After several years of preparation, The Honors College at The University at Albany came into existence in September 2006. Our goal has been to create a community of developing scholars in which honors students and their professors learn together and support each other, and in which each member of the community attempts to be a better scholar at the end of each academic year than he or she was at the beginning. My goal is to have The Honors College be a nationally recognized program of excellence within a decade.

I am pleased to report that the honors community at UAlbany is vibrant and growing. The academic performance of most of our students has been very high and almost all the honors professors report that teaching an honors course is challenging and rewarding. Many of the students have formed a sense of community through their residence-life experience and their coursework, and feel that they are part of an important new undertaking at UAlbany.

The Honors College has benefitted from strong support across the University at Albany. The university administration; colleges, schools, and departments; library; residential life program; and many other components of the university have contributed to our success. In turn, The Honors College has begun to strengthen the environment at UAlbany through the development of an academic and living environment that will attract increasing numbers of talented undergraduates to UAlbany.

The next two or three years will present budgetary challenges to the State University of New York and consequently to the University at Albany. Many or most of the units within UAlbany are facing budget cuts. At the same time, The Honors College is in its initial growth stage. For example, our budget for the previous two years has not included significant funding for our students during their junior and senior years. Similarly, it has been based on a total number of students of 150 and 300 over the past two years, while the goal is for us to grow to about 600 students over the next two years. How to meet the needs of our expanding program in a time of budget reductions will be challenging for the university administration and for The Honors College.

**Honors Students**

Goals with our students have included attracting top high school students to UAlbany, propelling students forward in their development as scholars, and creating a sense of community among the honors students and their professors. Propelling students forward has been accomplished in several ways: (a) developing an honors curriculum designed to introduce students to a wide range of disciplines and require them to think and write more intensely, (b) encouraging students to become involved in research early in their college years and requiring this involvement during their last year, and (c) creating a set of educational activities outside the classroom. Creating a sense of community has been accomplished in the residence halls and through honors courses. The educational and social activities sponsored by The Honors College have helped in this regard, but the sense of community has largely been created by the students as they live and work together. It is anticipated that the goal of attracting top applicants to UAlbany will be accomplished through achieving the other two goals.
Admission of Honors Students

The admission plan for The Honors College, established when it was created, is to admit about 125 incoming freshmen each year and then add 25 first-year students at the end of their first or second semester at UAlbany. The goal is to have about 150 students in each graduating class. The number of students admitted to The Honors College during the past three years has been:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class of 2008</th>
<th>Class of 2009</th>
<th>Class of 2010</th>
<th>Class of 2011</th>
<th>Class of 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>incoming freshmen</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during first year</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>212</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have increased the number of students accepted during their first year to above 25, based on my developing knowledge about (a) the number of students who will leave The Honors College during their first year and (b) the number of students accepted during their first year who decide not to join The Honors College.

Incoming Freshmen

During the 2006/07 admissions process, all students offered a Presidential Scholarship or a Frederick Douglass Scholarship were invited to join The Honors College. Since this resulted in 119 incoming honors students, it was decided to continue this procedure for the 2007/08 academic year.

However, in the 2007/08 admissions process, 177 of the Presidential or Frederick Douglass Scholars chose to join The Honors College. Consequently, we started the year with 50 more students than we expected.

The unexpected number of students had an influence on our honors courses and on the honors housing program. With increased funding from the Provost and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, we created an additional five honors courses for the academic year. This provided enough places in honors courses for each of the honors students to take the three honors courses that we expect they will take during each of their first and second years. Honors housing was complicated by the fact that not all honors students could be accommodated in honors housing. Consequently, some were not able to live with other honors students.

The large number of students admitted to The Honors College in 2007/08 suggested that we needed to develop a strategy to monitor the admissions process more carefully. After discussions with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and the Governing Board of The Honors College, we decided to create an admissions process for the class to start in 2008/09. Students wishing to apply to The Honors College were required to submit a 500-word essay addressing the topic: If you were the Director of The Honors College and received a very, very large donation, what two honors programs would you create or expand. Our goal was to accept about 200 students, and we believed that, of those, about 125 would enroll at UAlbany. In addition to helping us control the number of students admitted to The Honors College more closely, we believed that the admissions process would require a commitment to honors education from the incoming students above that required the previous two years, which would be reflected in higher achievement.

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1 A small number of first- and second-year students were admitted to The Honors College prior to its first year.

2 Tentative number, based on those who have sent an enrollment deposit.
We did not receive the number of applications we expected. A total of 207 applications were received. Of those who applied, 171 were accepted and 36 were rejected (an acceptance rate of 83%). Of those who were accepted, 79 (46%) made a deposit to UAlbany, indicating their intention to enroll as a student here. Consequently, we will begin next year with fewer incoming freshmen than we had anticipated.

**First-year Students**

In December 2007 and May 2008 we sent emails to all first-year students who had achieved a very high GPA (those with a 3.7 in December, those with a 3.8 in May (it was raised to 3.8 based on the GPA needed to be admitted among those applying in December)), inviting them to apply for admission to The Honors College. In December, 62 students applied to The Honors College after their first semester. Thirty-five were accepted and 30 of those students accepted our invitation to join The Honors College. The first-semester GPA of those accepted was 3.89 or higher. The students not accepted also had high GPAs–almost all of which were 3.7 or higher. In May, we accepted 10 of the 12 students who applied to be in The Honors College at the end of their first year. The lowest full-year GPA of those who were accepted was 3.72. Five of the students accepted our invitation.

