



Douglass Seaton, Ph.D.
Warren D. Allen Professor of Music

MEMORANDUM

DATE: 2 April 2018

TO: Faculty Senate

SUBJECT: Honors Program Policy Committee report for 2017–2018

As the Honors Program Policy Committee reported last year, and as we updated at the Faculty Senate meeting on 21 February, the Honors Program has been struggling for years and is barely meeting the minimum that the National Collegiate Honors Council suggests we have. The Committee, the external review from a few years ago, and most importantly the students have all been dissatisfied with the Honors curriculum. Student attrition has been high, and recruitment of faculty to teach Honors courses has been a constant struggle.

To respond to these problems, in 2016–2017 the Committee created a proposal for a pilot program for a new curriculum. The curriculum will require 22-25 credits and include the Honors in the Major program. The central feature of the new curriculum will be a core of three courses that will all address an “Essential Question” (EQ) and will satisfy IFS requirements, Ethics, Diversity X and Diversity Y, and Scholarship in Practices. The pilot was envisioned for a limited cohort of students, who would be offered a menu of 5 different courses, each repeated 3 times—spring, fall and spring.

The new curriculum will seek to enroll fewer students than in past years, requiring students to commit to completing both course work and Honors in the Major. The hope is that with a smaller Honors contingent students will remain challenged and engaged, so that we will not see the massive attrition that has plagued the program in the past.

After consideration of staffing the core EQ courses with existing faculty, the Provost instead authorized a staffing plan to create three new lines for Honors specialized teaching faculty, who will teach only the Honors core courses. The Honors Program Policy Committee provided members to the search committee, and others participated in the interview process. These new faculty lines have now been filled. The new faculty will begin soon to develop the EQ and the courses for the coming year.

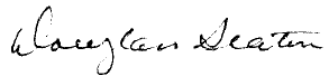
It is important to stress that *Honors will not be fully staffed by our three new Honors faculty colleagues*. We will still need faculty to teach Honors courses beyond the EQ core, as well as to mentor Honors in the Major theses. We hope that deans, chairs, and the Faculty Senate will assist us to find new, creative

ways to facilitate and encourage more of the existing faculty—especially those in tenure-track, research faculty positions—to offer Honors courses.

Since the Committee developed this major project and has been engaged in seeing it develop, we have not undertaken any additional initiatives in 2017–2018. Members of the Committee do also have responsibilities for the Honors Program, however. Most important of these is reviewing proposals for funding for students' Honors in the Major thesis research, which always leaves one impressed by these students' high level of aspiration and achievement. Other tasks are evaluating nominations for Honors Thesis Mentor awards for faculty put forward by their students, and reading theses submitted for the Kingsbury Undergraduate Writing Award.

I know that the Senate will want to join me in thanking the members of the Honors Program Policy Committee—Bridgett Birmingham, Ravindran Chella, Ed Hilinski, Jane Lo, Daniel Maier-Katkin, Paul Marty, Chad Marzen, and Lynn Panton—and especially Mark Kearley, Director of Honors.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Douglass Seaton".

Douglass Seaton, Chair
Honors Program Policy Committee