

Blueprint for Academic Excellence, 2009

South Carolina Honors College
February 2009

Davis Baird, Dean

I. Vision, Mission, Goals

A. Executive Summary

Vision: The South Carolina Honors College leads the nation in the development and implementation of undergraduate honors educational opportunities. South Carolina Honors College—leading learning, driving discovery.

To a considerable degree the South Carolina Honors College has succeeded in fulfilling its vision. A variety of indicators (number of applications, quality of students, richness of academic opportunities, post-graduate success of its students) provide persuasive evidence that the South Carolina Honors College is one of the two or three very best honors colleges in the country. While we are proud of our success, we believe in continuous innovation, and several new initiatives detailed below will help to keep the College at the forefront of honors education.

Mission: The South Carolina Honors College provides a superlative undergraduate education for academically gifted students. With a focus on the individual educational needs, abilities and aspirations of each of its students, the College draws on the full resources and academic depth of a comprehensive research university. Integral to this mission is developing innovative approaches to undergraduate education that serve the broader University and beyond.

Goals: The College's strategic goals have undergone modest change from last year:

- (1) [slight modifications from last year] Enhance the College's academic opportunities, most especially its curriculum, and where appropriate and possible, bring these innovations to the broader University;
- (2) [new] Improving the post-Honors College transition;
- (3) [carried forward] Establish the South Carolina Honors College as an undergraduate "destination of choice" for academically gifted high school students;
- (4) [carried forward] Expand external support;
- (5) [carried forward] Enhance Honors College living-learning communities;
- (6) [done] Improve the College's administrative facilities;

- (7) [carried forward] Improve Honors College advising;
- (8) [carried forward] Expand and improve the use of information technology for educational support.

While the goals have undergone only modest change, the specific initiatives have undergone more substantial change as detailed below.

We continue to look for ways to put Honors College students in direct contact with faculty members and other innovators at the University and beyond. We want the transition from the classroom to the community, research bench and workplace to be seamless. This, we believe, is at the heart of superlative honors education for the 21st Century.

These efforts depend on our ability to recruit students with superior academic skills. The College was established to staunch the flow of South Carolina's brightest students out of the state. Now the College is adding to this mission the goal of attracting academically gifted students from out-of-state to USC and to South Carolina, thereby augmenting the State's human capital with future leaders drawn here from elsewhere.

The College supports the broader University it inhabits in many ways. We believe that the College's pioneering effort in requiring education "beyond the classroom" will create a path for the University as a whole to follow. The College has done this by developing a model for undergraduate research, and will continue to push to develop better ways to implement undergraduate research at the University. We are now taking the lead on developing academically rigorous courses that engage students in service to the community as well. In addition, we believe that the internship program that we are developing will provide a useful model for the University at large.

B. Goals, Initiatives and Action Plans

Goal 1: Enhance the College's academic opportunities, most especially its curriculum, and where appropriate and possible, bring these innovations to the broader University.

The College established a new requirement for graduation with honors, "Honors Beyond the Classroom" (Initiative 1d). Students are required to earn three honors credit hours in one of four ways, (i) "Honors on the road," (ii) "Undergraduate research," (iii) "Service learning," and (iv) "Internship." Several initiatives (1a-c, and Goal 2), focus on providing the necessary resources

for this effort to be successful. In addition to this major effort, the College continues to address pressing curricular needs (Initiative 1e). During the past year we developed a new approach to compensation for teaching honors classes (Initiative 1f); we will be closely monitoring the impact of this new effort.

Initiative 1(a) [updated]: “Honors on the road:” This initiative continues to develop nicely.

During the 2007/08 reporting year, the Honors College was responsible for 25% of all undergraduate students at the University studying abroad (198 of 788 total). The numbers traveling have continued to increase: The most recent three years of data are as follows: SCHC: 154; 191; 198; USC total: 584; 734; 788. SCHC’s percentage of the total has declined slightly 27% to 25%, but given that the College comprises only 7% of the total undergraduate student body, we still comprise a disproportionate share of undergraduate study abroad. We are working with the other SEC honors colleges and programs to establish a summer study abroad “base camp,” where four-six honors courses might be taught for a larger group of SEC honors students in some appropriate site abroad.

