

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
COMMONWEALTH HONORS COLLEGE COUNCIL
ACADEMIC YEAR 2019-2020**

**Presented at the
801st Meeting of the Faculty Senate
January 28, 2021**

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Madalina Akli | Benjamin Marlin |
| Neal Anderson | Anthony Paik |
| Thomas Brashear-Alejandro | MJ Peterson |
| Alexandrina Deschamps | Sarah Pfatteicher |
| Rachel Ellis | Katherine Reeves |
| Diane Flaherty | Sylvia Salas |
| Gretchen Gerzina | Patrick Sullivan |
| Linda Griffin | Kimberly Tremblay, Chair |
| Makhai Dickerson-Pells | Lisa Troy |
| Emma Dundon | Julian Tyson |
| Farshid Hajir | Elizabeth Vierling |
| Sarah Hutton | Susan Ware |
| Don Levine | Jacey Woods |
| Luis Marentes | Alexandra Young |

Submitted by
Kimberly Tremblay, 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 CHC Council held six meetings during Academic Year 2019-2020.

Council and College Leadership

Dr. Kimberly Tremblay was unanimously reelected as Council Chair for the 2019-2020 year. As Chair of the CHC Council, Dr. Tremblay and two CHC Advisory Board members were appointed to the University's search committee for a new Commonwealth Honors College Dean. The search produced three final candidates, and on January 1, 2020, the new Dean of the Honors College was announced.

Effective June 1, 2020, Dr. Mari Castañeda, Ph.D. was appointed Interim Dean of the Honors College and on September 1, 2020 became official Dean for the Commonwealth Honors College.

Former Dean, Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina Ph.D., returned to the English Department as a Professor and will teach graduate courses in AY20-21.

The three-year term for the Associate Dean of Curriculum and Academic Oversight ended in August 2020, and Professor Diane Flaherty returned to the Economics Department where she will continue to teach Honors courses. Professor Flaherty will also continue in service to the Honors College and serve on the Academic Standards Committee of the CHC Council.

The Honors' College long term Executive Director and Sr. Assistant Dean, Meredith Lind, retired in January 2020. The new Executive Director, Sylvia Salas, began in November 2019.

Curriculum and Courses

Early in the Fall 2019 semester, the CHC Council reviewed and commented on a Request for Proposals that the Dean subsequently distributed to academic departments campus-wide. The RFP was intended to solicit concept proposals for new honors thesis seminars to be offered beginning Fall 2020. Honors students entering the University in Fall 2018 and thereafter, are required to complete an honors thesis, and the Honors College's goal is to increase the number of interdisciplinary Thesis Seminars offered over the next three to four years. In March 2020, the Council approved six new Honors Thesis described in Table 1. below. The new Honors Thesis

Seminars were added to the Fall 20- Spring 21 course schedule.

