

Honors College Strategic Plan 2017-2020

Goals and Accomplishments

Advancing Student Success

Goal: *Increase honors student success and satisfaction and honors status retention by improving staff and peer services to honors students.*

1. In 2016, the Honors College worked with the University Perspectives program to create honors UP sections for first-year students. Still utilizing the goals of the UP program, these honors sections are designed to help students learn about opportunities in the Honors College, including specialized coursework, grant funding for study abroad, and how to start getting involved in undergraduate research. Realizing that many of our first-year students are considering graduate school or competitive career fields, there is also an emphasis on teaching students how to better market their achievements throughout college and beyond. Our enrollment and student success staff members have taken the lead in organizing honors UP, recruiting both staff and faculty from the Honors College to teach these specialized sections.
2. Unmet and under-met student needs were identified via separate expectation and satisfaction surveys for first- and second-year honors students. These surveys will continue to be conducted annually and inform Honors College programming for first- and second-year students. Moreover, results of the second-year satisfaction surveys are also being used as part of one Honors College staff member's doctoral research.
3. A well-planned, packaged and promoted Sophomore Experience Program, dovetailing with existing freshman programming, was developed to address loss of second-year Honors College students. Topics covered include stress, research, study abroad, sophomore issues and how to "adult."
4. A comprehensive print and electronic mentoring calendar incorporating events by Honors College advising and programming staff was developed internally to allow better event coordination and promotion. This new calendar facilitates the assessment of use of Honors College space and the range of both internal and external events that take place each semester.
5. To complement the work of the new U of A Student Success Center team of 360-degree advisors, an Honors College Futures Hub has begun taking shape, staffed by one honors advising specialist. This specialist offers broad advising services to help students create "academic maps" as a part of the long-term planning they must all master in preparation for any career trajectory. This full-time advisor also collaborates with the Fulbright College of Arts & Sciences Liebolt Chair of Premedical Science to provide niche, personalized advising services to pre-med honors students, who make up 10 to 15 percent of the honors population. To achieve the privacy needed for such 1:1 advising, the first-floor space in Gearhart Hall was renovated, and two of the college's second-floor study rooms were repurposed to create more office space for these advising endeavors.
6. Specialized long-term planning workshops and information sessions were first piloted for honors fellows in the 2018-2019 academic year before being extended to all honors students who want them this year.
7. A new Honors College advising platform was created in Blackboard for undergraduate Honors College fellows to help them optimize their honors experience at the U of A. This online learning tool includes advising tools to help with long-term academic mapping for study abroad, med school and other graduate programs, honors research/thesis navigation, securing a Research Experience for Undergraduates supported by the NSF, mastering language and good habits of student success by utilizing UA Success/UA Connect student portals, etc. Though currently available only to fellows, we plan to share these materials with all Honors College students before the end of the 2020-2021 academic year. In the meantime, Honors College advising references this good information whenever working with any honors student to support their progress and success.

8. A mandatory “Academic and Professional Development for Fellows” Advising/Student Success Series for first- and second-year fellows has been implemented and has helped these undergraduates experience a smoother transition into the management of the fellowship (forms and reporting). These meetings help all undergraduate fellows gain a full understanding of the advantages for study abroad, research and professional development opportunities, and how to pursue them to the fullest potential.
9. An “Honors Café” series was created to explore issues related to honors advising. Hosted once a semester, it brings together stakeholders from across campus including honors programs’ staff, academic advisors and other student success staff. Recent topics addressed include “learning to fail as part of learning,” “undergraduate honors research and the faculty mentor,” and “reshaping honors for the 21st century,” to ease demand for faculty research mentors.

