

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Academic Program Review
College of Arts and Sciences

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM
Honors in Humanities Program (including Global Humanities track)

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS
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CAMPUS VISIT
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The review team read the *Self Study* written by the faculty in the program; reviewed the curriculum, course syllabi and evaluations; interviewed faculty, students and staff; and met with the Dean, Associate Deans and other relevant members of the campus community. Prior to their visit, the reviewers were also provided with a variety of materials about the College and the University.

- 1. How did the external review committee rate the quality of the program – excellent, very good, good, adequate, or poor? How does the program compare with benchmark top-tier programs nationally? Please provide a brief rationale for the external review committee’s rating.**

The committee gave the Honors in Humanities program an overall rating of ADEQUATE. They noted that the programs “comprise a recognized locus of academic excellence for the institution,” and with their impending transition into a new Honors Program/College, they can become “a source of pride and imaginative pedagogy across a much wider swath of USF than currently appears to be the case. However, in the programs’ current state, reviewers noted many “questions [that] need to be resolved with care, sensitivity, and perhaps even additional financial resources” if the ultimate result is to “emerge as the nationally recognized flagship program that the University aspires for it to become.”

- 2. What are the most important general issues that emerged from the external review process?**

- The program’s current “two-track” Western and Global Humanities system involves “really, two distinct programs” that benefit from “two outstanding directors who are committed to their respective programs and students.” However, the establishment of the new Honors College leaves the future of this ‘two-track’ system “unclear:” reviewers wondered whether “the western track will, in fact, continue to be offered or will be folded into an integrated global humanities curriculum,” the latter of which “appears to be of more interest to current students.”
- Students comprise “an essential strength of both the western and global humanities honors programs.” Reviewers characterized them as “highly intelligent, eloquent,

engaged and committed to excellence,” and “very enthusiastic about their professors and the experience of their classes.” Students did, however, note some “challenges” with “logistics” and “communications [within, and about]” the program.

- While the “original honors program ... served USF students very well for many years now,” reviewers felt “there remains much room for growth in making the program (and future college) not just an exemplary honors program but also, more specifically, an exemplary *Jesuit* honors program.” The creation of the new global humanities track was cited as a positive development, but reviewers urged the program to include “clearer programmatic and curricular links to the university’s commitment to a faith that does justice,” such as emphasis on “the important role service learning can play in ... a student’s understanding of complex societal challenges.” Expanding the program’s “opportunities for service learning” is an “important path to pursue in revising and expanding” its curriculum.
- Honors in Humanities “benefits from significant institutional commitment in many ways,” from the presidential level to the college level to the program level. However, “there are some areas in which the [soon-to-be] Honors College could benefit from greater administrative support and resources going forward.” Ultimately, they reviewers felt “it should have its own structures, an independent budget, and the possibility of growth.”
- There exists tension between the “distinctively interdisciplinary nature of the honors curriculum” and the requirements of USF’s general education Core, which “focuses on disciplinary requirements.” Reviewers felt that such tension contributed to “a surprising number of somewhat demoralized faculty” frustrated about “having to eliminate large chunks of what they consider to be the best and most engaging parts of their honors seminar[s] in order to satisfy the quantitative metrics required for the Core approval process,” and they recommended that the University “make it an institutional priority to find ways to distinguish the Honors curriculum from the discipline-specificity of the Core” and allow for “cutting-edge pedagogy” within it.

3. What specific recommendations for improving the program’s quality has the external review committee made to the Dean?

Curriculum

- The curriculum is “still tilted quite heavily toward the ‘Western’ track.” Moving forward, the program “should recruit more faculty to teach globally-oriented courses” and encourage faculty currently teaching classical Western humanities courses to “try to think of ways to ‘globalize’ their own offerings in imaginative new ways – for instance, by thinking about the Renaissance, say, or the Enlightenment not as purely ‘Western’ phenomena but rather as the outcome of larger global processes and encounters.”

Department/Program clarification - This is somewhat misleading. It is true that there are more western courses on the books, but already the number of offerings is equal or even greater in the global track.

- Consider “finding ways to facilitate team-teaching in the Honors College,” where several faculty “co-teach a course organized around a central theme,” motivating faculty to “be as inventive and rigorous as possible in imagining new course themes and pedagogical methods.”
- Offer “a range of co-curricular Honors program/College experiences outside the program,” which students could “opt into” at various points to “build community with other students.”
- Honors program requirements should “constitute a substantial portion of [its] participants’ undergraduate work, typically 20%-25% of the total course work and certainly no less than 15%.”
- Clarify the relationship “between Honors Program/College courses and the general education requirements of the Core.” Develop a new process for evaluating potential Honors courses that “addresses both the learning outcomes and WASC requirements.”
- Allow the Honors College “relative control over its own curriculum.”
- Consider “rethinking the timing of honors classes, offering a bigger variety of time-slots” to better integrate STEM and nursing majors that are currently unlikely to be able to fit honors “into their complex schedules.”

