



Honors Program Comprehensive Report

Fall 2013- Spring 18

Submitted February 2, 2018

1. Summary of Previous Efforts

Background

The Honors Program is Los Medanos College's oldest learning community whose 19-year mission has been to serve LMC's highly motivated students with enhanced curriculum and student services that support transfer to competitive universities. Students with a 3.25 or higher cumulative GPA and strong skills in college-level reading and writing are eligible to join. Upon joining they are then required to enroll in Honors Courses which are designed to be more intensive and challenging. The Honors Program grew out of a taskforce commissioned by the Academic Senate. Since its founding in 1999, it has been governed by the Honors Advisory Board made up of faculty, staff, managers and students.

Over the last four and half years, the Honors Program has either been led by a solo Honors Director or by two Co-Directors due to a variety of staffing shifts. The following people have served in these roles since Fall of 2013: Jennifer Saito, Marie Arcidiacono, Jeannine Stein and Kasey Gardner.

1.1 Annual Report Update Analysis

Summary of Prior Years' Goals & Activities The past four and a half years have seen

- steady growth,
- increasing program stability and
- a steadfast focus on recruiting and mentoring enthusiastic faculty to create high-quality curriculum.

We have met or exceeded all our goals which fall into the following general categories

1. Sustainable Growth. The years prior to the 2012-13 academic year demonstrated that participation in the Honors Program was on a downward trend. In fact, membership dropped to its lowest point of 126 active students¹ during 2013-14. We therefore made growth a key focus over the last five years, with a target of 150 active students. Key efforts included instituting fall recruitment drives, securing a permanent Honors Counselor and stepping up marketing and advising initiatives.

¹*A student is defined as being "active" in the Honors Program if s/he successfully completes at least two Honors Courses or Contracts in an academic year.

The results are evidence of our success at meeting this goal. ***Participation numbers have been steadily rising since 2014.*** For example during 2016-17 there were 169 students active in the program, a ***34% increase*** over the 2013-14 base. This has led to increased Honors Course enrollments and more Honors Club student-directed activities which lend a vibrancy to the program.

2. Securing Program Staffing Stability. Five years ago there were two significant staffing holes that posed significant challenges for the program:

- The lack of a permanent Honors Counselor and
- An unsustainable short-term hourly solution to Honors Administrative Assistant Connie Colleson's retirement in 2012.

Filling these positions in a permanent fashion took many years of RAP requests and constant advocacy by Dean of Students Dave Belman. Thankfully, with Luis Morales' hiring as the Honors Counselor in the spring of 2014 and Maureen Willhoite's hire in spring of 2017, ***we are now fully staffed*** with devoted, permanent Honors employees. It should also be noted that Honors Director Jennifer Saito's absence during Fall 2017 was filled with distinction by Professor Marie Arcidiacono who maintained quality and oversaw enrollment growth during her term.

The major impact of staffing stability is enrollment growth and a constant level of high-quality student support. Students depend on Luis to guide them through their years at LMC. We attribute much of the enrollment growth to his efforts. In addition, the steady presence of Maureen in the Honors Center keeps the entire program afloat. She supports the students, the Honors Director and the faculty with myriad important tasks and is truly the glue that holds the program together.

3. Emphasis on Research in the Honors Curriculum. In the ten years that the Honors Research Symposium has been held at Stanford and UC Berkeley, LMC has had great success at having its students selected through a highly competitive process to present. Being invited to speak at the Symposium is a rare honor – of the 200+ students who submit proposals each year, generally only 45% of applicants are accepted to speak. LMC has routinely been in the top 10% of colleges in terms of student speaker numbers. We are proud that ***over the last four years there have been 30 LMC students who presented at the Symposium.***

In addition to the students invited to present at the Symposium, major ripples of improvement spread through the program because of this event. Many Honors Faculty now integrate original research projects into their Honors Courses, so their students will have projects to submit to the Symposium. This means that all students taking Honors Courses are learning to conduct academic research which can benefit them in their future studies. In

addition, the pride and inspiration LMC Honors Students get from attending the Symposium and seeing their fellow students shine motivates all to push themselves.

