

University Honors Advisory Council  
6 March 2015

Minutes

Present: Beckmann, S.; Bell-Werner, M.; Berger, C.; Crk, I.; Hecht, K.; Smallman, L.;  
Springer, C.; Voss, E.; Ruckh, E. (chair); Caveny, I. (guest); Toberman, I. (guest)

I. Announcements

- A. Website Redesign
- B. Honors Focused-Interest Communities (FIC's)
- C. Diversification of Honors Program
- D. Meridian Selection Committee
- E. Meridian and Provost Scholarships

Discussion of all of these items was held, so as to have time to discuss honors reform scenarios and budget implications.

II. Approval of Minutes

A. 19 November 2014

Hecht motioned approval of minutes of 19 November; Smallman seconded.  
Approved unanimously.

B. 3 December 2014

Voss motioned approved of minutes of 3 December; Hecht seconded. Approved  
unanimously.

C. 9 December 2014

Minutes were amended. Hecht moved approval of amended minutes; Crk seconded.  
Approved unanimously.

III. New Business

Update: Honors Budget and Reform

The director laid out four scenarios for honors reform with preliminary budget analysis (assuming an incoming honors cohort of 125). In addition the director presented an analysis of cohort sizes in order to find the points at which each scenario became approximately cost neutral.

Discussion ensued regarding optimal cohort size; Dr. Voss suggested a ceiling of 7% of incoming freshmen class (on the basis of the procedures of Phi Kappa Phi); that would be approximately 140 students (in coming first-year students, 2014: ~2100). All of the scenarios imagine starting with a smaller cohort size. The director is seeking clarification from the Provost.

Discussion continued about the curricular content of the reform scenarios. Mr. Toberman suggested modifications to Scenarios #2 and #3 that would make them more flexible (by removing a linkage to the Lincoln Program breadth requirements); these were sound and thoughtful comments that the Director will work into revisions. Dr. Berger pointed out that scenarios #2 and #3 would make a substantial difference to the existing program and would address substantial weaknesses to the existing program (these comments in the context of saying that it is not a propitious time to recommend a maximal reform that would require hundreds of thousands of dollars to implement). After Dr. Berger spoke, sentiment seemed to coalesce around proceeding with some version of scenarios #2 or #3. The director will be meeting with the Provost and Associate Provost after Spring Break to discuss the viability of these options. Dr. Crk, in considering justifying reallocation of university funds to the honors program, made an excellent point and asked an important question. Point: the justification for honors reform should include that honors education should accelerate the transition of students from thinking about learning as the passive reception of information to understanding learning as an active process in which students are co-collaborators in exploring and understanding the world. The director will be sure to use this thread when writing up the rationale for honors reform. Dr. Crk's question: did we have empirical data to back up the claim that honors education does in fact accelerate or amplify this transition? The director wonders if one place to look would be in the URCA program; what is the percentage of URCA students who are honors students? There was widespread interest in this information. The director will contact Dr. Laura Pawlow and request a master list of URCA students. Dr. Crk agreed to look at the lists of URCA students and honors students and see if meaningful inferences can be drawn.