

## Honors Task Force 2017-18 Report

### **I. Overview**

The 2017-18 Honors Task Force (HTF) convened for 2018 during late winter and spring quarters on a bi-weekly basis, researching data and information on honors colleges and programs nationally, analyzing the data as it pertains to local conditions at CWU, and considering the interim findings and recommendations of the 2016-17 Honors Task Force. In consultation with Faculty Senate and the Provost, several new members were added to this year's HTF, with all members of the previous year's HTF continuing on to this year with the exception of the Chair.

The HTF members are broadly supportive of the mission and programming of the DHC, and strongly believe that the greatest value to CWU lies in supporting further growth of enrollment and programming to better serve CWU's students. The HTF particularly located the mission to serve first generation and underserved students, the growth of diversity in the DHC student body, the emphasis on innovative programming and pedagogy, and strengths-focused advising as key values the DHC brought to CWU students.

The HTF feels that DHC plays an important role in the lives of CWU and its students, and would like to see it grow to serve a larger segment of the CWU student population and be recognized as a signature program of the university. Coordinating departmental honors under DHC, as recommended in the 2017 HTF Report, growing to serve a larger percentage of the CWU student population and serving as a 'piloting' site for innovative programming were located by the HTF as key areas for growth. The committee was particularly interested in the history of institutions investing in honors education in order to effect institutional change, including data showing a 'halo' effect that can occur when robust, high-profile honors colleges influence non-honors students at their universities to higher achievement.

While the essential building blocks for DHC growth have already been put in place, the HTF recognizes that to become a fully developed honors college, DHC/CWU must secure resources in the following targeted areas: faculty, student engagement, advising, and scholarships. Additionally DHC/CWU will need to provide and encourage sustainable and reliable resources for participation in honors college teaching and learning, including participation in honors conferences and other scholarly meetings and professional training in honors education. CWU will also need to encourage an honors culture in which CWU staff and administrators are recognized as playing integral roles in honors student success. Such institutional commitment to the establishment of a fully-developed honors college has served an institutionally transformative function at numerous institutions, including regional comprehensives.

#### **A. Sub-committee on Departmental Honors (Honors in the Major) – HTF Charge item # 02**

1. CWU lists eleven departmental honors options in the catalog. However, of these departments, not all are active programs and the 2016-17 HTF found that there was a general lack of awareness among faculty, advising and administrative staff of the honors in the major program among many of these departments.
2. The 2017-18 HTF considered the recommendation of the previous year's TF to regularize departmental honors minimum standards, make departmental honors available to all students who wished to participate in honors in their major, and designate coordination of departmental honors to the DHC. Upon review of the data and analysis behind the TF recommendation, this year's committee members agreed with the recommendation and took steps to move it forward.

3. The Chair of the sub-committee, along with the general members of the HTF, agreed to a process of consultation with the department chairs currently hosting a departmental honors option. Based upon the positive feedback received from chairs, the decision was made to request a place on the ADCO agenda in Fall 2018 to discuss the option more broadly and to gauge general support among department chairs for coordinated support to a build-out of departmental honors for all departments interested in developing the option for their students. The sub-committee will also meet with the members of the departments currently listed as offering departmental honors, but whose programs have not been active recently, with a view toward gauging departmental interest in rebuilding the option.
4. The basis for the conversation with department chairs offering an 'honors in the major' option, and for the ADCO conversation, are the guidelines drafted by the 2016-17 HTF on minimum standards for departmental honors. Among the department chairs on the 2017-18 HTF, as well as the other department chairs consulted, the guidelines were felt to represent a good minimum set of expectations for students earning honors in a major. HTF members, including chairs, did not feel the currently drafted guidelines offered any impediment to customization and build-out by departments.

B. Sub-committee on Budget Build-out

1. The sub-committee used as its baseline the current DHC budget. With the support of the ASL budget manager, the DHC budget for FY 2019 was transferred into an interactive RCM model. (See section III, below.)

## II. Background

A. William O. Douglas Honors College  
*Current Status*

The administration of the William O. Douglas Honors College (DHC) consists of two full-time staff, the Executive and Assistant Directors, and a part-time Associate Director. They are supported by a ¾ time Senior Secretary and a recently hired Lower-division Writing Coordinator. The budget of the DHC has required backfill from the Provost's Office for the past four years as DHC programming has expanded in response to enrollment growth. The DHC began 40 years ago as a joint administrative and faculty endeavor, and continues to enjoy strong support from across the University.

