

**IFC ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT ON  
THE STATUS OF THE IUPUI HONORS COLLEGE  
Edited**

May 2011

*(with Preliminary Responses to Recommendation from Dean Luzar)*

The IFC Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) was asked to conduct an interim review of the implementation of the new IUPUI Honors College. Founding Dean, E. Jane Luzar, was invited to meet with the AAC to provide an overview of the new Honors College and to discuss the major achievements and challenges during its first two years. Dean Luzar met with the AAC twice and invited committee members to tour the new Honors College facilities located on the lower level of University Library building. This report summarizes what the AAC learned as well as offers some specific suggestions for Dean Luzar and her staff to consider as they continue to build the Honors College.

**SUMMARY OF DEAN LUZAR'S REPORT**

Dean Luzar gave a thorough report on the status of the IUPUI Honors College. In her remarks, she reviewed many achievements since the official founding of the Honors College, in particular with regard to the development of a new dedicated space, expanding and reorganizing the staff, strengthening the curriculum and program offerings, and assisting in the recruitment of high-achievement students. She also identified a number of challenges that she and her staff were working to address, including continuing to expand the curriculum, increasing the number of honors students, and adding one more staff person. Dean Luzar noted that cooperation by the faculty and registrar's office has been exceptional, and they are looking into ways to more fully integrate more schools into the Honors College. In her formal remarks and in response to questions raised by members of the ACC, Dean Luzar provided detailed information on the following issues:

*Space.* The Honors College relocated to new, dedicated space in August 2009. Their new home is located in the basement of the University Library. The prior student space and vending areas were maintained. Stayed on time and on budget. Promised entering class they would get the space in the fall 2009. The new space provides unique areas for students from different majors and programs to interact. All staff members (previously located in 4 places) are now in the same place which has facilitated coordination and more efficient management. Now they are a campus "showcase" because of the unique, inviting space design. The new area has attracted a variety of visitors, including prospective students, their families, high school counselors, faculty, and staff. On one day 150 student visitors toured the area.

*Staffing.* The original honors initiative staffing was structured as a small boutique program. The new Honors College has expanded staff and established a new organizational structure, including a full-time recruiter for high-ability students, a new associate dean, and a full-time advisor for the Bepko scholars program. They have reclassified some staff to better

suit program needs and are working to build a culture of excellence oriented toward the campus' "service with distinction" standard. They are conducting a baseline assessment and will monitor their progress in meeting this high service standard in the future.

Curriculum. The original curriculum was generally ad hoc and based only on the "H option" model, where an honors section was added to an existing course. The Honors College has taken steps establish a 24 credit hour program option, where students could take a larger number of honors courses in their major. Previously, many courses were not identified or advertised as "honors," and they have focused on developing formal processes to recognize honors courses on student transcripts and successfully worked through the administrative processes to put those procedures in place. Now, there are specialized honors sections attached to existing courses that have PUL-driven requirements and a formal "honors contract." They are working to coordinate and publicize honors curricula available on campus and to help more faculty offer honors courses. They are developing procedures and tip sheets for faculty. Dean Luzar also is meeting with individual departments and faculty to identify new courses and courses of study that could be taught in an honors format and to help clarify what it means to be an "honors" course or have an "honors contract" (approximately 90% of students now have them). The Honors College Associate Dean reviews all honors contracts before students are allowed to enroll in an honors course and begin work on the honors project. The Honors College staff is also working on adding an international component. Specifically, they have created a new program "international honors short-term study" that will be led by Dawn Whitehead and will involve 2 weeks at Moi University in Kenya. A second short-term project will be developed for Costa Rica or Mexico.

Recruitment/Students. Dean Luzar reported that the Honors College had approximately 140 students last year, with students consisting primarily of high-ability students and scholarship winners (i.e., Bepko, Plater, Herbert scholars). Participation in the college is currently 450 students, which includes students in the Kelly and Nursing Honors Programs. She and her staff have now assumed responsibility for advertising all of the major scholarship programs to engage more students, and they also are implementing the new Chancellor's scholarship program. The target is to enroll 200 students per year, so that the Honors College will have a total of 800 students in any given year when they reach capacity. A key activity in recruiting more high-ability students is developing new behavior-based interviews so that students get to meet faculty during the recruitment process. Faculty involvement has been shown to be central for successful recruiting of high ability students into honors programs.

Online/Distance Learning Opportunities. Dean Luzar reported that there are a small number of courses that are official "Honors College" courses. In most cases, Honors courses are taught by faculty who do not have full time appointments in the Honors College. The majority of honors courses are offered in traditional academic units using an "honors option" section associated with a standing course. There are no honors-specific initiatives to develop online or distance/learning opportunities. Those that do exist are because of the initiative of individual faculty with the support of their academic units.

