

Honors College Student Association (HCSA): Student Initiated and Executed Academic Programming

Challenge

This initiative was borne out of the feedback that we have received from our students, primarily from the Senior Survey given to graduating seniors. In those evaluations the Seniors consistently stated that, particularly later in their academic career, they felt that there was a significant lack of opportunities for interaction with other members of the Honors community, both within their year and across the class years.

In addition, over the last few semesters we have noted a general lack of student investment in participating in events such as Evening with Faculty. They do not respond to invitations to provide possible faculty hosts and their participation in the events themselves has dropped over the last 3 years.

Further, it was apparent that other Honors Programs at other institutions were very active about generating additional opportunities for the students to become involved within the leadership and administration of their Honors Programs

Proposal

I proposed that we offer more student based, student initiated academic programming as way to ameliorate these challenges. I suggested that we create a student forum, most likely using the student volunteers to initiate and execute additional educational and social opportunities for Honors scholars. The working name for this group is the "Honors College Student Association (HCSA)." A member of the Honors College, most likely an Assistant Director, will provide leadership, support and guidance to the group.

Options/ Activities/ Possibilities

Faculty Presentations

Faculty could share their interests in an open forum. This could either be personal or professional in nature. We could use it as a way to share or present Honors Seminar material for the next semester as a way to market Honors Seminars and their content. It would allow for more thoughtful and knowledgeable decisions that students would make regarding choosing their next Honors Seminar. For example, we could have Joe Gardella speak about his experience with Hickory Woods, Kevin Corbett discuss poetry or Rev. Mansfield introduce some aspects about his Christianity class.

Open Forums on Current Events

It might also be interesting to offer the opportunity for debate of current events. This could either be with students doing the debate back and forth or could be more of a faculty centered debate, with the professors each representing an aspect of the issue.

Brown Bag Lunches

We could also have students discuss current events, new research, or local concerns in an informal setting in our Seminar room. It is also possible (if people wanted more structure to the conversation) that we could ask the participants to read easily accessible or internet sources to prepare for the discussion. We could involve faculty or the discussion could be completely student lead.

Evening with Faculty

Historically we have had a lot of trouble getting students to suggest the names of faculty that we could approach for EWF. It is my hope that students may be more responsive if they are asked by their peers to contribute the names of possible faculty. In addition, this provides the opportunity for student leaders to work and interact with faculty on a new and different level.

Tie-ins to Distinguished Speaker Series

The HCSA could use any of the above vehicles to allow an additional venue to learn or explore more about speakers coming onto campus. For example, we could screen a Michael Moore documentary and/ or host a debate regarding the issues raised in his films prior to his Distinguished Speaker engagement.

Presentation of Student Research or Creative Activities

Students could use this opportunity to share their research or creative activities with Honors colleagues. In addition, it would provide a forum for students to comply with the presentation requirements of the grant award. For example, this would have been a great chance for some of our HPRF film makers, such as Jonathan Maurer, to exhibit his finished product.

Community Service

These activities could use this opportunity to create community by announcing and participating in “one shot deal” community service projects, such as the Linda Yalem run or blood drives. These types of events would allow them to interact with other Honors scholars and the community at the same time without necessarily making a full, prolonged commitment to a service organization.

Tie in to Residential Programming

This program will allow us to better tie in to the residential programming that happens for our Governor’s Hall students. We may be able to assist in the publicizing of these events and we may be able to eliminate the presentation of similar programming efforts. We could take advantage of space such as the Jones Center in Governors Residence Hall.

Targets

This aspect would be driven by the student representatives and ideally would increase as they become more skilled and more invested in the endeavour. I would hope, however, to be able to offer between 6 and 10 opportunities each semester (of which at least 2 would be Evenings with Faculty). We would have to be sure to try to offer unique and different programs to our students, the kind of opportunities in a forum that they wouldn’t be able to get elsewhere. In the end we are better off to have fewer, higher quality events than trying to cover too much ground and end up spreading our efforts and our resources too thin.

Outcomes

- Greater investment by members of the Honors community in the Honors College
- Additional leadership opportunities for Honors students, perhaps allowing them pertinent experience for other on-campus leadership positions such as Residence Assistant (RA)
- Greater interaction among all students within the Honors College
- Greater emphasis on academics
- Additional opportunities to interact with faculty outside of the classroom
- These additional “honors activities” may serve as possible recruitment vehicles to academically talented students.

Thank for taking the time to read and consider participating in this endeavour. If you are interested in joining this group please email me at nmarrine@buffalo.edu.

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