The curriculum of the DHC is realized through an engagement with the four pillars of DHC programming: Critical Inquiry, Undergraduate Research, Leadership, and Civic Engagement. In addition to completing course requirements, DHC students are required to participate in yearly cultural events, experiential learning opportunities and advising sessions. DHC students are an active presence in the administration of the College, including by maintaining a DHC student government association (DHCSA) with the DHCSA-VP for Academic Affairs sitting on the DHC Advisory Committee. DHC students serve on the DHC Admissions Committee, engage in developing and participating in student-led programming throughout the academic year and serve as peer mentors in the DHC Living and Learning Community (DHC LLC). DHC also maintains an active Student Ambassador program, supporting DHC outreach and recruitment as well as working with the DHCSA, peer mentors and staff in support of DHC student-led programming.

The DHC offers a range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities designed to meet the learning and educational needs of CWU honors students. The DHC curriculum is interdisciplinary and comprises two tiers (Core Curriculum and Upper Division) as well as an Interdisciplinary Honors Minor. The core curriculum consists of 56 credits of DHC designated courses, which satisfy the general education requirements of CWU. DHC students thus do not have to complete the basic skills or breadth requirements of the CWU general education program. Most students entering the DHC will start with this curriculum.

The upper division honors sequence consists of 15 credits and complements all majors and minors offered at CWU. It is also a pathway for transfer students, designed to allow them to enter the DHC, complete honors seminars and the faculty-mentored capstone and graduate with honors from the DHC. Transfer students with an Associates degree generally enroll in this sequence, along with some Running Start students. The interdisciplinary honors minor is comprised of 34 credits, including course options from within the core curriculum and an additional upper division course.

The DHC's classes are supplemented by a variety of other educational experiences. The DHC hosts a number of on-campus lectures each year, averaging between four and six over the last few years. The DHC also works with other programs and departments on campus to co-sponsor visiting speaker visits, discussion panels, and cultural events. Each term, students are required to participate in at least two cultural events, the cost of which is covered by the DHC, either in Ellensburg or in nearby cities such as Seattle.

The DHC Learning and Living Community is located in Barto Hall. CWU Housing reserves approximately 45 of the 360 beds in the hall for DHC students each year. The DHC LLC also has two lounges, a multipurpose room, and a secondary DHC office used by peer mentors. The LLC has five peer mentors residing with students and many DHC students go on to serve as RAs in the residence halls. The peer mentors work collaboratively with the DHC Ambassadors, faculty and staff to build a vibrant academic and residential community of scholars.

#### *DHC 2017-18 Priorities*

1. Increased recruitment, with emphasis on diverse student body
2. Pilot of Strength-based Advising model – incoming class
3. Development, with emphasis on alumni and donor cultivation
4. Mapping of DHC curricular revisions in response to new CWU Gen Ed
5. Revitalization of DHC Advisory Committee
6. Honors Task Force

#### *Initiatives and Growth*

DHC has, over the past four years, developed many of the elements essential to the growth of student enrollment and increased excellence crucial to the expansion of the honors college. These include programming, administrative, student success and curricular elements such as: 1) the DHC Ambassadors program, peer mentoring, DHCSA, student developed programming and student integration into core administrative areas; 2) program assessment rubrics, strategic planning cycle and regular curricular review; 3) strengthening of writing across the curriculum support and oversight; 4) cultivation of alumni relationships; 5) development of strengths-based advising model and problem-based learning pedagogy as nationally unique DHC attributes. Such initiatives have contributed to an average retention rate of 95% for DHC students. However, financial constraints have prevented full build-out of many of these elements.

A strengths-based advising model has been build into the floor of all DHC student advising, beginning with their entry into the DHC and following them throughout their time as students. From the moment students start at DHC, the advising curriculum focuses on developing their confidence and individual strengths. Long-term longitudinal studies have found results suggesting that people who are aware of their strengths and build self-confidence at a young age may reap a 'cumulative advantage' that continues to grow over a life-time, finding benefits ranging from income and career attainment to health. Following this year's successful pilot with first year students, DHC will focus on building out the strengths-based curriculum for the sophomore, junior and senior years.

