

March 22, 1988

Report to Undergraduate Council on Honors

In summer 1987, the Provost appointed, in connection with the campus planning process, an Honors Program Task Force to examine the existing Honors Program and to propose ways by which it might be strengthened. The Task Force's work has been completed, and this report constitutes a summary of its document, including the recommendation that UMBC develop an Honors College.

The UMBC General Honors Program was instituted in 1981. In recent years, several campus documents, including the report of the Select Committee on Missions and Goals (1985), the Middle States evaluation (1986), and the report of the Honors Program Task Force (1988), have all mandated that UMBC pay special attention to a program that can be expected to attract and challenge some of our very best undergraduates. The campus' response to date has been the alteration and continued operation of the program in place. The Honors Program has accomplished all that it reasonably can in its present form and with the limited resources at its disposal. We recognize the need to demonstrate a firm commitment to further development of Honors by raising its level of institutional and financial support.

Evolution of the General Honors Program into an Honors College will help the University in many ways. A strong Honors College enhances the perception of UMBC as a center of academic excellence; it demonstrates UMBC's commitment to the belief that excellence in research and in teaching are mutually reinforcing and lead to new knowledge; it increases the likelihood of UMBC's acquiring a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa; it improves UMBC's attractiveness to students who otherwise would contribute to the "brain drain" from Maryland and who will in the future become the producers of new knowledge; it becomes a

feeder to departmental honors programs; and it places UMBC in company with other strong, public research universities.

As envisioned, the Honors College will cut across general education and departmental requirements. Currently, UMBC lacks the administrative structure (i.e., organizational units are not colleges) for implementing a full-fledged Honors College. Therefore, the Task Force supports the implementation of an Honors College in an evolutionary fashion, the first phase of which is the enhancement of the current General Honors Program. We anticipate full implementation of the Honors College within the next five years.

Implementation of the Honors College rests in large part on the building of mutually beneficial relationships between the administration, the Honors College, the academic departments, and the honors students. These relationships must be carefully cultivated; a close alliance between the Honors Director and the department chairs is crucial to supporting the Honors College.

The Honors College will be established to meet the special academic and co-curricular needs of UMBC's most capable and motivated students. Building upon the achievement of its predecessor, the Honors Program, the new College will provide increased opportunities and recognition for high academic attainment by undergraduate students. The Honors College will be open to students campuswide and will bring together both human and material resources which are usually retained at the graduate and faculty levels of a growing research university. This will be accomplished through the four components of the College: formal coursework, special advising, academic community, and, eventually, the option to pursue a unique baccalaureate degree.

University-wide in scope and undergraduate in focus, the Honors College will provide special opportunities that fuse the scholarly advantages of a

research university with the individualized attention, rigor, and educational commitment of an academically demanding liberal arts college.

Keeping in mind the evolutionary nature of the Honors College, during the initial year of implementation, the number of credits in Honors courses required for completion of the College's requirements will be increased to eighteen (from the present twelve), taken in no fewer than six courses. Of these credits, twelve will normally be taken in Honors versions of standard courses or in new courses developed specifically for the Honors College; and at least six will be taken in two colloquia, the Freshman Colloquium and the Sophomore Colloquium.

Honors courses emphasize challenging content, in-depth treatment, individual effort, and outstanding teaching in an environment of relatively small class size which provides valuable opportunities for close interaction with faculty and classmates. Rather than the passive acquisition of information, these classes stress critical thinking and synthesis. The combination of course qualities, demanding of student and faculty alike, is intended to foster academic achievement, the development of a disciplined intelligence, and a maximum of personal satisfaction.

Although honors courses are challenging and require significant effort, they are not overly specialized. Indeed, most have few, if any, prerequisites. Some are solid introductions to disciplines and others deal with selected topics. Still others are unique and interdisciplinary. As a result, honors courses can be a source of intensive basic education in a major, electives, or a stimulating way to fulfill GER's.

The Freshman and Sophomore Colloquia will be designed specifically for the General Honors Program. Multi-disciplinary in nature, they will seek to engage students and faculty in a dialogue across fields of inquiry, from the

sciences to the humanities. Linkages of this type might be established by colloquia focusing on themes such as (1) "Science-Technology-Culture" and (2) "Perspectives and Values," the latter aiming to broaden outlooks and clarify values by including the study of women, minorities, the disadvantaged, and issues from an international point of view. Colloquia might be variations of such offerings as, under (1), "20th Century Conceptions of Time and Space," "The Role of the Observer," "Order and Disorder," and "Cognition" and, under (2), "Contemporary Issues in Civilization," "Perspectives on the Conflict in the Middle East," "Finance and American Literature," "Communication Across Cultures," "The Question of Difference," and so forth. Colloquia could be team-taught, taught by one faculty member, or organized by one faculty member as coordinator responsible for designing the syllabus and arranging for guest lecturers. We foresee 10 colloquia (with enrollments of 15-20) each year: 5 Freshman (HONR 100) and 5 Sophomore (HONR 200) sections.

