

Annual Assessment Update

Program/department name: Honors Program **Academic year: 2011-2012**

This form is to be used by programs with previously completed assessment plans. Please address the following areas. You may answer on this form by expanding the space between the steps or on an attachment.

Note: You should fill in steps 1-4 ONLY if you have made changes to your assessment plan. You must fill in steps 5 and 6.

Step 1: Mission

Were any changes in your mission adopted during the past year?

No **Yes** (Please describe the process used to approve these changes below or on an attachment and attach a copy of the new mission.)

Step 2: Learning outcomes

Were any changes in your learning outcomes adopted during the past year?

No **Yes** (Please describe the process used to approve these changes below or on an attachment and attach a copy of the new learning outcomes.)

Step 3: Program components

Did you change the program components in which you carry out assessment in any way?

No **Yes** (Please describe below or on an attachment.)

Step 4: Data collection methods

Did you change your data collection methods in any way?

No **Yes** (Please describe below or on an attachment.)

Step 5: Summary and analysis of data collected during the past year

Please describe and interpret the indirect and direct data you collected during this academic year.

Near the end of Spring 2012, we sent a survey to the 69 seniors who entered Honors in Fall 2008 and who were listed as graduating this year. We obtained results from 38 students, although not all students completed all questions. The compiled results of the survey begin on the next page.

GRADUATING SENIORS -- HONORS PROGRAM EVALUATION - RESULTS

You entered the Honors Program in 2008. Please complete the following evaluation, whether you completed the program or not. We highly value your feedback on the program.

Answers from students are shown in blue.

Part I – General

1. **In assessing my overall experience in the Honors Program, I would say that I have been**

very dissatisfied	1	2	3	4	5	very satisfied
	0	0	7	10	21	

2. **Among my academic experiences at Albion College I would rate my participation in the Honors Program as**

one of the very worst	1	2	3	4	5	one of the very best
	2	2	15	10	9	

3. **Would you recommend the Honors Program to a qualified incoming first-year student?**
37 Yes 1 No

Part II -- Great Issues Classes

4. How many Great Issues courses did you complete? 1 2 3 4 >4

3	5	6	19	4
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5. If you did not complete all four Great Issues courses, please indicate why below (number all that apply, with 1 being most important)

<u>9</u> Could not fit into schedule	<u>8</u> Was not interested in the subjects
<u>2</u> Not enough choices	<u>6</u> Not enough time to complete
<u> </u> GPA fell below level required to remain in Honors	

6. **I greatly benefitted from taking Honors classes instead of the traditional core classes.**

strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree
	1	3	6	10	16	

7. **In comparison to my regular classes, my Great Issues classes:**
 - a. **utilized many more unique or creative approaches to presenting material.**

strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree
	1	4	5	12	15	

b. encouraged me to take much more unique or creative approaches to addressing the material.

strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree
	1	3	6	12	15	

8. In general, my Honors classes were:

a. in terms of the breadth of the material covered,

much too narrow			just right		much too broad
1	2	3	4	5	
0	6	28	4	0	

b. in terms of the readings and course load,

much too easy		just right		much too challenging
1	2	3	4	5
0	2	22	11	2

c. in terms of the grading standards used,

much too generous		just right		much too tough
1	2	3	4	5
0	5	24	7	0

Part III -- Honors Program Advising

9. How would you rate the information and advising you received regarding Honors Program academic requirements?

very poor	1	2	3	4	5	excellent
	2	5	6	8	9	

Part IV -- Honors Thesis

10. Did you **Complete** : a) an Honors Program thesis 19?
 b) a Departmental Honors thesis 5?
 c) neither 11?

If you did **NOT** write a thesis, please check one or more reasons:

- 2 Not able to complete honors classes so no sense writing thesis
- 1 Did not have a subject
- 5 Too busy with Academics, Sports, Social, Extra-curricular commitments
- 2 Could not find a Committee/supervisor
- 3 Lost sense of involvement in program
- 1 GPA fell below level required to remain in Honors

If you DID write a thesis please answer the following three questions.