Governance and Advising

- Consider term limits for directorial positions of each Honors track, or within the new Honors College, to “give it more structure and enlist participating from a rotating pool of faculty officers within the program,” as well as allow for more input into “decisions about the direction of the program” beyond one “sole advisor,” as is currently the case.
- Create “a faculty advisory board or steering committee” with rotating membership comprised of “a broad spectrum of faculty in the humanities, as well as international and area studies, and possibly even social sciences (especially those involved with global and international studies.”
- Reviewers felt that as per the National Collegiate Honors Council’s benchmark “Basic characteristics,” “honors students themselves [should have] some advisory or consultative role in curricular or policy development, something they currently lack at USF.” This could come in the form of an “honors student association or council that could participate in curricular and other programmatic conversations, and also build [its] social and co-curricular components.”
- While the program’s “relationship with its current dean(s) has its strengths, reviewers felt the Honors college “ultimately should have its own structures, an independent budget and the possibility of growth.” Over the long term, it may be worth considering that the program “report directly to the Provost ... as it is typically considered national best practice.” The reviewers noted “it may well be that in the near term it makes the most sense for USF to keep Dean Fung as the key administrator shepherding the Honors College into existence, and the person to whom its director should report (once one is hired). But over the long term, the idea

of having the director of the Honors College report directly to the Provost is worth considering, for the very same reasons that it is typically considered national best practice.”

- Develop a charter document for the Honors program
- Establish clear guidelines for the recruitment and selection of Honors faculty, as well as for staff and administrative/admissions/advising support, to lessen reliance on the program’s director.
- Create a more “expansive system of advising” for students, to provide clarity on requirements and “the kinds of scholarships, fellowships and other such opportunities that are available to enhance their educational experience.”

Marketing, Admissions and Presence

- Make it easier for “students to find adequate information about the program,” – the reviewers felt it is currently “a hidden gem” and such information can be “difficult to find,” even for “colleagues at USF” that are not directly involved with/teaching in it.
- Express “far greater clarity regarding the program and its admissions processes: it is surprisingly difficult to find information regarding honors on the USF website, whether as a program or as a part of the admissions process.”
- Update the Honors website and provide material that “clearly and directly specifies” what the program is and what its requirements are, including “transparent criteria and processes for applying.”
- Incorporate “or at least build upon” the “standard admissions process to the university,” inviting students to apply for Honors *before* they arrive to USF, as “some talented students might *choose* USF [over competitors] if they knew they’d have the chance to be in an Honors program/college.
- Promote access and equity “through a holistic review of candidates that does not overly rely on test scores, but uses a variety of factors to recruit honors students who are Pell eligible, first generation or from other underrepresented backgrounds” – the reviewers felt this is “essential, especially at a Jesuit institution.”
- Continue to seek, “in the long term, as the University ponders future building projects and renovations,” better infrastructure “for the Honors College to thrive” in, including: an “independent office,” and “appropriately sized classrooms in which to hold Honors seminars.”

4. In the opinion of the external review committee, is the program following the University’s strategic initiatives?

- a) *Offers demanding academic programs that challenge students to maximally expand and develop their intellectual capacities and transformative educational experiences that will “act” them into new ways of thinking about the world and their role in it* Honors program faculty described their students as “committed to excellence,” and reviewers felt that “this description was confirmed in our meeting with students drawn from both program tracks.” Students seem “highly engaged” by program materials, and “the curriculum for the Honors Program has historically been very strong, particularly in terms of its academic rigor and emphasis on interdisciplinarity.” Reviewers also noted “strong student-faculty relationships

forged by the program's relatively small seminar-style courses" as an "important asset to [both] the honors programs and [the wider USF] institution" as a whole.

b) *Fosters the development of curricula that reflect the most recent advances within and between the disciplines*

While "until very recently" the Honors program curriculum was "quite limited in range" and focused "almost entirely on the Western humanities in ways that have not really kept up with recent scholarship and trends in academe," its recent creation of a new "Global" track is a "very salutary" and "inclusive approach" that will allow for a "more challenging and intellectually engaging learning environment."

5. In what way is the program contributing to the goal of making the University of San Francisco a premier Jesuit, Catholic urban university with a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world?

Reviewers noted that "many strengths" of the Honors programs arise from its relationship to USF's mission. They praised the "intellectual curiosity and critical thinking" present within the program, and felt that the "deep commitment of outstanding faculty to [their] courses and the students they teach is evidence of the *cura personalis* at the heart of Jesuit educational ideals." Additionally, they commended the new global humanities track as an "important step" toward a "more inclusive approach [to] study of the humanities": with its attention towards "the intersection of knowledge and power ... especially as it relates to issues of race, gender, class and colonialism," reviewers saw an educational view "more in keeping with the Ignatian mission of the university as a 'diverse, socially responsible learning community'"

6. What is the timetable for the response to the external review committee's recommendations for program improvement? What can the Office of the Provost do to appropriately respond to the review?

The next step is for the Dean and Associate Deans to meet with the full-time faculty of Honors in the Humanities and discuss the Action Plan based on the *Self Study* and the *External Reviewers' Report*. Based on the agreed upon Action Plan, the Office of the Provost can assist the program by providing necessary resources to implement those actions.

7. What general comments or issues, if any, are crucial to understanding the reviewers report?

No additional information needed.