Radford University Honors Academy:

Implementation Plan and Budget Recommendations

Prepared for

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BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW HONORS ACADEMY

Definition of Honors at Radford University

"Honors at Radford University is defined by intellectual curiosity and active engagement in the educational process. In turn, these qualities are expected to result in the pursuit of excellence in one's scholarly and creative activities."

Mission Statement of the Honors Academy

The Honors Academy (HA) mission is:

1. To give ***recognition*** for academic excellence.
2. To provide opportunities for more academic ***rigor.***
3. To foster a ***community*** of distinction.

Honors Academy Size

The HA's freshman cohort size will be comprised of approximately 80 students. In addition to the regular fall cohort, approximately 20 new freshmen will be accepted into honors based on performance during their first semester at RU. This will represent a ~50% reduction to previous admissions standards.

Rationale: Incoming cohorts of this size will foster an HA composed of a student body truly committed to supporting all three components of the Honors Academy mission statement. In addition, an HA student body of this size will be large enough to support the Honors curriculum as listed below.

ADMISSION TO AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS IN THE HONORS ACADEMY

Admission Requirements

Academic requirements for entering freshmen. Students who meet any two of the first three requirements below will be invited to apply to the HA. Invited students must submit the required essay as described below. Admission to the HA is not automatic. The essay, the quantitative admissions criteria, and any other submitted information deemed relevant by the applicant will be reviewed by at least two HA administrators or designated honors faculty who will make the final admission decision. High school performance (GPA and class rank), SAT, and the application essay will bear equal weight in the decision process.

There are three requirements for admission, which are comprised of any two of the first three, plus the fourth:

i. High School GPA of at least 3.5
ii. Top 20% of one's graduation class
iii. Combined V+Q sections of the SAT of at least 1100
iv. Essay requirement

Essay requirement:
Students are required to submit an essay addressing the following:

> If you meet the appropriate criteria above, you are eligible to apply for admission to honors. The final decision will be made based on spaces available, your academic background, and an application essay that describes why an honors education is right for you. You should complete this essay as a separate file (e.g., Word or PDF document) and upload it using the links in the application form below. The essay should be double-spaced, 12-pt Times New Roman font, and no more than 500 words. Please consider the following information when writing your essay:
>
> "Although no two honors experiences are the same, a common theme is the desire for active engagement in the educational process. Thus a commitment to honors means more collaborative learning between the honors student, other students, and faculty. It also can include an emphasis on interdisciplinary perspectives, international education, and student-initiated research. Please write an essay to describe why you believe an honors education at Radford University will assist you in fulfilling your educational and career goals."
>
> In addition to this required essay, you may also include a separate narrative that describes anything about your personal or academic background that you will like the committee to consider when making decisions about admissions to honors. This information is optional, but if submitted it should meet the same format and length requirements described above.

Rationale: Inclusion of the new essay requirement supports an HA student body dedicated to the mission of the HA. It should be noted that an expected drop in applications during a pilot implementation of the essay requirement did not occur. In addition, it was noted by the HA administrators that even *minor* changes to the current minimum eligibility requirements will most likely result in a disproportionately large decrease in number of incoming freshmen who are eligible for honors at RU.

Academic requirements for second semester freshman. Freshmen with a minimum GPA of 3.5 (an increase of .2 over current standards) at the end of their first semester at Radford University (RU) will be invited to apply to the HA. They will need to fulfill the essay requirement and their applications will be reviewed in the same manner as new freshmen.

Maintenance of Good Standing

To maintain good standing in the HA students must:

- Maintain a GPA of 3.3 during freshmen and sophomore years (an increase of .1 over current standards for freshmen), 3.4 during junior year, and 3.5 during senior year.
- Fulfill at least one HA curriculum requirement each semester as relevant to cohort standing (see below). Typically, HA students will be expected to complete at least one HA curriculum requirement each semester.
- Fulfill co-curricular requirements (see below).
- Maintain minimum professionalism score (see below).

Students who fail to fulfill one of these requirements will be subject to probation or suspension policies determined by the Honors Academy Student Council (HASC) and Honors Advisory Council (HAC).