**Discussion and Directions for the Coming Year**

We continue to search for an effective procedure for admitting about 125 incoming freshmen to The Honors College each year. Consultations with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions are likely to result in a different admissions strategy for The Honors College next year, as we admit the Class of 2013.

Meanwhile, it is likely that we will increase the number of students admitted during their freshman year during 2008/09, as a way of working toward our goal of having 150 honors students in the Class of 2012.

The high academic achievement of students admitted during their first year increases the level of achievement and purpose among the honors students of each graduating class. However, having to reject the applications of so many first-year applicants who had higher academic achievement while at UAlbany than some of the students who were admitted as incoming freshmen was troublesome.

This issue was discussed at a meeting of the Governing Board this year. One strategy suggested was to drop students who achieved a GPA considerably below the required 3.0 during their first semester, with the opportunity to stay in The Honors College for a probationary semester only given to those who had experienced significant events in their lives that impeded their first-semester academic performance (this is discussed in more detail in the next section). This may allow for more high-achieving students to be admitted during their first year.

Another strategy is to accept fewer incoming freshmen and more students during their first year. However, there is a distinct disadvantage to joining The Honors College partway through the first year. Only those accepted as incoming freshmen live in honors housing their first year, and living in honors housing is an important part of the honors experience. In addition, those accepted during their first year do not join honors courses until their sophomore year. Consequently, some or many students accepted during their first year feel less a part of the honors community. I assume that the Governing Board will continue to discuss the balance between the numbers of incoming freshmen and first-year students who should be admitted to The Honors College.

**Retention of Honors Students**

One of the missions of The Honors College is to help retain a high percentage of the top students who enter UAlbany. In many of my messages to the honors students, I emphasize that one of my most important tasks is to help each of them excel academically and that there are many others on campus eager to help them excel. Through presentations by professors, advisors, advanced honors students, and the Honors Librarian; through information from our website and the many emails I send the students; and through individual meetings with students we work to give the information, support, and encouragement that students need to be successful. I also
let students know that they must take the initiative to take advantage of most of this assistance (e.g., attend evening meetings, seek help from a professor, contact me for a meeting). Many students use some or many forms of the assistance available to them; some use none of them.

I also work to have the students understand that certain values were used to establish the academic program of The Honors College and that the requirements that they must meet reflect these values. For example, one value is that students receive a broad-based university education, so we require that they take six honors courses even if those courses are not in their major or minor. A second value is that students develop as scholars in their major discipline, so we require that they write an honors thesis in their major. We also have the value that students should be successful in their academic work, so we require that they meet certain GPA requirements.

Retention Rates

There are no national data on the retention and graduation of students from honors colleges and honors programs. However, information that I have received from many honors Deans or Directors suggests that about 50% of honors students leave during the first two years and about 30% of the admitted students graduate from their honors college or program. Colleges or programs that tie scholarships to membership in their college or program report higher retention and graduation rates than those in which scholarships are not tied to being an honors student (although most of our students have a merit-based scholarship, being in The Honors College is not required to receive one of these scholarships at UAlbany). Colleges or programs that require the completion of a senior thesis report lower graduation rates than those without this requirement (a senior honors thesis is required to graduate from The Honors College at UAlbany).

Of the 10 students admitted to the Class of 2008, four graduated from The Honors College (and with honors in their majors), one did not have the senior thesis accepted by the major department, three withdrew from The Honors College before their senior year, and two extended their time at UAlbany to five years and remain in The Honors College.

The following table shows the number of students who remain in The Honors College among those who were admitted and have not yet graduated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Class of 2009</th>
<th>Class of 2010</th>
<th>Class of 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number admitted</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remain in The Honors College</td>
<td>13 (48%)</td>
<td>92 (62%)</td>
<td>150 (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntarily withdrew</td>
<td>14 (52%)</td>
<td>29 (19%)</td>
<td>30 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were dropped for grades</td>
<td>16 (11%)</td>
<td>20 (9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left UAlbany</td>
<td>12 (8%)</td>
<td>12 (6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Voluntary Withdrawal from The Honors College

Students withdrew voluntarily for a range of reasons. Once they entered The Honors College, some students found that the honors experience as we created it was not for them.

• Some found that the requirements for graduating from The Honors College impeded their education plan. For example, students who wanted to focus on a narrow range of courses during their four years here found that having to take six honors courses impeded this goal, particularly if many of their general education requirements had been met through AP credits earned in high school. Others found that taking honors

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3 This includes two students who are remaining at UAlbany for a fifth year and plan to graduate in 2009.
courses interfered with their plans to take the number of courses in their major or minor that they wanted to take during their first two years.

