



Faculty Senate Office
Ashe Administration Building, #325
1252 Memorial Drive
Coral Gables, FL 33146

facsen@miami.edu
web site: www.miami.edu/fs
P: 305-284-3721
F: 305-284-5515

MEMORANDUM

To: Donna E. Shalala, President

From: Richard L. Williamson
Chair, Faculty Senate

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard L. Williamson'.

Date: November 21, 2013

Subject: Faculty Senate Legislation #2013-13(C) – Recommendation of the Faculty Senate
Academic Standards Committee Regarding the General Honors Program

The Faculty Senate, at its November 20, 2013 meeting, voted unanimously to approve the Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee's report regarding the General Honors Program and its recommendation to abolish the program through a four-year phase out process, with the understanding that by the end of the academic year, the committee should further investigate and propose the next steps to be taken. The approval of this proposal has no relevance either to the Honors Programs of the Schools and Colleges, or to the graduation ("Latin") honors.

The proposal from the Senate Committee is enclosed for your reference.

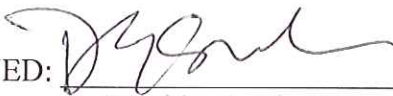
This legislation is now forwarded to you for your action.

RLW/rh

Enclosure

cc: Thomas LeBlanc, Executive Vice President and Provost
William Green, Senior Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education
Don Stacks, Chair, Academic Standards Committee

CAPSULE: Faculty Senate Legislation #2013-13(C) – Recommendation of the Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee Regarding the General Honors Program

APPROVED:  DATE: 12/9/13
(President's Signature)

OFFICE OR INDIVIDUAL TO IMPLEMENT: VICE PROVOST BILL GREEN

EFFECTIVE DATE OF LEGISLATION: IMMEDIATELY
(if other than June 1 next following)

NOT APPROVED AND REFERRED TO: _____

REMARKS (IF NOT APPROVED): _____

**Academic Standards Committee
Faculty Senate
Report on the University of Miami General Honors Program**

The Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee has spent the better part of the 2012-2013 academic year examining the General Honors Program. This examination has included a review of: the previous report submitted by Fred Frohock, John Barker, and Andrea DuPuch (2011); an analysis of General Honors courses and faculty; and a survey of honors students completed in December 2012. Based on the data and analysis obtained, the Committee recommends the abolition of the General Honors Program as it now exists. This recommendation does not come easily; indeed, the General Honors Program was created 25 years ago and did what it was expected to do at that time. Times have changed, however, and with that change we find the General Honors Program is neither “general,” nor is it the type of program the University can use to attract the best and brightest students. A caveat—this recommendation has no impact on the various school or other Honors programs and only recommends the abolishment as a phase-out process spanning four years from implementation.

Analysis of the General Honors Program

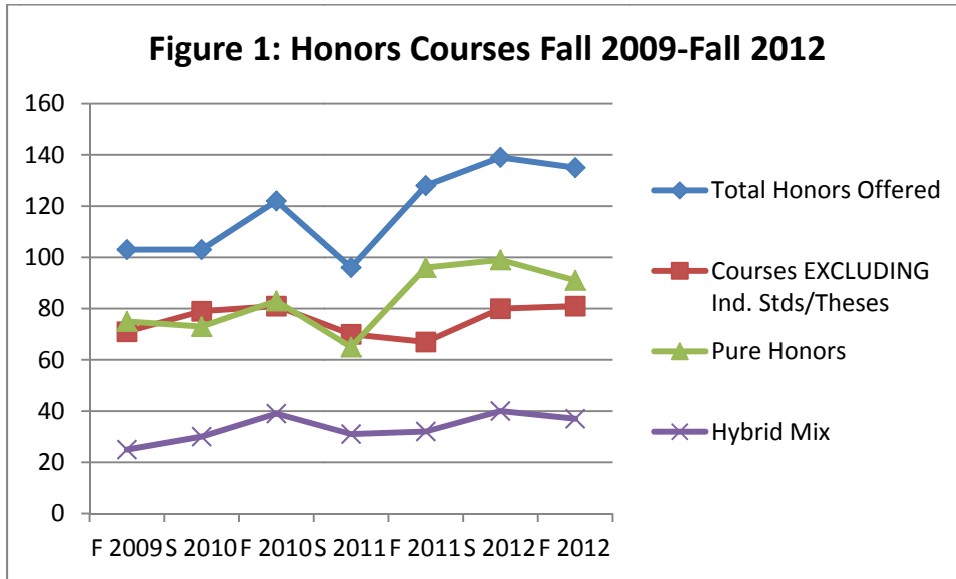
The Frohock *et al.* report suggested that “the current structure of the Honors Program limits opportunities of academically motivated students by the limited number of courses offered, having to constrict their class enrollment to a set of Honors course[s] in their schools and colleges” (p. 1). It goes on to state the program “will need recourses and must make the decision on either to become a selective elite group of students...or an iteration of its current form” (pp. 1-2). However, the report failed to make specific recommendations other than three specific restructuring proposals. It apparently never considered the wider problems of a general program—one that meets the needs of students *across the university*. This analysis and report goes beyond the Frohock *et al.* report by collecting and analyzing historical, competitive, and Honors student perceptions of the current General Honors Program.