Table 1. New Honors Thesis Seminar Courses – Approved in AY 2019-2020

| Faculty/Dept | Course Title and Summary | Course Nbr |
|--|--|--------------|
| Steven Brewer Biology | <p>Course Title: Open Science Instrumentation and Data Collection 4 credit course in Fall/Spring</p> <p>Students will complete and defend an individual honors thesis using data collected with their instrument and create an "instructable", supplemented with imagery or video, that describes their instrument, how it works, and how to make one.</p> | 499 CK/DK |
| Leda Cooks Communication | <p>Course Title: Food as Communication 4 credit course in Fall/Spring</p> <p>The thesis Seminar will explore the intersections of food, community, identity and justice from a wide variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives, and will teach students ethnographic and other community-based research skills toward their culminating thesis project.</p> | 499 CL/DL |
| Hossein Pishro-Nik Electrical and Computer Engineering | <p>Course Title: Uncertainty, Risk and Decision Making 4 credit course in Fall/Spring</p> <p>Randomness and uncertainty exist in our daily lives as well as in every scientific investigation. Our intuition is often wrong when assessing uncertain situations, leading us to make wrong decisions. The goal of this Honors Thesis Seminar and the projects is to better understand randomness and uncertainty, and develop tools to make more informed decisions under uncertain situations.</p> | 499 CM/DM |
| Graciela Monteagudo Social Thought and Political Economy | <p>Course Title: Women Organize for a Better World 4 credit course in Fall/Spring</p> <p>Women's resistance across the globe is a theme that offers many entry points for research, as women organize around their own interests, jobs, and lifestyle choices. This highly structured seminar will guide students into researching and writing their research in an upbeat, highly motivating setting. The course will offer students exposure to databases and readings that will enhance their scholarship in their fields of interest,</p> | 499 CN/DN |
| Fredrick Shaffer Political Science | <p>Course Title: Is Democracy Possible Everywhere? 4 credit course in Fall/Spring</p> <p>This course asks whether there are in fact economic, or associational preconditions for (or impediments to) the establishment or maintenance of democracy. The course thus offers an excellent opportunity to 1) learn something about one of the big political issues of the day, 2) examine key methodological issues involved in the study of democracy, and 3) evaluate critically various kinds of social-scientific explanation.</p> | 499 CO/DO |
| Ashley Woodman Psychological and Brain Sciences | <p>Course Title: Readings and Research in Disability 4 credit course in Fall/Spring</p> <p>In this course, students will explore disability through theory and research. Students will be introduced to conceptualizations of disability, models of disability, and historical perspectives as well as the intersection of disability with other social identities such as gender, sexuality, and race/ethnicity.</p> | 499 CJ/DJ |

On behalf of the Council, the Dean's office reviewed 32 honors course or colloquia proposals, between September 1, 2019 and August 30, 2020. Table 2. below describes the proposals submitted by the Departments, their request for honors courses or colloquia, and lists the final determination made by the CHC Council and/or Dean.

Table 2. Course Proposals submitted to CHC Council/Dean in AY 2019-2020

| Course | Department | Course Number | CCMS Proposal - Department Request | Dean/Council – Final Determination |
|---|------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Political Economy of the Environment | ECON | 308H | #7188 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| Special Topics- Behavioral Economics: How and Why We Make Decisions | ECON | 297R | #7142 Add an Honors Component | Make Honors |
| Intro To Audiology | COMM-DIS | 313 | #7076 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| Intermed Microecon Theory | ECON | 203H | #6733 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| Junior Year Common Experience- What's the "Big Idea?": How Innovative Thinking Can Change the World | HONORS | 323H | #6767 Create a Major Course Revision | Make Gen Ed, Make Honors |
| ST- Research Topics in Economics | ECON | 297R | #6889 Add an Honors Component | Make Honors |
| STPEC Focus Seminar I | STPEC | 491H | #6776 Add an Honors Component | Make Honors |
| Hnrs Gen Chem-Sci | CHEM | 121H | #6695 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| STPEC Focus Seminar II | STPEC | 492H | #6777 Add an Honors Component | Make Honors |
| Introduction to Microeconomics | ECON | 103H | #6732 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| Honors Colloquium for Mineralogy | GEOLOGY | H311 | #6203 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| Honors Colloquium for Structural Geology | GEOLOGY | H431 | #6205 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| Honors Colloquium for Geological Mapping | GEOLOGY | 331HH | #5446 Add an Honors Component | Make Honors |
| Intro Oceanography, Honors | GEOLOGY | 103H | #6034 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| Intro Oceanography | GEOLOGY | 103 | #6648 Add an Honors Component | Make Honors |
| Honors Colloquium for Introduction to Oceanography | GEOLOGY | H103 | #6202 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| Introduction to Algorithms | COMPSCI | 311 | #6442 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| Honors Thesis- Energy Politics: Power and Inequality in a Climate Change Era, Second Semester | POLISCI | 499DC | #6447 Create a New Course | New Course, Make Honors |
| Honors Thesis- Energy Politics: Power and Inequality in a Climate Change Era | POLISCI | 499CC | #6430 Create a New Course | New Course, Make Honors |
| Caribbean Literature: The Sea is History, Honors | ENGLISH | 372H | #6538 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| Calc Life-Soc Sci II | MATH | 128H | #6255 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| Calc Life-Soc Sci I | MATH | 127H | #6253 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| Calculus I Honors | MATH | 131H | #6254 Honors Reappraisal Review | Honors Reapproval |
| Hnrs:Western Thought Since 1600 | HISTORY | 101H | #6495 Honors Reappraisal Review | Make Honors |

