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www.stockton.edu/honors-program/

1 July 2023

Dear Dean Gregg, Associate Provost O'Shaughnessy, and Director Walton:

The Honors Council thoroughly reviewed and discussed the consultant's report provided by Dr. Kevin Dean. While we endorse all of Dr. Dean's recommendations and priorities for our program,* there are a few that need the University's immediate attention. We strongly urge that the University support the following recommendations from our current consultant, most of which were also made by Dr. Greg Lanier in his external consultant's report from 2015:

Space:

- Dr. Greg Lanier, the external consultant from 2015, wrote, "The Honors Program needs clearly designated (and preferably prestigious) space." Our current external consultant, Dr. Kevin Dean, added, "The horribly inadequate space allocation to honors has not changed, indeed, arguably it has worsened as the numbers of students in the program has seen an increase."
 - ***Our Honors Council and students deem this a matter of high priority. Honors students should have a space consistent with the spaces afforded other groups of students on campus.***

Budget:

- In his report this year, Dr. Kevin Dean noted that, "An institution of Stockton's reputation in national standings should have a budget aligned with the University's strategic budgeting that would properly invest in current students and afford opportunity for growth."
 - **"For a comparison with a four-year regional comprehensive, the Honors budget at WCU [West Chester University in PA is where Dr. Dean is Honors Director] supports...a full-time Administrative Assistant, two graduate student lines, and access to student work study students, in addition to a yearly operating budget of nearly \$100,000. And beyond that there are the funds that support Honors scholarships and funds that come from the named Honors endowment accounts." *There are 80 students enrolled in the WCU Honors Program. Our Stockton Honors Program has 250 students and could grow.***
 - "Establish an enrollment-based funding system for Honors Programming in which students contribute \$50 per student per semester and the university demonstrates its recognition and commitment to them by devoting double the matching contribution in the amount of \$100 per student per semester. NOTE: this fund reflects an additional revenue stream for honors and should, in no way, replace or otherwise jeopardize, the current level of funding."

Registration:

- “Priority registration for Honors students at Stockton must be established if the program is going to retain students.” Dr. Dean pointed out that early registration is an ***ethical obligation*** of our university. We tell incoming students that they can complete both their academic majors and the Honors Program. We need to provide them with early registration to ensure that they can set up class schedules that allow them to do so.
 - Early registration for Honors students has been approved by the faculty senate twice and the Provost’s Office twice. It should be re-established as it was meant to be implemented in Fall 2021.

Honors Program Staff:

- “Honors desperately needs a ***full time*** Administrative/Clerical Assistant (AA),” (emphasis original).
- “Honors merits a ***faculty*** AD [Assistant Director] with a minimum quarter time release/reassignment each semester and the ability to teach a minimum of one honors course yearly, or better yet, one each semester.”
- The appointment period for the Honors Director should be at least 5 years and renewable, contingent upon a fourth-year review from the Honors Council and provost.

Other Institutional Support:

- The home program of the Honors Director should be appropriately compensated for the loss of their unique contributions to the program.
- Empower the Honors Program with the ability to schedule and lock-in professors to offer courses at least a year in advance.
- To be consistent with national standards and to distinguish Honors Program resource needs from many competing priorities in school budget requests, the Honors Program Director should report to the provost.

This is a pivotal time for our program. To give our students an Honors experience on par with other area universities and consistent with standards from the National Collegiate Honors Council, we require additional institutional support. It is a challenge to meet even our *current* obligations to our students, faculty, and the university with current levels of support. Fulfilling the majority of the recommendations in Dr. Dean’s report hinges upon receiving the additional resources he recommended.

Additional investment in our Honors Program will pay tangible dividends. Creating a stronger, more supportive Honors learning environment will improve recruitment and retention of academically motivated students. Better supported Honors students will produce more research and other good works, helping Stockton to garner greater national exposure.

If the university provides the additional support recommended by Dr. Dean, our Honors Council plans to pursue the following recommendations over the next five years:

Curriculum:

- Revise the Honors curriculum and create specific protocols for Honors advising in all majors.
 - Create three Honors Tracks: CORE, BRIDGE, and SEMINAR CERTIFICATE.
- As part of the recommended expanded Honors curriculum and Honors-specific PLOs, identify courses within students' majors that could fulfill Honors curricular requirements. Formally collaborate in their development with schools and instructors.
- Formally incorporate reflection in experiential learning and interdisciplinary coursework.
- Educate faculty, sponsor faculty development, and incentivise teaching in Honors.
 - Inform faculty about research opportunities through NCHC.
- Create Honors undergraduate student research tracks and service tracks.

Registration:

- Offer Honors courses at predictable, accessible times each semester.

Assessment:

- Create an Honors course evaluation document, required in all Honors courses, and with results confidentially shared with the Honors Director.
- Develop a partnership with the Office of Assessment to demonstrate the benefits of supporting the Honors Program, including potential student interns/work study.
 - Create a strategic assessment plan with Residence Life and Service Learning, and seek their support for assessment efforts.

Budget:

- Meet with the Director of Enrollment Management to discuss financial support for all admissions-related activities conducted by Honors.
- Involve multiple voices in funding requests.
- Create a student Alumni Director position on the Honors student EBoard.
- Discuss "friend-raising" with the Stockton alumni office.

Campus-wide Student Leadership:

- Encourage the Honors student E-Board to create an Honors Student Association, representative of all Honors groups on campus.
- Work with students to create an online Honors newsletter.
- Create Honors Campus/Community events, such as:
 - An annual reception to recognize outstanding faculty, advisors, mentors and staff
 - A Graduate School Fair
 - A High School Honors Conference

Recruitment and Retention:

- Create a strategic plan with the Office of Enrollment Management.
- Collaborate with Enrollment Management and Assessment to gather data and identify Honors practices that aid in student retention.
- Create articulation agreements with 2-year colleges and High School chapters of the National Honors Society for direct admission into the Honors Program.
- Explore Honors student-supported Admissions events, such as:
 - Back to my high school
 - Travel with Admissions
 - On-campus Honors Admissions Ambassadors

- Enhance recruitment of existing Stockton students.
 - Develop Honors Program membership status for students who cannot complete all requirements.
- Work with the Development Office to support renewable Honors scholarships for underrepresented students and for room and board.

Student Recognition:

- Work to get Honors students recognized at commencement. This should be a basic requisite and is compatible with recognition of those graduating with Latin Honors.
- Create an Honors Program “Dean’s List.”

Engage Stockton Leadership:

- Engage the faculty senate to recognize the Honors Council as a standing committee.
- Try to plan a meeting with President Bertolino and the Honors Council this summer.
- Try to plan a meeting between Dr. Dean and the new Stockton President and Provost.
- Discuss and, if possible, pursue Quarter Time Articulation of Honors faculty to the Honors Program with the Union, Faculty Senate, and Provost’s Office.
- Work with the Honors Director’s home programs to formally demarcate home program teaching, service, and professional development obligations.

Sincerely,



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*In his report, Dr. Dean sometimes mistakenly refers to the teaching load at Stockton as four, 3-credit classes each semester,, which is the teaching load at his institution, West Chester University, where he taught for 35 years. He was aware that Stockton’s teaching load is the credit-hour-equivalent three, 4-credit courses each semester.