DHC has identified problem-based learning (PBL) for pedagogical build-out across the curriculum. It has currently been implemented in DHC 101 and DHC 480, book-ending the students' pedagogical experiences. DHC faculty development workshops are scheduled for each quarter of the 2018-19 academic year to support build-out of the pedagogy in other DHC courses. DHC is currently working with the CWU Foundation to locate funding for a DHC/CWU team to participate in the annual AAC&U/Wooster Polytechnic Institute Project-Based Learning Institute. The benefits of problem and project-based pedagogy have been identified through numerous quantitative and qualitative studies for all levels of education. This initiative is considered by DHC to be scaleable and of high value to other interested academic units at CWU once PBL is more fully integrated throughout the DHC curriculum.

#### *Budget*

DHC currently operates on a budget of \$384,000., which has required subvention for each of the past four years to meet operating costs. DHC has now reached a stage where coordinated institutional support is necessary to sustain operations and continue to grow. DHC also has a small amount of self-support from summer session which it has been working to grow.

#### B. National, Regional and State-wide overview of Honors landscape

1. An honors college is not structurally similar to traditional academic colleges. It does not host departments, offer majors, or (generally) staff its courses with faculty whose lines are housed fully within the honors college itself. While a robust honors college may have some tenure-line faculty (often through shared tenure-lines) to provide consistency for students and stability for the curriculum, the majority of courses in most honors colleges are taught by faculty borrowed from other departments. This is necessary to ensure the broad disciplinary coverage of courses, often interdisciplinary in nature, comprising most honors college curricula. Additionally, honors colleges offer a broad range of co-curricular experiences, pro-active advising and residential living as integral aspects of the honors college curriculum and experience.
2. Nationally, growth of Honors Colleges has been dramatically increasing since the mid-1990s, with the pace of increase especially pronounced over the past decade. According to NCHC 2016 census data, of the 95 honors colleges for which NCHC was able to obtain data, 33.7 percent have become honors colleges in the past seven years. Another one-fourth of the 95 responding were established as honors colleges in the previous decade. Thus, a clear majority of honors colleges are less than 16 years old. Regionally, this growth is reflected in the membership of the Western Regional Honors Council.
3. Of the six public four-year institutions of higher education in Washington State, only CWU and Washington State University support long-standing honors colleges. The

William O. Douglas Honors College at CWU has just celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (placing it among the oldest honors colleges in the nation).

4. The WSU honors college is the most robust honors college in the state if measured by enrollment and funding. Although it is not as old as DHC, it has benefited from a sustained level of institutional support for an extended period of time, and is fully integrated into the research and academic life of the University.
  - i. Eastern Washington University has recently made the decision to invest in turning its 20 year old honors program into an honors college, building out its core interdisciplinary first year seminars into a full honors college curriculum with accompanying advising and administrative structures for support.
  - ii. University of Washington and Western Washington University both have honors programs, which serve to supplement the departmental majors.
  - iii. Evergreen State College does not host an honors college or program.

### **III. Options for DHC/CWU Honors – HTF Charge item #03**

The HTF felt that the benefits of retaining DHC as an honors college far outweighed any potential cost savings from devolving it into an honors program. In particular, committee members called attention to what they felt were major advantages of the honors college: freshman recruitment, sophomore retention and funneling sophomores and juniors into department honors programs.

#### **A. Build-out as fully fledged CWU academic college**

1. The HTF believes that DHC already has the essential building blocks in place to become a fully developed college in line with the other academic colleges at CWU, with the understanding that inherent structural differences between honors colleges and traditional academic colleges would need to be maintained. In particular, three changes to the current DHC structure would need to occur: 1) the budget would need to move from incremental to RCM, 2) the administrative structure would need to be shifted from Executive-Director to Dean, and 3) dedicated (probably shared) faculty lines. Data from the 2016 NCHC census found that 68.3% of honors colleges nationally are led by a Dean and enroll students representing approximately 7% of the university's undergraduate student enrollment. Ideally, the honors college would grow with the goal of future co-location of the residential, administrative and curricular components.
2. Because the administrative and programming structure for the DHC largely reflects that of a fully developed honors college, the primary expenses in terms of growth would be in the need to hire additional faculty to teach a growing number of classes, the need to hire a recruiter/advisor to help support outreach and growth, and the need to expand co-curricular programming to accommodate additional students (including support for research and conference presentations). If coordination of department honors were added to DHC, this would require additional staff time.
3. Budget
  - i. Initial budget modeling for RCM using the current DHC budget for 2019 shows DHC running a \$13,000 deficit after the subvention rate of 75% (\$39,000). Thus, the DHC would be \$52,000 over budget prior to subvention.
  - ii. Most DHC students enter as first years without declared majors. For those students who have declared majors, the HTF suggests allowing the 30% that travels to the major department for declared majors to remain with DHC, (or at

least to be split between DHC and the major department). This is especially pertinent as DHC prepares high achieving students for strong major-level work for which they might otherwise be less equipped.