Building a Collaborative and Innovative Campus

Goal: *Share the Honors College’s resources and broaden the experience of honors students by expanding the college’s programming and event collaboration with the university’s other colleges, departments, centers and registered student organizations.*

1. The Honors College has greatly expanded our collaborations on campus to include University Programs, University Relations, Office of Nationally Competitive Awards, Office of Admissions, Center for Multicultural and Diversity Education and Student Services, among others. Members of our staff are active on committees throughout campus, including the One Book, One Community Initiative, the University’s Sesquicentennial, Diversity Champions, and other means of campus-wide support. Honors College advising works closely with student success advising staff and UA Success Administrators across campus. Our Path team collaborated with the Center for Multicultural and Diversity Education to plan and organize a Civil Rights Bus tour event. The Honors College also partnered with University Relations to develop the award-winning short documentary Buen Camino, which airs frequently on AETN, providing exceptional visibility for both the Honors College and the University of Arkansas.
2. In fall 2016, the Honors College created the “Honors College Pulse” series to provide students a space and opportunity to openly discuss timely and sometimes controversial events in a productive manner. The initiative is completely student-led. Topics have included hate speech, sexual assault, sex trafficking, microaggressions, sustainability and guns on campus. This initiative has transformed into part of the Advisory Committee on Service and Social Justice, which provides a space for current students to continue to address important campus topics.

Enhancing our Research and Discovery Mission

Goal 1: *Redesign the honors thesis program so that by spring 2020, honors students in each college have the option to complete their honors requirements with creative or experiential projects, reflecting the diversity of disciplines and approaches encompassed by the university’s colleges and departments.*

1. Honors program directors have worked with the Honors College dean and associate dean to develop piloted opportunities to broaden the types of research experiences available to students. Opportunities have included more community-based projects and internships. These capstone options continue to evolve as honors programs work to accommodate the growing number of honors students in their programs.
2. In fall 2017, the Honors College launched the annual Honors College Research Conference to demystify the thesis process by highlighting preparation for and execution of experiential and creative theses. Partnering with University Libraries, the Creative Writing Center, Class+, Walton College of Business Community Lab, CAPS, Discovery Journal, *Inquiry Journal*, Office of Nationally Competitive Awards, Research and Sponsored Programs, and all of the honors programs, students participate in concurrent sessions, an information fair, a showcase of completed theses and college programming that fosters research engagement and productivity.

3. In fall 2017, the Honors College launched two new student research programs to facilitate student collaboration on projects across the U.S. and around the world. The Short-Term Research Travel and Extended Research Travel grant programs offer funding to students working on UA-mentor-approved theses that require travel outside of the area to gather data or otherwise conduct research overseen by an external mentor. Since the first student participants in summer 2017, 27 students have traveled to three cities in the U.S. and 13 countries around the world to conduct research sponsored by these grant programs.
4. The Honors College has collaborated with the Office of Study Abroad and the School for International Training (SIT) to offer additional SIT scholarships for students who participate in research-based SIT programs. Since its launch in 2017, four students have been awarded these funds.
5. Each semester, again with relevant research conference partners, the Honors College hosts thesis preparation workshops covering topics related to mentor selection, timing of research and citation development and management.

Goal 2: *Encourage student-faculty collaboration and leverage existing resources by supporting an increase in the number of group research projects both within and across departments and colleges by spring 2020.*

A Research Team Grant program was developed in fall 2016 and launched as a pilot in spring 2018 and campus-wide in spring 2019. Based on demand, the call was expanded to offer a fall deadline in 2019. To date, 20 faculty and 16 students have participated in 49 projects across four honors programs on campus.

Enriching Campus Diversity and Inclusion

Goal 1: *Increase both the applicant pool and incoming class for the Honors College Path Program by 25 percent over those for the 2017 class of Path scholars.*

1. The Honors College has greatly expanded Path Program support so that an ever-larger number of Path students receive scholarship funding for participating in the program. The Honors College endowment for Path has grown to \$5 million, providing funds for programming and renewable annual scholarships for six to eight students a year. Since fall 2018, the Honors College has provided 113 semester scholarships to 70 students in the Path Program.
2. In collaboration with S-STEM partners on campus, the Honors College was awarded nationally competitive funding from the National Science Foundation to provide a research-based academic experience for 36 incoming Path freshman S-STEM students (averaging 12 new students a year) starting with the fall 2018 incoming class. To date, the program has awarded 27 annual renewable scholarships to 27 students.
3. To increase academic preparedness adjustment, the Honors College has created a summer bridge program for incoming Path scholars. In collaboration with the UA Accelerated Student Achievement Program, this bridge program offers two traditional academic courses plus a one-hour research course together with social experiences to build both community and an early strong academic record. In the two offerings to date, 45 students have earned 294 credit hours towards their academic degree programs during the summer bridge experience.
4. The Honors College has developed both peer and faculty mentoring programs for Path scholars to strengthen retention both at the university and in the Path Program. Further, monthly programming offered to each cohort teaches skills to maintain high academic achievement and mental health stability.

