

**June 2007**

## **Clark Honors College: Diversity Action Plan**

### **I. Description of Unit's Mission**

A committee of distinguished faculty members, under the chairmanship of Earl Pomeroy, proposed the formation of an Honors College to the faculty of the College of Liberal Arts in 1958. In its written recommendation, the committee stated that the purpose of the College should be to “provide the best possible liberal education, both general and specialized” for a community of high achieving students. The committee envisioned a “four-year program leading to the degree of B.A. (Honors College).” The Clark Honors College (CHC) pursues this purpose in the context of a larger research and teaching mission of the University. Courses in the CHC are designed to fulfill the University’s goal, detailed in its mission statement, “of helping the individual learn to question critically, think logically, communicate clearly, act creatively, and live ethically.”

The Clark Honors College opened September 1960, making it the oldest Honors College with a four-year curriculum at a public institution. In its 47-year history, the HC has served as a magnet for high achieving students. The initial student body numbered 260. As a result of the expansion plan two expansion plans, the size of incoming classes was raised to 100 students per year, then in 1993, to 150 students per year. And as a result of more admitted students choosing to come to the CHC, the student body now hovers between 600-700.

### **II. Organizational Structure**

The Robert D. Clark Honors College operates under the authority of the Provost. This structure is designed to increase the visibility of the Honors College and provide greater coordination with the Office of Undergraduate Studies in admissions, recruiting, and scholarship support, while at the same time retaining close academic affiliation with the College of Arts and Sciences. The Director of the Honors College reports to the Provost, and works closely with the Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs. Supervisory authority for curricular, personnel, and related budgetary issues, is delegated to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, with the usual administrative and faculty review processes internal to CAS. An Honors College Alumni Advisory Council actively supports diversity issues.

The Director of the Clark Honors College is responsible for implementing the Diversity Plan.

### **III. History of Diversity Efforts in the Clark Honors College**

The CHC has had a longstanding commitment to diversity. Diversity issues for the college can be divided into three areas: curriculum, faculty composition, and student body composition. These three areas are obviously closely interrelated, and years of effort have culminated in reasonable success in two of the three areas.

At least since the late 1980s there has been a diversity committee consisting of a faculty member and usually a handful of interested students. Nevertheless, because of the very small number of resident faculty (two literature professors, one historian, and one professor of rhetoric), which is also responsible for running the entire College, diversity efforts until the year 2000 were, unfortunately, inconsistent, and often interrupted when the faculty member organizing the committee was on research or sabbatical leave. The main areas of concern for the

committee from the late 1980s through the 1990s were recruitment and curriculum. In order to recruit students who would add to the diversity of the CHC, the committee attended a variety of recruitment fairs and programs sponsored particularly by the UO Office of Multicultural Affairs and work with admissions to find and contact students who would contribute to the diversity of the CHC. Some success was achieved, but it was, for reasons mentioned above, difficult to sustain.

In terms of curriculum, the CHC sought to recruit UO faculty members from outside the CHC to teach courses in the college that would satisfy the multi-cultural requirement. Otherwise, the core CHC curriculum, as established at its founding, focused on the “Western” World: year-long, lower division courses on Western Literature were required for CHC students. All CHC faculty were committed to including voices that had not traditionally been heard in the lower-division classes. And Professor Henry Alley developed a series of upper-division colloquia on Literature by and about Gay Men, and both he and Professor Francis Cogan taught courses on women writers. But with the constraints of the inherited curriculum and too few faculty, there were obvious limits to the range of possible experimentation.

In the year 2000, however, the Honors College was finally given permission to fill the first of three faculty positions (promised since 1993 when the CHC student body was expanded by fifty percent), and things began to improve. The addition of these three new faculty members over the next three years opened many new possibilities.

The first step was taken in 2000, immediately following the hire of a second historian. The history faculty applied for and won a Tom and Carol Williams Fellowship for the expansion of the History curriculum. The challenging conversion process took a good two years, but the result was a transformation of the History sequence from a History of the Western World to Historical Thinking in a Global Framework.

The new History curriculum required faculty with expertise outside of Western History. The second hire of a History faculty member, accordingly, was of a professor of Modern Chinese History; and when the Director managed to cobble together the funds for a fourth historian, we were able to hire a historian of the Caribbean and Atlantic World.

The expansion of the History curriculum was followed by a similar expansion of the Literature curriculum in the direction of Thinking about Literature in a Global Framework, and had similar consequences for the new faculty hires. Two new literature professors were added. One of these is a professor of Jewish literatures in North Africa and Latin American; the other was a professor of modern Indian literature (who has since taken another job, but whose position has been filled with a Professor whose specialty is on Russian cultural relations with Asia and Korean literature).

There are now nine tenure-related resident faculty members in the CHC. Of these, a majority is female, one is African-American, and one gay. Faculty from Brazil and Korea strengthen our international perspectives.