Rationale: Students who do not maintain the minimum GPA requirements are unlikely to achieve the necessary 3.5 GPA for graduating with honors. Expectations for completing honors requirements and participating in honors co-curricular events are designed to increase the sense of an honors community.

HONORS ACADEMY CURRICULUM

27 total credit hours

All HA designated courses will have the prefix (HNRS).

University CORE A – 6 credits

Take at least 2 of following 3 honors courses:

- HNRS 103 – Written and Oral Communication-Honors (*required*)
- HNRS 201 – Topics in Critical Inquiry-Honors
- HNRS 202 – Topics in Ethical Inquiry-Honors

University CORE B – 9 credits

Take at least 3 honors courses from the following 5 areas:

- Math
- Natural Sciences
- Humanities
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Social and Behavioral Sciences

Upper Level Honors Sequence – 9 credits

Take at least 3 of following 5 options starting junior year:

- HNRS 300 – Scholarly and Creative Inquiry (*required*)
- HNRS 310 – Interdisciplinary Honors Seminar
- Independent Study (---- 498) in major
- Contract course in major
- Study abroad

Honors Capstone – 3 credits

Petitions for exceptions to the prescribed honors curriculum can be submitted to the Director. Specific policies and guidelines for accepting these petitions will be determined by the Honors Advisory Council.

The Director, Associate Director, and eight designated Honors Fellows (see section below) will typically teach most of the HA courses offered in a given semester. Probable exceptions are as follows:

- Multiple sections of HNRS 103 will be required each semester and will be offered by faculty from the English department.
- Any RU faculty could submit a proposal to teach the Interdisciplinary Honors Seminars.
- Independent study, HA contracts, study abroad, and HA capstones can be offered and supported by any RU faculty

Rationale: The primary goal of the new curriculum is to increase retention of upper-level honors students by providing academic experiences that keep them engaged in honors. At the same time, the curriculum allows for the flexibility to address the complex needs of some majors (e.g., nursing) and double-majors. Notably, this proposed curriculum shifts some hours from contracts (i.e., currently, students are required to complete a total of four contracts) to course credits (i.e., currently, students are required to take four HA courses in the University CORE; this proposal increases that requirement to 5 HA courses in the University CORE). In addition, students will be encouraged to complete 3 *different* options of the five that are presented in the upper level sequence (i.e., versus multiple contracts). Taken together, we anticipate that upper-level honors students will have more contact with honors faculty and other honors students, both of which will facilitate their retention in the program.

HONORS ACADEMY FELLOWS & ADMINISTRATION

Honors Academy Fellows

In addition to the HA director and associate director, there will be eight designated Honors Fellows. These faculty members will be drawn from the following:

- One from each area of University CORE B (Math, Natural Science, Humanities, VPA, SBS)
- One from each college under-represented in University CORE B (COBE, CEHD, CHHS)

Designated Honors Fellows will teach two honors classes per academic year, advise honors students on academic and professional issues, and participate in co-curricular activities with honors students. With approximately 100 students per cohort (comprised of approximately 80 students admitted for the fall semester of their freshman year, plus an additional 20 accepted into the HA based on their performance during their first

semester at RU), two-thirds of the classes could be covered by the Honors Fellows teaching two courses per academic year. Additional faculty from outside the HA will be needed to teach some of the courses. Expectations of and incentives for designated Honors Fellows will include:

Expectations:

- Faculty from each college will apply for and, if selected, be appointed for a 3-year term as an Honors Fellow Applicants will be selected by the honors director in consultation with deans from each undergraduate college.
- Each Honors Fellow will teach 2 honors courses per academic year.
- Honors Fellows will advise honors students within the faculty member's college on professional and academic matters.
- Honors Fellows will participate in co-curricular honors activities throughout the year.

Incentives:

- 1 course release per academic year
- Stipend of $2500
- University-wide recognition (may include names of Honors Fellows listed in graduation program, plaques in HA facility, etc.)