Goal 2: Conduct a comprehensive assessment of successes of honors students and alumni compared to those who did not participate in the honors program to better assess and articulate the impact of honors education at the U of A.

1. The Honors College recruitment staff has developed extensive materials and programming that give prospective students and families definitive information regarding the Honors College and honors programs across campus. The recruitment staff continue to retool the Success Stories literature, with a new edition scheduled to come out within the next year. Further, the A+ magazine distribution list has been extended to include high school counselors and school leaders throughout the state and the region so that these high school partners can better share our student stories at their schools.
2. Student Success staff within the office identified identity based RSOs and instigated communication in the spring of 2018. From this initial interaction, we were able to partner with the African Students Association, the Panamanian Student Society, the Italian Club, and the Black Student Association. These partnerships consisted of event support, speaking at chapter meetings and with the group, and raising the overall awareness of the Honors College and the resources it offers.

Goal 3: Improve opportunities for academic success of all underrepresented undergraduate students across campus.

1. The Honors College created the university's first formal first-generation mentoring program in fall 2017. The First-Generation Mentoring Program is open to all first-generation students (honors and non-honors) who are first- and second-year undergraduates. The goal of the program is to help students navigate the college process. To date, more than 125 faculty and 80 students have registered in the program. In fall 2019, the Honors College sought collaboration with the Multicultural Center and New Families Programming to develop National First-Gen Day programming for November.
2. The Honors College has promoted First-Generation Mentoring Program activities and successes through a communications campaign that included an A+ feature article and video that highlight the struggles and successes of first-generation students on campus. A flyer that can be emailed to high school teachers and guidance counselors was developed to assist in recruiting first-generation students from across the state.

Goal 4: Develop a Diversity and Inclusion statement for the Honors College that demonstrates our intentionality for inclusion and serves as a lens from which to view the strategic planning process for 2021-2025.

The Honors College is committed to be a leader in diversity and inclusion on campus. We will invite IDEALS or other experts to hold inclusion workshops with Honors College staff in preparation for new strategic planning. The first workshop will take place in spring 2020.

Investing in Faculty Excellence

Goal: Recruit, recognize and support honors faculty to create a varied and experienced teaching and mentoring cadre for honors college students.

1. Partnering with the honors programs, the Honors College is recruiting new and diverse faculty members into honors through a faculty "sophomore experience" program. We have worked with honors directors to encourage college-based workshops for their faculty to better prepare them for mentoring honors undergraduates. Workshops have been established in Fulbright College and Bumpers College to date. The Honors College dean and associate dean also provide a brief pitch at the new faculty orientation.

2. The Honors College continues to recognize faculty for their mentoring and service to honors students and the Honors College through the annual Honors College Faculty Reception. This event, hosted at the Fowler House, brings together faculty, their families, their college administrators and Honors College staff to celebrate the faculty for their commitment to honors. We also recognize exceptional faculty members, typically six per year, by awarding Honors College Distinguished Faculty and Distinguished Leadership Awards. These faculty members receive a bronze medal designed by honors alumnus Hank Kaminsky and \$1,000 in academic funding and are recognized on the Honors College website.
3. In 2018, the Honors College created a new awards program to celebrate the "unsung heroes" of honors—staff across campus who maintain a low profile, yet provide exceptional support to the Honors College and students across campus. In two awards ceremonies, the Honors College has recognized six staff members across campus.

Promoting Innovation in Teaching and Learning

Goal: Make the Honors College a nationally recognized leader and resource for developing innovative interdisciplinary, service-learning and study-abroad courses at the U of A.