The Clark Honors College is committed to support programming that enhances our students’ understanding of the multicultural world of globalization that they inhabit. In support of this goal, and with funding from the Underrepresented Minority Recruitment Plan, two of our junior professors created a Thinker-In-Residence Program, the idea of which is to house in the Honors College for a week someone who has thought and written about matters pertaining to diversity. In April, 2006, they brought Vijay Prashad of Trinity College in Connecticut as the Thinker-in-Residence. Dr. Prashad is very much a public intellectual, the author of several books on contemporary political economy and race in America. Dr. Prashad presented several

events: 1) a public lecture entitled “Ethnic Studies Inside Out: an analysis of the limitations of ethnic studies in neo-liberal times”; 2) a workshop for student activists on the corporatization and racialization of the university; 3) a faculty discussion on immigration and politics in the contemporary United States; and 4) a student seminar on the connections between people of African and Asian descent in the United States. All were well attended.

We have, in short, been successful in our diversity efforts in the areas of curriculum and faculty composition. But despite some sporadic successes, it has proven much more difficult to achieve diversity in the student body, which is our main area of concern at present (this is a problem typical of Honors Colleges and programs). Our figures are incomplete, but the big picture is clear. We have some 600 students, many of whom decline to report ethnicity. Of those who do, 50 are Asian or Asian-American. 2 are African-American. 8 are Hispanic or Hispanic-American.

#### **IV. Resource Statement**

We have approximately \$40,000 available (from under-represented minority recruitment funds) to spend in the next several years for diversity programming and recruitment. Many of our faculty apply other Clark Honors College research and travel funds to diversity purposes, but this amount varies with the professor. I estimate that we will spend an additional \$10,000 each year in this way. Other resources include a commitment to diversity from our faculty, staff, and existing student body.

#### **V. Diversity Committee and Plan Development**

The Chair of the Diversity Committee was appointed by the Director. Because the CHC is monumentally understaffed, because the faculty is small, and because all faculty members are committed to such an important matter, the committee itself is essentially a committee of the whole. The Faculty Diversity Committee will also be working with the Honors College Student Association whose governing board will organize meetings in which students can express and exchange their opinions on relevant matters.

In 2007-08, we will reconstitute our Diversity Committee to include three professors, two students, and one staff member. They will be appointed by the Director after consultation with Members of the Honors College community.

As noted above, the most pressing issue at this time is adding diversity to the student body. Proposals that we are considering are:

- An Admissions Officer/Recruiter or to have even stronger representation in the Admissions Office.
- Identifying prospective students who would expand our diversity early enough to invite some to visit the Honors College.
- Establishing ties to various efforts by the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity to “fill the pipeline.”
- Working with UO admissions to identify students who would bring diversity to the CHC.
- Establishing partnerships with high schools (e.g. in Springfield, Bethel district, Woodburn area) with diverse student bodies and encouraging applications to the CHC. This might include CHC faculty and student visits to the schools, perhaps giving talks as well as meeting more informally with students; or organizing a visiting day for students to come to the CHC.

- Developing exchanges with other honors colleges in the United States and abroad. We have one Honors College exchange at present, with the Scholars Program of the National University of Singapore. There are other possibilities to explore. For instance, the University of Oregon already has an exchange program with Hunter College, part of the City University of New York. Using that initial connection to develop a relationship with Hunter's Macauley Honors College would bring the diversity of New York City to the Clark Honors College and to Eugene. Other exchanges with honors colleges at state universities in major metropolitan areas across the country, including Los Angeles, Toronto, Chicago, and Miami, would further enhance diversity.
- Secure ongoing support for diversity programming, such as the Thinker-In-Residence. We propose to use some of our budget to use as matching funds with other programs to jointly sponsor diversity-related speakers and other events. This would engage the Honors College more deeply in diversity activities across campus, as well as use resources more efficiently.
- Involving the CHC Alumni Board, which has often expressed its concern about diversity issues, in a variety of ways (most notably through the Internship and Mentorship program that alumni have established for Honors College students—this might be expanded to include internships for high school students interested in attending the CHC; but also in institutionalizing the Thinker-in-Residence Program.

## **VII. Diversity Value Statement**

To paraphrase Lawrence Levine in his book *The Opening of the American Mind*: to seek diversity in our curriculum, faculty, and student body is not political correctness, it is a social necessity. The better the community we create within the honors college can mimic the world, the better our students are prepared to be citizens of the world after they graduate. To this end, as the next section shows, we understand diversity as a broad and inclusive concept, incorporating all individuals who might help balance our largely white, middle-class, Oregonian student body.

## **VIII. Diversity Defined**

We accept the UO Diversity Plan Definition as “differences based on race and ethnicity, national origin or citizenship, gender, religious affiliation or background, sexual orientation, gender identity, economic class or status, ability or disability.

We have no systematic set of measures for diversity within the Honors College. We are a small unit, and it is obvious enough if we have gained or lost faculty and staff diversity. This is a greater problem when it comes to student diversity. We have identified student recruitment as our major goal, although we only have a poor measure even of ethnic diversity, and no usable figures at hand for economic or even regional diversity. Thus we are reluctant to promise in an arbitrary manner that we will achieve 15% increased diversity in the next two year period, until we are able to say 15% more of what. A first step must be to develop a more comprehensive set of measures of current performance. We have assigned staff member Carol Giantonio the task of pulling together data in a more systematic manner. This will permit us to formulate realistic markers and timelines in conversation with Admissions and OIED.