- Some students saw little advantage to engaging in original research in their discipline and so believed that writing an honors thesis would not be useful.
- Other students found that their honors courses required work that was more intense or more extensive than that required in many other courses and that credit for this additional work was not reflected in their grades (e.g., weighting grades such as is done in many high schools).
- We work to have the honors courses meet general education requirements, but some honors courses do not meet any general education requirements and some students were frustrated because the general education requirements that they needed to meet were not available through an honors course, or through an honors course that they could fit into their schedule. This issue arose more frequently with students who had met several of their general education requirements through AP credits earned in high school.

This past year, 17 freshmen withdrew from The Honors College before the end of the first semester, suggesting that they had little interest in our honors curriculum and probably enrolled in The Honors College because of their parents’ encouragement rather than their own interest.

**Dropping Students Through Administrative Action**

To remain in The Honors College, honors students must achieve a 3.0 GPA during the first semester of their first year. Each subsequent semester they must achieve a 3.25. Students who do not meet the GPA requirements in a particular semester can remain in The Honors College if they meet with me and we develop an academic workplan for the next semester. They are then put on probation and must meet the GPA requirements in all subsequent semesters. Students who do not meet the GPA requirements for a second semester are dropped from The Honors College through administrative action. Rather than meeting with me, some students who do not meet the GPA requirement in a particular semester choose to withdraw from The Honors College.

Most students who are dropped through administrative action will be dropped during their first or second years; a few are dropped in their third or fourth years. The number of students put on probation or dropped from The Honors College each semester in 2007/08 are indicated in the following table.⁴

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Put on probation after the fall 2007 semester</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropped after the fall 2007 semester (all had been on probation after the spring 2007 semester)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put on probation after the spring 2008 semester</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropped after the spring 2008 semester (all had been on probation after the fall 2007 semester)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NA = not applicable

⁴The number of students in each class is based on those who were in The Honors College in mid-September, 2007. Consequently, these numbers differ from the number of students admitted each year and the number who remained in The Honors College at the end of the academic year.
Discussion and Directions for the Coming Year

As noted above, students withdraw voluntarily from The Honors College for several reasons. Most of these relate to the specific values and requirements of The Honors College. Some students may not be aware of these requirements or may not understand how they will influence their choices until they begin taking courses and planning their future semesters. In my view, and I believe in the view of the Governing Board, we should not change the values or requirements of The Honors College to reduce the number of students who withdraw voluntarily. However, I will continue to seek feedback from students withdrawing from The Honors College and if I notice new concerns among the withdrawing students, I will bring these to the Governing Board for discussion.

I am bothered by the number of students dropped from The Honors College because of poor grades. Next year, I plan to meet more frequently with the first-year students living in honors housing, to urge them to work hard and monitor their grades effectively during their first semester. For the past two years, most of my messages to the students about this have been through emails. It may be that small-group meetings will allow me to get my message across more effectively. In addition, I will be contacting the entering freshmen over the summer and encouraging them to complete a tentative weekly schedule for their various activities. We will look at these during the first few weeks of classes in the fall.

Based on discussions in the Governing Board, I will establish more stringent requirements for students who do not achieve the required GPA to be placed on probation. For example, it may be that first-semester students who achieve a 2.8 or higher can be on probation the following semester, while those achieving below a 2.8 would be dropped from The Honors College unless they had experienced some significant life event that impeded their achievement (e.g., a health problem, a family issue). If this strategy had been used this year, 30 of the 41 students placed on probation at the end of their first semester would have been dropped instead (the number might have been reduced by the students knowing that below a 2.8 would result in their being dropped after the first semester). Of these 30, 4 achieved a 3.25 or higher GPA during their second semester and were reinstated in The Honors College. If we were to have dropped them after their first semester, these students would not have had the chance to remain in The Honors College by achieving higher grades.

This year I plan to institute a mentoring program where our third-year students will have the opportunity to mentor our first-year students. We are likely to do this using a team approach, with teams of two or three third-year students working with six or eight first-year students. I will be contacting the third-year students early in the fall semester to determine who will be willing to act as a mentor and the best way to create a meaningful mentoring program.

Academic Performance of Honors Students

At the beginning of the 2008/09 academic year, The Honors College will have 246 sophomores and juniors. The GPAs of these students is listed in the tables below.

As can be seen, most of the continuing students achieved at a high level during the 2007/08 academic year. Notably, about half of our students received a 3.8 or higher GPA during the spring semester and 85% of them will begin next year with at least a 3.5 cumulative GPA. Those achieving at various high levels are shown in the following table, along with the mean, standard deviation, and median for all continuing honors students (the median (the point at which half the scores are higher and half are lower) is included because a small number of low grades skewed the data).
### Discussion and Directions for the Coming Year

The numbers in the tables above do not include the GPAs of students who were dropped from The Honors College because of poor grades or those who withdrew voluntarily during the year. However, the grades of those who continue in The Honors College after their first or second year are very strong. I continue to believe that concentrating our students in honors courses and honors housing contributes to their achievement by surrounding them with fellow students who are high achievers.

This year, I began inviting all honors students with a 4.0 GPA the previous semester to my apartment for dinner (which I cooked, to the amazement of most students). I will continue this strategy for acknowledging the efforts of our highest achieving students. I will also continue my policy of sending congratulatory emails to those achieving a 3.9 or higher each semester. Other strategies for acknowledging the high achievement of many of our students may also be possible.

