliver a University Honors informational session for student-athletes and will work with Spears, Tovar, and coaches to target specific students for recruitment to the University Honors Program. Other issues under discussion include a joint recruitment letter, a special Honors Seminar for student-athletes, and co-programming between the units.

- Jones organized a meeting in late October to work with campus colleagues to craft a “Women in Leadership” initiative. Lisa Freeman (VP for Research and Graduate Studies), Denise Schoenbachler (Dean of the College of Business), Kristen Meyers (Director of the Women’s Studies Program), Nancy Castle (Acting Director of NGOLD), Katie Wernberg (Assistant Director of the NIU Alumni Association), and Vanessa Segundo (University Honors) participated in the meeting. There was consensus to develop and deliver a Women’s Leadership Conference for 50 undergraduates in spring 2013.

- Jones spent four days in October working in Montreal with Birberick and Anne Seitzinger, director of the Study Abroad Office with the goal of launching a freshmen study abroad initiative for University Honors students. This is an agenda item, so more information will be provided later in the meeting.

- A meeting was held with J.D. Bowers regarding a University Honors study abroad initiative in The Netherlands for upper class persons.

- The event to honor Michael Maibach, first recipient of the University Honors Program Outstanding Alumni Award, will be held on November 13. All members of the committee have been invited to the event and are strongly encouraged to attend.

- Jones is pleased to announce as a result of this award, Maibach has pledged a three-year gift to the Honors Program to fund a lecture series—NIU University Honors Lecture Series. He will give the initial lecture. Every fall there will be a lecture series focus on “America as a Commercial Republic: The Virtues of Commerce and the Commercial Profession.” Maibach will use extensive connections in the national and international business community to help find speakers for the new series.

Ballantine asked about the 2013 recipient. At last report, the recipient had not accepted the award. Sharp said he has not heard from the recipient. He sent an e-mail on October 5. He will send another and call the recipient.

- Jones said he was very appreciative of the considerable attention the University Honors Program has received recently, from the State of the University address to news articles and university videos to a forthcoming feature in the Northern Now magazine.
VI. Assistant Director’s Report
Cisneros reported:

- He attended the Honors Council of the Illinois Region conference at Illinois State University. He learned a new honors program is being started at Kishwaukee Community College. He was able to make contacts with other local directors.

- He continues to work with the Honors Student Association as the organization’s advisor. There will be a formal dance on Saturday, November 3.

- He attended the graduate school preparatory session, gave a presentation, and had a table at the event. Some students have followed up on this event.

- He attended Homecoming with Jones and Ganshirt.

- He was a chaperone for an Honors Themed-learning course trip to the Chicago Lyric Opera.

- He attended the Honors House trip to play whirlyball.

- He coordinated and attended the University Honors Program event at the NIU open house on October 8. The Honors Program had multiple break-out sessions in the HSC University Suite. Three sessions with student panels were held. The program overview was given by Jones and himself, followed by the student panel. This recruitment program went very well.

- He attended the course preview night held on October 25. The session devoted to the Lower Division honors courses was well attended. The session for Upper-Division honors courses was not as well attended. The format for the preview night will probably be changed to solve this problem.

- He represented the University Honors Program at an Office of Admissions-sponsored event for high school guidance counselors held at NIU-Hoffman Estates. He gave the keynote address on the value of honors in college.

- He attended an event for the Latino Honors society. He said he is seeing all sorts of value to connections being made with the campus ethnic diversity centers.

- He attended a number of high school-focused events in East Aurora.

- He has been helping to coordinate individual meetings with prospective students who have been offered scholarships to NIU who now want one-on-one meetings, campus tours, and a visit to the Honors House.
● He attended a meeting of the Honors Alumni Council with Jones and Segundo.

● He continues to teach and advise students. This is a particularly heavy advising period as Monday, November 5, is the priority registration day for University Honors students.

Referring to the program data update, Cisneros said there is nothing too earth shattering. Numbers are about equal to the same time last year. There are currently more new freshmen than transfer students in the program. The quality of the students in the program should be better, because he has been “fairly ruthless” in removing students who are not performing academically or taking University Honors courses. The enrollment numbers are more solid than in the past, and the students are certainly more engaged. Asterisks shown in some of the categories are because the University Honors database is being redone to match information listed on MyNIU.

He added the Latino Resource Center is working to get more students involved with the Honors Program, and the Center for Black Studies had recently sent a Gates Millennium Scholarship winner to join the program. Cisneros and Jones believe the increased diversity of the University Honors administrative team is and will continue to have a positive impact on new student recruitment and advising.