Indicators: The primary indicator of success with this initiative is increased growth in the number of Honors College students who have at least one experience on the road while in the College. I remain committed to the goal that all Honors College students have a study abroad experience at some point. During the past two years for which we have data, 50% of all students graduating with honors in 2007 and 2008 studied abroad. There is room for growth, and we continue to seek ways to encourage this growth.

Initiative 1(b) [updated and modified]: “Undergraduate Research:” While differences in disciplinary cultures and approaches to undergraduate education cited in last year’s report remain, progress has been made in increasing undergraduate participation in scholarship in these underrepresented areas. Using insights gathered by the Advisory Board to the University’s Office of Undergraduate Research, and from SCHC personnel and USC faculty, we determined that no significant change is likely to be made in this area University-wide until mentoring of undergraduate scholarship is recognized as a valid contribution to a faculty member’s load. A proposal to include undergraduate research as a recognized form of teaching has been made to the committee charged with revisions of the Faculty Manual. This is a long-term strategy, and in the meantime we are aiming to increase participation of SCHC students through the creation of new research fellowship programs within the SCHC. Specifically, we established the Exploration Scholars Program [ESP] with two levels—Apprentice and Journeyman. One of the major obstacles

to increasing undergraduate research in non-STEM fields is that students need significantly more intellectual development before they can make original contributions to faculty research. To address this issue, the Exploration Scholars Program includes an “Apprentice level” where faculty members are encouraged to have students doing heavily structured tasks directly supportive of faculty scholarship efforts. Vigorous efforts have been made to advertise this new program and to retool that portion of the SCHC webpage to reflect this new emphasis. We achieved our target goal of 40% of SCHC undergraduate research occurring in the arts, humanities and business (15 of 38 awards, or 39%). Total expenditures were \$83,500 for the year with an average award size of \$2,200. Project durations varied from 6-10 weeks in the summer to a full academic year. A large percentage of projects (58%) were interdisciplinary, where the student’s major differed from the director’s home department; and 7 projects (18%) were explicitly trans-disciplinary, with students working in areas significantly outside of their major. We will continue to focus on increasing the percentage of non-STEM undergraduate research projects. In addition, we will start tracking the outcomes of student projects, including student authored publications, presentations, etc.

Indicators: The College would like to see more students engaged in undergraduate research, although just gathering the statistics of the number that are so engaged is difficult. With that in mind, the first indicator of success will be to have a means of determining how many students are engaged in undergraduate research. Then we would like to see this number grow, perhaps to 75%. In particular, we would like to see the percentage of students in the humanities and business that are engaged in undergraduate research grow, from negligibly small numbers to perhaps 40% or more.

Initiative 1(c) [updated and modified]: “Service Learning:” The College continues to develop and refine opportunities for service learning. During 2008 we offered five service learning courses enrolling 44 students (26 Honors College students). We also have made several curriculum development awards to faculty members interested in creating new service learning courses; \$18,208 was awarded to develop seven new courses. We believe that this will lead to an appropriate core set of service learning courses, and we hope that this will help to change how faculty think about engaging students in service in their courses. We have contributed to the writing of a Faculty Handbook for service learning. I am very happy to note that the Historic Columbia Foundation gave an award to the Honors College for “significant contributions to our understanding of the rich and diverse history of Columbia or Richland County through research and scholarship reflecting the

highest standards of excellence.” The award was the result of a continuing series of courses that engage students in the history of historically African-American neighborhoods surrounding the University.

Indicators: I want to see the number of service learning opportunities provided by the College increase. I am aiming for 4 service-learning courses per semester. I am confident that student interest will follow available opportunities, but, of course, an important second indicator is the number of students involved in these courses, which I would like to see grow to at least 150 per year.

Initiative 1(d) [carried forward and updated]: “Honors beyond the classroom:” In order to graduate with honors from the South Carolina Honors College, students who entered the College after August 16, 2008 are now required to have at least the equivalent of three honors credit hours from one of (i) “Honors on the road,” (ii) “Undergraduate research,” (iii) “Service learning,” and (iv) “Internship.” We are in the process of monitoring the impact and success of this requirement.

