**Proposed Program: The Honors College**

**Program Description**

Both the philosophy of and the genesis for the Honors College are refreshingly simple – the desire to create a comprehensive approach to honors education that builds on the existing Institute and expands the universe of services available. In short, MCC will create a college within a college: an incubator for scholarship and engagement.

The Honors College, serving between 75 – 100 students in each cohort, will offer a powerful and transformative experience. By combining the essential traditions of both the Liberal Arts and the Sciences, the Honors College will promote a separate program model – students within the program will enroll in a sequence of courses, needing to accumulate 24 credit hours in order to matriculate as an Honors College graduate.

These courses, while diverse in both content and methodology, may share one or more of the following characteristics:

 •course enrollment will be limited to 15 students;

 •courses will stress the interdisciplinarity of undergraduate studies;

 •courses will allow students to pursue independent research/creative projects;

 •courses will incorporate travel and the use of regional resources;

 •courses may incorporate meaningful internship opportunities;

 •courses may be offered during the summer at four-year partner institutions;

 •courses may involve international travel;

 •a capstone course will try to summarize the two-year intellectual journey, asking student to practice thoughtful reflection and keen academic synthesis.

In addition, Professor D’Alessandris identifies a number of characteristics that the National Collegiate Honors Council recognizes as representative of a fully developed Honors College:

•a fully developed Honors College should exist as an equal collegiate unit within a multi-collegiate structure;

•the operational and staff budgets of fully developed Honors Colleges should provide resources at least comparable to other collegiate units of equivalent size;

•a fully developed Honors College should exercise considerable control over Honorsrecruitment and admissions, including the appropriate size of the incoming class. Admission to the Honors College should be by separate application.

•an Honors College should exercise considerable control over its policies, curriculum, and selection of faculty;

•the curriculum of a fully developed Honors College should offer significant course opportunities across all two years of study;

•the curriculum of the fully developed Honors College should constitute at least 20% of a student’s degree program. An Honors thesis or project should be required;

•where the home college has a significant residential component, the fully developed Honors College should offer substantial Honors residential opportunities;

•the distinction awarded by a fully developed Honors College should be announced at commencement, noted on the diploma, and featured on the student’s final transcript;

•like other divisions within the college, a fully developed Honors College should be involved in alumni affairs and development and should have an external advisory board.

**Admission Criteria**

Students may be considered for acceptance into the Honors College if they satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

 •graduate in the top 5% of their class;

 •score 1300 or better on the SAT (Critical Reading and Math);

 •achieve an MCC GPA of 3.75 (for current students);

 •transfer 3 but not more than 6 honors course credits with a GPA of 3.75 or better from another accredited institution.

**Scholarships**

Ideally, the Honors College will provide full-tuition scholarships, book allowance, and all fees after financial aid requirements are met. In order to receive a second year of funding, students must meet academic eligibility standards.

In addition, students may receive other forms of financial support for research/creative activities, for travel, and for summer opportunities at other institutions or at MCC.

**Curricular Vision**

Students will graduate with an Honors degree if they successfully

 •maintain an overall Honors GPA of 3.75;

 •complete a capstone experience, defending an Honors thesis;

 •complete 35-40 hours of service-learning;

 •present at one scholarly conference (Scholars’ Day, Beacon Project, Posters on the Hill, CUR).

In short, the Honors College 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 Honors College imagines a learner who is not only a critical thinker but an ethical and civic-minded citizen.

**Unique Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities**

The Honors College will offer the same extra- and co-curricular opportunities as the ELI. However, the creation of an Honors College allows for the adoption of some special activities and initiatives:

 •*Undergraduate Research Fund*

 The Honors College is the natural home for undergraduate research. Student-faculty joint scholarship often begins in Honors courses, but no visible means exists to help continue these nascent projects. The number and variety of these projects may soon increase as Honors introductory courses in the sciences are under development. If these collaborations are valued, a structure must be put in place to nurture them. A highly visible, college-wide competition for funds for undergraduate research should be established. This fund would only support student-faculty research projects conducted outside of established courses. Projects need not involve Honors students or faculty, but the home for the fund would reside in the Honors College.

The minimum, initial requirements for an Undergraduate Research Fund include:

•5 student awards of up to $750 each;

•5 faculty stipends of up to $1000 each.

 •*Regional Honors Conference*

 The Northeast region of the National Collegiate Honors Council has yearly spring meetings that feature student scholarly work. Conscientiously held at inexpensive locales (Harrisburg, PA in 2010), typically within driving range from Rochester, these meetings are an effective way to expose Honors students to scholarly life.

The minimum, initial requirements for attendance at the Regional Honors Conference include:

•5 students and 1 faculty sponsor (5 x $500 + 1 x $1000 = $3500).

 •*Course-Embedded Activities*

 Opportunities for extending the educational experience outside the walls of the classroom should be supported. These opportunities can occur spontaneously (the opening of a museum exhibit, performance, or film) or be regularly integrated into a course (a visit to the Rochester Zen Center in SBS 295 Psychology of Religion). A fund dedicated to funding these serendipitous educational possibilities helps integrate the honors curriculum into the broader Rochester community.

The minimum, initial requirements for a Course-embedded Activity Fund include:

$500 per Honors section.

•*Student Travel*

 Opportunities for student enrichment through academic travel abound. The variety (and cost) of these experiences make any attempt to create a general template for funding difficult. However, once a commitment to the value of student travel is made, specific programs can be identified and incorporated into the Honors Institute. In all cases, a competitive application process would be expected, and student cost-sharing could be expected. A possible initial program, Partners in the Parks (<http://www.partnersintheparks.org/>), a joint program of the National Collegiate Honors Council and the National Park Service, offers several week-long experiences integrating conservation, natural resource management, archeology, and service activities in a variety of national parks. Program fees average $600, not including airfare.

The minimum, initial requirements for a Student Travel Fund include:

•2 scholarships to Partners in the Parks ($600 each).

**Student Incentives**

 •priority in residence halls: the creation of an Honors enclave;

 •student aid positions on campus;

 •early registration;

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

 •free notebook/laptop;

 •dedicated student services staff and resources;

 •student memberships in cultural and arts organizations (for example, Geva Theater, the RPO, and the Memorial Art Gallery).

**Staffing**

 •12-month coordinator (shared with T&CC);

 •12-month Honors Specialist;

 •full-time secretary;

 •half-time admissions counselor;

 •faculty director (12 FCH release time per academic year);

 •summer stipend for faculty director;

 •dedicated career and transfer staff;

 •Advisory Committee.

**Space**

The Honors College demands a fully-equipped Honors Center. The minimum requirements for an Honors Center include

 •office space for coordinator, faculty director, and staff;

 •student lounge for study and informal gatherings;

 •Honors library and reading/study room;

 •computer and printing facilities;

•small meeting room for admission interviews, counseling and advising, faculty and student advisory panel meetings;

•a satellite Honors Center at the Damon City Campus.

**Assessment**

A more robust assessment process might include the earlier measures of attractiveness and effectiveness but would also collect additional data. For example, the coordinator may track the number of funded research/creative activities or travel applications, or design a survey for both program completers and those accepted applicants who chose not to attend. Additional measures of effectiveness may include semester-to-semester retention rates, the graduation rate, program GPA, the number of transfer partners accepting program graduates, and an analysis of the financial offers for program graduates.

**Budget Development**

TBD