The Frohock *et al.* report examined data from other aspirational peer schools. . Its analysis is unhelpful because the University of Miami is not comparable to those institutions. Given our nine-school and college structure without a central Honors College or School, any comparison to UM is spurious at best, as none are as comprehensive as our General Honors Program. The only institution that comes close is the University of Southern California, a much smaller program, and one that is very institutionally expensive. Therefore, the Committee (1) examined the Honors courses offered across the institution, (2) the Honors course type, (3) the faculty teaching those courses, and (4) a survey of Honors students enrolled during the fall 2012 academic term. The results of these analyses clearly indicate that the General Honors Program is broken and cannot be fixed in a way that represents the full University of Miami undergraduate structure.

Review of Honors Courses Taught

A review of Honors courses taught across the University of Miami and those taught by specific schools and colleges from Fall 2009 to Fall 2013 finds a disappropriate number of courses in three (3) of the nine (9) schools and colleges.. Figure 1 shows a slight increase in the

total number of Honors courses across time but also a reliance on hybrid/regular Honors courses. It also shows a large number of Honors courses as independent studies or thesis credits.



Honors Courses across the University

A review of Honors courses across the University between Fall 2009 and Spring 2013 by school, clearly indicates the General Honors Program is not serving the general University population (see Figure 2). Indeed, as shown in Table 1 and graphically demonstrated in Figure 3, the number of “true” Honors course is much less than the total courses taught across this time frame.

