Proposal for a Pilot First-Year Honors Program at UCSC
CAFA, January 2012

The Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid (CAFA), in response to long-standing recruitment and retention concerns, proposed a pilot university honors program. This pilot program was designed to provide high-achieving students at their earliest stage at UCSC with an intensive and challenging academic experience, opportunities to forge social links with intellectual peers, and direct connections to committed Senate faculty. Our hope is that this first-year experience will attract more high-achieving students to UCSC and encourage them to continue their studies here through to timely graduation.

In 2010-11, UCSC entered the initial experimental phase of implementation. The first cohort of honors students were recruited in Fall 2011 and placed at Cowell College. In Fall of 2012, four colleges will participate in the pilot honors program: Cowell, Crown, Kresge, and Stevenson. The main components of the UCSC pilot honors program are described below, along with college-specific variations.

Invitations to Students to Apply to the Honors Program

After student applications have been reviewed and assigned a holistic review score, students in the top tier will be invited to apply to the UCSC Honors Program. The top tier will include Regents Scholar candidates and students with a holistic review score of 1. Depending on the target incoming honors cohort and the anticipated acceptance rate, additional high-scoring students may be invited as well. For Fall 2012, we will additionally invite the top 2% of students from California high schools (top 2% ELC). Students interested in honors will be invited to apply to the honors program and asked to rank order their choices for participating colleges.

Selection of Students for the Honors Program

The target honors cohort for each college is 20-25 students, so 80-100 total for 2012. All invitees that complete the Statement of Intension to Register (SIR) will be assigned to one of the four participating colleges, considering the students rank ordering of colleges and working with the provosts to distribute the students fairly evenly.

If the number of students exceeds 100, then provosts will select 80-100 students from among the larger group. Another option is to have two honors sections in one or two colleges. As a reminder, our invitation to apply to the honors program is an invitation to be considered, not a guarantee of acceptance.

If the number of students is less than 80, then the individual colleges may consider inviting additional top-tier students that have been assigned to their college to join the honors program, as done this year by Cowell.

Satisfaction of the C1 Writing Requirement

Students who enter the Cowell, Kresge, and Stevenson honors programs must have satisfied the C1 writing requirement. Crown will accept students who have not satisfied C1. See below for how this may impact the fall and winter courses.

Winter Entry of New Honors Students

Some of the provosts recommended that we offer an opportunity for additional frosh to enter the honors program in winter quarter. CAFA agrees with the spirit of this recommendation but is concerned about the logistics (fall quarter grades will not be available until the end of the
quarter, too late to factor into the winter selection, and it seems preferable to have more than one quarter of UCSC performance to evaluate students for later entry into honors). CAFA’s preference would be to postpone winter entry until Year 2 of the pilot honors program. However, to accommodate the strong preferences of some provosts and to experiment with identifying “diamonds in the rough” who may emerge in fall quarter, CAFA recommends that winter entry be tried during 2012-13 on a small scale by 1-2 colleges. For the 1-2 colleges that want to experiment with winter entry, they must scale back their fall cohort to provide empty slots to fill in winter. Scale back can be down to a floor of 20 students. The remaining open slots plus any slots that may be vacated by departure of some students from the honors program after fall can be filled by the provosts for winter. That could lead to 5-10 winter-entry students in each of the 1-2 participating colleges. We will assess the effectiveness of winter entry in 2012-13 and continue discussing when and how to recruit additional students into the honors program in future years.

Residence
Cowell and Crown will each house their honors students together in one of the college dormitories. Kresge and Stevenson will not.

Fall Quarter
Honors students will take a 5-credit honors core course that engages with the college’s core theme, offers a more challenging, academically intensive focus than the standard core courses, and satisfies C2. In Cowell, Crown, and Kresge, honors students will be in a single honors section of core (20-25 students). Since some Crown students may not have satisfied C1 yet, the Crown section may be a mix of students fulfilling C1 and students fulfilling C2. In Stevenson, students will be dispersed among that college’s core courses and will gather together in an additional and academically challenging 2-credit honors discussion section.

