

Blueprint for Quality Enhancement at USC

**SOUTH CAROLINA
HONORS COLLEGE (SCHC)**

2012

Draft
2/29/12

Vision:

By attracting a diverse group of high-ability, high-aspiration students to the University of South Carolina, and by providing them with an extraordinary education, the South Carolina Honors College will continue to prepare its graduates for leadership roles in all fields and to be recognized as a pre-eminent Honors College.

Mission:

The South Carolina Honors College will serve its students by offering a rich curriculum of core, major, and special-interest courses, featuring small enrollments and excellent teachers; by providing individualized and insightful advising that leads to academic success, on-time graduation, and meaningfully focused lives after college; by creating and fostering a nurturing and stimulating learning community; by requiring and enabling transformative “out-of-the-classroom” experiences (study abroad, internships, service learning, undergraduate research); by working cooperatively with other units on campus to achieve the University’s expanding mission; and by engaging with parents, alumni, supporters, and donors to assure that the SCHC continues to thrive and improve.

I. Executive Summary

A. Top Ten, Peers: The following public universities have honors colleges/programs that would widely be considered among the top ten (see Appendix One for discussion): Arizona State, Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Oregon, Michigan State, Penn State, UT Austin, Texas A&M, and Washington. The South Carolina Honors College (SCHC) is competitive with all of these and superior to some—although the dissimilarities of Honors Colleges make evaluative comparisons difficult and subjective. Other institutions that might be considered in this top tier include Alabama, Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio State, Vermont, and Virginia. I agree, in other words, with Davis Baird’s assessment in his 2010 “Blueprint” that the SCHC is arguably “one of the two or three very best honors colleges in the country,” based on facilities, number/quality of applicants and enrollees, quality and range of academic opportunities, and students’ post-graduate success. These schools and others are however investing heavily in their Honors programs, and we have no opportunity for complacency or self-congratulation.

B. Strengths, Accomplishments: Our “top strengths and important accomplishments achieved in the last five years” are the following: increasing the size and quality of the incoming classes, opening the new Honors Residence Hall, developing the “Honors Beyond the Classroom” requirement, launching a development program for the SCHC, creating an internships program, creating a service learning initiative, supporting undergraduate research, and delivering a varied and large selection of Honors courses.

C. Weaknesses and Plans: At least four items listed as “important accomplishments” in previous blueprints are nonetheless still very much works in progress: diversity, course compensation, alumni relations, and developing the College’s “brand.” These complex and longstanding issues require comprehensive strategies. Briefly: To increase diversity, we will enlarge the pool of potential students (eliciting more applications and considering a larger group on empirical measures: that is, we will consider the essay portions of a larger group of students). We will also recruit from within, advertise (*Black Pages* ad e.g.), target high schools, and develop high-visibility programs (such as a statewide writing contest). To change how departments think about course compensation, we will need to create slots designated for the Honors College, shifting away from the idea that the Honors College is an external contractor, purchasing the services of faculty (at bargain rates). We want to move to the awareness that the Honors College is part of every unit’s core mission: the entire University benefits from the Honors College, which serves the entire University. To strengthen alumni relations, we will focus more staff effort on increasing contact and events. Strong alumni relations begin during the undergraduate years, and a major focus going forward will be enhancing the undergraduate experience, providing landmark events for each class year and more frequent and better organized social and educational events. We have been working with Communications on how to expand awareness regionally and nationally, and we need to move on this in the coming year.

We are blessed with an excellent facility in the Honors Residence Hall, but we need to renovate Harper, complete the Residence, expand living opportunities for juniors and seniors to live on the Horseshoe, and find additional office space. We also need to raise

additional funds for targeted scholarships: it is a fierce competition for the best students.

Five-Year Goals

Goal One *Students: Increase the number, diversity, quality, and retention.*

- Size: from 352 to ~400 (incoming); 1400 to ~1600 (overall)
- Diversity: from 3% to ~6% minority students
- Quality: maintain or increase average SAT and/or middle 50%
- Retention: from 70% graduating “with honors from SCHC” to >90%
- Recruitment: Enhanced materials and activities

Goal Two *Faculty: Establish a Core and Affiliate Faculty; cultivate shared mission in other units.*

- Core Appointments: two years, a portion of teaching/service assigned to SCHC
- Core Profile: ~20 faculty selected; fields representative of the curriculum
- Funding: Shift the model from (a) compensation to units by the SCHC for use of their teachers, to (b) the assumption that staffing the Honors College with exceptional courses and teachers is part of the unit’s fundamental mission
- Affiliate Status: identify and cultivate faculty currently teaching/mentoring in the SCHC
- Activities: Create a teaching community of Core and Affiliate faculty

