

April 24, 2013

Dr. Tom Hackett, Provost
Columbus State University
4225 University Avenue
Columbus, GA 31907

Dear Dr. Hackett:

At the request of Dr. Cindy Ticknor, Director of the Honors Program, I agreed to chair an exploratory faculty committee charged with the following: 1) consider Dr. Gregory Lanier's external review of the Honors Program; 2) explore the climate of Honors in the University System of Georgia; and 3) make a recommendation about the feasibility of an Honors College at Columbus State. The committee included faculty members who are actively involved in the Honors Program: Mr. Rylan Steele (Art); Dr. Alan Tidwell (Accounting and Finance); Dr. Mariko Izumi (Communication); Dr. Andrée Martin (Music); Dr. Troy Vidal (Political Science); and Dr. Kevin Burgess (Biology). The committee also included four members participating in an advisory capacity: Dr. Cindy Ticknor (Director of Honors Program); Dr. Sue Tomkiewicz (Assistant Director of the Honors Program); Ms. LuMarie Guth (Chair of Honors Education Committee); and Ms. Amy Clines (Director for Undergraduate Recruitment). After careful review and deliberation, the committee is pleased to bring you a unanimous recommendation for the future of Honors at Columbus State University.

The Honors Program Exploratory Committee recommends the formation of an Honors College with a focus on Undergraduate and Interdisciplinary Research and Creative Endeavors. To that end, we propose that Undergraduate Research and Interdisciplinary Studies (all ITDS courses) be housed in the Honors College. Including these two programs in the Honors College would facilitate the following goals: 1) build on the strengths of our institution's varied and distinctive academic programs; 2) bridge the gap between Main and Riverpark campuses by institutionalizing collaboration and cooperation between colleges and programs; 3) allow the kind of innovative teaching recommended by the external reviewer, including team teaching and interdisciplinary research projects. In addition to serving these vital interests and needs of the Honors Program, the inclusion of Undergraduate Research and Interdisciplinary Studies in an Honors College will improve the level of instruction and engagement for all Columbus State students. As Dr. Lanier explains in his external report, "Honors at Columbus State needs to establish its position as the 'Research and Development' wing of the institution." Innovative teaching strategies may be piloted in Honors courses and then offered to the campus at large. In addition, by providing a clear institutional home for Interdisciplinary Studies, Honors would promote and develop opportunities for engaging faculty from different colleges in partnerships for teaching, research, and study abroad. The Honors Program is already deeply involved in the undergraduate research efforts, including Tower Day and *Momentum*. Again, by housing undergraduate research in an Honors College, the university leverages its strengths for its high achieving students but also continues to provide those opportunities for the campus at large. Based on this model, the Honors College serves all students across all colleges while maintaining its own distinctive identity and mission.

The committee would strongly discourage adding any other existing programs to the Honors College. We carefully considered the other programs currently included in the Interdisciplinary Programs Council (e.g. International Education, Servant Leadership, and First-Year Experience), and we concluded that these programs would distract from the mission of Honors. As Dr. Lanier observes in the external report, “There seems to be confusion as well over the distinctions between [the] mission of the Honors Program and the Servant Leadership program and to a lesser extent the Study Abroad Program.” The goal of our recommendation is to strengthen the vision and mission of Honors at Columbus State.

Prior to the formation of an Honors College, the committee acknowledges that Honors will need strong and tangible support from the administration. To facilitate a strong and vital Honors College, we recommend increased institutional support for the priorities outlined below. These recommendations are also supported by Dr. Lanier’s external review.

1. Administration/Leadership

We recommend that the Honors Dean be included as a voting member of the Deans Council with the ability to participate in planning academic priorities and resource allocation.

2. Infrastructure

We recommend that additional resources be allotted to support Honors teaching. While the recent supplemental funds for faculty “buy-outs” for Honors are an excellent place to begin, Honors needs to support stipends for Honors Contracts and travel support for faculty members presenting research with Honors students at national conferences. More resources are also needed to increase the scholarship money allotted to Honors students.

3. Curriculum

The Honors Dean needs the ability to determine and direct Honors course offerings. In addition, the Honors Dean may establish clear guidelines for selecting Honors faculty.

4. Recruitment

The Honors Dean will work with Enrollment Services to align the Honors Scholarship process with the Honors recruitment strategy and goals.

As the National Collegiate Honors Council survey of existing Honors Colleges suggests, an Honors College would allow Columbus State the opportunity to recruit stronger students, raise funds to support Honors scholarships and infrastructure, and strengthen the profile of Honors. On behalf of the Honors Program Exploratory Committee, I submit our unanimous recommendation for an Honors College focused on Undergraduate and Interdisciplinary Research.

At your convenience, I would be happy to meet with you to discuss the recommendation or answer any questions. We appreciate your support of Honors at Columbus State. Thanks in advance for your consideration of this recommendation. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Carmen Trammell Skaggs