ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

COMMONWEALTH HONORS COLLEGE COUNCIL

ACADEMIC YEAR 2013-2014

Presented at the
741st Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
October 9, 2014

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Neal Abraham          Sarah Hutton
Doris Bargen          John Lenzi
Renee Barouxis        Don Levine
Carol Barr            Ernest May
Rajesh Bhatt          Nicholas McBride
Richard Bogartz       LeeAnn Monteverde
Alexandrina Deschamps Howard Peelle
Gloria DiFulvio       James Rinderle
Emma Dundon           Pamela Trafford
Diane Flaherty        Kimberly Tremblay
Dan Gordon            Julian Tyson, Chair
John Higginson        Susan Krauss Whitbourne
Edward Hull

Submitted by
Julian Tyson, Chair
Commonwealth Honors College Council
Charge

The Commonwealth Honors College Council shall:

(a) Provide advice to the Dean of Commonwealth Honors College (CHC) on all matters relating to the administration of the Honors College, its curriculum and policies, including:
    (i) honors course approvals;
    (ii) standards governing the establishment, modification and termination of all Departmental Honors and Multidisciplinary Honors;
    (iii) standards governing CHC student admission and graduation;
    (iv) standards governing membership on the Honors Faculty and the direction of Honors theses/projects;
    (v) development of a system designed to resolve such differences as may arise between honors students and members of the faculty; and
(b) Send minutes of its meetings to principal administrative officers and to all academic deans as well as to those listed in Section 4-2-1 of the Faculty Senate Bylaws.

Summary of Commonwealth Honors College Council Business for the Year

The Honors Council held eight meetings during Academic Year 2013-2014.

Provost James Staros attended the Honors Council meeting on September 13, 2013. Provost Staros recognized the contributions of the late Dean Priscilla M. Clarkson who passed away August 26, acknowledged Associate Dean Daniel Gordon’s appointment as Interim Dean, announced plans to mount a national search for a new dean of Commonwealth Honors College, and requested input from the Honors Council on forming the search committee.

Vice Provost Carol Barr made a presentation to the Honors Council at its meeting of December 6, 2013, regarding the University’s strategic plan, its implementation, and its impact on CHC and students in general.

Chancellor Kumble Subbaswamy met with the Honors Council April 11, 2014, and discussed the University’s strategic plan and “responsibility center” management.

During the fall semester, the Honors Council held several discussions regarding honors writing. Materials on writing in honors courses were distributed by email early in the spring semester, and at the Council’s meeting of February 14, 2014, Honors Council Chair Julian Tyson introduced the Honors Writing Initiative, generating further discussion at several meetings. With the Council’s endorsement, a memo to all honors instructors was sent on April 10, 2014, soliciting input and extending the discussion through a web blog.

The Academic Standards Committee (ASC) reported that the revised process for submission of individual thesis proposals is contributing to more-timely, well-written submissions. ASC is also framing a request to departmental Honors Program Directors for rubrics of Honors Independent Study expectations at different levels.

Other items discussed by the Honors Council included reports on the Dean’s initiative on Diversity in CHC, Honors Program Director meetings in September and February, Five College cross registration from the Executive Director of Five Colleges Inc., hiring of joint honors-departmental tenure-track faculty, and reports from CHC council representatives on other Faculty Senate councils regarding “responsibility center” management.
At the request of the Honors Council, the Course Committee revised and streamlined the 499 Course Proposal Form used by faculty to develop and submit proposals for new 499 seminars that provide a small-group experience for students engaged in honors thesis and/or honors project. The Honors Council approved the following 499 seminar courses:

- Communication 499C/D, Honors Thesis Seminar: Popular Culture and Cultural Production, 8 cr. (4+4) – three-year approval
- Political Science 499C/D, Honors Thesis Seminar: Health and Health Care Inequality in the United States (to be cross-listed as Honors 499C/D) – one-year approval
- Political Science 499C/D, Honors Thesis Seminar: Power and Conflict in International Politics, 8 cr. (4+4) – three-year re-approval
- Accounting 499O, Honors Project Seminar: Emerging Issues in Accounting Practice, 6 cr. – one-year approval
- Nursing 499K, Honors Internship, for Accelerated Second Bachelor’s degree in Nursing students, 7 credits – change from nine credits to seven credits

The Honors Council approved a new honors course, Honors 290D, The Springfield Renaissance: Art and the City, and recommended that it be proposed for permanent course status and an application submitted for Gen Ed AT designation.

Between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014, the Academic Standards Committee of the Honors Council reviewed 364 Honors Independent Study proposals, 331 individually contracted 499Y Research proposals, 239 individually contracted 499T thesis proposals, and 44 individually contracted 499P project proposals.

On behalf of the Council, the Dean’s office reviewed 26 new honors course proposals from departments, 16 new honors colloquia proposals from departments, 21 re-approvals of honors courses, and 18 re-approvals of honors colloquia, between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014.

Honors Council members assisted in review and evaluation of applications for Research Assistant Fellowships and Honors Research Grants resulting in award of $127,980 to 139 CHC students. The fellowships support students assisting faculty on research projects, while the grants support students’ own research under the guidance of a faculty member. Students applying for research grants must submit a research proposal, endorsed by their faculty sponsor, for competitive review.