

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
COMMONWEALTH HONORS COLLEGE COUNCIL
ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-2018**

**Presented at the
781st Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
November 15, 2018**

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Neal Abraham	Farshid Hajir
Madalina Akli	Sarah Hutton
Neal Anderson	Don Levine
Carol Barr	Luis Marentes
Thomas Brashear-Alejandro	Benjamin Marlin
Julio Capo	Esther Oh
J. Kevin Crocker*	Anthony Paik
Alexandrina Deschamps	Howard Peelle*
Gloria DiFulvio	MJ Peterson
Michael Dodge	Thomas Roeper
Diane Flaherty	Patrick Sullivan
Cobi Frongillo	Kimberly Tremblay, Chair
Gretchen Gerzina	Julian Tyson
Stephanie Griggs	Susan Ware
Taylor Guertin	

Submitted by
Kimberly Tremblay, Chair
Commonwealth Honors College Council

Charge

The Commonwealth Honors College Council shall:

- (a) Provide advice to the Dean of Commonwealth Honors College (CHC) on all matters relating to the administration of the Honors College, its curriculum and policies, including:
 - (i) honors course approvals;
 - (ii) standards governing the establishment, modification and termination of all Departmental Honors and Multidisciplinary Honors;
 - (iii) standards governing CHC student admission and graduation;
 - (iv) standards governing membership on the Honors Faculty and the direction of Honors theses/projects;
 - (v) development of a system designed to resolve such differences as may arise between honors students and members of the faculty; and
- (b) Send minutes of its meetings to principal administrative officers and to all academic deans as well as to those listed in Section 4-2-1 of the Faculty Senate Bylaws.

Summary of Commonwealth Honors College Council Business for the Year

The CHC Council held seven meetings during Academic Year 2017-2018, and one email vote was held upon prior agreement by the Council. The email vote was conducted from March 9-13, 2018, to facilitate course approvals.

During Academic Year 2017-2018 Commonwealth Honors College underwent its 6-year program review and was re-approved by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education as a Commonwealth Honors Program at the Board's June 2018 meeting. CHC Council members met with the Visiting Committee on February 9, 2018, during the site review.

Discussions

The CHC Council's proposal to revise Commonwealth Honors College requirements and reinstate the requirement for CHC students to complete an honors thesis was approved by the Faculty Senate at its October 12, 2017, meeting and will become effective for students entering the University Fall 2018. The Dean discussed with the Council an initiative to actively solicit thesis seminar proposals, with a focus on encouraging recently retired faculty to develop offerings on topics of interest to students in STEM fields. The Council also discussed the current information provided on Thesis/Project Manuscript Content on the Honors College website. The Academic Standards Committee was asked to further examine the issue and work with Honors Program Directors regarding thesis expectations.

The Honors Council continued discussion of "right-sizing the Honors College," including discussion of thesis capacity, University efforts to rebalance the numbers of STEM and humanities majors, and shifting the CHC Good Standing Policy. The Honors College grew from just under 3,000 students in Fall 2013 to nearly 3,800 by Fall 2016, straining resources available within budget constraints. To offer the full honors curriculum and provide well developed honors thesis experiences, moving back to a student body of 3,000 through gradual attrition would better serve students. Concerns were raised about the impact of such attrition on URM and first-generation students. It was noted that in Fall 2017 the student body numbers had moved down to 3,629 while the proportion of ALANA and URM students

increased reflecting continuing outreach. The Council Chair also provided information on students pursuing General Studies Honors, thesis enrollment capacity, and relevant historical information.

A committee of CHC Lecturers collected information on what faculty have been doing in HONORS 201H, *Ideas That Change the World*, for a proposal to the General Education Council to transition HONORS 201H from “I” to “I DU,” adding the U.S. diversity designation. Over the previous year, in collaboration with the Library’s Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA), materials from the papers of W.E.B. Du Bois and class visits to SCUA have been incorporated into the course. The proposal to add the DU diversity designation to HONORS 201H was approved by the General Education Council in Spring 2018. In addition, the *Junior Year Common Experience* course was approved as a permanent course, HONORS 323H, and its general education SB U designation was approved to become SB DU.

Policy

The Policy Committee proposed a limit on the number of non-honors courses that could be approved through the petition process to fulfill honors course requirements. The Council approved the new policy stating that “No more than 2 (two) non-honors courses may be approved as substitutes for honors course requirements,” and the language was added to Petition for Exception instructions.

Course and Program

The Course and Program Committee met with representatives of the International Programs Office and agreed to initiate a process for honors pre-approval of study abroad courses. That work will proceed over Academic Year 2018-2019.