4. Holistic Student Development. While helping students achieve top grades and research skills is one goal of the program, we have also made it a priority over the last five years to encourage their development as happy, healthy human beings. That is, we want to help Honors Students learn *how to live* not just *how to make a living*. To this end we have created and scheduled a variety of opportunities for Honors Students which address their emotional and personal development. Highlights include

- **The Dear Sugar Reading Group** New York Times best-selling author Cheryl Strayed also penned an advice column under the pseudonym “Sugar” which focused on personal development. During the Fall 2012 semester, Honors Co-Directors Jennifer Saito and Jeannine Stein hosted a weekly reading group attending by both students and faculty alike which used the advice letters as a springboard for talks on life topics. We covered topics ranging from parental pressure, sexuality, resolving conflict and how to grapple with anger/fear/misery. These intense, rewarding sessions resulted in a private dinner with Cheryl when she visited LMC.
- **The Honors Yosemite Retreat & Mt. Diablo hikes** As every good transcendentalist knows, exposure to nature’s sublime beauty is an important part of a healthy life. Many LMC students have had few opportunities to engage with nature, therefore the annual Honors Retreat and many Mt. Diablo hike give students the important opportunity to encounter nature’s magnificence with their Honors friends and teachers. The Honors Retreat now brings up to 40 students and faculty to the Sierras for workshops focused on personal and intellectual development. There have been many, many miles of hiking over the last five years, all good for the body and soul.
- **Development of two new courses with a focus on personal development** While extra-curricular activities are an important component of meeting this goal, recent Honors teachers have been creating highly original curriculum which brings an academic approach to life’s important questions: what does it mean to live a good life?, how can I be a good friend or daughter/son?, what obligations do I have to my family and co-workers? Through the development of two special sections of the Honors Seminar (Philosophy 122), Professors Alex Sterling, Jennifer Saito and Edward Haven have been teaching courses with the following emphases:
 - The Ethics of Personal Relationships
 - The Ethics of Life and Death

1.3 Professional Development Summary

An Honors Program can only be as good as its curriculum, which means that recruiting, training and mentoring quality honors professors must be a major program goal. To this end, the Honors Director meets regularly with past, current and future honors teachers to discuss pedagogy and support the innovations they create to “honors-ize” their courses. The Director also organizes the annual LMC Honors Faculty Retreat and encourages LMC’s honors teachers to attend the Honors Faculty Roundtable held at Mills College every October.

The success of these initiatives is evidenced by an almost 100% re-participation rate for new honors teachers, strong student reviews of classroom experiences and continued ranks of new faculty coming into the program. In fact, over the last five *years LMC has had the highest attendance numbers at every Mills Honors Faculty Roundtable event.* Here are the faculty who have taught in the Honors Program over the last five years with a (*) indicating a teacher whose first Honors Course fell in the 2013-18 time period covered by this report:

- Curtis Corlew
- Scott Cabral
- Jennifer Saito
- Alex Sterling
- Cindy McGrath
- Mark Lewis
- David Zimny
- Christina Goff*
- Edward Haven*
- Marie Arcidiacono*
- Kasey Gardner*
- Liana Padilla-Wilson
- Richard Livingston*
- Shalini Lugani
- Nick Garcia*
- Ken Alexander
- Jennifer Smith*
- Dennis Gravert
- Brianne McCarthy*
- Josh Bearden*
- Jill Bouchard*
- Jill DeStefano*
- Rick Estrada*
- Luis Zuniga*
- James Noel*

It should also be noted that dozens of faculty mentor students through independent-research projects known as “Honors Contracts.” One reason LMC’s Honors Program is a success is because of continued support from LMC faculty.