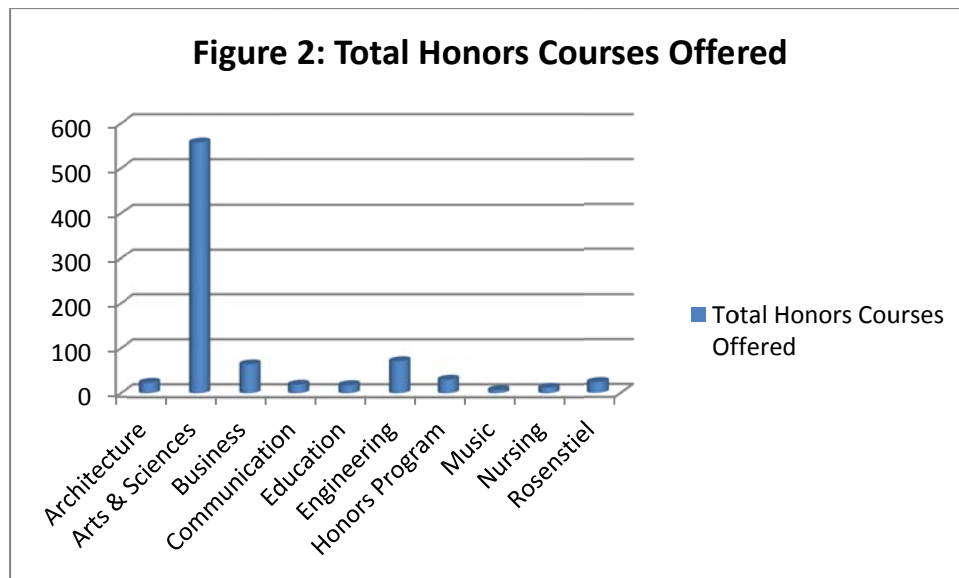
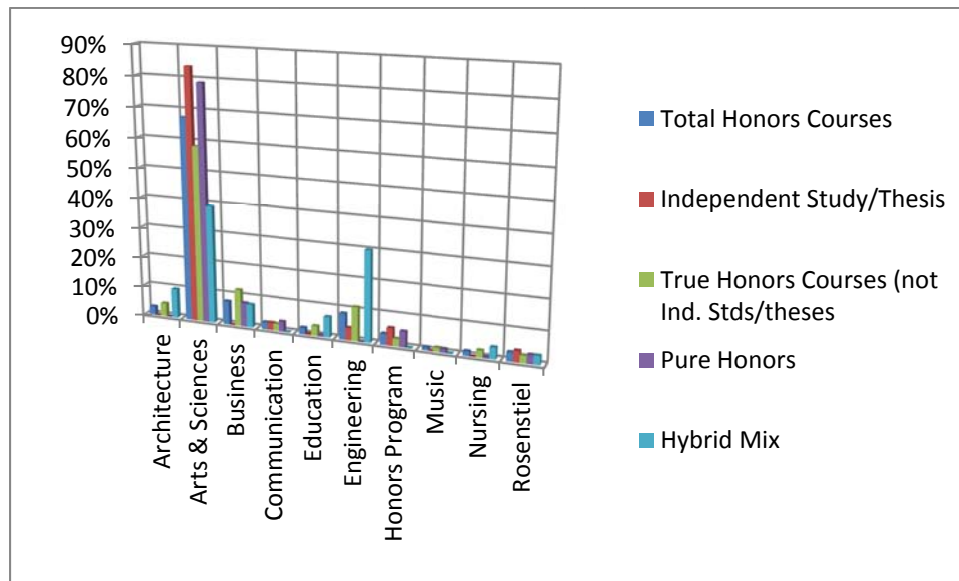


Table 1: Percent of Honors Courses by School by Type

School	Total Honors Courses	Independent Study/Thesis	True Honors Courses (not Ind. Stds/theses)	Pure Honors	Hybrid Mix
Architecture	3%	0%	4%	0%	10%
Arts & Sciences	68%	84%	58%	79%	39%
Business	8%	0%	12%	8%	8%
Communication	2%	2%	2%	3%	0%
Education	2%	0%	3%	0%	7%
Engineering	9%	4%	11%	0%	30%
Honors Program	4%	6%	2%	5%	0%
Music	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
Nursing	1%	0%	2%	0%	4%
Rosenstiel	3%	4%	2%	3%	3%

Figure 3: Percent Honors Course by School and Type



Faculty Participation by School

A review of faculty teaching the General Honors Program clearly finds that courses are offered by the same faculty over time. Between Fall 2009 and Fall 2012 a review of departmental offerings finds the same faculty offering honors classes. Due to the sensitive nature of the data, individual courses and faculty are not identified but remain available through the Honors Program.

Impact on Enrollment

Apparently, the General Honors Program does not have a great impact on enrollment. Given the rather small difference in average SAT scores and the minimum threshold Honors Program score (30 points), many students would be eligible for the program if not for the 10% cap on applications. According to the Office of Enrollment, the General Honors Program does not impact on enrollment, neither in terms of numbers (see students survey below for confirmation) or student quality in the program.

Survey of General Honors Program Participants

The results of a survey of all students enrolled in Honors programs at the University of Miami are presented as Appendix A. Any student admitted to an Honors program whether it is Departmental Honors or Foote Fellows considered a part of the General Honors Program. 450 Honors students responded to the survey, a 35.4% return rate ($450 \div 1,272$). Of particular importance to the Academic Standards Committee were the following results:

1. Very few considered the General Honors Program in making enrollment decisions. As Table 2 demonstrates, 67% of these students considered another college or university because of their honors programs. Of these students, 87% reported being admitted to other colleges and universities, but only 16% chose the University of Miami because of its honors program.

