

# Honors Program

## FY09 Report

### FY10 Goals and Enhancement Requests

Kim Pereira, Director

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For the last few years Illinois State University has been able to recruit, retain, and graduate a higher profile of students than in previous years. Obviously, the word is out that this university offers a high quality education attractive to some of the best students in the state and beyond.

As we continue to attract and graduate ever more highly-accomplished students, the role of the Honors Program becomes more and more crucial in ensuring that the best students here are of a truly high caliber. Our ability to do that is largely dependent on our capacity to offer such motivated students the best kind of advising, and the advantages of grants and scholarships, and intellectual and social activities.

It is vital that we see the honors program as central to the mission of the university not merely in attracting excellent students but in providing them with the means to impact the intellectual, academic, and social life of the campus.

#### 1. Accomplishments for FY09

##### a. Honors recruited and served several highly accomplished and motivated students

Number of students in Honors: **1169**  
Percent of total undergraduates (17,949) **6.5%**

Number of students by College

CAST	<b>99</b>
CAS	<b>504</b>
COB	<b>217</b>
COE	<b>180</b>
CFA	<b>97</b>
MCN	<b>55</b>

The rest are General Students

Number of new students in fall 2008

Freshmen	<b>195</b>
Transfer	<b>21</b>
Current:	<b>136</b> (existing ISU students who recruited to join the program)

New Presidential Scholars: **39 (Av. ACT, 31.46; HS GPA, 4.21)**

Total on campus: **131**

**b. The overall academic profile of students admitted to the Honors Program remains at an outstanding level.**

ACT of Honors freshmen:	<b>28.88</b>
HS GPA of Honors students:	<b>3.96</b>

**c. By far, the largest percentage of the Honors operating budget goes to student waivers, grants, and awards, often in support of undergraduate research. Being able to make such awards is vital to attracting and keeping top-level students.**

Number of Partial Tuition Waivers & Awards	99 @ \$1000 each
Honors First-Year Scholarships (as Tuition Waivers):	17 @ \$2000 each
2009 Research Mentorships	18 @ \$ 600 each
Summer Research Grants	11 @ \$2500 each (Holding)
Summer '08 Awards	49 @ \$ 400 each
Travel Grants	4 (\$1075 total)
2009 In-Course Honors Project Contest	— 2 (\$150 total)
Speakers for PS Colloquia	6 (\$300 total)

**d. Honors maintained a high persistence rate of students admitted to the program.**

Students receiving graduation designations in 2008 (May, August, and December)

No. of Honors Graduates	<b>269</b>
University Honors Scholar	
<i>(Most prestigious)</i>	<b>35</b>
Certificate in University Honors	
<i>(next most)</i>	<b>107</b>
Honors Program Scholar	<b>243</b>
Departmental Honors Scholar	<b>87</b>

*(Departmental criteria approved by Honors Council)*

**e. Honors made several significant programmatic improvements.**

- Secured several new honors course sections, continuing a trend started two years ago. More and more departments are exhibiting a willingness to offer honors sections of courses, many of them in the General Education Program.
- The Humanities Project is now a reality, having been approved by the Provost and President. It will reside within the Honors Program and be administered by Dr. Curtis White, Distinguished Professor of English. Courses will be in the Gen-Ed Program and will be interdisciplinary, trans-historical, and will use primary texts. Dr. White and Dr. Pereira will seek out interested faculty to teach these courses.
- Sponsored a bio-chemistry student, Emily Backhus (registration and travel), to present a research paper at the Honors Council of Illinois Region Spring Conference, February 28, 2009, at St. Francis University, Joliet.
- Met with every Chairperson/Director/Dean on campus to promote the Honors Program, secure new Honors sections of courses, and discuss various ways and means to strengthen the relationship between Honors and Colleges/Departments.