### Honors Graduation Celebration

This year we held our first graduation celebration. Five students participated. We asked each graduating senior to identify the high school teacher and college professor who had the greatest influence on his or her development as a scholar. With support from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, we funded the travel of the high school teachers for a day of activities at UAlbany. The high school teachers and the graduating seniors had lunch with Robert Andrea (Director of Undergraduate Admissions), Greg Stevens (Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences), and me. It was the first time that most of the teachers and students had seen each other in four years. After a tour of the campus, the graduating students, teachers, and some honors professors had a conversation about educating very bright students. It was very informative. That evening, we had a dinner for the students and their parents, the high school teachers and professors, and several university administrators.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spring 2008</th>
<th>Cumulative 2007/08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>47 (19%)</td>
<td>10 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 3.8</td>
<td>131 (53%)</td>
<td>109 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 3.5</td>
<td>198 (80%)</td>
<td>210 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>median</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to these accomplishments, one honors student received the prestigious Barry Goldwater Scholarship, five students received a Losee Scholarship to enhance their outside-the-classroom educational experiences, seven students were featured on the UAlbany website homepage, and fourteen of our students received a university award for scholarship or service.

However, not all students achieved at a high level. The following table shows the percentage of continuing students who have low GPAs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spring 2008</th>
<th>Cumulative 2007/08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤ 3.25</td>
<td>11 (4%)</td>
<td>14 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤ 3.0</td>
<td>6 (2%)</td>
<td>5 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(George Philip, Susan Phillips, and Sue Faerman). After dinner, the students introduced their guests and talked briefly about the influence that they had had on their lives. It was a terrific evening. Not only did we honor the graduates, but also their parents, high school teachers, and professors.

Honors Professors and Their Departments/Schools

Our goal has been to attract some of the best teaching scholars at UAlbany as professors in The Honors College and to facilitate their teaching intense, interesting honors courses. Each September we distribute a call for proposals for honors courses for the next academic year. All tenured or tenure-track professors are eligible to submit proposals. The curriculum committee of the Governing Board of The Honors College selects which proposals to accept.

Thirty-six proposals were received in October 2007. Of those, 35 were accepted as honors courses for the 2008/09 academic year.

Professors’ Affiliations and Experiences

During the 2007/08 academic year, 39 professors taught honors courses. Honors professors came from the College of Arts & Sciences, School of Business, School of Education, College of Computing and Information, Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy, School of Criminal Justice, and School of Public Health. Honors professors were affiliated with the following majors: accounting, anthropology, chemistry, Chinese studies, classics, computer science, East Asian studies, educational counseling & psychology, English, history, environmental science, geography, journalism, Judaic studies, languages, literatures & cultures, mathematics and statistics, molecular genetics, music, philosophy, physics, political science, public administration and policy, theatre, and women’s studies. For a description of these courses, see: http://www.albany.edu/honorscollege/curriculum_2007_2008.shtml.

The professors who have spoken to me about their honors course have generally been positive about their experiences. Some stated that teaching an honors course was a qualitatively different experience from their other undergraduate teaching experiences at UAlbany. I detected less universal enthusiasm from those teaching honors courses last year than I detected from those teaching the year before. Several professors stated that it had been difficult initiating discussions in their courses because many of their students were reluctant to talk in class. Some of these professors found that students were gradually more willing to discuss in class; others struggled to get students to talk in class the whole semester.

Faculty Consultation and Assessment

To ensure a continually improving curriculum for the honors students, I initiated the Faculty Consultation Program last year. In this optional program, professors are paired and each acts as a consultant for the other. This program met with marginal success last year and only a few professors participated during the fall semester this year. I talked with several professors about this and they stated that they believed that professors would be more willing to have me consult with them about their teaching than other professors.

Consequently, I tried a new approach during the spring semester. Professors could volunteer for the consultation program. I attended a class session suggested by the professor, about half way through the semester. About 20 minutes before the end of the class session, the professor left the room and I talked with the students about their experiences in the course. I asked questions about the course material and the style of the professor’s teaching, and asked students to supply any other information that they believed would be helpful for the professor to know. I then met with the professor several days later, and we had a conversation about my observations and the students’ comments. The goal was to provide more extensive feedback to the professor than is typically provided by written student evaluations and to provide this feedback in the middle of the semester, so that the professor
could make adjustments in the course. Five professors participated in the program and all said that the consultation was useful.

**Meals With Students**

For a second year, The Honors College provided funding for professors to have meals with their honors students in one of the residential dining rooms. Few professors have used this funding over the past two years, and only one did in 2007/08. This professor stated that the meals became an integral part of the course experience.

Several professors had students in their honors courses to their homes for lunch or dinner.

**Sherry Hours**

I held a sherry hour for the honors professors each semester. We met in a conference room near my office for some sherry and good conversation. About a dozen honors professors attended each sherry hour.