While there have been breakout sessions at the Mills Faculty Roundtable dealing with equity issues in Honors, more work can be done in this area. The November 2018 National Collegiate Honors Council conference has made Equity in Honors its theme, and we hope to send a delegation to bring back this information as evidenced in the Staff Development Request in this report.

1.4 Collaboration

Honors continues to partner with other LMC programs and local organizations to provide opportunities for students and generally enrich our community. Some of this has occurred with projects taken on by the Honors Director, but many of these are collaborations with the Honors Club Officers and Honors Faculty. These events contribute to the intellectual and artistic atmosphere at LMC which benefits students and community members alike. Highlights over the last five years include:

- **Cheryl Strayed LMC Visit** (Spring 2013): In partnership with the LMC Foundation and Heritage High School, the Honors Program brought best-selling author Cheryl Strayed to a sold-out event discussing her books *Wild* and *Dear Sugar*.
- **UCLA TAP Conference Visits** (Fall of 2013 & 2014) Because of our honors partnership with UCLA, LMC students were invited to attend the Transfer Alliance Project transfer conference at UCLA every fall. Honors partnered with other learning communities to give many students the opportunity to visit the campus and enjoy workshops about UCLA admission and opportunities. Students from Puente, Umoja, AVID and the Transfer Academy often attended, as did key staff from these other Learning Communities. (The TAP Conference was ended after 2014, hence the end of this collaboration.)
- **Fullerton College Social Justice Summit** (Fall 2015): In collaboration with the Debate Team, Honors co-sponsored a team of students to travel to Fullerton and enact a formal debate on whether civil disobedience is the best route for social justice.
- ***Ruined*** (Fall 2015) : Honors organized two events to supplement the Drama Department's production of *Ruined*. We hosted Benson Ocen from Uganda to talk about efforts his organization does to provide trauma counseling and economic support to victims of civil war. We also organized an event with history professor Josh Bearden called *Getting Ready for Ruined* which gave students the historical and dramaturgical background needed to fully enjoy the play. Both events filled the LMC Little Theater.
- **Student Activism Speaker, Book Club & Conference** (Fall 2016): In collaboration with John Nguyen of Student Life and Professor Josh Bearden, the Honors Program organized a series of successful events themed around student activism. Noted scholar Stephanie Hinnershitz came to discuss her book *Race, Religion and Civil Rights* with the college to a standing-room only crowd. This book was being used by the Honors History 30 class and also was the theme for a faculty book club which met four times as they were reading the text. The day after Professor Hinnershitz's talk, Honors Director Jennifer Saito helped facilitate the The Student Activism Conference which brought activists from around the community to LMC so students could be inspired and gain skills to enact their own initiatives.

2. Data Analysis

2.1 Enrollment, Recruitment & Retention Analysis

Enrollment in the LMC Honors Program has risen steadily since the 2013-14 academic year. As previously noted during 2016-17 there were 169 students active in the program, a **34% increase** over the 2013-14 base.

The table also indicates a **steady increase in the number of “half-active” students**, members

who take one Honors Course during their year in the Honors Program. Also noteworthy is a **rebound in the number of Honors Scholars**, students who graduate from the program with at least five Honors Courses.

Honors Enrollment			
Academic Year	TOTAL Active Students	TOTAL Half Active	Honors Scholar Awardees
2011-12	151	NA	37
2012-13	140	NA	34
2013-14	126	22	22
2014-15	150	15	30
2015-16	164	24	29
2016-17	169	34	31

We attribute this growth to several factors: Luis Morales’ hire as the Honors Counselor, increased marketing efforts and the initiation of a successful fall recruitment drive in 2013. As the table below indicates, the number of students newly joining the program each year has risen dramatically over the last years, **increasing 26%** in the period covered by this report.

Honors Recruitment							
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
# of New Honors Students	77	81	106 Fall: 73 Spring: 33	116 Fall : 87 Spring: 29	116 Fall: 83 Spring: 33	119 Fall : 92 Spring: 27	134 Fall : 97 Spring: 37

Equity Addressing the issue of equitable representation in the Honors Program is complicated by *incomplete data*. We were only provided cohort information for students who started the program during the fall of 2013, 2015 and 2016. As our recruitment numbers demonstrate, this means *we were only given diversity data for 51% of the new students over the period covered by this report*.

