**Proposed Program: The Exceptional Learners Institute**

**Program Description**

MCC’s Exceptional Learners Institute represents the next stage in the development of the Honors Institute. While the ELI will adopt the same curricular design of the Honors Institute, the goal is to enhance all the additional features associated with the program. In short, the ELI will provide comprehensive opportunities in extra- and co-curricular activities, will dedicate additional scholarship resources, will expand the advantages for enrolled students, will create a more distinct campus home for the program, will address staffing needs, and will initiate a rigorous assessment methodology.

In an effort to more aggressively promote an honors presence on the Damon City Campus, the coordinator will offer “honors enhanced” courses to serve as an initial recruiting tool. These courses, open to all MCC students, will feature additional academic and intellectual experiences, attracting students to explore the possibilities offered by a fully formed honors program.

The ELI will also explore the option of some kind of honors orientation experience. Whether imagined as a mandatory orientation seminar or as a more loosely defined series of experiences, this introduction will help to shape expectations and create a sense of community.

**Admissions Criteria**

In the initial transitional period, the ELI will adopt the same admissions standards as the Honors Institute:

New students:

•85 or better GPA or

•top 15% class rank.

Current MCC students:

•MCC GPA of 3.5 or

•a letter of recommendation from a professor.

Transfer students:

•transfer of any honors designated class.

These policies will be reviewed after the ELI has been operational for two academic years.

The ELI will also attempt to recruit, admit, fund, and assess the special needs of the adult learner, recognizing that the program must serve the needs of all students. Of course, all programs remain committed to serving various underserved populations.

**Scholarships**

The ELI will offer a full scholarship (after financial aid needs are met) to the top graduate of each high school in Monroe County and in the RCSD. Scholarship recipients will be expected to be fully engaged in the life of the ELI, participating in all Honors colloquia and other activities, and gradually asked to take on a leadership role in planning and organizing these activities. Scholarships will be available for the sophomore year but are competitive and by application only.

**Curricula Vision**

The ELI will adopt the same curricula vision as the Honors Institute.

In order to graduate with a Certificate in Advanced Studies from the Exceptional Learners Institute, a student must

•complete ENG 200: Advanced Composition;

•complete four honors courses, one of which must be IDC 195: Seminar in Critical Analysis;

•complete a service-learning elective or leadership seminar;

•maintain a GPA of 3.5 or higher.

At present, the Honors Institute offers both a number of standard courses converted into an honors section (for example, ENG 105, ENG 214, PHL 101, PHY 121, PSY 101, and SOC 101) and a series of honors seminars (IDC 195, HMN 295: Seminar in the Humanities, SCI 295: Seminar in the Natural Sciences, SBS 295: Seminar in the Social and Behavioral Sciences, and IDC 295: Interdisciplinary Honors Seminar).

The ELI may address contemporary issues in themed seminars and may exploit the services of visiting writers and scholars in a more rigorous way than at present. The ELI will also foreground seminar offerings that address campus-wide initiatives; these may include topical explorations of global issues, sustainability, and civic engagement.

**Unique Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities**

One of the key distinctions between the Honors Institute and the ELI is the quality and scope of the extra- and co-curricular components of the program. These experiences will include

•opportunities for independent research/creative activities during the summer (on campus or at a four-year partner institution);

•meaningful internship experiences;

•funded participation in Scholars’ Day and other regional and national conferences;

•course linkages to Rochester and area arts and cultural institutions;

•leadership participation in a variety of campus events (Creative Arts, Speakers Series);

•international travel.

In short, the ELI seeks to promote engaged and active learning opportunities outside the classroom and to place the honors student in both regional and international learning environments. The ELI imagines a learner who is not only a critical thinker but an ethical and civic-minded citizen.

**Student Incentives**

In order to recruit and retain these students, the ELI proposes the following “perks”:

•early registration;

•priority for residence hall spaces;

•student aid positions on campus;

•enhanced library privileges (longer loan periods, free photocopying, ability to check out more items);

•laptop loan program.

**Staffing**

The ELI will share a 12-month coordinator with the Teaching and Creativity Center. This administrator will have responsibility for all budgetary and operational procedures associated with the ELI. In addition, the ELI will continue to have a half-time secretary (shared with English/Philosophy but reporting to the dean of Liberal Arts), and will enjoy a new position – a 12-month Honors Specialist or Assistant Director, an administrator who will handle such activities as recruitment, registration, advisement, and career and transfer counseling.

A faculty director will share leadership duties with the coordinator, and receive release time for this role (12 FCH per academic year). The faculty director will also receive a summer stipend.

An Advisory Committee will continue to serve and to review the operation and growth of the ELI.

The ELI will also establish “dedicated” personnel in other campus offices in order to better serve honors students. These dedicated staff members will be expert in the issues that these students may need help in resolving. They will be present in such offices the Career Center, the Campus Center, and Financial Aid. In addition, a half-time advisor will be available to honors students in Counseling and Advising.

**Space**

The ELI proposes two policies regarding space: that contiguous classrooms be dedicated to the program and that the coordinator’s office be located next to the program office. These changes in space will promote a more visible identity on campus for the program and will help students in such areas as registration, advising, and career couneling.

**Assessment**

After establishing the program, MCC will seek to assess two broad areas: program attractiveness and program effectiveness. Measurements of attractiveness may include enrollment data, course offerings, and % of seats filled. Measurements of effectiveness may include retention data, graduation rates, program GPA, number of students presenting during Scholars’ Day, and transfer and scholarship data.

**Budget Development**

Apart from the scholarship monies and salary costs, the ELI will require budget support for a variety of activities:

•dedicated recruitment, marketing, and promotional materials;

•competitive funds for faculty travel;

•class stipends to support student travel or other learning opportunities;

•summer funds to support research/creative activities (for both students and faculty/staff);

•individual and institutional membership fees;

•travel funds for students to attend professional and academic events.