**Interactions with Departments, Schools, and Majors**

Part way through the fall semester, I sent a note to each department chair or school dean asking if I could attend one of their faculty meetings and give a brief update on The Honors College. I received invitations from about half the departments/schools. In these departments/schools I gave a 15-minute presentation in which I described the development of The Honors College, encouraged the professors to consider teaching an honors course, and talked about the numbers of honors students in their departments/schools who would be looking for thesis advisors over the next few years. I distributed a pamphlet that we created this year, *An Invitation to Consider Teaching in The Honors College*, and lists of the intended or declared majors of the first- and second-year honors students.

**Discussion and Directions for the Coming Year**

I am pleased that honors professors came from so many departments/schools this year. This suggests a continuing broad-based support for The Honors College across units at UAlbany and a broad-based interest by professors in participating in The Honors College.

This summer, we asked departments/schools to distribute *An Invitation to Consider Teaching in The Honors College* to all professors. I hope that this will increase the number of professors submitting proposals to teach an honors course. Several honors professors this year expressed an interest in teaching in The Honors College on a periodic or regular basis, and I have encouraged them to do this and encourage their colleagues to submit a proposal in the future.

In 2008/09, I will make a concerted effort to visit the departments/schools that I did not visit this year. In the future, I hope to visit every department/school every two or three years.

We will continue to fund professors having meals with students. Even though this is not a widely used opportunity, it is an important one for the professors who use it.

**The Honors Curriculum**

**Honors Courses**

I conceptualize honors courses as being taught in an overlapping two-year cycle (e.g., one cycle is 2006/07-2007/08, the next cycle is 2007/08-2008/09). Students are expected to take six honors courses during their first
two years. Consequently, the goal is to have a wide range of courses during every overlapping two-year cycle. As seen in Appendix 1, we achieved the goal of offering courses from a wide range of disciplines and meeting most of the general education requirements during our first two-year cycle. The general education requirements of U.S. Diversity, Global and Cross-cultural Studies, and particularly U.S. History were not met through many honors courses. However, several courses during the 2008/09 academic year will meet these requirements.

Informal feedback from the honors students suggested that most of them are very satisfied with their honors courses. Most students enjoyed being in small courses with other serious students and professors who challenged them. In addition, many professors of honors courses reported high levels of satisfaction with their courses. Several stated that teaching an honors course had re-energized their overall teaching.

During the fall semester, we worked to get students to complete course-evaluation forms that we emailed to them. We did this to give students more time to complete their evaluation than they typically take in class. However, as happened during the 2006/07 academic year, only about one-third of the students completed an evaluation. At the suggestion of some honors professors, we asked that students complete the honors evaluation forms in class during the spring semester (see Appendix 2 for the form). This raised the percentage of students completing a form substantially.

Overall, students had a positive view of their honors courses. Some courses were viewed as considerably more challenging than their other courses by most of the students. Most honors courses received a rating suggesting that they were moderately more challenging. The time spent on an honors course was usually rated as slightly or moderately more than the time spent on other courses.

Characteristics of honors courses about which students gave the most positive feedback are:

- Ongoing, meaningful discussion in class: students liked the opportunity to share and think about a range of ideas.
- Professors showing obvious interest in the students’ learning and performance: students were particularly impressed when professors were willing to engage in conversations and other activities with them outside class.
- Professors requiring that the students work hard and think intensely: several students noted that their best courses were those where they felt in over their heads initially, but with guidance from the professor felt competent by the end of the semester.

Characteristics of honors courses about which I heard the most complaint:

- Unclear assignments: this drove our high-achieving students crazy. They had no problem with ambiguity during discussions, but felt awash completing assignments that they believed were vaguely described. This may be a particular problem for our first-year students who are unsure how well they will adjust to the demands of college.
- Professors spending most class sessions lecturing rather than facilitating discussion.
- Assignments not returned promptly: this was particularly an issue when assignments were not returned before a second round of similar assignments was due.
- The professor seemed unwilling to entertain perspectives that differed from the professor’s: some of the students feared that they might be “punished” for disagreeing with the professor and they believed that this impeded discussion.

Several courses used web-based discussions or assignments. Although there was a mixture of feelings about these, the predominant feeling was negative. This was particularly true when students believed that web-based discussions were used in lieu of classroom discussions.
Research

I have continued to encourage our students to become involved in research or faculty-directed creative work by the beginning of their junior year. Information about this process is on our website (http://www.albany.edu/honorscollege/research_opportunities.shtml and http://www.albany.edu/honorscollege/college_four_year_plan.shtml). Several honors evening programs focused on facilitating students’ initial forays into finding a research program to join. Three programs were led by professors (see Appendix 3 for a list of all the honors events), one on research in the biological sciences, one on research in political science/public administration, and one on research in business. Three additional programs were led by four of our graduating seniors who described how they got started on their thesis research and some of the findings of their research.

Discussion and Directions for the Coming Year

I believe that the honors curriculum is shaping up well. We offer a wide range of courses now. My hope is that, given the positive experiences of professors teaching honors courses, the number of professors proposing honors courses will increase in the future. In addition, I hope that the brochures we have created on teaching in The Honors College and my visits to department faculty meetings will encourage professors to propose teaching honors courses. This should give us an even stronger and more varied curriculum.