Indicators: The most important indicator will be the rate with which students fulfill this new requirement. Having ascertained the rate at which students are already doing one or another of these activities, we do not anticipate a problem. We expect the rate with which students graduate with honors to remain approximately the same as now (70%).

Initiative 1(e) [carried forward and updated]: “Addressing Specific Curricular Needs:” In many areas, the College is very fortunate to have a rich set of honors course offerings. However, there remain areas where supply is well short of demand. These include:

- i. Upper-level Chemistry (little since last year; Biology essentially solved);
- ii. Laboratory science courses for non-science majors (while we have made some progress here, this continues to be a major concern);
- iii. Upper-level Engineering for SCHC Engineering majors (some progress; we continue to work with Engineering on this);
- iv. Fine arts courses to satisfy the fine arts general education requirement (no progress, and no courses, a serious problem);
- v. History (particularly non-Western) to satisfy this general education requirement;
- vi. Upper-level business courses for SCHC Business majors (we continue to work with the Moore School to find solutions here);

We continue to work with the relevant colleges and departments to address these shortages.

Indicators: Course offerings to meet demand from Honors College students.

Initiative 1(f) [carried forward and updated]: “Course Compensation:” Currently the College pays units that provide courses for the College at a negotiated rate per class, with separate negotiations for every unit involved. In addition, the tuition revenue for these classes goes to these units (or the colleges in which they reside). We have negotiated a new approach to compensation where for each course a unit provides, the unit will be provided funds equal to the average amount it costs to hire an adjunct to teach a course in that unit. This results in a net increase of funds going from the Honors College to supporting units; however, we will recoup these funds by retaining the tuition revenue generated by SCHC-designator courses.

Indicators: The primary concern is that we continue to field a rich honors curriculum. We will be carefully monitoring the impact of this new approach to compensation during the coming years to see if any deterioration of honors offerings occurs.

Goal 2: [new] Improving the post-Honors College transition.

As I noted in the introduction, we want the transition from the classroom to the community, research bench and workplace to be seamless. This, we believe, is at the heart of superlative honors education for the 21st Century. Towards this end we are working on a series of initiatives that tie academic work in the classroom more closely to the workplace. This is closely related to the new honors requirement, “Honors Beyond the Classroom,” and several of the initiatives below satisfy this requirement. However, the focus here is on improving the transition beyond College.

Initiative 2(a) [carried forward—previously 1(d)]: “Internship:” The College continues to work on an effort to create internship opportunities for Honors College students. Working with a local businesswoman, and alumnus of the College, we are developing internship opportunities at local businesses. Frequently, these experiences are transformative in determining a student’s future career path. In addition, we also are developing a speaker series aimed at elevating the aspirations of Honors College students. Here the idea is to bring people at the peak of their careers to speak about the important work that Honors College students can do.

Indicators: We will have systems in place to connect students with internship opportunities by 2009/10. We hope to have a good trial number of students placed in internships during 2009/10.

Initiative 2(b) [new]: “Career and Profession Speaker Series:” The College is developing a speaker series aimed at elevating the aspirations of Honors College students. Here the idea is to bring people at the peak of their careers and their professions to speak about the important work that Honors College students can do. Additional benefits to this speaker series are relationships between the speakers and the Honors College and possible internships and job opportunities for Honors College students.

Indicators: We aim to have the speaker series running by Academic Year 2009/10. We hope to have internship opportunities as an offshoot.

Initiative 2(c) [carried forward—previously 1(e)]: “Ivory Tower to Marketplace:” Working in cooperation with the Moore School of Business and the USC NanoCenter, the College is pursuing an exciting idea to give Honors College students real world experience in moving intellectual property from the University into the marketplace. Working in cooperation with the Office of Intellectual Property, we have selected IP developed by Goutam Koley (Department of Electrical Engineering) concerning gas sensing. During Maymester 2009 we will offer a team-taught course where students will develop a business plan for the commercialization of this IP. This will be a proposal suitable for a South Carolina EPSCoR Phase 0 proposal, or an SBIR Phase 1 proposal or for some other appropriate alternative agency. Proposals will be presented to an Advisory Board for the project in the form of a Venture Capital presentation. Depending on the outcome, we expect that teams will continue to work to bring the IP to market. We want to encourage an entrepreneurial spirit among our students.