Rationale: The primary benefit of an honors education is increased contact with faculty and other academically-minded students. Currently, our honors program must beg and plead with department chairs to release their faculty to teach honors section. Further, the program must beg and plead with faculty to attend honors events and meet with students. These chairs and faculty have their own departmental obligations and any work for honors comes from the kindness of their hearts. Clearly this is professionally rewarding work, but the stability of the program requires a committed group of faculty who are willing and able to spend time with honors students (both in and out of class). The proposed incentives for working as Honors Fellows would be small in comparison to the important mentorship they will provide for these students.

Honors Advisory Council (HAC)

The purpose of the Honors Advisory Council (HAC) is to determine policies for the RU HA, ensure that the execution of these policies is aligned with the HA mission, and that the HA maintains a mutually beneficial relationship with the larger campus community. The HAC will be comprised of the eight designated Honors Faculty members, a representative from RU Admissions, the HA Director and Associate Director, and 2 student representatives selected by the HASC.

Honors Academy Student Council (HASC)

The role of the Honors Academy Student Council (HASC) is to recommend policies and regulations regarding the requirements and expectations of HA students. These recommendations are expected to include standards or policies related to professional behavior and co-curricular requirements for students in the program. Final responsibility for adoption of any HASC recommendations is held by the HAC. The HASC should be comprised of 3-4 HA students from each cohort; a President and Vice-President will be elected each year. The HASC will be a new addition to the Honors Academy.

Rationale: These advisory committees are typical in other honors programs. The committees will ensure that the best policies and procedures are adopted, while also enhancing the sense of community in honors.

HONORS ACADEMY PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND CO-CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

Honors Academy Professional Conduct Requirements

HA students are expected to behave with professional decorum. They will need to maintain a formal professionalism score. This score will start out at 100% with the assumption that they are professionals. The score will drop when they have unexcused absences from co-curricular events, are reported as being unprofessional by faculty or staff, or if they have a student conduct violation. Scores may also be raised as a result of behaviors that exhibit exceptional professionalism. Students who fail to maintain the minimum score will be placed on probationary status or removed from honors. Other behaviors could be identified that increase a student's score. The Honors Academy Student Council will make recommendations regarding the professional conduct requirements to the Honors Advisory Council.

Rationale: The professional conduct requirements score will establish a formal process to address behavioral and professional issues by HA students. These students should be expected to have conduct consistent with membership in any prestigious organization, yet the current program has not mechanism for enforcing such expectations.

Honors Academy Co-curricular Requirements

HA students will be required to complete four co-curricular activities per year, of which two required activities will be HA meals. The goal of the co-curricular requirement is to augment the mission of the HA (i.e. recognition, academic rigor, and community). At

least one Honors Fellow will be expected to also attend each co-curricular activity. The co-curricular activities will be expected to vary from year to year, but typical examples might include:

- Each class (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) will have one meal together each semester, preferably with a faculty speaker.
- HA students will attend honors capstone presentation(s) at the Undergraduate/Graduate Engagement Forum each spring.
- HA Student Organization community service events/activities
- QEP-sponsored events
- Leadership roles within the HA (e.g., HSC, HASO leadership, coordinating other honors events)
- Leadership roles in HA orientation for new members

Details of policies and procedures for monitoring participation in co-curricular activities will be made in recommendations by the HASC to the HAC. In addition to participation in these formal co-curricular activities, honors students will be expected to participate in informal co-curricular routes as well. For example, upper-class HA students should welcome the opportunity to mentor new freshmen assigned to them.

Rationale: This requirement will encourage communication, engagement, and involvement among the HA students. The requirement is expected to enhance a sense of the "community of scholars" beyond the classroom, in situations and environments in which HA students will think about and discuss the world around them.

Upperclassmen Research Scholarships

Upperclassmen (juniors and seniors) who maintain active membership in the HA will be eligible to apply for an annual (maximum of two) $500 research scholarship. HA administrators will work directly with the Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research to determine the specific criteria for these awards.

Rationale: This incentive is one of several strategies the committee is proposing to increase retention of upper-level students in honors while also supporting the academic mission of the program.