A significant task for me is to work with departments to facilitate our students becoming involved in departmental honors programs, through which they will complete their senior thesis. I will ask to meet with each major’s honors program director early in the 2008/09 academic year, to learn about the honors process in their department. I will encourage the directors to encourage their faculty to review and consider their honors program, including their procedures for approving the honors thesis. Strategies for this vary widely from department to department. Although this variation is not a problem, it will be important for students in each department to know about the approval process and it will be important for the faculty members of the departments and schools to think about these procedures and make any needed adjustments to them.

Honors Events Outside the Classroom

During our first year, honors events were the least successful part of our experience. Most events were attended by only a few honors students. The result was that I organized fewer events as the year progressed. In response to the sense that having honors students engaged in educational and social activities is important, the Governing Board of The Honors College instituted a requirement that students attend seven honors events each semester during their first two years, in order to be eligible to live in honors housing in subsequent years. This resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of students attending events in 2007/08. For example, the average attendance at an evening lecture by one of the honors professors was 35.

All honors activities held on campus were in Steinmetz Hall, one of the honors residence halls (except for the PAC performances, museum tours, and library tours). I believe that this provided an appropriately informal environment for the activities. Students would sit on the lounge furniture and folding chairs until they were occupied, then would sit on tables and the steps leading to the lecture area. Others would stand along the walls. In ways that are difficult for me to explain, this felt like a true “university” setting, with students crowded into a room, sitting where they can, to hear a professor talk.

Several student-initiated events occurred this year and several student-led groups began. Amanda Boyd and Melissa Trapani organized four open-mic nights (Florescent Expressions) where students performed music, poetry, and prose for each other. Erin Horan, Greg Pruden, Nick Colbert, Jeff Knaack, Chris Hocker, Stefanie Piacente, and Kim Gargiulo led several community service events in which many honors students participated. Katie Vittozzi, Vanessa Schrader, Karina Kelley, Roopa Bhopale, and Lucy Place organized our second annual
Dinner/Dance(lessons) in January. Trisha Hahn and Allyson Impallomeni created an a capella group for honors students that met weekly through the spring semester. George Bezama organized our first Pi Day (on 3.14, starting at 5 minutes after 1). I was particularly pleased to see these students take an active leadership role in the community life of The Honors College.

Overall, we had 78 honors events last year. The list of the events and those who led them are in Appendix 3.

**Discussion and Directions for the Coming Year**

I believe that our honors events were very successful this year. I worked to have a wide range of events, including those that were purely social, and believe I was successful in that. Most weeks there were three or four events for the students to attend. The events gave students an opportunity to learn, to socialize with each other, and to feel a part of the honors community.

It was exciting to see so many students at most of our events. I plan to continue a similar lineup of events for the students next year. I would like to have more off-campus events, but they are limited by transportation issues. Perhaps as we get more students in their third and fourth years, we will have more students with cars who can give rides to other students.

**Residential Life**

One of the decisions made as The Honors College was being established was to specify one or more residence halls as honors housing. This wise decision has contributed dramatically to the overall success of The Honors College. Administrators and staff members in the Residential Life Program have been very supportive of The Honors College during our first two years, and they have worked extensively with me to establish a viable honors housing program. In addition, I appreciate their friendliness and support as I continue to adjust to living among 1200 18-year-olds.

Beginning in 2008/09, honors housing will be in two locations. Freshmen and sophomores will have the option of living in two adjoining buildings on State Quad. Juniors and seniors will be eligible to live on Empire Commons, in buildings reserved for honors students. I live in a faculty apartment in Steinmetz Hall, where our first-year students live. Over this summer, the Residential Life Program is expanding the size of my apartment, which will allow me to host a variety of events for honors students, parents, potential donors, and others in Steinmetz Hall.

Honors housing continues to have a strong positive influence on our ability to build an honors community. Students in honors housing get to know each other quickly and most of our continuing students have chosen to remain living with the friends they made in honors housing last year.

**Discussion and Directions for the Coming Year**

I will continue to host a variety of honors activities and events in honors housing next year. With funds raised through gifts to The Honors College through the UAlbany Foundation, I hope to enhance the living environment in the honors residence halls. I will work with the folks in the Residential Life Program to coordinate these efforts.

An important goal will be for me to develop strategies to remain engaged with the third-year and fourth-year honors students next year, many of whom will be living across campus in Empire Commons. I will work on creating a variety of activities for students, held in Empire Commons, that will allow them to get together, have contact with me, and move forward with their graduation requirements.
Other Issues and Activities

Web Development

With the help of the UAlbany marketing group (in particular, Brian Smith) and last year’s honors graduate assistant, Becka Grome, we continued to expand our website: http://www.albany.edu/honorscollege. I rely on the website to provide a significant amount of information to honors students about courses, research opportunities, and moving toward graduation. This past year, we added a four-year plan for getting to graduation and more information about research. We also created a new homepage for The Honors College that includes columns for news and for upcoming honors events. My hope is that students will check this page frequently. Next year, I plan to include several pages in which the honors programs in the majors are described in more detail, as a way of facilitating our students becoming involved in honors in their majors.

Nationally Competitive Scholarships

One long-term goal at UAlbany is to increase the number of our students competing successfully for the nationally competitive scholarships (e.g., Rhodes, Marshall, Goldwater). Although students from across the UAlbany campus can apply for these scholarships (not just honors students), one of my responsibilities has been to encourage students to apply and help them with their applications.