Goal Three *Honors Experience--Curriculum: Improve, review, and evolve the curriculum.*

- Identify courses that need to be added or altered; review teachers and take action where needed; explore special Honors programs/partnerships in high-profile areas (Marine Science, Digital Humanities).
- Review and revise the curriculum to align with the new core.
- Create a new SCHC course focusing on leadership skills in any discipline (speaking, writing, rhetorical analysis, management, cultures, trends, ethics); fast track for internships, service learning, QEP projects, the SEC Consortium, SCHC Ambassadors, and similar activities.
- Involve more faculty in mentoring and advising (career and research).
- Improve the advising by the staff (more communication with departments; more assessment and training; use technology to reduce rote tasks, freeing time for engagement).

Goal Four *Honors Experience--Extracurricular: Expand students’ opportunities for personal growth and enrichment within a vibrant and inspiring community of learners.*

- Programs: Expand and refine Study Abroad, Service Learning, Internship, and Undergraduate Research opportunities. Focus on Waverly Tutoring and select one new SCHC-wide project each year (which then becomes an ongoing

- concern). Start an Honors College Rowing Club and use it as a platform to reach disadvantaged youth (in concert with the Columbia Rowing Club).
- National Scholarships, Fellowships: Increase participation and success (establish as priority for faculty and dean's office: tangible encouragements for nominations and awards).
 - Community: Continue and expand the many social and educational events ongoing. Create landmark events and traditions for each class year.
 - Spaces and tools: Create a computer lounge in Harper, targeting in particular junior and senior Honors students who may live on the Horseshoe and have no gathering place. Re-open staff office presence in the dorm. Renovate Harper. Working with Housing, maintain the new dorm and increase its appeal (lending library, ping pong, music).

Goal Five *Development: Expand and intensify focus on raising funds for scholarships, construction, and faculty; increase parental and alumni involvement and giving; nurture a commitment among students before graduation.*

- Scholarships: Enhanced and more numerous scholarships will help us to attract the best students.
- Construction: Completing the dorm will provide for much-needed staff and faculty offices, and will create space for classrooms and screening theatre.
- Faculty: Create endowed chairs assigned to Honors, linking top faculty to the SCHC for an extended period.
- Alumni and Friends: Formalize networking opportunities; create biographical profiles for each class; expand the advisory board in number and activity; launch Gameday activities on the Horseshoe for students, parents, and alumni (food and busing).

2012-2013 Academic Year Goals

Goal One

Plan and execute “Connecting Life and Leadership” as a recurring course that can be exported and replicated.

I am developing this course now and will teach it in the Fall. Thad Westbrook as his Liberty Fellowship project will set up the mentors, linking each student to a vital leader. The course will have practical benefits—improving students’ writing, awareness of current events, understanding of major leaders and key historical texts, as well as providing access to leaders in various fields. Students will, on the one hand, be better prepared to write a personal statement and navigate an interview, and they will also, on the other hand, have a clearer understanding of their own goals and values.

Goal Two

Staff: Replenish, reorganize, expand, and evolve the staff, including additional development activity.

Jim Burns (Senior Associate Dean) and Patsy Tanner (Budget Manager) will be retiring in December, taking with them some seventy years of experience. It would be hard to exaggerate their importance to the Honors College. Another staff member is eligible to retire and has talked informally about it. My assistant is already retired from another state agency and is working for us four days a week as a temporary hire. Chappell Wilson has reduced her work to three days per week, and two of those three have been assigned to the Leadership Initiative. Other staff have abilities that are not being utilized in their current positions. Some shifting, combining, and expanding of duties has already begun, but next year will require a major evolution of the staff.

Goal Three

Space: Find acceptable space for new and existing staff; create a computer lounge for students; renovate Harper; obtain access to or control over key spaces.

I believe that hiring a second development officer would be a good idea—a view shared by Chappell Wilson, Susan Lee, and William Hubbard among others. We have over 8000 alumni in the Honors College, and my understanding is that a development officer can cultivate a maximum of about 150 to 175 donors and potential donors. I also agree with Luanne that we could make good use of a dedicated writer. (I would also use this person to run a statewide writing contest for high school students.) I have a variety of plans to deal with our acute space shortage (we have people in closets and storage rooms). Whatever we do with staff, we must renovate Harper. We have windowsills that have rotted away completely, leaving handmade nails standing up. We have a smelly and stained carpet, which was actually more tolerable before it was steam-cleaned. We need to have use of the faculty offices and apartments in the dorm and the space outside our control in Harper.

