A Narrative Description of the “New” Honors Curriculum  
(Information for the University Curriculum Committee)  

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Introduction  
The Auburn University Honors College will continue to offer a select—but expanding—cohort of high-ability students a unique academic experience designed to provide many of the advantages of a small college in addition to the myriad opportunities available at a large and diverse research university. Students in the Honors College will continue to receive a more intensive and innovative education than is available in the regular curriculum. Thanks particularly to small class size, specialized advising, and regular exposure to diverse social and co-curricular programs, Honors students will have close personal contacts with their teachers and with other students, providing a sense of community and identity within the larger university context.

New Admission Requirements for Honors  
Entering freshmen as well as currently enrolled students who demonstrate the potential for outstanding academic achievement are eligible for admission into the Honors College. Currently, selection of incoming freshmen is based on ACT/SAT scores (29/1290 minimum), high school GPA (3.50 minimum), and a record of leadership and service. All students already enrolled at Auburn must do to be considered for admission is complete an application and have earned an unadjusted GPA of at least 3.4 while at Auburn.

Starting with the incoming class of 2011, the minimum high school GPA for Honors admission will be raised to 3.75. The ACT minimum will stay at 29. Admissions requirements for already-enrolled students will remain the same.

The “New” Curriculum  
Comprehensive review of the Honors curriculum has been occurring on campus for over two years, and a formal call for curricular reform was made in March 2009 by an Honors College Task Force chaired by the Dean of Libraries, Dr. Bonnie MacEwan—a report whose recommendations were promptly approved by the University Senate. Subsequently, with direction from the University Provost and Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies, the Honors Director began working out a detail plan of curricular reformulation, with presentations on that plan made in fall 2009 to Provost’s and Deans’ Council.

Under that plan, much about the Honors curriculum will stay the same, with a number of Honors classes still being taught as Honors versions of University Core courses. In addition to the standard fare, however, the new curriculum will offer 1000-level interdisciplinary symposia, additional 1000-level Honors Lyceums, plus new 3000-level seminars and alternative ways (besides an Honors Thesis) of completing the last phase of the Honors program. No longer will “Junior Certificates” be awarded for finishing the first part of the program and “Senior Certificates” for finishing the final phase. In their place, the Honors College will be offering a single, integrated program that requires a unified completion of all credit requirements to receive any sort of Honors designation.

As with all other Auburn students, Honors students must continue to complete a University Core curriculum of 41 hours. Of these 41 hours, Honor students, must complete a minimum of 18 hours in the Honors Core, which is a reduction from previously. (In the past, AU Honors students had to complete 24 hours to earn their Junior Certificate and an additional 6 hours to complete the Senior program if writing a thesis or an additional 12 hours if substituting contract courses for the thesis. The required number of hours to finish the entire Honors curriculum was thus either 30 or 36.) All Honors students will have to earn at least 10 of their Honors Core hours in non-Science/non-Math Honors courses. All credit hours in the Honors Core will count as credit hours in the University Core.
AP/IB Credit
Previously, a maximum of 12 hours of Honors credit could be earned as substitutes for Honors Core courses. Under the new curriculum, no AP/IB credit will be given for any Honors courses per se. However, Honors students may still receive all the AP/IB credit they have earned as substitutes for non-Honors University Core hours.

The Honors Apogee
In the new curriculum, to graduate as a Distinguished Honors Scholar, a student must finish an “Apogee Experience” that is in keeping with the requirements of the academic major but taking that project one step farther. There will be two ways to fulfill the Apogee Experience: (1) the Apogee Project and (2) the Apogee Pact. The Apogee Project may be intra-disciplinary or interdisciplinary. It may be a traditional Honors thesis, a portfolio, a performance, an artifact (painting, musical composition, 3-D model, piece of software, etc.), a conference-style presentation, or an identifiable part of a team (senior design) project. The Apogee Project may also be an approved community-based research project (“service learning”) or a project based on a substantial study abroad experience. Completion of an Honors Apogee Project requires 6 credit hours. (Those hours will often be the same six hours that a department requires from a student to complete its own capstone; in those cases, the Honors Apogee will be a cross-listing with the departmental courses.) Students may also complete the Honors Apogee Experience by taking 6 credit hours in new 3000-level Honors Seminars. A student’s GPA must be at least 3.4 to qualify for beginning both the Apogee Project and Apogee Pact.

Significance of the new 3000-level Honors Seminars for the Apogee Pact
Given the dramatic growth in the size of Honors enrollment at Auburn, it would be a tremendous burden on campus faculty if all Honors students were pursuing the writing of an Honors thesis, for every one of those students would need a thesis advisor. In various planning meetings, the College of Science and Mathematics has repeatedly emphasized the impossibility of meeting this great demand for Honors thesis advisors if even a slightly greater number of Honors students approached COSAM faculty for thesis advising.

The Apogee Pact has thus been designed to mitigate this potential problem by giving Honors students a way to complete the requirements of the Honors program—one which is solid and highly worthwhile—that is an alternative to writing a thesis. The alternative comes in the form of the new three-credit-hour 3000-level Honors Seminars, two of which an Honors students will need to complete to finish the Apogee Pact.

