

Departmental Honors Program Council

Meeting: Wednesday, September 10, 2025

5:00 p.m., via Zoom

**** MINUTES ****

Honors directors present: Mira Waits (Art), Matt Estep (Biology), Santosh Nandi (Walker College of Business), Jennifer Gray (Communication), Mark Hills (Computer Science), Peaches Hash (English), Jennifer Kurtz (Exercise Science), Kristan Cockerill (GLS/GWSS/IDS), Cole Edwards (Geological and Environmental Sciences), Adrienne Erazo (Languages, Literatures and Cultures), Noah Williams (Mathematical Sciences), Cuong Mai (Philosophy and Religion), James Sherman (Physics and Astronomy), Christopher Seitz (Public Health), Erik Rabinowitz (Recreation Management), Emily Dakin (Social Work), David Russell (Sociology), Rebecca Witter (Sustainable Development).

Honors College staff present: Vicky Klima, Heather Waldroup

- I. Welcome and Introductions: new Honors directors!
- II. Approval of minutes from March 5, 2025: Matt, Cole 2nd. Approved with one abstention.
- III. New Business: discussion and vote on curriculum proposal from Biology, updating the Bulletin description of the program.
 - a. Matt Estep presented the proposal, which was approved by the Department of Biology in Spring 2025. The intention for the proposal is to lower the GPA required to apply for the program to 3.25, to hopefully remove barriers to students who might wish to begin doing honors research. The proposal also cleans up the Bulletin languages, expands the choice of prereq course options from two to four, and changes the GPA required to graduate with Honors in Biology.
 - b. Matt noted that the department hopes to raise numbers in its honors program and also make it more accessible to transfer students.

- c. Discussion ensued. A question arose about the 3.5 overall GPA required to graduate from the program. Vicky noted that the Honors College requires a 3.45 overall GPA to graduate, and Matt noted that the intention from the department was to bring the program in alignment with University Honors.
- d. A motion was made to approve the proposal with the amendment of requiring a 3.45 overall GPA (changed from 3.5) to graduate with Honors in Biology (Cole, Adrienne 2nd).
- e. Heather inquired re: whether the proposal should go back to the department with a substantive change. Vicky felt that approval from the Biology department chair would be sufficient for this purpose.
- f. Followup: Matt notified Heather that the Biology department chair approved the GPA change. Heather will ensure that the approval and change are noted in Curriculog.

IV. Reports and Reminders:

- a. The Departmental Honors Program Director Handbook was updated for 2025-2026: shared as a PDF [and also available here](#).
- b. This is a great time in the semester to begin recruitment! Suggestions from Jennifer G. and Mira:
 - i. Jennifer shared that she has Banner access and is able to pull reports of students with required GPA and appropriate number of credit hours. She then emails them to invite them to the program, and shares program information, student handbook and requirements ([see examples linked here](#)). She recruits in the Fall and has found email to be the most productive way to connect with students.
 - ii. Mira added that she has reports pulled by the department admin, uses that list as a starting point, shares information with students via email and holds a group Zoom advising session for interested students.
 - iii. Discussion ensued:
 - 1. Heather noted that programs may recruit fall only or fall and spring, whatever makes the most sense for their needs.
 - 2. Directors may consider visiting a 2000-level course if there is a single gateway course that all majors take (for example, HIS 2800 in History).
 - 3. Departments may have different philosophies about when to code students for honors in Banner. Heather encouraged directors to have students coded when they are admitted to the program, and Matt added that this could be useful for advising.

4. Jennifer K. inquired when students start the program after being admitted. Most programs have students begin the following semester (having them coded would allow them to enroll in honors sections, if available).
5. Vicky pointed out that coding students makes the courses required to complete honors also required for graduation, which is a requirement for much financial aid.
6. Students should be uncoded in Banner if they are not completing the program to not impact their graduation.
7. Some discussion ensued around asking students to formally apply for the program. Erik noted that he uses a quiz and Rebecca noted that her program has a formal application.
8. Heather will continue to update the Google Drive with resources.

V. Adjournment: a motion was made to adjourn (Erik, Jennifer G., 2nd). The meeting adjourned at 5:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted for review this 11 September, 2025, by Heather Waldroup.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be October 8, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. via Zoom.