Indicators: This first important indicator is the successful launch of the course. After that, we will look for how successfully students learned about the process of taking an idea into the marketplace. Finally, we are audacious enough to hope that some of the ideas that are developed in this manner will become commercially successful.

Initiative 2(d) [new]: “Washington Semester:” Currently the Institute for Public Service and Policy Research houses a very valuable honors opportunity, the “Washington Internship Semester.” This program takes students from honors colleges and programs throughout the State and places them in internship positions in Washington DC. Most of these positions are in SC Delegation offices, but other offices (e.g., the White House, the

Supreme Court, etc.) are involved as well. Students earn nine hours of honors credit for this experience. In addition, they take two honors courses, one on Contemporary American Politics and the other on Washington Theatre, for a total of 15 honors credits. Because of the financial crisis, the Institute for Public Service and Policy Research is being eliminated. The Honors College is in the process of taking over the Washington Internship Semester program. We do not anticipate major changes in the program. We are looking for ways to cut costs, and we do anticipate some significant synergies between this program and our internship effort (Initiative 2a) generally.

Indicators: The program is transitioned to the Honors College without significant disruption or degradation of the quality of the program. Synergies with our internship focus emerge.

Initiative 2(e) [new]: “SC Legislative Internship Program:” As with Initiative 2d, the Institute for Public Service and Policy Research also houses the SC Legislative Internship Program. This program places students in internship positions in the SC Legislature. The Honors College is in the process of taking over this program as well. We do not anticipate major changes in the program, although we are likely to eliminate the stipends paid to students as a cost saving measure. Again we anticipate synergies between this program and our internship effort (Initiative 2a) generally.

Indicators: The program is transitioned to the Honors College without significant disruption or degradation of the quality of the program. Synergies with our internship focus emerge.

Goal 3: Establish the South Carolina Honors College as an undergraduate “destination of choice” for academically gifted high school students.

I believe the current financial climate provides an opportunity for the Honors College. We provide a very high quality education at a very affordable price. For this reason, with the economy under stress, I anticipate students who previously would have gone to well-known “name” or “prestige” schools, taking the Honors College more seriously as an alternative. Already, I can report that applications were up this year (approximately 1650) from last year’s high of 1,400. The quality of the applicant pool remains extremely strong. I also am anticipating higher yields of admitted students—and we are taking measures to make sure this does not result in an unduly large freshman class. This is the perfect time to increase awareness of the quality of the Honors College.

Initiative 3(a) [carried forward with modifications]: “Better interaction with Undergraduate Admissions:” We continue to work with Undergraduate Admissions toward improving our relationship. While progress has been made, we still have yet to find a fully satisfactory solution. We have found better ways to communicate and strategize with Admissions, but I remain convinced that a dedicated admissions officer in the Honors College is the only satisfactory solution. We need to recruit students in a fundamentally different way—with a much more individual emphasis—than the University as a whole.

Indicators: We are looking for a larger and stronger applicant pool that yields a stronger, and somewhat larger, class of students. Over five years we are looking to increase the size of our freshman class to 350. During the last several years, we have aimed at a target of 310 (see Initiative 3b); this year we are aiming for 340.

Initiative 3(b) [carried forward]: “Modest Growth:” Following the Board of Trustees proposal, I will increase the size of the College modestly. We are aiming at an entering class of 340 this year. We believe that the current financial situation is the right time to move ahead on increasing the size of the College. There are multiple issues here that require careful handling or the quality of the College will significantly suffer. Some issues are beyond the control of the Honors College and are tied to the University’s capacity for undergraduate enrollment. Two areas are paramount: (1) Sufficient faculty to teach undergraduate courses (for the University at large and for the Honors College in particular). (2) Faculty to mentor undergraduate research and Honors College senior theses; we already experience problems here. Other issues we can control with sufficient funding and resources. We will need to increase the number of opportunities to study abroad, to pursue service learning, etc. (all in progress, see Goal 1). We will focus an effort on creating small communities within the Honors College that preserves the “small feel” of the College (see Goal 5).