Changnon asked what percentage of the NIU population would optimal as membership in the University Honors Program. He suggested looking at the percentage currently enrolled. Cisneros said enrollment is five to six percent of the total NIU enrollment. This is the national norm. Jones said enrollment in the Honors Program cannot be much higher if our high-achieving students are to be adequately served. The administrative team is already stretched thin; advising resources are limited; and more courses and other resources would have to be added.

Birberick asked if the large increase in the number of students from the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology was directly due to the new, customized CEET-University Honors initiative. She was told it was.

VII. Assistant Director of Programming & Communication Report
Segundo gave the following report:

● There was a significant number of faculty members at course preview night. Even though there was great variance in the numbers of students attending the two different sessions (Lower Division courses versus Upper Division courses), there was an excellent turnout for the event (80 students). The problem with attendance was logistical. This problem will be addressed next semester. She said she was grateful to the many faculty members who participated.

● The first “Soccer with the Doctors” was held. It was very intense competition. The second match will be later this month. There are a large number of female students who wish to participate.
The last career workshop will be held next week. Many military veterans and non-traditional students are slated to attend this workshop. These are students who do not normally attend University Honors events.

November 17 will be the all-University Honors field trip event. Nearly 100 students have confirmed their attendance. There will be time for sightseeing, then a Broadway show, followed by a question and answer session with the actors and finally the Chicago Parade of Lights.

Community outreach is being conducted. Segundo went to East Aurora High School to work on developing a grant to promote the idea of family engagement and curriculum for teachers.

Segundo distributed a handout illustrating the new format of the weekly update. It is now in newsletter format to be sent through the listserv. Committee members are invited to send any information to students via this update.

Capstone preview night is coming up next week to help students know about the process. Timeline, EYE grant, and paperwork will be discussed. She asked that committee members mention this to any students they have.

Segundo also previewed the website. She has been working hard to upgrade, expand, and update the information available on the website. Students, faculty, alumni, and prospective students may now find answers to most questions about the University Honors Program on the website.

VIII. Additional Reports & Updates

There were no additional reports.

IX. New Business

A. Assessment
Changnon delivered a brief update on his working group’s efforts to advance the University Honors Program’s assessment practices, which Jones believes need improvement.

Changnon reminded the committee that they had approved the general framework and language of the Honors Capstone assessment rubric at the last committee meeting and his working group was now completing forms for the Honors Seminar and Honors In-Courses Contract experiences, which he said he would simply provide to Jones once completed. Changnon said that he did think the committee needed to be concerned with the approval of each form moving forward. Rather the working group, Changnon and Jones working in consultation with the Office of Assessment could handle and finalize the matter.
Birberick, who did not attend the October meeting, asked if the “honors-level performance expectations” listed in Changnon’s Capstone form would be defined. Because faculty members will be asked to rank 1-4 these expectations, she said they will need to know the expectations.

Sharp said the committee talked about this issue extensively at the last meeting and decided to let the instructor decide what “honors-level performance” means because of the diverse nature of the courses taught. Changnon said the experience level of faculty with teaching honors courses will also determine the expectations. Birberick said the expectations may need to be actually determined by the committee, because the question could be raised as faculty members complete the forms. Ryan said he includes expectations in the syllabus so that could be used to meet the definition for the evaluations. Schraufnagel noted this can only be used in the aggregate. The assumption will have to be made that there will be some consistency in the faculty. The cumulative results that will be compared are the assessment. Ballantine said this is absolutely the critical point. The Assessment Office will want to know the definitions or the assessments will be sent back. He added the committee members all know what performance is expected. What is need is a comparison to non-Honors students. Sharp said that comparison would not work for seminars because not all students take them. Ballantine said it is known what the average student can do and a quantitative assessment can be made from that information.

Birberick asked if the rubrics were for individual students and what is meant by “approaches Honors level.” Changnon said the focus on generating aggregate data not individual level data. Ryan suggested the language that concerned Birberick could be changed. Changnon said he did not have a problem removing the “Honors-level performance” language. Birberick asked what is meant by “approaches expectation.” Ryan said that is the language received from the Assessment Office. Ballantine said if the language is removed, then the expectations are set by the professor. Birberick said removal of “Honors-level” is would be fine. Changnon agreed to move reference to “Honors-level” and simply use “expectations” on a revised rubric form for the Honors Capstone and the other forms under development by his working group.

