

Honors Re-Envisioning Task Force

Recommendations for the Future of the Honors College

University of Arizona

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Introduction

In this short document, we provide the university community with our vision for the future of UA Honors. It is one that outlines what must happen for UA Honors to evolve into the new national model of honors education. It builds upon what we have learned from the data we collected as part of this process. Our vision for UA Honors is one that is co-created with students. It leverages the entire University of Arizona in developing a community of students focused on the goal of addressing the grand challenges of our day.

UA Honors: Toward the Future

A New Normal:

Expect More, Do More, Be More: The UA Honors College Experience.

Our future honors college has no peers; there is no metric by which you can measure it. No one has built this model as yet. And, this is what it will take to get UA Honors to the next level:

1. **Everyone** at the University of Arizona, from the president to the faculty, staff, and students, must invest their time and energy in building an honors experience. They must champion its achievements, participate in the recruitment of its next students, and teach and learn in its classes.
2. The new dean is a committed teacher *and* scholar. He or she is a fearless experimenter. A communicator, agitator, and collaborator. A community builder. The new dean is an “**un-honors dean**,” a dynamic individual who is not beholden to the models of what honors education has been in the past but rather someone who has a compelling vision of what it can be in the future.
3. UA Honors must **recruit** innovators and out-of-box thinkers who are passionate learners. UA Honors students are experimenters who know how to succeed through repeated efforts. They

are partners in the creative process, architects of their unique pathway, and community-builders invested in developing a shared experience that leverages the entirety of this premiere research university.

4. Its **admissions processes** attract and evaluate those recruits in a comprehensive way that looks at both academic achievement and intangible factors. This robust application has upper-division honors students recruiting and evaluating the next class of great minds, practitioners, and idea makers to join their community.
5. The Honors College has a **central location and living space** *and* supports the expansion of **new spaces** across campus and in the academic colleges. These residence halls, research labs, cafes, maker spaces, artist studios, and innovation hubs allow honors students to connect with other students. These spaces **physically adapt** to the ideas, creative energies, and interdisciplinary conversations that honors students have with their peers, colleagues, outstanding faculty, and staff across the university as they engage the grand challenges of the day. These spaces are essential for the inspiration of current honors students and for the recruitment of future ones.
6. The **development plan** of the Honors College is fully integrated with the rest of the campus so that donations are leveraged to support the honors experiences in the research labs, cafes, maker spaces, artist studios, and innovation hubs in which they work across the campus. This plan enables a wide range of activities including, but certainly not limited to, named scholarships, study abroad experiences, and the archiving and publishing of student scholarship and creative activities.
7. Its **students** are positioned to drive conversations, connect with the broader community within and beyond the university. UA Honors students are not encouraged to be cloistered and inward-looking but rather engaging and outward-facing – sharing their intellectual conversations with any and all who want to join.
8. The **introductory curriculum** builds on the superlative lower-division coursework and first year projects already in place and asks students to **design and implement** solutions to some of our most pressing needs locally, nationally, and globally. As students complete this curriculum, they are recognized for that effort. They can't just passively “level up” through their honors experience. They must “do something” constructive and beneficial to the larger university and/or Tucson community in order to be permitted to move forward in honors.
9. UA Honors students are taught by the **best faculty on the campus** – our regent's and distinguished professors, interdisciplinary honors faculty, and others committed to training the next generation of leaders.
10. The honors students are **leaders** in our efforts toward 100% engagement, completing a number of engagement activities and competencies along the way to their culminating experience. Through second and third year projects and then their final project, they address the various permutations of the 100% engagement initiative and build the professional and personal skills that undergird the program.

11. The honors students are enrolled in creative **interdisciplinary minor programs**, such as the “Health and Human Values” minor, along with other new minors in areas such as, “Environmental Humanities” or “Engineering and Social Change,” to name just two.
12. Honors students demonstrate that a university education is so much more than the courses they take; their education is also about the relationships they build, the experiences they create, and the struggles in which they engage as they wrestle with big ideas, challenges, and opportunities. It is not an experience tied to a fixed number of academic credits. Upper-division students thus build their advanced honors experience through the development of a **personal pathway**¹ that integrates their curricular and non-curricular activities into a final project, thesis, white paper, play, patent, novel, or any other product that contributes to the mission of the university and the community in which that university is embedded. The UA honors experience is unique to each student.

In sum, the Honors College is a program in which discovery, research, inquiry and engagement are threaded through every facet of the experience, making for a unique undergraduate academic career. UA Honors is not an island within a larger sea. It is an integrated experience where the some of our most highly motivated students work closely with faculty, staff, and other students to create an unparalleled learning experience.

¹ This builds on the work of Barry Fishman, University of Michigan, who has designed a new teaching platform informed by the concepts of learning analytics and “gameful learning” (see: <http://odl.arizona.edu/news/school-game-it-good-game>). As Fishman suggests, gameful learning is not ‘fun.’ It is work. But, it is work that students can own and do.