- iii. The RCM model provides a path for growth and increasing revenue for the DHC. However, subvention is a requirement until full growth is achieved.

#### 4. Challenges

- i. The HTF was concerned with three perceived challenges. Foremost was the concern that RCM was not a model that would work for the DHC. Although initial budget modeling of DHC as an RCM unit looks promising, there is general insecurity among faculty as to how RCM will play out over time, and concern that it could jeopardize the long-term viability of the DHC. The HTF also expressed some concern as to whether the administration would support the position of Dean of the DHC and whether there would be difficulty making the DHC a fully academic unit supporting shared tenure lines. The HTF did not feel these options were damaging to the DHC or insurmountable, rather that they were sites where friction might occur in implementation.
- ii. For the DHC to grow into a viable, fully-developed college at CWU it would need continued budgetary support for its growth until it reached the stage of self-sufficiency within RCM.

#### 5. Opportunities

- i. The greatest opportunity for DHC in this model is the opportunity afforded by RCM. Although initial budget modeling shows the DHC running a deficit, the more the DHC grows in this model, the greater seems to be its ability to support itself without subvention. If the DHC is truly going to achieve the goal of serving 5-8% of the CWU undergraduate student population, in line with national averages for honors college enrollment, RCM seems to present a viable budget model. However, programming and staffing to build DHC growth would need to be supported through subvention until self-sufficiency was achieved.
- ii. DHC, like many honors colleges, is an entrepreneurial unit with a forward vision and strong sense of commitment to the well-being of the university as a whole. Allowing the DHC the opportunity to manage its growth, serve as a piloting-site for initiatives of potential benefit to the rest of the university, and fully inhabit the role of one of the leading lenses through which academics at CWU are presented for recruitment, retention and development would bring additional value to many areas of CWU operations.
- iii. Additionally, a fully collegiate administrative structure would put DHC and CWU fully in line with National Collegiate Honors Council standards for 'fully developed honors colleges.'

#### B. Hybrid model (continuation of existing model)

##### 1. Structure

- i. To serve a larger number of students, as well as to support building and/or rebuilding department honors programs under the DHC, the DHC will need to continue to grow. This growth could be quite slow, if funding is unavailable, and the DHC would continue to serve its current student population. However, the addition of a coordination role in department honors will require the addition of staff time, as would a charge to build-out the student recruitment structure

already in place. Programming costs would also rise, as the number of students grew. Ideally, the honors college would grow with the goal of future co-location of the residential, administrative and curricular components.

## 2. Budget

- i. DHC's current incremental budget for 2019 is \$42,939 over budget for basic operations, which is consistent with the past several years and reflects the ongoing growth of DHC enrollment and programming.
- ii. To continue to allow DHC to grow in a dedicated way to better serve a greater number of CWU students, DHC's budget would need to grow to support the addition of necessary faculty and programming.
- iii. DHC's budget model is incremental, but has never received incremental increases for faculty, and the budget has remained static. For example, in the four-year faculty contract that just lapsed, DHC did not receive approximately \$30,000. of salary increases, nor did it receive the additional increases for benefits which were included in the state budget. The funding for the salary increases went to the home College while the burden for the additional expenses went to DHC. As faculty continue to negotiate higher rates, the expenses for DHC will continue to compound with no additional funding.

## 3. Challenges

- i. The largest challenge the HTF located in relation to maintaining the current 'hybrid' structure of the DHC is the lack of necessary funding for growth. This lack of funding, and need for annual subvention, means that growth happens slowly if at all. DHC has now reached, and somewhat exceeded, the limit of what it can do within its current budget.
- ii. Remaining a 'hybrid' college also means DHC is not considered a 'fully-developed' honors college by National Collegiate Honors Council standards.