UNIVERSITY AWARENESS AND EDUCATION OF THE HONORS ACADEMY

Honors Academy Communication with RU Administration and Faculty

The HA will improve its campus reputation via more frequent communications, public relations, and general promotion, including the creation and distribution of an HA annual report and promotional brochure.

There will be formalized and regular meetings with RU administration and faculty members to increase awareness of the HA and to clarify policies and expectations of both students and faculty as well as to address issues of concern. These meetings will include:

- HA administrator(s) (HA director and/or associate director) will meet regularly with the Provost/VP for AA.
- HA administration will present and participate in at least one Academic Affairs Leadership Team meeting per academic semester.
- HA administrators will attend college leadership team meetings at least once per year; administrators will contact the Leadership Teams of each college at least once per semester to offer to present/meet with faculty during these meetings
- HA administrator(s) will offer regularly to meet with each academic unit. These meetings may include discussion regarding the quality of departmental HA contracts and capstone projects.
- HA administrator(s) will be allowed to participate in new faculty orientation sessions.

Rationale: One finding from the previous task force on honors was a general lack of knowledge about the Honors Academy. This knowledge gap ranged from policies and procedures to membership requirements to mission. Increased communication from honors is the chief way to improve knowledge.

Honors Academy Contract and Capstone Project Expectations

The HAC will determine and create general standards for HA contracts and capstone projects. Although it will be the responsibility of each faculty and HA student dyad to discuss and generate expectations for each contract, the following will be in place in order to support the attainment of the standards:

- There will set expectations for contracts in order to ensure that the quality of each HA contract is acceptable for HA credit. HA administration will contact and offer to meet with faculty who have agreed to supervise contracts (or with academic departments and schools upon request) to discuss expectations of contracts. These expectations will also be discussed with each academic department (or school) to ensure that the faculty's understanding of the expectations is consistent with their departmental academic standards.
- Academic departments should exercise some responsibility over the quality of students HA capstone projects. The HA administrators will meet with faculty as requested (either singly or in their departments regarding expectations regarding these projects).

Rationale: Whereas many contracts and capstones have been of extremely high quality, the previous task force on honors noted that faculty were uncertain about what to require of students and, in turn, the student outcomes were often inconsistent.

UNIVERSITY SUPPORT OF THE HONORS ACADEMY

Technical Support of the Honors Academy

A university-level information technology (IT) mechanism will be put in place for tracking HA coursework, student progress towards meeting requirements, registration for HA courses, etc. (i.e., embedded within DegreeWorks).

Library Support of the Honors Academy

In order to better support student research and presentations, a designated RU librarian will be appointed to work with the HA. HA students will have graduate status in the RU library.

Rationale: The IT integration is crucial for program assessment, communication with HA students, and meeting the expectations of students on a campus with high digital integration of services. The library support will facilitate student scholarly activities, while also serving as an incentive for continuing participation in honors.

HONORS ACADEMY HOUSING

Preferably, the HA will be housed in a new, integrated living-learning space in order to successfully meet its mission (of recognition, rigor, and community). A new residence hall will be built specifically designed for the HA and its students. The new space should include the following:

- Updated residence rooms. Ideally with dorm rooms for freshmen and apartments or suites to entice upper classmen.
- At least 2-3 classrooms that include the installation of the latest instructional technology equipment.
- Seminar rooms (to hold 15-20) that include the installation of the latest instructional technology equipment.
- One meeting (to hold 50-75) that includes the installation of the latest instructional technology equipment.
- A lounge or social space
- A coffee shop/kiosk for all Honors students.
- Signage/branding that clearly indicate occupants are part of the HA will be pervasive on the exterior and well as interior.
- Gym/workout space for students

If a new space is not an option in the immediate future, renovation of a current residence hall, including both classroom and social space, is an option. The renovation should include the following:

- At least two classrooms will be renovated and updated to meet current campus standards. This includes the installation of the latest instructional technology equipment and student work spaces (i.e., desks and chairs).
- The addition of a designated and renovated HA lounge in the residential area. This area will be renovated with a coffee shop/kiosk and made accessible to all HA students.
- One meeting/social room (to hold 50-75) that includes the installation of the latest instructional technology equipment.
- A lounge or social space with a coffee kiosk that is accessible to all HA students.
- Dorm rooms to be renovated to the same standards as other recently renovated dorms.
- The HA residential areas, lounge and classrooms will be renovated to include signage/branding that clearly indicates occupants are part of the HA.
- Signage/branding that clearly indicate occupants are part of the HA will be pervasive on the exterior and well as interior.