Course Approvals

Upon review and recommendation by the Course and Program Committee, the Honors Council approved the following honors courses:

- Communication 499C/D, *Media Effects* (#4194), a new yearlong, 8-credit (4+4) thesis seminar, also approved by the General Education Council as an Integrative Experience, was approved for 3 years.
- Economics 499C/D (#4777), *Social Values & Public Decisions: Philosophical & Economic Perspectives*, a new yearlong, 8-credit (4+4) thesis seminar was approved for 3 years.
- English 257H (#4919), *Interactive Fictions: Performance, Participation, and Play*, a new 4-credit honors course, also approved by the General Education Council for AT designation, was approved for 3 years.
- English 499C/D, *Foundations & Departures in Creative Writing* (#4616&4617), a yearlong, 8-credit (4+4) thesis seminar, underwent 5-year assessment and was reapproved for 5 years.
- History 428H (#4892), *Nazi Germany*, a 4-credit honors course, converting from experimental to permanent, was approved for 3 years.

- History 490MEH (#5176), *Middle Eastern Metropolis*, a new 4-credit experimental honors course was approved for 3 years.
- Honors 222H (#5123), *American Portraits*, a 4-credit honors course, converting from experimental to permanent, also proposed to the General Education Council for renewal of its Gen Ed SB U and to become SB DU, was approved for 3 years.
- Honors 390EH, *Junior Year Common Experience: How the 1960's Changed America* (4 credits, Gen Ed SBU) underwent 1-year review and the Council approved extending its 1-year approval to 3 years.
- Honors 499C/D, *Debating Globalization* (#5041), a new yearlong, 8-credit (4+4) thesis seminar was approved for 1 year.
- Honors 499D, *Digital Communications and Society* (#4454), a one-semester, 6-credit thesis seminar was approved for 1 year.
- Honors 499D, *Psychology and Social Issues* (#4479), a one-semester, 6-credit thesis seminar was approved for 1 year.
- Honors 499C/D, *Video Games as Simulations* (#4760&4761), a new yearlong, 8-credit (4+4) thesis seminar was approved for 3 years.
- Nursing 499K, *Clinical Internship for CHC Nursing Accelerated Track* (#4544), a one-semester, 6-credit honors internship 499 experience underwent 5-year assessment and was reapproved for 5 years.
- Political Science 390EWH (#5012), *Politics of the End of the World*, a new 4-credit experimental honors course was approved for 3 years.
- Psychology 209H, *Myths & Truths in Psychology* (#4238), a new 4-credit honors course, also approved by the General Education Council for SB designation, was approved for 3 years.
- Public Health 499C/D, *Community-Based Participatory Research, Chronic Disease Prevention, and Stress Biomarkers* (#4911), a new yearlong, 8-credit (4+4) thesis seminar was approved for 3 years.
- Resource Economics 499N/O, *Implementing Sustainability and Social Responsibility in Today's Economy* (#3860 & 4035), a yearlong, 6-credit (3+3) project seminar, underwent 3-year assessment: reapproved for 5 years. The instructor also requested administrative approval to shift from project seminar to thesis seminar and modify the title; it was renumbered Resource Economics 499C/D and retitled *Sustainability in Today's Economy*.

On behalf of the Council, the Dean's office reviewed 111 honors course or colloquia proposals, between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018. This included 17 new honors versions of departmental courses, 44 new honors colloquia proposals from departments, 37 re-approvals of honors courses, and 13 re-approvals of honors colloquia.

Between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018, the Academic Standards Committee of the Honors Council reviewed and approved 391 Honors Independent Study proposals, 432 individually contracted 499Y Research proposals, and 416 individually contracted 499T Thesis proposals and/or 499P Project proposals. Ninety-five percent of 499Y/T/P proposals were reviewed and registered before the end of Add/Drop. Among the Honors Independent Studies, 122 were for standalone 3-6 credit projects and 269

were to add 1-2 credits of enrichment to a standard course. Over 95% of standalone Honors Independent Study proposals and over 80% of course enrichment proposals were registered before the end of Add/Drop. This is more than double the rate before implementation of PATHS and earlier submission deadlines.

Fellowships and Grants Awarded

Honors Council members assisted in review and evaluation of applications for Research Assistant Fellowships and Honors Research Grants resulting in awards of \$134,378 to 212 CHC students. The fellowships support students assisting faculty on research projects, while the grants support students' own research under the guidance of a faculty member. Students applying for research grants must submit a research proposal, endorsed by their faculty sponsor, for competitive review.

*Unfortunately, two CHC Council members passed away during Academic Year 2017-2018. Kevin Crocker attended one meeting in Fall 2017; Howard Peelle continued his membership but was unable to attend any meetings.