Goal Four

Student Experience: Continue, improve, and expand activities to support students and enrich their education.

This year the Honors College will give out over \$170,000 in undergraduate research funds. My goal next year will be to award a similar amount, and to make sure that students make the most of these opportunities with well-conceived, well-supervised projects that yield significant results. Travel funding for students was eliminated at the beginning of the current budget cuts. It will be restored next year. Next year we will

develop, with the input of the revamped Honors Council, signature events for each class year. In addition to the Rowing Club, I will ask every staff member to be responsible for at least one new social/educational event. I hope never again to have a Pharmacy student sit in my office and say “I don’t see what I am getting for my Honors College fee.”

Goal Five

Core Faculty: Create a detailed plan, gain buy-in, carry out the initial steps.

This year I discussed the idea of establishing a core faculty for the Honors College with upper administrators (provost, vice-provosts), deans and associate deans (Business, Engineering, and Arts and Sciences), chairs (Chemistry, Biology, Political Science, English, Math), program directors (Marine Science, Digital Humanities), and a significant number of individual faculty. With the exception of one chair, the idea was positively received: it is easy enough to see its benefits. What is hard is to see how it will work, and how it can be created. But the Honors College needs more faculty participation and support, and such a structure would formalize that. I have worked through and discarded several models, and I believe I now do understand the best way to do this, which involves a combination of appointing existing faculty to limited terms as Honors Core Faculty, along with creating faculty slots from new hires (which might be filled by new hires or existing faculty). The expansion of the faculty will be key to this transition. Five years from now, we will have a new model with teaching slots in departments that are understood to be central to the department’s mission. We will be paying teaching salaries only for the occasional adjunct or special opportunity.

Appendix One: Rankings of Honors Colleges

No rankings currently exist for Honors Colleges (a partially ordered set), and the national organization (NCHC) seems unlikely to undertake any assessment or quality or accreditation in the near future. An independent individual, however (John Willingham), has established a website, requested and gathered data, and announced his intention to publish a book entitled “Top Fifty Honors Programs.” Although his criteria have not been fully disclosed, Willingham focuses on those top-ranked universities that have honors programs or colleges. The South Carolina Honors College is included in Willingham’s “Top Fifty” even though the University of South Carolina is not included in his group of top universities. Willingham identifies the SCHC as an outlier in this regard. Here is Willingham’s list:

Alabama, Arizona, Arizona State, Arkansas, Auburn, Clemson, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Georgia Tech, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Iowa State, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Michigan State, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Carolina State, Ohio State, Oregon, Penn State, Pitt, Purdue, Rutgers, South Carolina, Binghamton SUNY, Buffalo SUNY, Stony Brook SUNY, Texas A&M, UC Davis, UC Irvine, UCLA, UC Santa Barbara, UC San Diego, UT Austin, Vermont, Virginia, Virginia Tech, Washington, Washington State, and Wisconsin.

Although I might quibble with Willingham’s list (University of Maine for instance has a strong and interesting program), I think the top ten Honors Colleges or Programs are definitely included in this list. I narrowed the list to ten by considering the following features, which would no doubt figure into anyone’s assessment: quality of the university, facilities (dorm, lounge, offices, campus, etc.), quality of the students (SAT/ACT, GPA, % of student body), resources applied (undergraduate research, study abroad, internships, service learning, etc.), staff, curriculum (# of courses, types of courses, faculty), hours required to graduate “with honors” and presence of a senior thesis (or similar experience), visibility (years established, reputation).

Appendix Two: Unit Statistical Profile

See attachment, please.

Appendix Three: Research Proposals

**Office of Research
IT and Data Management Office
Honors College
FY2011 Blueprint Data**

Q1. The total number and amount of external sponsored research proposal submissions by agency for FY2011

**FY2011 PROPOSAL
SUBMISSIONS
Honors College**

	Number	Dollars Requested
NSF	1	\$17,896

Q2. Summary of external sponsored research awards by agency for FY2011

**Awards by Source/Agency
Honors College**

	FY2011 Funding
DOD	\$9,043

Total Funding**\$9,043****Q3. Total extramural funding and Federal extramural funding in FY2011****Summary of Awards
Honors College****Total Funding**
\$9,043**Total Federal**
\$9,043**Q4. Amount of sponsored research funding per faculty member in FY2011
(by rank and type of funding).**

PI_HM_DEPT_DESC	TITLE_DESC	PI_NA	TOTAL	COMM	FEDERAL	LOCAL	OTHER
Honors College, South Carolina		Tanner, Patsy	9,043		9,043		

**Q5. Total sponsored research expenditures per tenured/tenure-track faculty for FY2011
(by rank and by department).**

Division / Unit	PI	Total Expenditures (Direct/Indirect)	Status

Honors College, South Carolina			
	Munn Sanchez, Edward	5,730	
	Tanner, Patsy	7,463	

Q6. Number of patents, disclosures, and licensing agreements in fiscal years 2009, 2010, and 2011.

