

Blueprint for Academic Excellence, 2008

South Carolina Honors College
March 2008

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I. Vision, Mission, Goals

A. Executive Summary

Vision: The South Carolina Honors College provides the best undergraduate honors education in the United States. 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. A recent meeting of the deans and directors of SEC honors colleges and programs hosted by the South Carolina Honors College confirms how well developed the College is. While we are proud of our success, we believe in continuous innovation. 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. The College combines the intimacy and personal attention of a small liberal arts college with the resources and academic depth of a comprehensive research university. Integral to this mission is developing innovative approaches to undergraduate education that can be exported to the broader University and beyond.

Goals: The College's strategic goals remain unchanged from last year, and are the primary engines through which the College pursues its mission:

- (1) Enhance the Honors College curriculum, and where appropriate and possible, promote the export of Honors College innovations to the broader University;
- (2) Establish the South Carolina Honors College as an undergraduate "destination of choice" for academically gifted high school students;
- (3) Expand external support;
- (4) Enhance Honors College living-learning communities;
- (5) Improve the College's administrative facilities;

- (6) Improve Honors College advising;
- (7) Expand and improve the use of information technology for educational support.

That said, we are pursuing forward with two efforts that are supported by a series of interrelated initiatives tied to these on-going strategic goals. These are:

- I. Establishing a requirement for graduation with honors that a student must have three honors credit hours “beyond the classroom;”
- II. Continuing to improve our ability to recruit the strongest academically prepared students to the College.

Initiatives that are being developed to support the “beyond the classroom” requirement include:

- Developing a richer set of internship opportunities (Initiative 1d);
- In cooperation with the Moore School of Business and the USC NanoCenter, developing opportunities for students to take university intellectual property to commercial fruition (Initiative 1e);
- In cooperation with the Office of Undergraduate Research, better articulating the educational mission of undergraduate research in different disciplines and finding appropriate resources to achieve this mission (Initiative 1b);
- Launching a series of service learning course opportunities (Initiative 1c);
- In cooperation with the other SEC honors colleges and programs, enhancing opportunities for study abroad (Initiative 1a).
- Developing a better relationship with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions (Initiative 2a);
- Improving our ability to recruit a diverse student body (Initiative 2c);

Initiatives that are being developed to support the College’s recruiting efforts include:

- Programming the new honors residence in construction at the intersection of Blossom and Main streets to draw students to the Honor College (Initiative 4a);
- Improving the College’s administrative space so that it better serves as a recruiting vehicle (Initiative 5a);
- Increasing the pool of funds for scholarship support for Honors College students (Initiative 3g);
- In cooperation with the other SEC honors colleges and programs, pursuing appropriate joint recruiting efforts (Initiative 2e).

It should be clear that these initiatives and the goals they are tied to support the College’s mission. 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 will fall flat if we do not continue 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, 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 believe that the College's efforts to implement service learning, study abroad and internships will similarly help the larger University.