Ballantine said he would like to change the “seminar project” to seminar course. Birberick said she would like to see the comments section not be optional. The comments would be very good to know. Pohlman asked if the comments would be acted upon, pointing out that is the reason for assessment. Sharp said the rubrics are to help identify program problems so the comments would be beneficial. Ballantine said he remembers Changnon saying comments would not be based on individual students, but based on comments the faculty member would make on how to improve the course. The comments should be specific to what was good and what was bad. Pohlman asked if this would still be about individual students. Sharp said these comments would be distilled to see if there is a pattern or problem (such as bad grammar). Ballantine said the individual
students need to be looked at to get the aggregate and then look at the comments to see if they can be addressed by the faculty member. Birberick said she would rather have the comments in the aggregate. She said the faculty members could do the rankings and then do comments on the course as whole. This would be a good way for the faculty to reflect on the Honors experience. Sharp asked what the consequences would be if a report is not completed. “Will there be any push back if we make it required?” It might be better to make it a suggestion. Birberick said the link to (future) Honors faculty status would be the consequence. In order to secure and maintain Honors faculty status, the rubrics would be a requirement.

Jones said that he preferred at this point to include an optional comments section and simply allow faculty to share feedback on the student, course experience, the assessment form, or whatever they deemed relevant and appropriate. He said let’s not box faculty in and see what we receive from our colleagues given these are new forms and processes for the program. While it will be difficult to aggregate comments and he would like to avoid it, comments could provide valuable insights about the program and its new assessment rubrics.

As the discussion ended, there was general consensus that Changnon would adjust the language of the form and other forms; an optional comment section would be included on the forms; and Changnon and the working group would complete the other forms and share them with Jones. Changnon and Jones will run the forms by the Office of Assessment before they are implemented late in the spring 2013 semester.

B. Freshman Study Abroad Initiative

Jones reported that he, Birberick, and Anne Seitzinger, director of the Study Abroad Office spent four days in Canada conducting a site visit to explore the viability of a University Honors Freshman Study Abroad Program in Montreal. This is a collaborative Vision 2020 initiative involving the University Honors Program, Division of International Programs, and Office of the Vice Provost.

The program is designed to introduce students to the richness of Canadian culture as it is manifested in the beautiful, international city of Montreal. The experience is intended to be both fun and educational with one of the goals being to excite first-year University Honors students about study abroad. After completing their short-term Montreal experience, the hope is these students will be interested in pursuing more extensive study abroad opportunities in Canada and around the world.

Jones, Birberick, and Seitzinger along with Deb Pierce, Associated Provost for International Programs have selected the program theme: “Discovering Montreal, Canada.” Students will have class meetings at NIU to prepare for the experience and class meetings upon their return to reflect upon their experience. However, the core of the course will be an educational visit to the City of Montreal in May 2013. This visit will encompass about seven days.
The working plan is for students to arrive on a Sunday. They will participate in a “welcome dinner” during their first evening in Montreal. A full, five-day (Monday through Friday) educational experience focused on discovering the City of Montreal will follow. Each of the five days will be devoted to a different “theme” or aspect of the city. Following breakfast each morning, students will be exposed to a two-hour lecture related to the subject of the day. This lecture will be delivered by a faculty member from the selected host institution. Each two-hour session will encompass a short break and an interactive discussion period. The students will eat lunch together. Following lunch, students will participate in a site visit, tour, and/or field trip directly related to the educational theme of the day. The host institution will facilitate and arrange all the necessary details related to the afternoon’s site visit, field trip and/or site visit. Students will have free time in the late afternoon and will be on their own for dinner. The group will be asked to reconvene in the early evening to reflect on the day’s educational content and to preview the next day. Students will have some additional free time before they are expected back in their rooms for the night or a specific nighttime activity will be organized by the NIU faculty or staff member, such as opportunities to explore music, cinema, parks, and so forth. There will be a designated and monitored curfew. On Saturday, students will be allowed to explore the city or (depending on the cost) participate in a field trip to Quebec City or Ottawa will be organized. Students will participate in a “farewell dinner” during their last evening in Montreal. They will return to the United States on Sunday.

Given the academic diversity of the University Honors Program and its students, Jones hopes to build the daily themes around an issue area that would relate to each of NIU’s six undergraduate colleges: art and architecture, government and politics (with attention to history and culture), healthcare, small business or another business or trade topic, and sport.