Indicators: Number of students in the College, and the quality of the students in the College.

Initiative 3(c) [carried forward]: “Improving Diversity:” Despite the small pool of minority students with the credentials for admissions to the Honors College, we remain committed to improving diversity in the college. We are working on all ends of this problem. We are working to increase the pool of qualified minority applicants. We need to increase the yield of admitted minority applicants. We need to provide better opportunities for transfer admission. Integral to our approach here is the Honors College Minority Student Union, an organization of minority students currently in the Honors College. This group is

helping our effort in several ways. They are creating a community for minority students within the Honors College. They are also actively helping us recruit new minority students for the College, in particular through making telephone contact to admitted—but not yet enrolled—minority students and recruiting internal transfers.

Indicators: The obvious indicators are tied to the number of applicants, the yield and finally the number of minority students we enroll. Currently there are 31 (of 1,220) African-American students in the Honors College. This is a slight increase from last year. More significantly we had an entering class of 10 African-American Students, including two Carolina Scholars, and two transfers. This group of 12 students is the largest single year addition of African-American students in our history. We have accepted 17 African-American Students for the 2009-2010 academic year. We do not yet know the yield. We would like to see the number of African-American students double over the next four years.

Initiative 3(d) [carried forward]: “Alumni interviews:” Some schools arrange for students to interview with alumni as part of the application process. Appropriately chosen alumni can serve as the College’s best recruiters. Working with the College’s Alumni Affairs Coordinator and the Office of Admissions, I aim to establish the option for alumni interviews. I hope that this could be in place by the 2009/10 recruiting season. No progress was made here last year, and I hope to see progress in the coming year as we develop a better relationship with the Office of Admissions.

Indicators: The clear indicator is the existence of alumni interviews for prospective students. In the end, however, this goes back to the number and quality of applicants, and our yield of admitted students.

Goal 4: Expand external support.

Many of the initiatives in this plan require significant additional resources. Given the current climate for state support, expanding external support for the College will be essential. At all levels, this goal provides fundamental support for the mission and vision for the College. I believe that the Honors College can serve as a powerful magnet for philanthropic giving, and the evidence gathered so far confirms this belief. During the past two years, with the help of our own dedicated Development Officer, we have raised over \$1,000,000. For comparison, during the two years prior to that, we raised \$155,000. In addition, \$10,007,500 was raised for the Carolina and McNair Scholar Programs.

Initiative 4(a) [carried forward and updated]: “Alumni Organization:” Continuing on the suggestion of our Partnership Board, we have been organizing College alumni by selecting “Class Captains” for each graduating class. The goals are organizing the class, creating community, and ultimately raising money for the College. We have met with the Class Captains to brainstorm and develop ideas about new alumni events. The website to help build community is close to its launch date. Our first spring reunion will be held this May, and Class Captains will help us find missing contact information of other alumni, plan upcoming reunion events, and smaller local events.

Indicators: The website will launch in March. We hope to increase the traffic on our website and the percentage of our alumni who have good contact information on file. We would like to see the rate of annual giving increase as a result of the website and Captain involvement.

Initiative 4(b) [carried forward and updated]: “Alumni Events:” We continue to move ahead in coordinating events aimed at bringing alumni together. We participated with three “Meet the Dean” events last year (Greenville, Atlanta, Charleston). Attendance was modest—total of 60 alumni combined, and we hope to see this grow. We also hosted a 30th Anniversary Celebration last fall, with approximately 40 alumni in attendance. We are currently planning for what we anticipate will be the first of an annual spring SCHC reunion event.

Indicators: The clear indicator is the existence of the events, and alumni participation in these events. The proximate goal is to involve alumni more actively with each other and with the College, and the ultimate goal is to increase the rate of annual giving.

Initiative 4(c) [carried forward and updated]: “Alumni/student/College staff interaction:” We are looking for ways to connect alumni, students, faculty and staff. Our focus on internships (see Initiative 2a) is intimately tied to this effort. “Honors Alumni Profiles” [HAP] is an online system that allows alumni to post their professional profiles, so that other alumni and College students with related interests can contact them.

