



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

May 5, 2021

*Honors Program Policy Committee Report for Academic Year 2020-2021*

Dear Faculty Senate Members and Faculty Senate Steering Committee,

The Honors Program Policy Committee met seven times during this academic year, four times in Fall 2020, and three times in Spring 2021; all meetings were conducted via Zoom due to the pandemic.

The HPPC dealt with a wide range of curricular and policy issues during these meetings, including:

- continuing efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in Honors;
- revisions to the Honors application process (this was folded into the main application process this year for the first time, thereby yielding a more diverse group of Honors applicants);
- the ongoing success of the Honors Experience Program, along with options for expanding the Honors Experience Program curriculum to more Honors students in the future;
- opportunities for increasing formative experiences for Honors students (including scaling up the “Honors in the Major” program to meet increased student demand); and
- reviewing scholarship and award applications such as the Honors Thesis Awards, and the Honors Thesis Mentor Award (awarded this year to Dr. Douglas Ahler).

In the interest of brevity, I would like to focus on two key outcomes from our meetings this year.

First, the HPPC is ready to declare the Honors Experience Program (HEP) an unqualified success. As a reminder, the HEP was approved by the Faculty Senate in Fall 2018 as a pilot program intended to evaluate the potential for building community among FSU’s Honors students by offering a structured curriculum taught by dedicated Honors faculty, including four full-time specialized faculty members along with “Honors Teaching Scholars” representing a wide variety of departments across campus.

Preliminary results continue to indicate that students taking HEP courses are more engaged in the Honors program, more likely to graduate with honors, and more likely to have a more successful



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experience in the honors program. It is the conclusion of the HPPC that the more HEP courses we can offer, the better the experience we can offer honors students at Florida State University.

To that end, the Director of the Honors Program has been working diligently to recruit departmental faculty from across campus to develop and offer HEP courses that complement the courses offered by the core Honors teaching faculty. Thanks to these efforts, the HPPC is confident that we will have sufficient seats in HEP courses for every incoming FTIC Honors student to take at least one HEP course during the 2021-2022 academic year, and for every incoming FTIC Honors student to take at least two HEP courses during the 2022-2023 academic year. This will then have the net effect of expanding the Honors Experience Program to all Honors students (as intended), at which point the Honors Experience Pilot Program will be retired, and the courses developed for that program will simply be offered as Honors Signature Courses available to all honors students.

By Fall 2023, therefore, every honors student will be able and required to take at least two Honors Signature courses during their first year in the program. Note that this is not a change to the total number of credit hours that honors students have to take (they still need 18 credits of honors courses to complete the program), but instead of hunting around campus for honors classes (which is hit or miss depending on the student's major), every honors student will have the opportunity to take advantage of a dedicated honors curriculum, learning within a cohort of other honors students, and selecting from courses that have been intentionally designed to best meet the academic needs of honors students and provide a shared learning experience that is foundational for student success.

Second, the HPPC is committed to taking a more active role in its official capacity as both the honors policy *and curriculum* committee (as specified in its Bylaws, which state, "The Honors Program Policy Committee shall consider curriculum and related policies and procedures for the University's Honors Program and Honors in the Major Program."). In order for the HPPC to play a more involved role in reviewing the honors curriculum, we are currently updating the process of approving courses developed by the core honors faculty to include a more formal course review by the HPPC.

While this does not change the curricular review process for *departmental* honors courses (those courses naturally go through their normal academic review channels), this allows the HPPC to serve as



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the *de facto* curriculum committee for honors course offerings that are not typically routed through more traditional departmental course approval channels (such as courses developed by the core honors faculty). The HPPC believes that serving as a curriculum review body for the honors curriculum will help ensure increased, consistent, and sustained faculty oversight and governance over the Honors Program policies and curriculum.

Finally, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to the committee members, Tarez Graban, Ithel Jones, Chad Marzen, Bridgett Birmingham, Rochelle Marrinan, Ed Hilinski, Lynn Jones, and Lisa Lyons, along with all of the *ex officio* committee members, including Director Annette Schwabe, Associate Director Jeff Badger, Dean Joe O'Shea, Provost Sally McRorie, as well as the Honors Student Representatives to the committee, Dexter Bell and Hannah Kelsey, for all their hard work on the Honors Program Policy Committee this year.

This has been a stressful year for both the University and the Honors Program, but the HPPC remains excited by and enthusiastic for the future of Honors at Florida State University.

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