- Instituted meetings with groups of Honors Coordinators to discuss ways and means of developing stronger relations between Honors and Departments/Schools.
- Invited Chairs/Directors to host informal gatherings with their honors students. Many chairs responded enthusiastically with pizza gatherings—Dr. Pereira attended these and presented information about the Honors Program.
- This year we continue our collaboration between The Vidette and The Study-Abroad Program. The Vidette will publish the three winning essays from our Study-Abroad Essay Contest, which was a collaboration between Honors and the International Office. We had ten superb essays submitted.
- The website has been vigorously updated to provide a much more comprehensive picture of the program. Asst. Director Christie Proctor maintains the website along with her other duties.
- Produced a new Honors Program recruiting postcard designed for efficiency and ease of response. This has proved to be much more efficient than the earlier mailings.
- Instituted a Professional Development session for our Student Assistant Leadership Team. SALT team (7-9 members) will develop leadership skills while promoting the Honors Program and building a sense of community among Honors students through creating and implementing innovative programs, as well as preserving Honors Program traditions. Our new staff person, Jennifer Frobish, advisors SALT.
- Stephen Brokaw, senior political consultant for the Obama campaign was invited by Assoc. Director Becky Mentzer to speak to her PS Colloquium; Mr. Brokaw then held a public forum under the aegis of the Honors Program at which he provided fascinating insights into the campaign, particularly what went on behind the scenes.
- “Trust me...I’m a Voter” panel presentation in September ’08.
- Michael Schafer is our Fulbright Scholar (2008-09) in Brazil, doing research in Archeology. This year we received 7 applications for Turkey, Spain, Cyprus, Korea, Germany, Chile, and Argentina. We are currently awaiting word from the Fulbright committee.
- We also received applications for the following scholarships: Goldwater (1) and Udall (4).
- The first Honors Tailgate was held at Homecoming, September 20, 2008. Approximately 30 students attended the event.
- This year we had an Honors Finals Party in the week prior to Finals; it was an opportunity for student to relax before the grind of finals. It was held in Honors House (Atkin/Colby). Food and drinks were provided and students had to donate cash or a non-perishable food or personal item to participate. Approximately 50 students made a considerable donation to the Home Sweet Home Mission.
- Combined Honors teams of HSO, PS Clubs, and SALT raised close to \$4000 for the 2008 Relay for Life.

**f. In addition to all the above, Honors maintained several effective programs.**

- Advised 250 students each semester, plus an additional 200-300 advising sessions for upper classmen dropping in.
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- Reviewed several hundred applications to the Honors program to select approximately 200 new students for fall 2008.
  - Organized an Honors Awards Ceremony in the Brown Ballroom, in October.
  - Administered the Bone Scholar Selection Process. Continued to streamline the process on Blackboard. This year there were 60 applications, the highest we've ever had; this is partly due to our continued efforts to promote the Scholarship among Chairs/Directors and to suggest ways in which they could make the applications more professional.
  - Administered and funded several grants and scholarships to students.
  - Presented at all "Freshmen Information Nights" to recruit freshman.
  - Participated in University Open Houses.
  - Organized Information meetings for current and transfer students.
  - Was heavily involved in the Presidential and University Scholar selection process, from reading all applications to interviewing students.
  - Published an Honors newsletter and a Presidential Scholars Newsletter; maintained a website, used a listserv to distribute timely information.
  - Advised an active Honors Student Organization and sponsored social events for Honors Students.
  - Determined Honors graduation designations for over 200 students.
  - Taught 1-credit seminars for all new freshman and presidential scholars.
  - Taught themed colloquia for Presidential Scholars; introduced new exciting topics (Elections, Humor, Social Justice) and guest speakers from various departments and Bloomington/Normal, thus strengthening the relationship between Honors and the Campus and City communities.
  - Continued the Faculty Panel Presentations with "Presidential Perspectives," in the Fall and "Sports Culture" this Spring.
  - Maintained active programs at Honors House, floors of Atkin-Colby Hall reserved for Honors students.
  - Maintained and clarified policies and procedures for 1200 undergraduate honors students.
  - Employed 10 honors students as peer mentors; 2 graduate Assistants; 2 student workers; 2 Presidential Scholar Assistants.
  - Awarded, through internal re-allocation, travel grants to undergraduates presenting their research at national conferences, a total of about \$1000.
  - Maintained a successful Student Colloquium Series, in which winners of research grants presented their work to their peers from throughout the university.
  - Alpha Lambda Delta (280 new members), a freshman honors society sponsored and advised by the honors program contributed several hours of community service and provided toys, blankets (which they created), etc., to the needy
  - Sponsored the annual fall program talent show.
  - Honors Homecoming Open House to watch the parade from the Honors building—alumni event.
  - Bookbag to Briefcase: Alumni panel offering advice by recounting their experiences after graduation. Five alums returned this year in February.
  - Continued the workshop (*More than Winning: the Broad Benefits of Applying for Prestigious Scholarships*) to help students learn about competitive scholarships.
  - Continued the dollar amount of the Bone Award of \$3,300, which was increased last year.
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- The Presidential Service Learning courses, which comprise Presidential Scholars and Honors students, contributed (including the anticipated enrollment this summer) more than 5000 hours of service to not-for-profit agencies in the Bloomington-Normal community.
- Extended the cultural enrichment activity of the Honors Freshman Seminar to include more art, music, and theatre options as well as attendance at guest speaker events. This coming year, students will be required to attend two fine arts events.
- SALT is helping to organize the Relay for Life together with the Honors Student Organization and the Presidential Scholars Club.