Rationale: The current classroom, residential, and community space no longer meets the standards for typical campus space, let alone an honors space. The honors classrooms are especially outdated in terms of form and function. The residential spaces are no longer seen as a desirable place to live on campus, with many students preferring rooms in halls like Moffett. Finally, our program has never had a social space that could be used by honors students who do not live in the honors residence halls. This lack of social space is one of many factors contributing to deficits in the sense of community among upper-level honors students.

Honors Academy Budget Projections 2014-2015

The budget proposal is composed of elements that are both already in place and some that would be new costs associated with the implementation plan. Those additional costs have been added in red in relevant sections of the budget, so as to high-light them. The green figure reflects a savings to the current situation.

I. Director

a. Full time 12 month AP position (Associate or Full Professor) ~25,000.00

II. Associate Director:

a. reassigned time (3 courses) during academic year @2,800.00/course 8,400.00

b. summer stipend to be part of the person's salary 10,000.00

-$800

III. Administrative Assistant

a. Full time Classified Staff (Level 3) ~25,000.00

b. Office & operating supplies (copier, printing, postage, orientation supplies) 6,800.00

IV. Honors Faculty (teach & advise Honors Students)

a. 8 faculty with one course reassigned time/year and summer stipend

i. 2,800/faculty/year reassigned time 22,400.00

ii. 2500.00/faculty/year summer stipend 20,000.00

+ 42,400

V. Honors Programming

a. 1 speaker/year (honors convocation for UG/G Forum)1@5,000.00 5,000.00

b. 3 speakers/year for smaller on-campus events 3@1,000.00 ea 3,000.00

c. 2 Meals per student/faculty member for required co-curricular lunches (400 students @ 11.00/student/faculty) 8,800.00

+16,800

VI. Instructional Support for Honors Students *examples in narrative

a. Honors Classes: (30 Honors Classes/year) 500.00/class (avg) 15,000.00

b. Honors Capstone Projects (150.00/project, 30 projects/year) 4,500.00

+12,000

VII. Research Scholarships for Upperclassmen

a. 10 @ 500.00 5,000.00

+5,000

VIII. Travel

a. Director
   i. NCHC 3,500.00
   ii. Regional (SRHC) or state (VCHC) 1,500.00

b. Associate Director
   i. NCHC 2,500.00
   ii. Regional (SRHC) or State (VCHC) 1,500.00

c. Students
   i. NCHC (2-3) 5,000.00
   ii. SRHC (3-5) @ 1,200.00 each 6,000.00
   iii. VCHC (6-8) @ 500.00 each 4,000.00

Total Travel: 24,000.00

+11,000

TOTAL Honors Expenses 182,900.00

+86,400

Additional Expenses (either one-time or presently budgeted)

I. Honors Scholarships (per freshman year)

d. 80 students/fall+spring semester @1,000.00 ea = 80,000.00

e. 20 students admitted midyear (spring only) @ 500.00 each = 10,000.00

f. Over four years = 4 X 90,000.00/ year 360,000.00

II. Facilities - one of two options **No estimate**

a. A new residence hall will be built specifically designed for the HA and its students.to the specifications as outlined in the HA Implementation Plan

or

b. Renovation of a current residence hall as outlined in the HA Implementation Plan

III. Graduate Assistant (1) and Undergraduate Work Study (2) **Federal Funds**

Proposal: Honors Fee (to offset programming costs)

Honors Fee 1st year students: 25.00/student/year, 15.00 for midyear admits

a. 80 X 25.00 = 2,000.00
b. 20 X 15.00 = 300.00
   i. Subtotal/admitting year 2,300.00

Upperclass students:

c. 100 X 25.00 = 2,500.00 X 3 7,500.00

Budget Narrative

The Honors Academy proposed budget for 2014-2015 is presented as a realistic proposal containing all components necessary to properly serve our best students and enhance the image of what should be the highest academic distinction that a student at RU can earn.