Winter Quarter
Each participating college will organize and sponsor a 5-credit seminar led by one of that college’s Senate faculty members on a topic appropriate for first-year general education, at an intellectual level appropriate for high-achieving first-year students. Writing-intensive seminars may require that students have satisfied C2. The target class size will be 20-25 students. All students in the honors program will be free to choose from among the honors seminars offered across the colleges, so long as the students have fulfilled the prerequisites for the course (e.g. C2 satisfied for writing-intensive winter seminars) and so long as space is available (courses will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis). This will enable honors students from the different participating colleges to meet and interact. The winter seminar courses will be designed to bear general education credit, and thus may be taken instead of the large-lecture courses more commonly available that satisfy general education requirements. As more colleges participate, the range of course choices will expand, and this will add to the vitality of the program. One variation on winter seminars will be in Stevenson, which requires that its students take a two-quarter core series. In Stevenson, the winter honors course will be fulfilled by Stevenson’s 5-credit second quarter of core. The honors section will be more challenging and academically intensive than the standard second core offerings. Every effort should be made to recruit a Senate faculty to teach the honors section. If that proves impossible, then it may be taught by a lecturer but should involve exposure to Senate faculty.

Spring Quarter
All honors students will be brought together for a 2-credit Faculty Research Talks course. This will be taken as an “extra” or “overload” class. Senate faculty from diverse disciplines across
campus will present talks on their ongoing research or creative activities. These will be similar to the exciting talks delivered to colleagues at other institutions and meetings, but pitched at a level appropriate for first-year students. The faculty presenters will be a mix of illustrious senior faculty and rising junior and mid-career faculty. Faculty will be selected to participate in the Faculty Research Talks course based on their scholarly area as well as their ability to communicate effectively and to engage students. Each week’s presentation will be followed by a discussion period during which the students can actively interact with the presenter. Each of the four participating colleges will organize and host at least one, and preferably two, Faculty Research Talks. Guest speakers will join the hosting college’s honors students for a meal, to provide more opportunity for discussion and interaction. Over the ten-week quarter, every student will have the opportunity to join at least one of the faculty presenters for a group meal and informal conversation.

Summary of Commonalities and Variations Among the Colleges

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<tr>
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<th>Cowell</th>
<th>Crown</th>
<th>Kresge</th>
<th>Stevenson</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students C1 satisfied</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not req</td>
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<td>Students co-reside in 1 dorm</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Students together in fall core</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Winter seminar</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Spring faculty research talks</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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Academic Requirements to Stay in the Honors Program
To stay in the honors program, students must remain in good academic standing, similar to the terms for Regents Scholars: earn 15 credits per quarter, earn a 3.5 or higher GPA each quarter, and maintain a 3.5 or higher cumulative GPA. Similar to Regents Scholars, there will be a probation policy, to allow students to be restored to good academic standing.

Funding of the Pilot Honors Program
The projected cost of the 2012-13 honors program is:
- $10,000 for a Faculty Director
- Funds for a dedicated Honors Advisor attached to the FAST team
- Funds to develop a web page describing the Honors Program at UCSC
- $26,000 for course buy-outs for Senate faculty to teach winter seminars
  - (4 seminars x $6500 per faculty)
- $1600 for meals associated with the spring research talks
  - (8 dinners x $200 per dinner)
- $1500 for honors activities for the second-year students at Cowell

Honors Opportunities in Second Year and Beyond
CAFA will propose and discuss with the provosts mechanisms to offer students honors options during their second and subsequent years. These mechanisms may include involvement of second-year students in welcoming and orienting first-year honors students, inviting second-year students to participate in Faculty Research Talks, involving second-year students in mentoring and tutoring other students (e.g. high school students or disadvantaged students at UCSC), offering honors sections of existing upper-level courses, and designing new upper-level honors courses.