#### **g. Personnel Changes**

Sara Schickel, Associate Director, resigned, effective Fall, 2007. In the Spring of 2008 her work was redistributed between Becky Mentzer and Christie Proctor. For FY09 we hired Jennifer Frobish, who is now our Coordinator of Student Programs; Becky Mentzer was promoted to Associate Director in charge of the Presidential Scholars Program and Christie Proctor was promoted to Assistant Director.

### **2. Any non-GR sources of funding you received and what you did with it.**

Honors received modest contributions from alumni and friends for its Foundation account. Most of this money was saved for “rainy day” needs or exceptional opportunities. However, some of it was spent on staff development activities and some on student recognitions. We have made some progress with the foundation and now have part-time staff help; starting this year we will be contacting and meeting alums to create relationships and, later on, secure some donations.

### **3. Internal reallocations**

Reallocations included money for student summer research grants and awards. Funds were re-allocated from Sara Schickel’s line towards the hiring of Jennifer Frobish and the promotions of Mentzer and Proctor.

### **4. Goals for FY09**

- Continue to keep the Honors Program prominent in the public eye of the campus community.
  - Continue to lobby for more honors courses.
  - Meet with Chairs/Directors/Deans/Coordinators to promote partnerships between the Honors Program and the ISU community.
  - Continue to increase the visibility of honors student work and achievements through regular web publications and colloquia.
  - Continue to expand civic engagement by centralizing the goals of the American Democracy Project within our Service Learning Colloquia.
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- Continue to increase undergraduate research participation by providing opportunities for students to present papers at state and regional conferences.
- Improve the quality and value of the Honors House living experience by planning events and activities through our student organizations.
- Seek funding so that we don't have to depend on internal reallocations to make Student Travel Grants for Research and In-Course Honors Awards permanent.
- Review the Honors Freshman Enrichment Experience—increasing the fine arts requirement to two events.
- Promote more vigorously, perhaps with more grants if possible, research among undergraduate students, particularly in disciplines that are not normally seen by students as research-oriented or research-friendly.
- Secure some funds for the new Humanities Project.

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## 5. Immediate Challenges and Opportunities

1. **Funds for research activities.** The success and commitment of honors students to research warrants at least a minimal amount of support from the program. Several students are now making efforts to present research at regional, national, and even international conferences. An amount of \$10,000 would support them in these endeavors.
2. **Increase the amount of the Presidential Scholarship.** The academic profile of incoming students is increasing every year and this is being reflected in the high quality of applications. It would make ISU much more attractive if we were to increase the amount of the Presidential Scholarship which is currently at \$8,000, far short of the total amount needed to attend the university.
3. **Honors First-Year Scholarships** are an excellent way to recruit the best students, particularly those students who did not receive Presidential Scholarships but are still interested in ISU and are extremely talented. This past year we received some extra funds and we hope to maintain that amount.
4. **Partial Tuition-Waivers** are competitively awarded to the most outstanding Honors sophomores, juniors, and seniors. These are modest awards, in the amount of \$1000 per year or less that typically go to the top 5% of honors students. Students who receive these awards are generally the students who constitute the campus nominees for the national scholarship programs (Fulbright,

Rhodes, Truman, etc.). The Partial Tuition waivers are vital, then, for recruiting, retaining, and encouraging our best students. As with the Honors First-Year Scholarships, the partial tuition waivers are unstable, making it difficult to plan and grant the awards. The extra amount helped and we hope to maintain that.

### **A Long-Term Challenge Now Rendered Immediate**

The Honors Program lacks meeting space for students and faculty. At present, the building can accommodate meetings of only about 10-12 people. There is no waiting area for students, there is no student gathering space, and there is no room for seminars, presentations, discussions, or social events. There is no room, further, for the seminars required of all freshman honors students or presidential scholars; among the places we've held our classes are the basements of residence halls. We have no place for colloquia or seminars. When prospective students and their parents visit the building, there is, quite literally, no place for them to sit.

The current building is really an apology for a university space, and particularly for an honors program, one that is viewed by the campus community as a leading program in the university. Whenever one talks to former honors students around the country, the one thing they always remember is the sense of community they built by "hanging out" in the honors lounge. We have no such lounge.

A space to call their own inculcates in students an emotional investment in their program which would then facilitate our efforts to raise funds for the program from alumni. At the moment, the immediate affiliation for most alums (and this includes honors alums) is towards their major, even though, almost without exception, they offer laudatory comments about their honors academic experiences. We need to find ways to change that and a "space to call our own" would go a long way.

The Honors Program minimally needs office space equivalent to that currently provided, plus at minimum, a conference room that would comfortably hold 15 people; a classroom/seminar space that would comfortably accommodate 30-40 people; and a commons area in which Honors students could gather. There has been talk of renovating part of Williams Hall to accommodate these needs and I would urge all concerned to expedite this move.

***Respectfully submitted,***

Kim Pereira, PhD  
Director, Honors Program  
Professor of Theatre

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