Indicators: I would like to see more alumni write to *AHA!*; I think this would provide evidence that this publication is working. I would like to see more alumni and students create profiles in Honors Alumni Profiles [HAP]; currently there are only approximately 200 existing profiles, an insufficient number for the system to be useful; this number needs to grow at least to 500. Finally, I am optimistic that we will have significant alumni participation in our internship effort.

Initiative 4(d) [new]: “Ivory tower endowment:” We secured \$20,000 of internal funding to support this effort this year. In future years we hope to secure additional funds from either foundations or corporations.

Indicators: Significant progress towards securing \$25,000 to support this course.

Initiative 4(e) [carried forward]: “Scholarship Growth:” In order to support both the overall growth of the College with improved diversity, and improved perception of the College, we need more full scholarships along the lines of the Carolina and McNair Scholar programs. We did make significant progress toward our goal of substantial scholarship growth with the additional McNair pledge of \$10,000,000. While we still have our sights set on securing more gifts of this size, we also secured several smaller gifts for scholarships in the Honors College and for the Carolina Scholars Program. There remains significant room for growth. This will be one of the primary target areas for enhanced external funding.

Indicators: This kind of scholarship growth will require major gifts. The 20 yearly McNair scholars and 20 McNair finalists are funded from an endowment of \$30,000,000. We should strive for funding to double this number of awards.

These scholarships should be divided into differently named and programmed groups to help promote multiple scholar communities.

Goal 5: Enhance Honors College living-learning communities.

Central to the mission of the Honors College is creating a community—or multiple communities—of Honors College students within the larger University. This is particularly important for freshmen. The College has outgrown the current “freshman residence,” Maxcy College. Thus, I am particularly happy that the new Honors residence will open for students this coming August. It will house all of our freshmen, and approximately 100 sophomores, juniors and seniors. In addition, it will provide sorely needed public space for the Honors College as a whole. Already we are thinking of this residence—or the public spaces it includes—as “the living room” of the Honors College. I am confident that it will have a substantial and positive impact on the quality of the honors experience that we provide.

Initiative 5(a) [carried forward with modifications]: “Honors on Blossom:” With completion in sight, and student occupancy an approaching reality, we are hard at work programming the new residence. Working with University Housing, we have already established new policies concerning student occupants. Thus, freshmen in the Honors College who live on campus (virtually all of our freshmen) will be required to live in this residence. This is a

new policy. For the first time we are allowing sophomores, juniors and seniors who seek housing in the new residence to include non-Honors College students in their groups. We have given back Thornwell and Woodrow in the “Outer ‘Shoe” to the general University housing population. We are in the process of working with the Honors Council to establish new approaches to governance for the new residence, and finally we are working on placing an Honors College staff member in the apartment that comes with this residence.

Indicators: In each of the areas noted above, we will be watching for a successful and smooth initial occupancy of the new residence, and will make changes as necessary.

Initiative 5(b) [carried forward]: “Communities:” We need to establish sub-communities within the Honors College. Already the College is big enough to require multiple sub-communities, and as we continue to grow, the need will be all the more pressing. I believe these can be established through a thoughtful combination of special housing opportunities and special scholarships, with programming along the lines of the Carolina and McNair Scholar programming. In the coming year we will be developing plans for doing this, with implementation as the new residence comes on line. Ultimately the scholarship end of this will require very substantial addition to our scholarship funds.

Indicators: Ultimately the success of this initiative depends on whether Honors College students feel part of a community within the larger University. We will regularly solicit feedback from students about this question, and make changes as appropriate.

Initiative 5(c) [carried forward]: “Honors College Faculty Fellows:” We have developed a model where USC faculty members could spend a year in the College developing innovative approaches to undergraduate education. These faculty fellows would be expected to “prototype” their innovations by teaching for the Honors College, and would be expected to participate in seminars on educational innovations with all Faculty Fellows. The College would compensate departments for the loss of teaching personnel; although we do not anticipate that this compensation would need to be equal to the full faculty member’s salary. This initiative continues on hold pending the resolution of space and funding issues.

Indicators: In the immediate-run, the success of this initiative will be determined by the launch of the program and faculty member’s participation. In the longer

run, the success of the program will turn on the development of innovative new approaches to honors education by the faculty fellows.