## 4. Opportunities

- i. This model presents the 'path of least resistance' for CWU. Little will change, and the DHC will continue to grow as its budget permits. With funding to support the move of departmental honors and increased recruitment, DHC would continue to serve CWU as a strong unit within the Academic and Student Life Division.

## C. Devolution into an honors program

### 1. Structure

- i. The HTF discussed possibilities in turning the DHC into an honors program, examining the NCHC guidance on a well-developed honors program and considering what form this might take at CWU. In particular, the committee discussed the model present at WWU, which is considered a strong and beneficial honors program.
- ii. As the committee discussed structure, it became clear that an honors program along the model of WWU, which is closely in-line with NCHC guidance, would not substantially change the current structure of the DHC. Core courses would need to continue, as would some form of upper division seminar and capstone structure. While the course load students would take could be reduced by several classes, CWU does not have an academic infrastructure similar to that of

the interdisciplinary FairHaven College at WWU to provide additional curricular support.

2. Budget

- i. The Committee did not foresee much change from the current DHC budget, since most of the programming and administrative structure of DHC would need to remain intact were the DHC devolved to a program.

3. Challenges

- i. The Committee was unable to locate any benefit to students by moving from a DHC model to an honors program model.
- ii. In the current competitive environment among regional comprehensives, as well as among tertiary educational providers in general, the Committee felt that moving against the trend of honors college build-out into an honors program model would reduce CWU's potential benefit from honors programming in general. This was of particular concern to the Committee given the recent decision by Eastern Washington University to expand its honors program into an honors college.
- iii. Additionally, the lack of a pathway to pursue an honors college coordination role in support of departmental honors build-out was felt to be a significant potential loss to students at CWU.

4. Opportunities

- i. The 2017-18 Task Force was unable to locate any opportunities for CWU in devolving the DHC into an honors program. Any cost savings realized from salary savings by offering fewer classes and providing less administrative support as well as less programming for students would be minimal and spread between so many academic programs and units as to be almost imperceptible. The HTF felt the risk of loss of prestige for CWU in using the DHC as a lens for recruitment and retention, along with loss of the ongoing benefits of the 'halo' effect of honors college programming on a larger student population far outweighed financial considerations. The TF members were particularly concerned about devolving the DHC into an honors program during a time of huge competitive growth of honors colleges at public institutions across the country as well as regionally and within Washington State.

***IV. Vision: DHC becomes the central hub for honors at CWU, including coordination of departmental honors and honor society membership, providing a 'halo' effect for CWU that helps to attract and retain all students***

**Action Item 1:** Institutional Commitment to a fully-developed Honors College as a Transformative Investment

Recommendation 1: Co-location of curricular, residential and administrative components of DHC

Recommendation 2: Commitment to phased growth for DHC, including budgetary support for increased faculty, programmatic and staff hiring, with goal that DHC will serve 5-8% of CWU undergraduate student population

Recommendation 3: DHC to serve as a piloting site for scaled initiatives supporting transformative institutional priorities

**Action Item 2:** Three shared tenure-lines approved for DHC in the humanities and social sciences

**Action Item 3:** Honors in the Major (departmental honors) coordinated through DHC

Recommendation 1: Honors in the Major minimum general standards agreed and implemented

Recommendation 2: Coordination of departmental honors, including support for departments wishing to implement or build-out departmental honors, tracking of departmental honors and honors designations in coordination with the Office of the Registrar, and coordination with departments to ensure availability of departmental honors to any students wishing to undertake honors in the major

Recommendation 3: Honors Society representatives at CWU coordinated with DHC

**Action Item 4:** Raise profile of DHC to support culture of excellence at CWU

Recommendation 1: Honors Faculty designation designed and implemented

Recommendation 2: DHC workshops for faculty development and pedagogy instituted in coordination with relevant campus units

---

Appendix I.

Honors Task Force Charge

Appendix II.

Honors Task Force Members

Appendix III.

Honors Task Force Interim Report – July 2017

Appendix IV.

Brief: Recent Increases in the Establishment of Honors Colleges in the United States (NCHC)

Appendix V.

NCHC 2016 Census of U.S. Honors Programs and Colleges Summary Table

Appendix VI.

Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College

Note: HTF Charge item #04 included a fall 2017 faculty survey, discussions with selected department chairs, and ongoing informal conversations by HTF members with faculty colleagues. It is expected that the chair of the sub-committee on honors in the major will address ADCO on this issue fall during 2018.