Honors Equity Comparison		
	LMC Student Body	Honors Program New Members*
African American	15%	13%
American Indian/Alaskan	0%	2%
Asian	4%	11%
Filipino	5%	9%
Hispanic	39%	32%
White Non-Hispanic	27%	31%
<i>*Calculated using data on new Honors Students for Fall 2013, 15, 16 only.</i>		

Nevertheless, we have aggregated the provided data in order to create a rough comparison with LMC’s overall racial/ethnic composition. As the chart indicates, the data suggests an

overrepresentation of Asian students, with an *underrepresentation of Hispanic students*. The *percentage of African American members is almost on par* with LMC’s general demographics.

To further investigate this issue, more complete data will need to be gathered. In addition, given that the Honors Program doesn’t draw from LMC’s student body, but rather from a subset of the student body that is eligible for the program, a more accurate picture would be gathered from comparing program membership composition with the demographics of LMC students with a 3.25 or higher GPA.

2.2 Course Completion & Success Analysis

Given that Honors Students have already been selected due to their academic accomplishments, comparing completion and success statistics with the overall LMC student body gives little useful information.

For example, data provided indicates an average **91% course success rate for Honors Students** who began the program during the Fall 2013, 15 & 16 semesters. This is much higher than the **LMC student body average of 71%** during that time period, but we cannot attribute this increase necessarily to any of our efforts.

Singling out *African American Honors Students*, the aggregated (and incomplete) data suggests they *succeeded at a rate of 87%* during the Fall 2013, 15 & 16 semesters, compared with an *overall LMC average success rate of only 60%* as reported in LMC’s

2014-19 Equity Plan. This significant difference, however, is likely a result of the admissions guidelines to Honors.

A more interesting (and more complicated) study would be to compare Honors-eligible student success rates with those of program members, broken-out by racial/ethnic groups.

2.3 Transfer & Degree/Certificate Outcomes

It is difficult to assess Honors Student transfer readiness patterns as we were only provided data for 70 students who began the program for Fall 2013. That is, of the 222 students who started the program between Fall 2013-Fall 2014, ***we have data for only 32% of our members***. In addition, as students can join Honors at any point in their academic career, we cannot necessarily attribute transfer readiness to Honors Program efforts. After all, ***many students enter the Honors Program already transfer ready***. With additional data more analysis can occur.

Those caveats aside, not surprisingly, of the 70 students who began Honors during Fall 2013, ***67.1% were transfer ready within three years, and 71.4% were after four*** – strong numbers that likely reflect the academic admission standards of the Honors Program. There seems to be a slight transfer readiness gap for the 9 African American students (67% after 4-years) and 20 Hispanic Students (65%) when compared to their general Fall 2013 Honors cohort (71%), but the sample numbers are too small to draw meaningful conclusions.

2.4 Research & Data Needs

As previously mentioned, several studies could provide helpful information to the Program most notably a comparison of the racial/ethnic composition of students in the Honors Program as compared with Honors-eligible peers.

3. Long Term Goals

3.1 Long Term Goals to Meet College Strategic Plan

Goal One: Maintain Sustainable, Equitable Enrollment and Participation Numbers or Secure Necessary Funds to Handle Growth

Aligned College Strategic Directions: 1 & 3

Aligned Integrated Planning Goals: 1 & 5

As evidenced by data in this report, Honors enrollments have grown steadily, surpassing our identified target of 150 Active Honors Students. The strain on program resources is evident and either more resources will need to be located to continue to provide high-quality services to our members.

Goal Two: Successfully Navigate the Transition to the New Honors Center

Aligned College Strategic Directions: 3

Aligned Integrated Planning Goals: 1 & 5

The Honors Center is scheduled to relocate to the new Student Union for the Fall 2019 semester. This will be a huge shift in our program and we need to be ready to adapt the services we offer students in the Honors Center.