Goal 6: Improve the College's administrative facilities.

This past year has seen major progress toward resolving the College's space problems. The Honors College now occupies all of Harper College (other than the Gressette Room). We have moved quickly to turn this into function space for all the activities of the College, including making the space an attractive recruiting space. As further space becomes available in the new residence, we should have solved for the time being administrative space problems.

Goal 7: Improve Honors College advising.

A key resource that the Honors College provides its students is individual one-on-one advising. Except for office staff, everyone in the College advises students. Still, with 1,250 students it is difficult to see all of our students during the 6 weeks between the time when the next semester's schedule is posted and the time when students register for classes. We hired a fifth advisor this past year, and this addition has substantially eased our advising crunch. Our focus now is on improving the quality of our advising.

Initiative 7(a) [carried forward]: "Improving advising:" Students are assigned to advisors by discipline. This allows advisors to specialize—one advisor serves Business and Engineering, another Liberal Arts, etc. Each advisor spends time meeting with their disciplinary counterparts, to improve their understanding of their disciplines, and to improve the disciplines' understanding of Honors College advising. This is an on-going process.

Indicators: Fewer mistakes in advising; fewer complaints on the part of students or discipline-based advisors about Honors College advising.

Initiative 7(b) [carried forward with modifications]: "Improving the senior thesis process:" We have learned that one of the primary reasons students fail to graduate with honors is failure to write a senior thesis. Part of the problem is psychological; students do not think correctly about what it means to write a senior thesis, convincing themselves that it is an impossible task, certainly not worth the effort. Another part of the problem comes from confusion about the process: When should a student start? How? Working with whom? What paperwork is necessary? We are taking steps to solve these problems. I frequently talk to students about the senior thesis opportunity, reframing it as exactly that, an opportunity—to take a class with an enrollment of one on a topic of one's choice, taught

by an expert. Concerning confusion, the College has revamped its thesis preparation class, SCHC 390Z. Students are required to pass SCHC 390Z prior to registering for the senior thesis course, SCHC 499. Previously, SCHC 390Z was run along the lines of an independent study; a student working on his or her own would identify a faculty member to direct his or her thesis, and a topic. Now, to pass SCHC 390Z, students are required to attend an information session on the senior thesis process. Approximately 300 students have attended these sessions, which offer topic ideas, cover the steps of completing a thesis from beginning to end, and alert students to opportunities such as the Senior Thesis Grant. Students are also given a newly rewritten Senior Thesis Handbook and are repeatedly encouraged to contact the Honors College with ideas, questions, or concerns. Additionally, the Thesis Handbook for Directors and Second Readers has been rewritten and distributed to all faculty members who have agreed to serve as a Thesis Director.

Indicators: An increase in the percentage of students completing a senior thesis, and less confusion about how to go about writing a senior thesis, as evidenced by fewer requests for information from faculty and students about this from the Honors College.

Goal 8: Expand and improve the use of information technology (IT) for educational support.

After weathering difficulties caused by rapid turnover in the Honors College IT Manager position (3 people in 6 months), I am happy to report that our current IT Manager is moving ahead aggressively to develop and improve IT solutions for the College.

Initiative 8(a) [carried forward]: “Integrated Honors College Database:” In order to better facilitate greater financial efficiency and to better understand how Honors College funds are tied to our services and courses, we are in the process of developing an integrated database that brings financial and course information into communication.

Indicators: The existence of a useful database that can help with cost-benefit analyses, and help with planning.

Initiative 8(b) [carried forward with modifications]: “Senior Exit Survey:” In order to better track how Honors College students feel about their education, we are developing a senior exit survey. Our first survey will be distributed in March 2009.

Indicators: The existence of a useful instrument to solicit information from graduating Honors College students.

Initiative 8(c) [new]: “Sophomore Survey:” In order to better track how Honors College students feel about their education, we are developing a sophomore survey. Our first survey will be distributed in March 2009.

Indicators: The existence of a useful instrument to solicit information from Honors College students in mid-college career.