11. The information and guidance that I received about how to begin the thesis process were:
- | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|----|-------------|
| very poor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 excellent |
| | 0 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 11 |
12. Was it difficult to find a committee and a Thesis advisor: YES - 2 NO - 21
13. The working relationship between me and my thesis committee was:
- | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|-------------|
| very poor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 excellent |
| | 1 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 10 |
14. As an educational experience, writing the thesis proved to be:
- | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|-------------|
| very poor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 excellent |
| | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 19 |

Part V

Briefly describe the most positive experience(s) that you have had in the Honors Program.

Many different answers were given, ranging from academic (favorite courses, thesis work, class discussions) to social (Honors Council, Midnight dessert, Honors retreat, ski trip). As usual, several students mentioned the help that Renee Kreger provides Honors students.

If you dropped out or were considering dropping out of the Honors Program, indicate your reasons.

- 6 Not able to complete honors classes
- 3 Did not have a subject for a thesis
- 3 Too busy with Academics, Sports, Social, Extra-curricular commitments
- 2 Could not find a Committee/supervisor
- 3 Lost sense of involvement in program

If you were going to improve the Honors Program, in what areas would you make changes? Do you feel the program is too big, not exclusive enough, classes too crowded? Would you like to see more Extra-Curricular activities such as speakers, common readings, author visits, or other items?

11 Great Issues Courses

4 Professors

1 Grading Policies (*for example, would you prefer exams or quizzes?*)

9 Advising

11 Thesis Direction

7 Social Programming

2 Other: _____

What are your plans for next year? Will you be attending graduate school, seeking immediate employment, etc.? Please be as specific as possible.

Received 27 responses

Graduate school – 8 (history – 2, molecular biology – 2, psychology – 2, communication studies, geology)

Medical school – 3 (UM, MSU, St. Kitts)

Law school – 1 (Boston Univ.)

Employment /internship – 2 (PR firm, marketing firm)

Student teaching in Fall 2012 – 3

Planning to work for one or more years before applying to professional/grad school – 7

Waiting to hear about school, internship, or employment – 3

In addition to the numerical scores, students had the opportunity to comment on many questions in the survey. Most students were very positive about Honors, including the seminars. The lowest average scores were for item 9, about advising that Honors students received. Several students wrote that they would have liked more specific advising about Honors seminars (some claimed to not know that HSP seminars counted for Modes of Inquiry), finding a thesis topic, and selecting a thesis advisor and committee.

Step 6: Use of the data

Please describe how you used assessment data in this academic year, including any changes you have made or plan to make to your program as a result of assessment.

No changes were made in the Honors Program in 2011-2012 as a result of assessment.

For 2012-2013, we have convened a “full-strength” Honors Committee, with at least one faculty member from each division in addition to the Director and Associate Director. The members of the Honors Committee and the Honors Coordinator will share and discuss the information from the senior survey as well as some other items to make the program work better for our students.

One concern we have is that the percentage of students who complete the program and graduate with Albion College Honors has declined over the past few years (determined as number completing the program relative to number of students who entered the program and graduated from Albion College; 47% of those graduating in 2008, 42% in 2009, 44% in 2010, 31% in 2011, and 33% in 2012). There are several reasons why students do not complete the program,

including achieving a GPA below that required for Honors, failure to complete four Honors seminars, and deciding to not write a thesis.

The most common reason cited in our senior survey as to why students did not complete Honors was the inability to complete four Honors seminars (see Part II, questions 4 and 5, and Part V). To increase the proportion of students completing the Honors seminars, we will indicate to incoming first-year Honors students at SOAR that new students to the program are **expected** to begin their Honors coursework in their first semester at Albion. We have enough spots in HSP seminars for Fall 2012 to have almost all our new first-year and transfer students sign up. In the past few years, incoming Honors students were told that taking an HSP seminar was optional in their first semester (and some interpreted it as being optional in their first several semesters). A few students in Honors who just completed their first year at Albion have not taken even one HSP seminar, and at least 15 rising seniors have not completed their HSP seminars. We will return to the policy that students in Honors should complete all four HSP seminars by the end of their junior year, at the latest.

Another issue raised by some students who completed the survey was the need for more information about how to get started on their theses and getting that information earlier in their time at Albion. This spring, we encouraged rising juniors to take the thesis development course in Fall 2012, and the Honors Director plans to meet with sophomores and juniors several times next year to discuss getting started on their theses, including topics such as how to select a project, find a good advisor, and put together a thesis committee.