Table 2
Honors Program Decision Making*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Look at other colleges or universities?		
Yes	436	97
No	14	3
Consider because of their Honors Programs?		
Yes	148	33
No	296	67
Were you admitted to any of these institutions?		
Yes	380	87
No	57	13
Did you choose UM because of its Honors Program?		
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	71	16
No	376	87
<hr/>		
<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
When did you start Honors Program?		
Freshman year	400	89
Sophomore year	39	9
Junior year	9	2
Senior year	2	0
<hr/>		
*Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding		

2. Most Honors Program students are quite satisfied with the *status quo*. When asked a series of attitudinal statements on a Likert-type Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree response metric, they either agreed with positive statements or were noncommittal with negative statements (see Table 3). Data was then submitted to an exploratory factor analysis to examine the dimensionality of attitudinal items. The six dimensions based on the Factor Analysis are found in Table 4. Factor 1 appears to measure motivation and challenge provided by the Honors Program. Factor 2 addresses the need for change in the General Honors Program. Factor 3 is measuring respondents’ perceptions of program size and the competitive nature of invitation and acceptance into the program. Factor 4 appears to be concerned with advisor knowledge—both

specific to their individual Honors Program and more generally of the University’s Honors Program. Factor 5 is questionable and may be an artifact of demand characteristics; the factor addresses respondent’s research and reason into accepting the University’s offer to enroll into the General Honors Program—something respondents indicated earlier in the survey was not the case (see Table 3). Finally, Factor 6 measures student attitudes toward hybrid Honors/Regular classes or “pink slipping” into a regular course for Honors credits.

Table 3*
Percent/Mean by Response by Item

Item	% Strongly Agree				% Strongly Disagree		M/ σ	# Respond-ing
	Agree	% Agree	% NA/ND	% Disagree	Disagree	M/ σ		
All Honors students should be able to create their own majors based on their interests.*	17	39	24	18	3	3.48 1.06	429	
Allowing non-freshmen to enroll in some Honors Programs dilutes the General Honors Program.	3	13	24	41	20	2.37 10.2	430	
Based on my experiences to date, I am disappointed in the quality of the Honors Program.	8	27	25	34	7	2.95 1.09	430	
Based on my experiences to date, the quality of my fellow Honors students is high.	8	50	28	12	2	3.49 0.88	431	
Being admitted to the Honors Program is one of the primary reasons why I came to University of Miami	5	17	18	35	25	2.43 1.19	431	
Being an Honors student motivates me to do well in all of my classes.	13	40	27	15	6	3.39 1.06	432	
Enrolling in the Honors Program is one of the best choices I’ve made at the University of Miami.	9	31	38	16	5	3.23 0.99	428	
Getting into the Honors Program at the University of Miami isn’t as competitive as I’d like it to be.	8	29	38	21	3	3.18 0.96	429	
Having to enroll in some hybrid classes (i.e., mixed honors and non-honors students) has negatively affected my experiences with the Honors Program.	2	10	37	35	16	2.48 0.94	431	
I am embarrassed that others know that I am an Honors student at University of Miami.	0	0	6	32	62	1.46 0.64	432	

Item	% Strongly Agree	% Agree	% NA/ND	% Disagree	% Strongly Disagree	M/ σ	# Respond- ing
I don't like the fact that there are a variety of Honors Programs at the University of Miami (Foote Fellows, Departmental, etc.).	4	16	25	40	15	2.56 1.06	431
I have established what I hope will be a long-term relationship with my Honors professors.	5	23	34	29	10	2.85 1.04	428
I like the fact that up to one-tenth of incoming freshmen have a chance to belong to the Honors Program.	6	39	37	16	3	3.29 0.89	429
I researched other Honors programs before coming to University of Miami.	6	32	12	33	17	2.77 1.24	431
I tell others that I am an Honors student.	10	42	27	15	6	3.34 1.04	432
I think that “pink slipping” into a regular course as an Honors student dilutes my educational experiences.	3	9	31	39	18	2.40 0.98	432
I think that the current structure of the General Honors Program needs drastic changes.	15	27	35	21	2	3.31 1.03	428
I think there are too many students in the General Honors Program.	5	17	41	32	5	2.85 0.92	430
If asked by my high school advisor about University of Miami's Honors Program, I would highly encourage him/her to promote it.	10	36	32	18	4	3.29 1.01	430
If asked by prospective students about my experiences in the General Honors Program, I would say that the program has greatly enhanced my learning experiences.	5	28	35	23	9	2.97 1.03	431
In my research of other Honors programs when deciding where to apply for college, I found University of Miami's General Honors Program was the best fit for me.	2	8	69	15	7	2.83 0.73	429
My advisor really doesn't understand what I want out of the Honors Program I am enrolled in.	4	12	48	26	10	2.75 0.93	431