In order to facilitate the students' written participation in such cross-disciplinary dialogues, HONR 100 will be linked to a writing workshop. This might be accomplished through the Writing Program's teaching assistants who develop such workshops and tutorials to guide students through the writing process, from prewriting to editing. Papers written for a colloquium, however, would be graded by the faculty member who organizes it.

The Task Force recommends establishment and adequate funding of a University Honors Forum. Although the Forum would not be a formal part of the curriculum, it would be an integral part of Honors, and attendance would be expected. The University Honors Forum would involve at least three major public events per semester that would be designed to elevate the general intellectual tone of the campus. Although most will be lectures, such events may also include concerts, creative performances, and exhibitions. Events and

presenters should be chosen by the Director of Honors in consultation with members of the Honors Students Association. The subject matter should be linked as often as possible to current topics of the Honors Colloquia. Events should be scheduled at a time convenient for both resident and non-resident honors students. In addition to the public forum, guest speakers or performers would be expected to interact with honors students and faculty in small seminars and informal social gatherings.

<u>Current Program</u>	<u>Proposed College</u>	<u>Rationale for Change</u>
1) <u>ADMISSION</u>		
Combined SAT - 1200 or Cum. H.S. GPA - 3.5 or greater or Cum. UMBC GPA - 3.5 or greater and 500-1000 word writing sample	No change in year 1 for Admissions Standards	The Honors Task Force is concerned that a change in admission requirements would result in our being overly restrictive at this point in the evolutionary development of the Honors College. Honors, as revised, will result in a certain degree of self-selectivity once students enter, i.e., students who fail to main- tain a cumulative average of 3.25 and who do not enroll in at least one Honors course each semester will automatically be dropped from the College. It is expected that standards for admission will change with the evolution of the College.
2) <u>PARTICIPATION</u>		
Currently there is no required "course per semester" requirement	Students must complete a minimum of 1 Honors course per semester or they are dropped from the program.	To encourage student participation in a more coherent and consistent fashion and to foster a greater commitment by the student to explore Honors learning oppor- tunities.
To be eligible to participate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or greater.	To be eligible to par- ticipate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or greater	No change

<u>Current Program</u>	<u>Proposed College</u>	<u>Rationale for Change</u>
3) <u>CERTIFICATE COMPLETION</u>		
Completion of a minimum of 4 Honors courses with a grade of B or better and a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or greater (12 credits)	Completion of a minimum of 6 Honors courses in the following manner: - 4 Honors courses (No more than two courses in any GER group will be counted toward the certificate.) - 2 Colloquia Freshman Sophomore (6 courses totalling 18 credits)	The Task Force views the distribution requirement for Honors courses as necessary for fostering the breadth of a liberal arts perspective.
	The above must be completed with a grade of B or better and a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or greater.	
	Additionally, mandatory attendance at the University Forum is required to complete the certificate.	(See description of University Forum on Page 4.)

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

	Development of an Academic "COMMUNITY OF LEARNING"	The Task Force believes that Honors education for the highly able undergraduates should combine several basic ingredients: intellectual challenge, individual effort, special advising, and academic community. We have observed that these ingredients, when combined with stimulating teaching by supportive and enthusiastic faculty, yield a particularly fulfilling educational experience.
1) Intellectual Challenge	1) Enriched academic community through a variety of exchanges (formal and informal) with: 1- faculty (Honors classes, independent projects, Research Fellowships, advising)	
2) Participation in a smaller academic community (honors classes) stimulating faculty and peers	2- Administrators (Provost's	
3) Notation on the transcript for Honors participation.		

<u>Current Program</u>	<u>Proposed College</u>	<u>Rationale for Change</u>
4) Development of enriched learning relationships with faculty mentors.	reception, Award ceremonies) 3- Peers (Honors classes, Honors Student Association)	Overall, the Honors College seeks to integrate high academic standards with correspondingly high expectations for individual attainment in a supportive environment (a "COMMUNITY OF LEARNING").
5) Participation in Honors Student Association	2) Special summer orientation for students participating in Honors 3) Individual faculty advisors/mentors to assist in developing abilities 4) The development of Semester and Summer Research Fellowships for outstanding students to work with individual faculty. 5) Merit scholarships will be made available to qualified students. 6) Notation on the transcript for Honors participation. 7) The opportunity for special housing in dormitories. As a further extension of the Community of Learning, a program of Faculty Associates will be developed. The Faculty Associates will be expected to take meals periodically with these students and make presentation to small groups in the designated residence halls. 8) Access to the serial stacks, extended library borrowing privileges, and study carrels. 9) The opportunity for early registration for both new and continuing Honors students.	