We have increased the degree to which we advertise these scholarships to our top students. We created a document describing these scholarships and how to apply for them and send it to our top students at the end of each semester (http://www.albany.edu/honorscollege/documents/NCS%20Guide%20for%20Students.pdf). In addition, I communicate directly with students who have the basic qualifications for one or more of these scholarships and encourage them to consider applying. Students must apply for these scholarships through the UAlbany Committee on Nationally Competitive Scholarships.

This past year, we nominated two students for a Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship. Neither of the students received a scholarship (the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation awarded 34 scholarships this year to the 977 students who applied). Nominating students for the Goldwater Scholarship is done through the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering. Last year, the student they nominated, Julita Patrosz, won one of the Goldwater Scholarships - a great honor for her and her research advisors. Julita is a student in The Honors College.

We continue to struggle in this area. As the time I spend on The Honors College increases (as the number of our students and our activities increase), I have less time to spend on nationally competitive scholarships. Doing this task well entails considerable time, and this includes encouraging students to develop the type of resume that will facilitate their receiving a scholarship, and then working with them to create a personal statement and prepare for interviews.

I also continue to struggle to emphasize to students the amount of time needed to create a good application for one of the nationally competitive scholarships. Most of our applicants do not spend the time needed to create what should be a perfect application. Many students do not identify their interest in pursuing a nationally competitive scholarship until much too late in the process and consequently are unable to create the type of application that has a reasonable chance for being considered for a scholarship.

Undergraduate Research Conference

In conjunction with the Vice President for Research, Lynn Videka, and the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education for Research Initiatives, Vivien Ng, The Honors College co-sponsored the 5th Annual Undergraduate Research Conference. Students from across UAlbany presented their research or creative work at this one-day event held in the middle of April.
About half the number of students participated this year as did last year. The reasons for this remain unclear. However, several departments now hold their own undergraduate research events—typically departments that have an active undergraduate research program. My sense is that most of the students who are participating in the university-wide Undergraduate Research Conference are those from departments that do not hold their own undergraduate research event.

**Development Office**

I continue to work with staff members in the Division of University Development to create opportunities for giving to The Honors College. This year we received one large gift of $5000 and several smaller gifts.

This year we created a brochure encouraging gifts to The Honors College. I mailed one of these to the parents of honors students along with a lengthy letter describing The Honors College and our activities during the 2007/08 year.

**Discussion and Directions for the Coming Year**

Web development: I will continue to add new pages to our website (e.g., a page for the administration of The Honors College, a page where I will post my yearly report) and expand current pages as needed. We will reformat our “students” page, posting 10-15 student profiles for each graduating class rather than the current strategy of posting a small amount of information about the students who submit it (about 1/4 of the students who are asked).

Nationally competitive scholarships: It is clear that some new strategies are needed if we want to promote some of our best UAlbany students for these awards. Many colleges and universities in our area assign one staff member (typically someone in the career development or advising office) to facilitate students applying for and receiving these awards (e.g., a half-time person at Buffalo, a full-time person at Binghamton).

Undergraduate research conference: A meeting is currently planned with folks from the Provost’s Office, the Office of Undergraduate Education, and the Office of the Vice President for Research, to decide how best to continue the development of a strong undergraduate research program at UAlbany. Part of that conversation is likely to focus on the Undergraduate Research Conference. There may be some value in combining the current Undergraduate Research Conference and the various departmental undergraduate conferences into one event.

Development office: My belief is that the establishment and development of The Honors College provides a prime opportunity to increase giving to UAlbany. With a variety of current new programs, and many other programs on the drawing board awaiting needed funding, The Honors College offers a wide range of opportunities for giving. I plan to continue my work with the Division of University Development to take advantage of the opportunities that The Honors College presents.
## Appendix 1: Distribution of Honors Courses and General Education Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gen Ed Requirement</th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Spring 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Spring 2008</th>
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<tr>
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<td>AENG 102</td>
<td>AJRL 220</td>
<td>AMUS 105</td>
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<td>ALCS 216</td>
<td>ALLC 275</td>
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<td>AMUS 214</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanities (3 credits)</td>
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<td>ACLA 250</td>
<td>AANT 197</td>
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<td>APHI 210</td>
<td>AEAS 105</td>
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<td></td>
<td>UUNI 101</td>
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<td>AENG 144</td>
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<td>Natural Sciences (6 credits)</td>
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<td>AENV 175</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AENV 175</td>
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<td>APHY 160</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ACHM131</td>
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<td>HSPH 105</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Sciences (6 credits)</td>
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<td>AGOG 230</td>
<td>AANT 197</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ASOC 215</td>
<td>APSY 102</td>
<td>HSPH 105</td>
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<td>RPUB 140</td>
<td>RCRJ 201</td>
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<td>AHIS 295</td>
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<td>ACLA 250</td>
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<td>IIST 250</td>
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<td>Lower-division Writing (1 course)</td>
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<td>AHIS 295</td>
<td>ALCS 216</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ASOC 215</td>
<td></td>
<td>RPOS 230</td>
<td>APHY 160</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RPUB 140</td>
<td>AWSS 260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics &amp; Statistics (1 semester)</td>
<td></td>
<td>AMAT 118</td>
<td>AMAT 118</td>
<td>ICSI 116</td>
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Appendix 2
Honors Course Evaluation Form

The faculty of The Honors College has an obligation to review each course taught in The Honors College. Your contribution to this process is providing a thoughtful evaluation for this honors course. Your thoughtful evaluation will help to ensure that courses taught in The Honors College continue to meet very high standards.

