

#11-90/91-EP Resolution on an Honors Program at Humboldt State University

WHEREAS, It is a traditional practice to honor students whose academic achievement is outstanding; and

WHEREAS, The Honors Committee has labored many hours in an attempt to construct a program that would honor such students; therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate of Humboldt State University extends its gratitude to the members of the committee for their work; and

WHEREAS, The "Honors at Humboldt" proposal (attached) fails to adequately specify either the range of work participating students would do or the method by which their work would be evaluated; and

WHEREAS, The proposal does not contain a report of the likely impact on department/college "honors" programs currently at HSU; and

WHEREAS, The units received in the "Honors at Humboldt" program would be of limited benefit for those students in "unit intense" programs, but would in fact lengthen their time at HSU; and

WHEREAS, The proposal would allow a shift from monetary remuneration to unit/credit remuneration for what is essentially a teaching assistant position; and

WHEREAS, Entitling this program "honors" is inconsistent with the idea of a traditional honors program and would likely be deceptive were that term used on the student's transcript without a lengthy description of the program; therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate of Humboldt State University cannot endorse the implementation of the "Honors at Humboldt" program in the form in which it is presently proposed.

PASSED: 01/22/91

HONORS AT HUMBOLDT

An Honors Committee, consisting of Karen Foss, Karen Carlton, Rod Sievers, and Michael Goodman, has worked for two years to put an Honors program in place at HSU. The first program devised consisted of special General Education courses for Honors students. The first course, Logic, was scheduled for Spring 1990; only one-third of the forty Honors students signed up for the course.

The Honors Committee since has re-evaluated the concept of an Honors program and has devised one that seems better suited to the needs and expectations of many students and faculty at Humboldt. Rather than a traditional Honors program in which students are selected on the basis of high school academic performance, the proposed program provides the opportunity for special experience for students who excel in certain classes while at HSU.

Specifically, the program allows students to serve as teaching or research assistants to faculty members. In order to participate, a student 1) must have received an A or A- in the course in which s/he is to assist; 2) must be invited to participate by a faculty member; 3) have junior or senior standing; and 4) must have taken the course in which s/he is to assist within the past two academic years. Students may assist a specific faculty member one time at most; students may assist in a given course, e.g., Biology 304, one time at most. Any university course is available as an Honors course under this program (there would be some constraints, e.g., a senior-level course probably would not be a course in which students could assist), and all faculty have the option of participating.

Students participating in Honors at Humboldt will receive three units of credit for each semester in which they serve as assistants. Two of the units will go to the department offering the course; a third unit will be a university-wide Honors unit that will generate assigned time for the Honors director. On the student's transcripts, those units will be given a single number across the university, e.g., Philosophy 501: Honors in Philosophy (Logic); English 501: Honors in English (English Composition), and so on. During the semester in which students participate, they will attend a weekly meeting for all Honors students, coordinated by the Honors director, in which problems, teaching strategies, research issues and the like, are discussed.

Various forms of compensation for the students have been discussed. Funding constraints would almost necessarily limit the number of students involved in the program. However, we hope to honor each semester's students in some way, which may vary according to the number involved. One semester, it may be possible to put on a luncheon for them; at another time, a nominal gift certificate at the bookstore may be provided. We do not expect students to enroll in the program because it offers a monetary reward. They will receive academic units for the experience and, as something of a "junior colleague," have an opportunity to work closely with a faculty member.

It is commonly agreed that we learn a great deal about a topic by teaching it. Given that the Honors student will be expected to prepare and give lectures to the class, perhaps the most important reward the student will receive will be the increase of knowledge of the material associated with the course in which s/he assists.

The program will be coordinated by a director who will receive three units of assigned time per semester and serve on a rotating two-year term. The director will facilitate the weekly meetings of the Honors students, publicize the program, coordinate evaluations of each student's honors experience, and generally manage the paperwork and procedures of the program. The director will be chosen from among those faculty who have participated in the program and who are willing to take on the position.