Birberick said this program is meant to start in May 2013. The program would be held during the third or fourth week of May. Special events and preparation work would be done during the spring semester. After the travel is completed, a wrap up session will be held. An assignment could be done for credit at NIU. Jones and Birberick will be faculty of record. The meetings were very successful and all universities contacted are enthusiastic about a prospective partnership. There will be Vision 2020 funding available to support travel grants for the participants. Ballantine asked how many students would be involved and what the deadlines will be. Birberick said prices have been sought for a group of six to eight students, eight to 10 students, and 10-12 students. She would like to send out information around Thanksgiving as a preview of the trip. Formal details will be given at a later date. Students will earn three ILAS course credits. Birberick stressed the money is available at this time and the program needs to be launched as soon as possible. If the program is available, gets good press, and students are excited about it, it will be hard for the money to disappear in the future. If it takes too
long to get the program organized and show positive results, then its sustainability may be questionable.

Pohlman asked if there is a plan to make this a long-term program through endowments, federal funds, or some other funding source. Jones said he will working on this as soon as the program has one successful run. If this program can be shown to be a success, we may be able to excite a potential donor to support it. Donovan asked if there are plans to expand this to other students who are not freshmen. He said he knows many students who cannot afford to do the regular study abroad program but would like to do this shorter version. Jones said this is a possibility and will be discussed further as planning continues in the coming weeks and months.

C. Glenn Course Proposal
Jones told committee members Gary Glenn is retired professor with 40 years of award-winning teaching experience and a great commitment to undergraduate and honors education. He would like to be involved with the University Honors Program, but there are no courses for him to teach from his home department. In order to stay involved with the Honors Program, Glenn has created an interdisciplinary course proposal to address what he sees as the sophomore gap. The course is focused on liberal education. Jones said he thinks the proposal is good but is not sure the course is appropriate for sophomore-level students. He asked committee members to decide what level of student should be exposed to this prospective course.

Schraufnagel inquired why the committee needed to be involved on this issue. Jones said he was simply seeking the committee’s counsel on the level of the course, because if it is a sophomore level course, it raises special issues for the program. For instance, all of the program’s current Lower Division offerings are general Education courses, and the Glenn course would not be a General Education course. Funding would have to be found given the Provost’s Office is explicitly funding General Education courses for freshmen and sophomores.

Ryan said he likes the idea of having Glenn teach a University Honors course but thinks the course is more appropriate for juniors and seniors. The syllabus is focused on traditional liberal education. He said he does not know how he feels about this being offered as a “dead white male initiative” to sophomores. Ballantine said he does not know if he accepts the premise for making this course a sophomore-level one. Students will not take this course if it is not a major or general education course. He thinks the course should be listed as an Upper Division Honors Seminar. Other committee members agreed. Jones thanked the committee for its input and said he would hire Glenn to teach the course to juniors and seniors as an Honors Seminar in fall 2013.

D. EYE Grant Proposals
Due to lack of time, these were tabled. Approval will be done via e-mail.
E. **Symposium Idea**
Cisneros said it would be nice in the future to have a mini-conference with faculty presenting research and best practices for teaching, all connected to honors education. This conference would involve other faculty and students. The idea for this came to him based the Honors Program’s recent course preview night where the faculty members all seemed to be very interested in the courses being taught by their colleagues. The symposium could be an Honors community event that highlights learning for learning sake. Schraufnagel asked how this would differ from SOUPer Wednesday programming. Cisneros said the Wednesday event is very focused on one topic, such as study abroad. Schraufnagel suggested using the Wednesday event as a mode for the symposium because it is so successful. It could perhaps be a round table discussion. Ballantine said a larger block of time would be needed for the symposium. Students enter and leave SOUPer Wednesday as they please. Faculty will also have time constraints and would have a hard time getting an idea across in five or 10 minutes. He suggested a Saturday morning would be better and would allow for an hour presentation with a short break between sessions. Sharp noted the Wednesday event is student-centered while the symposium could be faculty-centered. Cisneros said this could be a way to get faculty interested in being involved with the University Honors Program. Donovan asked how often the symposium would be held. Cisneros said it would be held once each semester. Segundo noted that Honors House advisors have discussed doing something similar to invite new faculty to get information about the Honors Program. Sharp said this is a great idea but it should be less formal with an open format to allow for an exchange of ideas. Sharp indicated Cisneros’ idea was a good one and merited further discussion in the future. No decision was made on this matter.

F. **Honors Faculty Status – Preliminary Proposal**
Due to lack of time, this was tabled.

G. **Course Transformation Initiative**
Due to lack of time, this was tabled. Jones did remind the committee that $38,000 was available. By the spring 2013 semester a plan will need to be initiated. An e-mail will be sent to committee members with a proposal.

X. **Adjournment**
Ballantine/Sharp moved to adjourn. Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Friday, February 1, 2013, at 1:30 p.m. in Campus Life 110.