Goal Three: Honors Faculty Staff Development with an Emphasis on Equity and Best Practices in Honors Pedagogy

Aligned College Strategic Directions: 1 & 3

Aligned Integrated Planning Goals: 6

With an influx of many new Honors Faculty, and an increase of equity-focused activities at LMC, providing pedagogically sound training to honors teachers remains an important goal of the Honors Program.

Goal Four: Research Opportunities for Honors Students

Aligned College Strategic Directions: 1 & 3

Aligned Integrated Planning Goals: 6

A key initiative of the Honors Program is to give students the opportunity to experience academic life through participation in the Bay Honors Consortium's Honors Research Symposium. We plan to continue to make this an academic focus of our program.

3.4 Professional Development Request

Professional Development Resource Request	
Department/Unit Goal - Reference #	Strategic Objective - Reference #
Provide staff development to Honors Faculty with an emphasis on equity and best practices in honors pedagogy	<p>College Strategic Direction 1. Increase equitable student engagement, learning and success.</p> <p>Integrated Planning Goals 5 & 6: Equitable Success & Learning Culture</p>
Department/Unit Name	Resource Type
Honors Program	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conference/Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Materials/Supplies <input type="checkbox"/> Online Learning <input type="checkbox"/> IT Hardware/Software <input type="checkbox"/> Other
General Description	Est. Expense
We want to send a delegation of 5 Honors faculty to the National Collegiate Honors Council’s November 2018 conferenc., Its theme is “ Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom ” based on the groundbreaking essay of feminist scholar bell hooks , who is delivering the keynote address and whose pedagogy will deeply influence workshop options.	<p>\$9725 (Airbnb shared space)</p> <p>\$11,225 (hotel)</p> <p>This represents a per attendee cost estimate of approx. \$2000-2300 depending on housing options.</p>
Justification:	
<p>Given the influx of new honors faculty and the college’s increased focus on culturally inclusive practices/pedagogy, it would be transformative to send a delegation of five Honors Faculty to the 2018 NCHC Conference in Boston featuring bell hooks. Sending five faculty who can come back to become leaders in the program would have a huge impact not only on the Honors Program, but also the myriad departments they represent.</p> <p>hooks’ work calls on honors faculty to resist the “unjust exercise of power” in the classroom and develop learning environments that interrogate the “privileged positions from which we speak.” Ultimately, she will urge honors faculty to experiment with” progressive pedagogical practices,” identifying the classroom as “the most radical space of possibility in the academy.”</p> <p>Attendees will not only be able to integrate experiences into their own classrooms, but they would presented key findings both at a January FLEX event for the whole college, the Honors Faculty Retreat in 2019 and the October 2019 Honors Faculty Roundtable at Mills College.</p>	

4. Advisory Board Summary

4.1 Advisory Board Update

Purpose: The Honors Board serves multiple functions as they:

- Establish the program's entrance/graduation requirements,
- Select the Honors Faculty and Courses,
- Review the Honors Contract student projects, and
- Maintain the quality and integrity of the Honors Program.

Structure: Any faculty, manager or Honors Student is welcome to serve on the Board.

Current Honors Board Members: Rachel Anicetti, Marie Arcidiacono, Josh Bearden, Jill Bouchard, Josh Bearden, Dave Belman, Scott Cabral, Jorge Cea, Curtis Corlew, Rick Estrada, Scott Hubbard, Briana McCarthy, Luis Morales, Cindy McGrath, Jennifer Saito, Alex Sterling, Maureen Willhoite, Nancy Ybarra.

Meeting Dates: Monthly, generally on a Tuesday afternoon.

Effectiveness: The Board has been successful at overseeing the program's enrollment growth and continued membership in the UCLA Transfer Alliance Partnership. They have also reviewed every Honors Contract proposal which has been submitted over the past five years.