Committee Name: University Committee on Honors Programs  
Chairperson: Rebecca Jacobsen, College of Education  

2012-2013 Activities and Accomplishments

Major Focus: Research Opportunities
The focus of UCHP for the 2012-2013 school year was on the research opportunities currently provided to Honors College students. The committee sought to understand: 1) What opportunities are currently provided?; 2) How are opportunities distributed across colleges/programs?; 3) Are there areas where opportunities are more limited and thus should be taken up by the committee in future work?

What is Currently Offered:
NOTE: The list below is not exclusively focused on just Honors College students. However HC students do represent a large proportion of the undergraduates participating in the opportunities listed below.

- University Wide, Honors College Specific - Honors Research Seminar
- University Wide, Honors College Specific – Professorial Assistant (PA) Program
- Music – Structured Research Funding Opportunities; Recital programs
- Engineering – NSF proposals include URA opportunities; Summer URA opportunities; About 50 PAs/year; About 300 undergraduates involved in some form of research (but not necessarily HC students)
- RCAH – About 12-16 URAs funded via faculty requests; Senior Thesis opportunity; Independent Study opportunities where research is often a key part
- JMC – About 6-10 PAs per year; high URAAF participation; Independent research work with faculty; 9-12 Senior Honors theses (probably ¾ are HC students); Research symposium; Active McNair Scholars presence
- Arts and Letters – PA program; Faculty with grant funds hire URAs so more diffuse
- Business – HC advisors in each department help students find opportunities
- Agriculture and Nat Res – Many lab research opportunities; Many build relationships over years with faculty; Summer Research opportunities available
- Social Science – Deans office offers funding for students to do research; Independent study opportunities
- Communication – Less aware of formalized mechanism for URA engagement
- Education – PA program more limited because students enter CoE 3rd year; Dean’s Office solicits proposals from faculty specifically for URA funding

Consistent Theme Across Colleges – The Role of Relationships
Successfully finding, participating in and succeeding in a research opportunity often was a product of a strong relationship between a student and a faculty member/advisor/other mentor. Continuing to foster such relationships is likely as important to furthering more student participation as is providing additional opportunities.

How Are Opportunities Distributed?
Not surprisingly, opportunities appeared to be more available in the sciences or in places where labs and funding are concentrated. However, each of the units does provide several opportunities and the HC continues to support university-wide opportunities.

Next Steps: The Honors College has already begun a more formalized review of who is participating, in what and with what impact. This will further elaborate on the work began by the UCHP during the 2012-2013 school year.

Recommendation: Continuing to build upon the Research Seminars such that a larger set of faculty creates a more diverse set of opportunities. This would further expand what’s available and to a wider group of undergraduates.

Because the Review of the Dean became a major charge for the committee during the second half of the school year, we did not fully complete our discussion of where additional opportunities may be needed and which student populations, if any, should be focused upon to a greater extent. This could be a topic for further discussion in the next school year.

Advisement to the Dean:
In addition to the above focus, the UCHP continued to provide feedback and support to Dean Jackson-Elmoore on a number of issues. These included discussing the national debate regarding whether or not on-line learning options should be offered for honors students and emerging opportunities for honors college engagement in international experiences.

1. On-line Learning Opportunities: The general feedback from the committee was that high quality on-line opportunities are possible, but implementation may be uneven. Therefore, the committee recommended proceeding with caution. The committee noted that the same criteria for face-to-face courses should apply to on-line courses (not taught by TA, limited number of students, etc.)

2. International Engagement Opportunities: The committee was enthusiastic about the possibility of an HC focused study abroad opportunity. The groundwork that Dean Jackson-Elmoore had already laid offers a strong starting point for developing the initiative.

Review of the Dean:
The UCHP also focused on the Review of the Dean procedures working directly with the Provost. This included:

1. Developing the list of stake holders who would participate in a university wide survey regarding the Dean’s performance

2. Developing a draft of the survey instrument
3. Identifying specific individuals both internally and externally to MSU who could serve as formal reviewers asked to write letters regarding the Dean's performance

**Additional Service Provided by UCHP Committee Members:**
1. Distributing awards information
2. Reviewing student applications for awards/scholarships
3. Reviewing faculty proposals for Honors Research Seminars

**Pending Items for 2013-2014**

As noted above, continuing the discussion of research opportunity equity across programs and student groups could continue into the 2013-2014 school year.

Because the Review of the Dean began mid-year, the committee will continue to assist the Provost during the 2013-2014 school year.

**Problems/Issues**

As with any university wide committee, finding a common meeting time can be a vexing issue. However, the majority of members were able to attend each meeting and all members attended at least one meeting. For those who were unable to attend (due to sabbaticals, conflicting meeting scheduled, teaching scheduled, etc.), communication with the chair directly occurred. This helped keep everyone aware of topics discussed and any work that needed to be accomplished prior to the next meeting.

Because there are no faculty with a tenure home in the Honors College, knowledge of all of the programs and opportunities the HC provides is often limited. Committee members often remarked that being a member of the UCHP made them aware of many more HC activities and programs. The UCHP discussed (informally) ways that we can continue to share with the larger university all that the HC is doing.

**Suggestions**

Formalizing the role of recorder (who then becomes the next chair) might aid in continuity from year to year.