Appendix Four: Credit Hours

See attachment please.

Appendix Five: Student Retention

Our retention rate is strong. We assess our retention and strategies with annual student surveys. These surveys ask about the effectiveness of the advising. The individualized advising that students receive, from an advisor in their major and an Honors College advisor, is perceived to be effective in helping students to progress on time, although there are some complaints about conflicting advice from two advisors. Students who are advised by Jan Smoak as Carolina and McNair Scholars are especially positive about that advising.

Social and educational activities that help to create an Honors community also contribute to students' adjustment, we believe. Excellent classes and access to needed courses are also factors in our retention, of course.

Each advisor in the Honors College deals with an average of about 150 students, spending on average thirty minutes per semester with each student. The advising is designed to go beyond getting the right courses and seeks to create a mentoring bond. Students do often return to their advisor outside of the advising period. Because students also have an advisor in their major, the possibility for differing advice or misunderstanding is present. I am asking our advisors to send confirming emails to the student's major advisor anytime there is some question about what the student should be taking. I am also asking them to meet at least once a semester with their counterparts to share updates and feedback.

In response to the question about what types of student support would be most beneficial: faculty advising would be most valuable—if faculty are dedicated to providing this advice. Faculty who are not committed to advising are much less effective than dedicated staff, it's clear. Staff can guide students on which courses to take, but faculty can help students figure out what they want to do with those courses, and what their career plans might be.

Appendix Six: Graduation and Placement

We have an internship director (Beth Watson) who supervises the Washington Semester, the South Carolina Semester, and the variety of internship opportunities. Beth offers periodic workshops and email announcements to make sure that students are aware of these opportunities. One of the most exciting recent new internships was arranged with Edventure, which generated over 20 applications.

We track our graduates with an exit questionnaire, and then follow up with an annual request for information.

Appendix Seven: Distributed Learning

We are not involved in distributed learning. (We do have a great course that links a French class here with an English class in France: the students are conversational partners, and then spend a week visiting each other—here and there.)

Appendix Eight: USC Connect and Community Engagement

Christian Price and Ed Munn Sanchez are piloting with Irma the software and procedures to create student portfolios. This process has not worked well with their students to this point: the Blackboard software is, according to the students, not acceptable. They are looking at a different strategy with a smaller group of students.

Since 1990, the SCHC has awarded over 510 SURF and Exploration research grants, in over 60 majors ranging from Accounting to Theater, Chemistry to Mechanical Engineering, for a total of over \$1,256,262.

Fiscal year July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011 - Total amount awarded was \$161,789

Fiscal year July 1, 2011 - June 30, 2012 - Total amount awarded was \$178,225

Because of the “outside-the-classroom” requirement, all Honors students are engaged in service learning, undergraduate research, or international experiences. All students are required to do a thesis project to graduate “with honors,” and these obviously involve undergraduate research. Some involve service, and a few include international experiences. Based on the discussion at the recent SEC Honors Deans conference, the opportunities our students enjoy are extraordinary, but everyone is playing catch-up as quickly as they can.

In the past year and a half, sixteen service-learning classes were taught in the SCHC. Some 227 students participated with 57 community partners to provide over 3218 hours of service. Many of our students continue their work in the community long after their class is over.

In recent years the Honors College has offered three study-abroad experiences each Maymester.

Additional opportunities: We plan to expand the very successful Waverly tutoring program, and we are launching a Rowing Club that will evolve into a community service project engaging late elementary and middle school students.

Appendix Nine: Faculty Hiring etc.

Not applicable to us.

Appendix Ten: Funding Sources

1. E fund balances:

2009: N/A

2010: \$11,496

2011: \$14,582

2. Gifts and Pledges received in FY 2011: \$1,976,976

Appendix Eleven: Interdisciplinary Research

Our BARSC students in particular are engaged in projects that are by definition interdisciplinary, involving typically three or more fields. I would also like to foster interdisciplinary activities by linking courses in different fields (English literature and History, for instance; science and philosophy; religion and science). I hope to have some courses of this type on the books for spring 2013.