1. The Honors College leads in developing groundbreaking interdisciplinary courses through the creation of Signature Seminars and one-credit-hour Forums and Retro Readings courses. To date, 18 Signature Seminars, 11 Forums and nine Retro Reading classes have enrolled students in all six colleges. Additionally, three Signature Seminars, five Forums and two Retro Readings courses are scheduled for spring 2020. The Honors College is dedicated to offering at least three Signature Seminars, two Forums and one Retro Readings course each semester moving forward.
2. In collaboration with the Service-Learning Initiative, the Honors College has supported the development of at least three new service-learning courses annually engaging both honors and non-honors students. These courses also offer at least one research opportunity for an honors student each year. Since fall 2017, eight new service-learning courses with research opportunities have been offered. Efforts are currently underway to measure student use of these courses for honors research requirements.
3. The Honors College has partnered with top faculty to offer Honors Passport, a two-week intersession study abroad experience that takes honors students to historically and culturally significant sites around the globe. Since 2016, these courses have recruited students in all academic colleges to participate in in-depth study experiences in Austria, Czechia, Peru, France, Spain and Sicily, with future courses planned in Japan and Mexico. The Honors College expects to continue to sponsor one offering each academic year.
4. Starting in fall 2019, the Honors College introduces incoming freshmen to Honors College curricula through presentations during "A-Week." Billed as "A Taste of Honors," ten 90-minute seminars feature top faculty presenters who teach high-enrollment honors courses across a wide range of disciplines.
5. Working with Alumni Relations, development staff explored running versions of the Peru and Camino de Santiago Honors Passport trips as donor and alumni trips. While some interest was generated, as with other alumni trips, there was not sufficient interest to offer the trips to U of A supporters alone. Shorter, lower-cost domestic trips for young alumni may be tested in the future.

Reaffirming Our Land-Grant and Flagship Responsibilities

Goal 1: Create a recruitment plan that leads to an honors student body better reflecting the state's demographics.

1. The Honors College created Discovery Day, a big focus of which is providing important admissions information to juniors so they can be more productive during the summer in preparation for the fall application process. The event hosts about 125 high-achieving juniors (the vast majority from Arkansas) along with their families each May.
2. In fall 2018, we simplified the honors application process for incoming freshmen, current students and transfer students by developing an online platform through UA Connect that allows students to apply with ease and informs honors program staff quickly of accepted and pending applications.
3. In fall 2019, we again revised the incoming freshmen application to specifically target eligible students. The process for incoming freshmen is now managed through Slate by Admissions and Honors College staff.
4. Enrollment in each of the honors programs has grown substantially since the launch of the Honors College. Therefore, in collaboration with the honors program directors, University Admissions, and marketing experts, the Honors College is leading a process to reshape the honors experience and revise the Honors College marketing plan to better represent what the Honors College is today.
5. In summer 2018, we implemented a recruitment strategy that focused on students from rural areas in Arkansas. We expanded the college fairs we attended to include more rural schools. We also began a communications campaign, which included emails to encourage rural students to attend Honors College Convocation and to encourage fellowship-eligible rural students to apply for fellowships. This campaign focused on sharing current rural students' stories and experiences. In spring 2019 we presented on the subject at the Honors Education at Research Universities Conference (HERU) and believe it could become a model for other honors programs at research universities.

Goal 2: In conjunction with the University Service-Learning Initiative, develop a long-term service-learning plan focusing on projects within the state, which encourage participation from students, faculty and staff.

The Honors College and Service-Learning Initiative have offered incentives (in the form of course development grants, materials grants and travel grants) to help faculty establish relationships with community organizations in Northwest Arkansas and assess their programming and needs. Workshops allow community partners to present their project ideas to UA faculty and help engage more community organizations in the work conducted through honors service-learning courses and research experiences.

Goal 3: Building on the success of the AP Summer Institute, expand the Honors College's offerings to support the work of Arkansas high-school teachers.

1. The Honors College has created a "teachers and counselors" page on the Honors College website, which includes a blog post with tips on writing a letter of recommendation. The Honors College Recruitment Team has also developed a presentation that can be given at teacher workshops and other professional conferences.
2. After 21 successful years, beginning in summer 2020, the AP Summer Institute will no longer be hosted by the Honors College. In 2019, the Honors College worked very closely with the Office of Nationally Competitive Awards to facilitate a smooth transition of leadership.

Goal 4: Raise Honors College's profile as cultural resource for the campus, for Northwest Arkansas and for the state.

