



## **CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH**

VICE PROVOST FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

**Memorandum of Understanding**  
The University Honors Program (UHP)  
Division of Academic Affairs  
February 2020 (for 2017-18 review)

This Memorandum of Understanding outlines the consensus reached The University Honors Program (UHP and the Division of Academic Affairs, based on the recent program review (self-study in June 2017, the external review from the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) in October 2018, and the UPRC report in spring 2019). It describes the goals to be achieved, and the actions to be undertaken by all parties to this MOU to achieve these goals, during the next program review cycle. Progress toward goals is to be addressed in an annual report.

The CSULB University Honors Program (UHP) has been in existence since 1960. Currently, four tracks are available: General Honors, Engineering Honors, College of Business Honors, and Global Emphasis Honors. Each track has two different plans. Plan I requires 21 units and is designed for entering freshman. Plan II requires 15 units and is designed for upper-division transfer students and continuing CSULB students. In both plans, 6 of the units are a culminating 6-unit independent scholarly project; the remaining units must be honors designated courses, some of which are listed under UHP and others which are special sections of course offerings in other departments. The University Honors Program last underwent review in 2013 and signed its MOU in 2015. As the UHP was seeking to become an Honors College, the PARC moved up its CSULB program review to 2018 at the request of the Program.

Since the last program review, the UHP has made significant strides in improving and growing the program and addressing action items from the 2015 MOU. Of note is that the President's Scholars program has been incorporated into the UHP such that an application for the UHP is simultaneously an application for the President's Scholarship. Additionally, the UHP increased enrollment from approximately 300 students in 2015 to 914 today, and has successfully expanded its residential component from one wing (52 beds) to an entire house (208 beds). Finally, the UHP has developed an assessment plan to measure PLOs and SLOs, and according to the self study implemented the first pilot study in Fall 2018.

A number of strengths were identified in the reports:

- The "administrative capability, general competence, and vision" of the current UHP interim director has brought about major improvements in the program in the last three years such that the UHP is "well on its way to eventually becoming an honors college";
- The "diverse and committed UHP staff";

- The quality of the “diverse, intelligent, and active honors students” who “have a strong sense of community and commitment to the UHP;”
- The innovative and relevant nature of UHP honors courses including the Senior Honors Thesis/Project experience, as well as internships, service learning, field/research, and study abroad experience(s);
- The impressive UHP honors residential component (for a predominantly commuter campus);
- The high level of support for the mission and success of the UHP from administrators, students, Admissions, Development, and Residential Life.

Areas of Concern that were noted in the reports:

- Since the 2015 MOU, the UHP has developed an assessment plan, which it initiated in Fall 2018 with a pilot assessment study. The assessment plan uses an Electronic portfolio that requires students to identify completed coursework that demonstrates mastery of program (and student) learning outcomes. Portfolios will be evaluated by the UHP ‘data team’ (comprised of the director, one associate director, one advisor and an Honors faculty) several times during their enrollment in the program. Additionally, the external reviewers emphasized that evaluation of student work occur several times a year.
- Completion of UHP should be noted on students’ diploma and transcript; it is suggested to distinguish between Plan I and Plan II in official documents/transcripts.
- The UHP director “does not have sufficient control” over honors courses taught in other departments and colleges – “how they are taught, and who teaches them.” In particular, external reviewers noted that the Honors curriculum in the College of Engineering diverges from the model set up by the UHP; the “existence of two honors programs on campus dilutes the UHP honors experience.”
- The UHP currently has no articulation agreements with two-year colleges.

A number of Opportunities were noted in the reports:

- If the Program would like to transition to College status, the following Opportunities should be addressed:
  - It is less than ideal for the director to only have a 50% time appointment rather than a full-time appointment; the UHP would also benefit from hiring a full-time assistant as well as adding an advisor position.
  - It is recommended that UHP director should report directly to the Provost rather than the Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Studies so that the provost is aware of the challenges the program faces as it becomes a college.
  - The current UHP course load constitutes just under 20% of students’ program; the recommended benchmark from NCHC is 20-25%. Reviewers recommended that the UHP add 3 units to Plan I to meet the minimum required standard; if the UHP moves to College status, the requirement should be raised to 30 units

total.

- The UHP does not have a formalized strategic plan or vision statement and “is not taking full advantage of its development/advancement (i.e., fundraising) capability.” The self-study states that the Program intends to undergo a strategic planning process as part of the Beach 2030 planning process.
- While the current location and space for the UHP is adequate, as the program grows into a College additional space that is central and ‘conspicuous’ (with adequate signage), as well as with private offices for advisors, is necessary.

It is therefore agreed that the University Honors Program will:

1. Work with the Director of Program Review and Assessment to use the newly developed program assessment plan to conduct direct assessment of program learning outcomes, and report results annually to the Director and to the Vice Provost for Academic Programs. The next self study will be due in 2025 for a 2025-26 program review.
2. Publish the Program Learning Outcomes on the UHP website.
3. Develop a strategic plan as part of the Beach 2030 planning process.
4. Establish a mechanism by which completion of UHP Plan I or II is noted on students’ diploma and transcript.
5. Establish articulation agreements with two year colleges, as appropriate to the UHP.
6. Work with Academic Affairs to exert greater oversight, coordination, and assessment of honors designated courses taught in other departments and colleges.
7. Work with Academic Affairs to obtaining space that is central and ‘conspicuous’ (with adequate signage), as well as with private offices for advisors, as resources permit.


If the Program would like to transition to College status, the is Recommended:

1. Make the director a full-time appointment, and hire an administrative assistant and an additional academic advisor, as resources permit.
2. Consider restructuring the administrative lines of communication such that the UHP director reports directly to the Provost.
3. Increase the units for Honors Plans I/II such that Honors courses meet the 20-25% of student course load benchmark recommended by the NCHC.
4. As resources permit, hire an administrative assistant and an additional academic advisor.

This MOU has been read and approved by:

University Honors Program Director:  Date: 2.24.20  
Bonnie Gasior

AVP Undergraduate Studies:  Date: 2-19-20  
Kerry Johnson

Vice Provost Academic Programs:  Date: 2-19-20  
Jody Cormack