Item	% Strongly Agree	% Agree	% NA/ND	% Disagree	% Strongly Disagree	M/ σ	# Respond- ing
My Honors classes don't challenge me any more than my non-Honors classes do.	9	20	25	38	8	2.83 1.11	432
My Honors professors have challenged me to learn more than my professors in non-honors courses.	8	39	27	20	6	3.22 1.04	430
My Honors Program advisor knows my personal program well.	7	17	31	24	21	2.64 1.19	430
The ability to register for classes early is one of the main reasons I chose to be in the Honors Program.	10	31	26	25	8	3.08 1.13	431
The current Honors Program does not meet my expectations of what an Honors Program should be.	10	33	26	26	4	3.20 1.06	427
The General Honors Program admission requirements do not enhance UM's reputation as a nationally-competitive program.	5	18	42	32	4	2.88 0.91	428
There are enough Honors courses offered in the curriculum that I am interested in.	2	15	9	31	43	2.03 1.15	431
There should be only one campus-wide undergraduate Honors Program that admits less than five percent of the student body.	6	23	35	29	7	2.91 1.00	431
There will be more value to my UM degree since I will graduate as a student in the Honors program.	19	55	16	7	3	3.81 0.92	432
* Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.							

Table 4

Honors Program Attitudinal Measure Dimensionality

<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>	<i>Factor 3</i>	<i>Factor 4</i>	<i>Factor 5</i>	<i>Factor 6</i>
My Honors professors have challenged me to learn more than my professors in non-Honors classes.	.764					
My Honors classes don't challenge me any more than my non-Honors classes do.	-.695					
Being an Honors student motivates me to do well in all of my classes.	.502					
I think that the current structure of the General Honors Program needs drastic changes.		-.765				
There are enough Honors courses in the curriculum that I am interested in.		.705				
I think there are too many students in the General Honors Program.			.763			
I like the fact that up to one-tenth of incoming freshmen have a chance to belong to the Honors Program.			-.724			
<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>	<i>Factor 3</i>	<i>Factor 4</i>	<i>Factor 5</i>	<i>Factor 6</i>
Getting into the Honors Program at the University of Miami isn't as competitive as I'd like it to be.			.708			
My advisor really doesn't understand what I want out of the Honors Program I am enrolled in.				.659		
I don't like the fact that there are a variety of Honors Programs at the University of Miami (Foote Fellows, Departmental, etc.).				.631		
My Honors Program advisor knows my personal program well.				-.608		
Being admitted to the Honors Program is one of the primary reasons I came to the University of Miami.					.728	
I researched other Honors Programs before coming to the University of Miami.					.607	
I think that “pink slipping” into a regular course as an Honors dilutes my educational experience.						.727
Having to enroll in some hybrid classes (i.e., mixed honors and non-honors students) has negatively affected my experiences with the Honors Program.						.722

3. Finally, UM Honors Program students do not see a lot of honors activities and do not participate in what is offered (see Table 5).

Table 5*

<i>Response</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Very active	18	4
Active	169	38
Neither Active nor Inactive	175	39
Inactive	13	13
Very Inactive	7	7

*Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Recommendation

Based on these findings the Academic Standards Committee recommends the University of Miami replace its General Honors Program with a program such as the Foote Scholars to produce an Honors Program truly representative of the University of Miami student body and academic units.¹

¹ Note: It is not the intent of this recommendation to replace or even abolish other honors programs offered by individual departments and schools. This recommendation focuses on the charge given the Academic Standards Committee to evaluate the General Honors Program and make a recommendation as to it.