The budget proposal is comprised of elements that are both already in place and some that are new to our Honors Academy. This narrative is organized into the same categories as those listed in the proposed budget.

Director:

It is assumed that the Honors Academy Director will come from the ranks of the tenured T&R faculty and as such is already on a 9 month contract. In their promotion to Director of the Honors Academy they would become among the ranks of AP faculty with a 12 month appointment and a salary that is 1/3 higher than their 9 month salary. As full-time AP faculty, the teaching duties will change to conform to that of AP faculty which is one or two classes per academic year.

Associate Director:

The Associate Director is a full-time tenured or tenure-track T&R faculty member who has 3/8 of their time in their academic department reassigned to the Honors Academy. Note that this is not just reassigned teaching duties but also other duties for which a faculty member is evaluated, for example professional activities and university service activities. In addition, the Associate Director will work during the summer, particularly in May, June and August and therefore, like a department chair requires a summer stipend that should be part of that person's salary (i.e., not just an 'add-on' as for summer school).

Administrative Assistant:

This position is currently filled and has been the only full-time staff position (other than the Director) assigned to the Honors Academy. Note that this is a Pay Grade 3 classified position.

Honors Fellows:

This is a new work category within the Honors Academy. For the most part, honors courses are sections of classes that are already offered in various academic disciplines. The Honors Academy Director works with department chairs to ensure that qualified faculty teach honors classes in their discipline. These teaching assignments are treated as a normal part of that person's teaching duties. The purpose of the Honors Fellow designation is to provide for adequate support for honors students in terms of academic advising, honors advising, nationally-competitive scholarship advising, career advice, and graduate/professional school preparation. In addition, a signature feature of our Honors Academy is the fostering of professional relationships between students and faculty – especially faculty in the student's major. This is likely the best way to ensure high quality honors contracts and honors capstone projects and determine who might be the best candidates to send to various honors conferences and apply for nationally competitive scholarships. It is assumed that each honors fellow would teach at least two honors classes per year, and would also have 1 course reassigned time (per year) to engage students in honors advising and participate in co-curricular honors activities.

Honors Programming:

Both our outside consultant and the Honors Task Force of 2011-2012 recommended engaging students in both co- and extracurricular activities in order to enhance the sense of community and intellectual engagement. In the past 10 years we have had no funds specifically devoted to honors programming. The present proposal includes funds for several speakers (perhaps one regional and another 3 local or statewide). The current Honors Implementation Committee has proposed that each class (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) meet once each semester to engage one another in conversation about some topic of common interest. Honors faculty and administrators would also participate in these gatherings. Although meals are an effective way to promote a sense of community they are also somewhat expensive. Therefore we have included a honors fee of $25.00 per year for each honors student to offset this latter activity. (This fee proposal is included at the end of the budget)

Instructional Support for Honors Students:

Although not specifically a line item in the existing honors budget, we have regularly supported some recurrent expenses associated with certain honors class offerings. For

example, the Theater Appreciation class visits the Blackfriars Playhouse in Stanton to view a live Shakespearean production and also participate in a backstage tour. The honors Biology class had each student use gel electrophoresis to generate the DNA profile for each student in the class. The Honors Academy was able to purchase the necessary equipment for the project. Projects or field trips for other honors classes have been funded throughout the past 10 -15 years. The amount requested is based on an average of $500.00 per honors class, however those funds would be distributed as requests for specific uses are received. In addition the Honors Academy has sponsored several teaching/instructional initiatives in recent years which were funded by special requests to the Provost. For example the "Wireless Classroom Project" was initiated to investigate the integration of this technology into the classroom environment when wireless internet was first available throughout campus. An "Honors Interdisciplinary Team Teaching Initiative" provided small stipends for pairs of faculty from different disciplines to combine their honors classes into a single class with a new title and interdisciplinary focus and instructional methodology. This project was funded as an in-house university-wide honors teaching grant opportunity.