Initiative 8(d) [new]: “Information to SCHC Students:” In the past we have had issues communicating with our students. In order to improve communication, and to enhance learning outcomes, the College is developing a cohesive system to manage information. This system will include, among other things, a process that combines secure web technologies along with local applications to provide a conduit to: (a) send, receive, and “push” data; (b) transcribe data relevant to a location, date, object, or request; (c) furnish means of transmitting data in a scalable architecture that does not interfere with systems or services already in place.

Indicators: The existence of an effective means to communicate with Honors College students, faculty and staff.

Initiative 8(e) [new]: “Honors College Computing Center:” We are taking steps to provide an enhanced computer laboratory for students and faculty with the dual purpose of a smart classroom and a research lab. This would create additional resources for students and faculty members working on their senior theses and/or other research projects.

Indicators: The existence of a space that different types of courses and research demands can support.

C. Summary of International Dimension

The College believes that all students benefit from “international education.” We support this in multiple ways, primarily through our “Honors on the Road” (Initiative 1a). We provide multiple ways for students to travel outside the United States. Usually one or two Honors College courses include a trip abroad as part of the course. For example, Lara Lomicka regularly teaches a two-semester French sequence where students befriend French students through the internet during the fall, and then travel to France to live with these students during spring break. Such trips are short, and are, admittedly “study abroad very light.” We augment these opportunities with Maymester travel classes, seven during the coming Maymester, 2009 (England, Eastern Europe, Azerbaijan). These courses are more intensive, but still only “study abroad light.” In both cases, the College provides some financial support to students to defray the cost of the experience.

Finally, we strongly encourage students to engage in longer courses of study abroad, and will grant elective honors course credits simply for studying abroad (3 honors credits for summer, 6 for a semester, 12 for a year). We are working with the other SEC honors colleges and programs to develop ways to further expand opportunities for study abroad.

Unit Statistical Profile

A. Instructional

Nearly all Honors College students also are students in other academic colleges. Thus, most of these questions do not apply. I can provide, on request, a variety of information about Honors College students (application/acceptance/enrollment information; distribution of majors; retention information; etc.)

1. Number of applications for Fall 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008.
2. Number of admissions for these same years, and as an added bonus to give an idea about yield from admissions, I include the number who enrolled.

	Applied	Admitted	Enrolled	SAT average	Core GPA
2008	1406	717	310	1401	4.47
2007	1553	672	288	1403	4.49
2006	1247	648	312	1398	4.47
2005	1245	650	308	1403	4.49

3. Freshmen retention rate for classes entering Fall 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007. I assume this means the percentage of freshmen enrolled into the Honors College in a given year that remain in the Honors College one year later.

	Enrolled	Retained	Rate
2007	322	301	94%
2006	312	298	96%
2005	308	296	96%
2004	265	247	93%

4. Number of majors for Fall 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 by headcount. Here I assume this refers to the number of *Baccalareus Artium et Scientiae* students.

Baccalaureus Students, Fall 2005	6
Baccalaureus Students, Fall 2006	8
Baccalaureus Students, Fall 2007	11
Baccalaureus Students, Fall 2008	11

5. Number of graduates for Fall 2006, Spring 2007 and Summer 2007, by headcount. For the Honors College this could mean several different things:

	Graduates	Graduates with honors	BARSC graduates
Summer 2008	16	11	2
Spring 2008	203	148	0
Fall 2007	43	15	0

6. Four-, Five- and Six-Year Graduation rates for the three most recent applicable classes (undergraduate only).

	4-year rate	5-year rate	6-year rate
Class enrolled fall 03	63.7%	71.2%	76.0%
Class enrolled fall 02	64.8%	74.0%	76.3%
Class enrolled fall 01	66.8%	75.2%	78.0%

7. Total credit hours generated by your unit (regardless of major) for Fall 2006, Spring 2007 and Summer 2007.

Total Honors Credit Hours, Fall 2007	7,353
Total Honors Credit Hours, Spring 2008	6,387
Total Honors Credit Hours, Summer 2008	308

Questions 8 and 9 (“number of faculty by title” and “total continuing education units”) do not apply to the South Carolina Honors College.

B. Research and Creative Accomplishments

All of the research and creative activity by College administration, faculty, staff and students will be accounted for in other college reports.

C. Faculty Hiring

The Honors College does not hire faculty members.