Honors Participation
Being an Honors student means more than excelling in the classroom. Reflective of the three commitments made by Auburn University in its mission statement, the Honors College promotes socially and intellectually productive involvement not just in instruction but also in research and extension. Honors students, therefore, participate and contribute very actively in the life of the campus and the larger community. One of the major ways they do this within the Honors College is through their attendance and energetic engagement in guest lectures, film series, special programs, community-based research/service learning, and other co-curricular events held on and nearby the campus. In keeping with this commitment, Honors students are required to take a minimum of four 1-credit hour courses from a menu of Honors lyceums, Honors book clubs, Honors service learning opportunities, and Honors forums. Typically, students will take one of these classes (graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory) each one of their four years. These four hours are in addition to the 18/6 (24 total) hours required to complete the regular academic part of the Honors curriculum (Honors Core + Honors Apogee). The four hours of Honors Participation may be able to count as elective hours within the student’s disciplinary major.

Summary of the Four-Year Curriculum
To complete the Honors program, students must complete a total of 28 hours in the following categories:
1. **Honors Core Courses**: a minimum of 18 hours must be earned. At least 10 of these hours must be in non-Science/non-Math Honors courses. See attached for listing of Honors Core courses.
   a. For those students who do not need 18 hours of Honors Core because they have come in with an abundance of AP/IB credit, a small menu of additional Honors courses will be available, i.e., courses offered by various departments either as stand-alone Honors courses or as “hybrid” Honors courses in which a coterie of Honors students takes a class along with a regular class of students but who then fulfill special, additional assignments.

2. **Honors Participation**: a minimum of 4 hours must be earned.
3. **Honors Apogee Experience**: 6 hours must be earned in an Apogee Project or Apogee Pact
4. **Total hours required**: 28

**Distinctions**
After completing the requirements of the Honors College, students will graduate with special designations on their transcripts. Those who complete the curriculum portion of the program (18 credit hours) plus the Honors Participation (4 credit hours), and have attained at least a 3.4 university GPA receive the distinction “University Honors Scholar.” Those who complete the curriculum (18 credit hours), Honors Participation (4 credit hours), and Apogee Experience (6 credit hours) and who attain at least a 3.4 university GPA earn the “University Honors Scholar With Distinction;” and Honors students who complete all 24 hours, an Apogee Project, and earn at least a 3.8 GPA receive the title, “University Honors Scholar with Highest Distinction.” (Previously, only those students who completed the entire Honors program, including thesis, have received the distinction of any title; those titles have been “Senior Honors Scholar” for those who complete the requirements of the Senior Honors program and have a minimum cumulative unadjusted GPA of 3.2 and “University Honors Scholar” for those who complete all of the requirements for both the Junior and Senior Honors certificates, complete an Honors thesis, and have a minimum cumulative unadjusted GPA of 3.4. The new system of Honors distinctions is more rational and, in concert with the new curriculum and other changes in requirements, should result in more students receiving Honors distinctions.

**Credit checks**
The “credit checks” for Honors students will be done by Honors advisors. It will not be up to college or department advisors to check to insure that the criteria for the various levels of graduation honors have been met.

**Transition Plan**
The new curriculum will be required for all Honors students beginning with the incoming freshman class of 2011. Current students will have the option of staying with the old program and completing its requirements or transitioning to the new program. Early in spring semester 2010, the Honors College will hold a general informational forum for all its current Honors students in which the new curriculum and its requirements will be described in detail. Following that forum, all Honors students will meet individually with an Honors advisor to discuss the pros and cons of staying with the old program or changing to the new one. Given that the new curriculum requires fewer overall course credit hours as well as much greater flexibility in completing the entirety of the Honors program, we anticipate that the majority of our current students will choose to move to the new program.

**List of new Honors Courses Being Submitted for Approval to University Curriculum Committee**

**Honors Interdisciplinary Symposia (1000-level)**

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<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HONR 1007-1017</td>
<td>Honors Technology &amp; Culture</td>
<td>6 credit hours per course, for total of 12 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>HONR 1027-1037</td>
<td>Honors Sustainability &amp; the Modern World</td>
<td>6 credit hours fall semester, 4 credit hours spring semester, for total of 10 hours</td>
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Honors Participation: All are 1 credit hour, graded S/U

HONR 1077  Honors Freshman Exploration
            Taught by Honors College staff
HONR 1087  Honors Lyceum—Special Topics
            Taught primarily by Honors College staff
HONR 1097  Honors Forum for Freshmen
            Not an actual classroom course. Students will fulfill requirements by attending co-curricular events held on campus
HONR 2087  Honors Book Club
            Taught by diverse campus notables
HONR 2097  Honors Forum for Sophomores
HONR 3097  Honors Forum for Juniors
HONR 4097  Honors Forum for Seniors

Honors Apogee

HONR 3007  Honors Seminar (Apogee Pact)
            3 credit hours
            Sections offered by every college/school
            See Attached:
            • Proposal Form for Addition of Course
            • Sample syllabus from Liberal Arts

HONR 4007  Honors Thesis (Apogee Project)
            3 credit hours
            There will be different sections of this course for Honors Thesis, Honors Portfolio, Honors Performance, Honors Artifact, Honors Conference Presentation, Honors Team Project, Honors Community-Based Research, and Honors Study Abroad, respectively.

Funding Plan

The Honors College will subsidize the teaching of every Honors Core course and Honors Seminar at a level of $6K per course. It will also seek to provide a stipend to every faculty member who is serving as advisor to a student working on an Apogee Project; the plan is to provide a $1 stipend for every student being advised, up to a maximum of $5K a year (if 5 students were being advised).