Connections with the SPAN initiative and other efforts to integrate middle and high school students who enroll in classes at IUPUI. Dean Luzar reported that she met with Johnny Russell last year to discuss the SPAN initiative and ways of better engaging high-ability middle and high school students. She explained further that the SPAN program used to be in the Honors Program but was moved and integrated into University College. The target population is home-schooled and other high-ability students. A continuing challenge is how to provide a “home” and support to these students on campus. Many of these students are still developing emotionally and do not integrate well into existing programs. Moreover, these students and their families have many special needs, but IUPUI still has much work to do to develop the necessary support programs. For these reason, the Honors College has made a decision to not automatically admit SPAN students into their program. They are, however, working on identifying alternatives as well as special strategies to respond to their special needs and integrate them more effectively into campus programs.

IUPUI Honors College Advisory Committee. Dean Luzar noted that she embraced an early suggestion to establish an honors college faculty that is composed of faculty who are teaching honors college. Currently, they do not have the funds to reimburse faculty for their extra efforts (which was done in the past). The Honors College currently has two other advisory groups: the Honors Advisors and High Ability Recruiting Committee/Team. Dean Luzar indicated she would like to create a new group composed of faculty to serve as the formal Honors College Advisory Committee. She is considering asking the Deans to appoint individuals to the new committee. She indicated further that she is now more familiar with faculty and can also suggest potential committee members to the Deans, in part, because of their prior/current involvement in the honors program and college. The Committee felt this would be a good strategy and overall structure, but also recommended that a key consideration should be whether or not the school representatives can really serve as a liaison and/or ambassador to other faculty within their units. Dean Luzar committed to organizing this new advisory board this summer so it would be in place for the fall semester of 2011-2012. Chancellor Bantz has also recommended the formation of an external, community-member board, and she will be working closely with him in this effort.

Dean Luzar noted that cooperation and support from the administration, faculty, and the Registrar’s Office has been exceptional. The principle challenge remains to expand involvement of schools beyond Science and Engineering and Technology, which have been the most involved historically.

### **AAC CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION**

The members of the AAC were in unanimous agreement that the implementation of the new Honors College is proceeding very well. Both Dean Luzar and her staff have done an excellent job in a very short period of time of creating a solid foundation and addressing many long-standing challenges in expanding and strengthening the honors programming on the IUPUI campus. Under Dean Luzar’s leadership, the new Honors College is creating positive academic synergy on campus that is truly impressive.

While much progress has been made in two years, the AAC noted a number of issues where continued work is necessary to expand access to Honors College programming and impact the academic life of the campus.

1. The AAC agreed with Dean Luzar that the Honors College should work on developing more formal programs and structures within individual schools beyond those in the Schools of Science and Engineering and Technology. Committee members felt that additional steps should be taken to make more students aware. Specifically, committee members recommended the Honors College develop specific programming to help students acquire a broader view on the value of honors, new programs that are integrated into existing majors, and more interdisciplinary honors activities and seminars. In addition, the Honors College may wish to expand their focus to include students who are not scholarship winners, especially in those schools that already have a recognized honors program (e.g., Nursing, Kelley, SPEA) as well as honors students who were admitted prior to the formalization of the new Honors College.

*Response Submitted by Dean Luzar on May 25, 2011: All students participating in existing programs were included in the new Honors College, including Kelley and Nursing programs. As SPEA and others such as Public Health develop their Honors Programs, they will automatically be included also. These are not tied to scholarships.*

2. Members of the AAC were also concerned that the new system ties “honors work” with the overall grade in the course. “H Option” students, however, are sometimes unable to complete the terms of the honors contract but are successful in completing the basic requirements for the course. The Honors College should investigate ways of helping students who may not be able complete the extra honors work that don’t, in effect, reduce their grade in the parent course. One potential solution offered by the AAC was to administratively withdraw students who decide not to do the honors project or is unable to do it and move them to the non-honors section. In short, there is a need for an “out” to accommodate these specific circumstances that doesn’t penalize students.

Response Submitted by Dean Luzar on May 25, 2011: Based on the discussion at the first meeting with the AAC, we developed a process to do administrative withdrawals from the honors section at the request of faculty or student, moving the student into the original section at no penalty to the student.

3. The AAC recommends that the new Honors College Faculty Advisory Committee, when it is established next year, develop a formal working definition and standard regarding academic “honors.” The committee remains concerned that there is little clarity or consistency in what constitutes “honors work” across the academic units and disciplines. The Honors College staff along with the Faculty Advisor Committee could strengthen the honors program by providing a working standard to help guide their own and other academic units efforts to create new honors curricula.

In sum, the AAC feels that the new IUPUI Honors College is off to an excellent start and already has had an important, positive impact on the academic culture of the campus.