



**FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION  
*School of Information*

May 1, 2020

*Honors Program Policy Committee Report for Academic Year 2019-2020*

Dear Faculty Senate Members and Faculty Senate Steering Committee,

The Honors Program Policy Committee met six times during this academic year, twice in Fall 2019, and four times in Spring 2020 (including two meetings that were held online after Florida State University shifted to remote instruction in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

The primary focus of the HPPC during this academic year was the continued evaluation of the Honors Experience Program (HEP), which was approved by the Faculty Senate as a three-year pilot program starting in Fall 2018. The HEP is primarily intended to build community among FSU's honors students through a structured curriculum taught by dedicated Honors faculty. This curriculum was specifically designed to offer courses that meet Liberal Studies requirements that students are often unable to fulfill prior to enrolling at FSU (such as the University's X, Y, and Ethics requirements). There are currently four full-time specialized faculty members teaching this curriculum for the HEP in a cohorted fashion to approximately 100 HEP students each year.

Preliminary results from the past two years indicate that Honors students who participate in the HEP are significantly more likely to take more Honors courses, to participate in Honors activities, to engage with the Honors curriculum, and to be on track to graduate with University Honors. While these are all positive indicators of the success of the HEP, the students who began this program in Fall 2018 have not yet graduated from the University, and therefore, the HPPC voted unanimously on October 1, 2019, to propose an extension of the HEP pilot until *after* the first HEP student cohort has graduated.

To that end, the HPPC proposed the following motion to the Faculty Senate on November 20, 2019:

The Honors Program Policy Committee proposes that the Faculty Senate extend the final evaluation of the Honors Experience Program (HEP) to Fall 2022. Since the first cohort of HEP students entered FSU in Fall 2018, extending the Pilot Program until Fall 2022 will allow us to capture a full four years' worth of program data from current HEP students, thereby allowing the Faculty Senate to make a more fully informed decision about the success of this program.



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This motion was unanimously and enthusiastically approved by the Faculty Senate, who also made it extremely clear in their discussion that they felt it was very important that FSU have a strong Honors Program, and that the HEP would play an important role in the long-term success of Honors at FSU.

During Fall 2019, the HPPC also voted unanimously to approve a new policy for students pursuing the Honors in the Major Program that would allow specialized faculty to serve on and/or chair Senior Honors Theses, “so long as they have a terminal degree in the field of study (which would be a Ph.D. for most academic programs) or have graduate faculty status.”

Throughout the academic year, the HPPC divided into three subcommittees that met as needed (synchronously or asynchronously) to handle specific issues related to *curriculum and pedagogy* (such as discussing ideas for future honors courses and expanding the HEP curriculum); *evaluation and assessment* (such as assessing the outcomes of the HEP in terms of student retention, engagement, and graduation requirements); and *scholarships and awards* (such as reviewing applications for the Kingsbury Undergraduate Writing Award, and the Honors in the Major Thesis Mentor Award, which this year was awarded posthumously to Ned Stuckey-French from the Department of English).

Following March 2020, the HPPC spent significant time discussing how the Honors Program is handling the COVID-19 pandemic, and what the Honors Program Policy Committee can do to help. The Honors Program faculty and staff have done a fantastic job supporting honors students, such as asking honors alumni to write encouraging notes for graduating seniors, and transitioning the Honors experience into a remote delivery format, including hosting a virtual medallion ceremony. There is a strong focus on student engagement, retention, and recruitment during this challenging time, including online interviews with prospective students and virtual orientation sessions for honors students.

To assist honors students coping with challenges related to COVID-19, the HPPC approved two policies related to honors thesis defenses and student service hours. The first policy allows students who are graduating in Spring 2020 to delay the defense of their Senior Honors Thesis to the summer or fall semester of 2020. The second policy temporarily suspends the service hours requirement for honors students due to the difficulties completing service requirements under COVID-19.



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Finally, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to the committee members – Douglass Seaton, Lynn Jones, Tarez Graban, Jane Lo, Chad Marzen, Bridgett Birmingham, Rochelle Marrinan, and Ed Hilinski – along with all of the *ex officio* committee members, including Director Annette Schwabe, Associate Director Jeff Badger, Dean Karen Laughlin, Associate Provost Joe O’Shea, Provost Sally McRorie, and the Honors Student Representatives to the committee (Robert Cotter, Anna Grace Lewis, and Emily Colpak) for all their hard work on the Honors Program Policy Committee this year.

This is a difficult and challenging time for both the University and the Honors Program, but there is no doubt in my mind that the strong ability of the Honors faculty, staff, and students to build community through initiatives like the Honors Experience Program will carry Honors at Florida State University through these challenges and into a brighter, more positive future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul F. Marty'.

Paul F. Marty, Ph.D.

Professor, School of Information, College of Communication and Information