1. The Honors College has planned, branded and marketed a distinct series of Honors College events to the campus and public. The events include the annual Honors College House Concert and Honors College Mic lecture, and Signature Seminar preview lectures offered at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters.
2. We have established Gearhart Hall as a space where honors students, faculty, staff and alumni may showcase their work. We offer rotating exhibitions and have begun to acquire and showcase artwork by honors students, faculty and alumni. We have hosted "pop up" exhibitions organized by honors faculty and students, and offered a Signature Seminar, "Place in Mind," where an interdisciplinary group of students and faculty explored ways to transform Gearhart Hall's courtyard into a more engaging community space. We are currently researching the cost and logistics of realizing the sculpture and landscape proposals developed by these faculty and students. Guidelines have been established for planning art exhibitions and for accepting acquisitions and donations.
3. To increase students' civic engagement, the Honors College has increased student access to news and periodicals in Honors College spaces. High quality periodicals are available in the Honors Student Lounge while the New York Times is available through a paper vending machine in the foyer.

Goal 5: Build an Honors College alumni and friends network that connects the Honors College to Arkansas communities, becomes a pipeline for recruiting Arkansas students, creates opportunities for service and internships and supports the work of the college.

1. In spring 2018, The Honors College conducted an honors alumni survey, with a focus on five-year and ten-year graduates to assess the value-added aspects of honors education and to find where the Honors College can be more successful. Over 550 Honors College alumni responded, providing important baseline information about honors graduate satisfaction, career paths, and graduate and professional school attendance. Results indicate high satisfaction with the U of A and the honors experience. Among those surveyed, 63% of Honors College graduates remain in the state and for every 100 students from Northwest Arkansas who graduate from the Honors College, 116 Honors College graduates remain in Northwest Arkansas. Of those surveyed, 69% reported attending graduate or professional school with 17% of all graduates and 26% of fellows obtaining an advanced degree.
2. In order to increase alumni and public engagement with the Honors College, the Honors College created a Dean's Advisory Board. Currently the Dean's Advisory Board meets in conjunction with the Honors College Capital Campaign Committee. After the campaign, the Dean's Advisory Board will continue meeting twice a year with a membership drawn from alumni, donors and those with expertise in honors education.
3. Traditionally, the honors programs across campus have recognized their seniors graduating with honors. Until recently, no single event existed on campus to celebrate the successful graduation of all Honors College students. Therefore, the Honors College established an annual "Senior Common Room Induction" ceremony that is held during the last week of class in the spring semester. Open to all graduating honors students, this event highlights their academic triumphs and signifies their welcome into the Honors College alumni community, cementing their bond to the college after they leave campus.

4. In fall 2018 the Honors College hosted the "Bodie Bash" with the goals of a) honoring Dr. Lee Bodenhamer for his financial support of top UA scholars for 20 years, b) providing networking opportunities for Bodenhamer fellowship alumni and current fellows and c) reconnecting with and engaging Bodenhamer fellow alumni in current Honors College activities and opportunities. The accompanying print piece, which includes an article on the Bodenhamer family and updates on alumni fellows, may be used by the Honors College director of development to encourage future investment in honors students.
5. A new Honors College LinkedIn page provides a place for alumni and current students to connect along with tips on professionalization. Two mixers have brought together alumni in communications and technology with current students.
6. Over the last three years, the dean and development staff have created a comprehensive family program that includes a fall family weekend, a fellowship weekend reception for prospective parents, a spring Little Rock reception for the families of central, south, and east Arkansas Honors Fellows, and a summer honors orientation reception for new parents. All events are supported by the work of the Honors Parents' Committee, organized in 2018.
7. Communications with the Honors College donor base has been vastly improved in the last four years through: a) streamlining the structure and content of Walton Annual Report (WAR), creating new individual donor annual reports to endowment donors beginning with the Cole and Finch families, c) creating a general Honors College Annual Report to be shared with all of the donor base and d) distributing holiday cards that feature artwork by honors alumni to donors and key prospects.
8. Annual giving solicitation has been expanded through new annual giving opportunities for the Honors College. An "All in for Arkansas" campaign attracts new financial support for study abroad opportunities for honors students. Donation envelopes in A+ Magazine and phone campaigns to parents and alumni attract support for a broad array of Honors College needs.
9. Working with annual giving, fellowship alumni and current fellowship parents are for the first time solicited for contributions to the Honors College as part of the university's phone campaign. Negotiations are underway for an Honors College holiday appeal.