The Honors Academy has regularly provided up to $150.00 in reimbursement funds to support students honors capstone projects. In compliance with state law we cannot reimburse students for purchase of office supplies. In addition we may reimburse students for the purchase of a book but the student's academic department (not the student) retains and takes possession of the book.

Additional funds have been requested in this category to support the new curriculum requirements and an expected increase in student research based on encouragement from the Honors Academy administration and fellows.

Upperclassmen Research Scholarships

Upperclassmen (juniors and seniors) who maintain active membership in the HA will be eligible to apply for an annual (maximum of two) $500 research scholarship. HA administrators will work directly with the Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research to determine the specific criteria for these awards.

This incentive is one of several strategies the committee is proposing to increase retention of upper-level students in honors while also supporting the academic mission of the program.

Travel:

There has never been a specific line for travel in the existing Honors Academy budget. However, the Director has regularly attended one or two honors conferences each year and usually brought students only to the state-wide conference. Student presentations

at regional or national honors conferences were rarely done. Six years ago the Provost requested that the Honors Director administer funds to support student travel to and presentations at professional and interdisciplinary conferences. As part of this funding a few more honors students began to travel to regional and national honors conferences to present the results of their labors on outstanding honors contracts and honors capstone projects. Ironically campus-wide interest in sending students to present their work at professional conferences grew to the point where it completely overwhelmed the Honors Academy staff, making it impossible for the Honors Director to keep up with what honors students were doing. Therefore what provided a temporary increase in student participation in honors conferences dropped precipitously. The present proposal provides travel funds to support regular participation by at least some honors students in statewide, regional and national honors presentation venues.

Honors Scholarships:

Radford University has for several years offered Academic Excellence Awards to new freshmen with appropriate high school grades and SAT scores. Many of the recipients of these scholarships were student members of the Honors Academy. For the first time, this coming year (2013-14) new freshmen who were invited to join the Honors Academy and who accept their invitation are awarded a $1,000.00 scholarship in addition to any other scholarship award that Radford University might offer them. The scholarships are renewable each year as long as the student maintains active status in the Honors Academy.

Facilities Upgrade:

Times and technologies have changed considerably since Floyd and Peery Halls were among the first to be renovated (some 10 years ago). The renovations included two room suites that share a bathroom, basement classrooms, air conditioning and computer and other digital A/V equipment in the classrooms. As Radford University attempts to provide for a more cohesive and identifiable honors community, our residential facilities are in rather desperate need of updating, especially in the areas of classroom technology and large small meeting rooms for use by all honors students. No dollar estimates are provided because the changes may be in the form of a new residential facility or renovation of current facilities. At an absolute minimum, the classrooms need to be brought up to the standard of typical pedagogical spaces.

Honors Fee:

To offset and to provide (literally) ‘buy-in’ to honors activities, we are proposing that each honors student be assessed an annual “Honors Fee” of $25.00 (or $15.00 for a single semester). Funds from this fee would provide funds for the meal meetings with faculty as described earlier in the “Honors Programming” section.

Savings Provided to the University by Honors:

It is recognized that Honors is an investment of resources by the university. Although not exorbitant, more than $150,000.00 is a lot of money in almost anyone's vocabulary. What is not often recognized is that Honors carries substantial value to the university. For example, an active and visible honors program on campus helps recruit other non-honors students. Also, data from a survey of current honors students (implemented by the 2011-2012 Honors Task Force) indicates that the presence of our Honors Academy was a significant factor for a majority of these students when they decided to attend Radford University. Failure to attract these students would have resulted presumably in their replacement with students much further down in the RU applicant pool where retention is most problematic. More importantly from a financial standpoint, data indicate that retention of honors students (to at least the second year) is 86-92 %, with an average value of about 89%. By comparison the general retention from freshman to sophomore year at RU is about 75%. Retention of students who qualify for the Honors Academy but who choose not to become part of honors is 81%. That is a net gain of 8% per year largely attributable to honors. Given that most of these retained students will remain at RU until graduation, the tuition generated accumulates over the remaining three years.

Submitted by:

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