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|---|----------|-------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Seminar- Psychology of Illusion | PSYCH | 391UL | #6212 Add an Honors Component | Make Honors |
| STPEC Focus Seminar I | STPEC | 491H | #6408 Add an Honors Component | New Course, Make Honors |
| Pollinators: Ecology and Conservation | NRC | 590PH | #5983 Create an Experimental Course | Make Honors |
| Honors Colloquium for Anatomy & Physiology II | COMM-DIS | H212 | #6361 Add an Honors Component | Honors Reapproval |
| Introduction To Macroeconomics | ECON | 104H | #6052 Honors Reappraisal Review | Make Honors |
| Honors Colloquium for Neurological Bases in Speech, Language, and Hearing | COMM-DIS | 530HH | #6347 Add an Honors Component | Make Honors |
| Honors Colloquium for Neurological Bases in Speech, Language, and Hearing | COMM-DIS | H530 | #6347 Add an Honors Component | Make Honors |
| Indigenous Peoples of North America | HISTORY | 170 | #5676 Add an Honors Component | Honors Reapproval |

Note: The above statistics were compiled from a report in the UMass Course and Curriculum Management System (CCMS) titled "Proposals Reviewed by Dean or Council" and provided under "Honors Reports" in the "Reports" tab. However, when honors course proposals in CCMS are manually rerouted, they may not appear on the report. Therefore, the number of honors course proposals reviewed and approved may have been higher than that reported above.

Academic Standards Committee

Between August 1, 2019, and July 30, 2020, the Academic Standards Committee of the Honors Council reviewed and approved 397 Honors Independent Study proposals, 355 individually contracted 499Y Research proposals, and 334 individually contracted 499T Thesis proposals and/or 499P Project proposals. Ninety percent of 499Y/T/P proposals were reviewed and registered before the end of Add/Drop. Among the Honors Independent Studies, 151 were for standalone 3-6 credit projects, and 246 were to add 1-2 credits of enrichment to a standard course; 87 percent of standalone Honors Independent Study proposals and 76 percent of course enrichment proposals were registered before the end of Add/Drop.

Honors Research Fellowships and Grants

Honors Council members assisted in review and evaluation of applications for Research Assistant Fellowships and Honors Research Grants resulting in awards of \$117,555 to 177 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.

Established a Exemplary Thesis Subcommittee

The Council established a subcommittee to discuss and determine solutions for addressing issues with student theses. The subcommittee charge is to determine how best to identify "exemplary" theses, how to make them accessible to students, and how it would be possible to provide templates to students for exemplary written work that comply with content and format guidelines in a given discipline.

Impact of COVID-19 on Honors College and Council Operations

As result of the University moving to remote operations right after spring break in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the council met remotely on May 4, 2020 for its final meeting of the academic year. At this meeting, outgoing Dean Gerzina introduced the new Dean, Mari Castañeda, and both discussed tentative plans for the Council in the coming year, such as conducting a curriculum review or "pulse check" of CHC's curricular offerings. The switch to remote for the remainder of spring 2020 also affected the College's Celebration of Excellence, which ultimately occurred as a pre-recorded online celebration. The Honors College staff and faculty

continued to work remotely throughout the summer (including NSO and preparing for fall 2020), and due to the University's financial situation and the implementation of VSIP, the college experienced four faculty retirements and the continuation of two staff vacancies.