

Executive Summary: Honors Task Force 2017-18 Report

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

Overview

The Honors Task Force (HTF) believes the greatest value to CWU lies in build-out of DHC into a fully-developed honors college. 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.

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

- i. Nationally, growth of honors colleges has been dramatically increasing since the mid-1990s, with the pace of increase especially pronounced over the past decade. Of the six public four-year institutions in Washington State, only CWU and Washington State University support long-standing honors colleges and only the WSU honors college is fully-developed. Eastern Washington University has recently made the decision to invest in turning its honors program into an honors college.

B. William O. Douglas Honors College (DHC)

- i. 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, including programming, administrative, student success and curricular elements. Such initiatives have contributed to an average retention rate of 93% for DHC students. However, financial constraints have prevented full build-out of many of these elements.
- ii. DHC currently operates on a budget of \$384,000., requiring 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.

II. Honors Task Force Findings

The HTF believes that the benefits of retaining DHC as an honors college far outweigh any potential cost savings from devolving it into an honors program. In particular, committee members called attention to the 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

- i. The DHC already has the essential building blocks in place to become a fully developed college in line with the other academic colleges at CWU. Ideally, the honors college would grow with the goal of future co-location of the residential, administrative and curricular components.
- ii. The primary expenses in terms of growth are the need to hire additional faculty to teach a growing number of classes, the need to hire a recruiter/advisor, and the need to expand co-curricular programming. If coordination of department honors were added to DHC, this would require additional staff time.

B. 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).

III. Recommendations

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