This evaluation is anonymous. This form will be read by Professor Haugaard and then will be given to the course professor after the grades for the courses for this semester have been submitted. Thank you for your help with this evaluation.

Course title: 
Professor: 

The first few questions ask about the challenging nature of this course. By challenging, we mean that the course made you think deeply and intensely.

1. Compared with the non-honors courses I took this semester, this honors course was (circle one number):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
much less challenging
much more challenging

2. Was the course as challenging as you had expected?

3. Are there things that could have been done to make the course more challenging?

4. Compared with the non-honors courses I took this semester, this honors course required (circle one number):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
much less time
much more time

5. What were the strengths of this course?

6. Are there ways that the course could have been changed that would have made it better?

7. Comment on the strengths of the professor’s teaching style and strategies.

8. Are there ways that the professor’s style or strategies for teaching this course could have been strengthened?

9. If you wrote papers, gave oral presentations, or produced other material, comment on the feedback you received about them from the professor.

10. Do you have any other comments that would help in the evaluation of this course?
Appendix 3
Honors Activities 2007/08

Student-initiated or Student-led Events
Second-year Students Helping First-year Students (6 events) (second-year students in various disciplines described strategies for doing well in those disciplines to first-year students)
Florescent Expression (4 events)
Honors Thesis Presentations (3 events): Eric Koch, Catherine Kramer, Elizabeth Gray, Zack Berkowitz
Honors College Dinner/Dance (lessons)
Pi Day
Halloween Gala
Organizing the Honors A Cappella Group (one organizational meeting, the group then met weekly during the spring semester)
The Write Stuff - Honors College Writer's Co-op

Community Service Events
Cleaning up Albany's South End
Heartwalk
Relay for Life
Tutoring at Albany High (1 presentation about tutoring each semester, many students participated weekly over the course of each semester)

Off Campus Events
Aquaducks (tour of Albany)
Capitol Hauntings
State Capitol Tour (2 events)

Library Events (all conducted by Ms. McLaughlin, the Honors Librarian)
Databases and Tools for Research (4 workshops)
Order or Chaos (4 workshops)
Bibliographies: Style Guides & Citing References (3 workshops)
Science Library Tour

Fine Arts, Theater, & Music Events
University Art Museum Exhibits (4 events) (Ms. Riker)
MFA Student Exhibit (Ms. Riker)
Performances at the Performing Arts Center
  Music for Solo Piano
  Nai-Ni Dance Company
  Percussion Ensemble
  Performances of Mozart and Bartok
  Piano Concert
  Picasso at the Lapin Agile
  University Symphony (2 performances)
  Bob Gluck, Michael Bisio, Dean Sharp Trio
  Choral Concert
  Concert Band and Jazz Ensemble
  East River Ensemble
  Ernie Williams concert
  Floom Workshop and Performance
  Coupla White Chicks
  Dangerous Music Talk and Demonstration
  Holiday Choral Concert
New York State Writers’ Institute Events
Workshop with writer Richard Russo
Film: Keeping Mum

Research Workshops
Research in Business (Professor Fisher)
Research in the Biological Sciences (Professors Shub & Tennenbaum)
Research in the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy (Professors McCaffrey & Miroff)

Evening Lectures by Honors Professors
The 5000 Fingers of Dr. T (Professor Newman)
Aftermath of the Holocaust (Professor Brenner)
Big, Allied, & Dangerous - Terrorist Tactics and Targets (Professor Asal)
Captive Audiences, Captive Minds? Nazi Film Propaganda (Professor Bowles)
Issues in Modern China (Professor Smith)
Deciphering Texts from Ancient Languages (Professor Justeon)
Entropy: History, Controversy and Future Directions (Professor Caticha)
Exceptional Children (Professor May)
Family Systems Theory (Professor Haugaard)
Filmmaking in Hong Kong during the 1900s (Professor Ng)
How We Ended Up Who We Are: The Theories of Pavlov & Skinner (Professor Haugaard)
Intelligent Life on Other Planets (Professor Delano)
Modern American Jazz (Professor Gluck)
Mathematical Research/Application in Everyday Life (Professor Range)
On Science and Religion (Professor Snyder)
Physics, Art History, and Archaeology (Professor Lanford)
Relations Between Historical & Literary Truth (Professor Berger)
Science, Art, and Zen of Volleyball (Coach Sheffield)
The Causes & Consequences of Anabolic Steroid Use (Professor Svare)
To Make Sense of the Present, Read about the Past (Professor Rozett)
Understanding Leadership (Professor Faerman)
Who Made History in China (Professor Hartman)
Why I Do What I Do (Professor Barlow)
Why Yiddish Theatre Matters (Professor Berkowitz)

In Addition
Tour of the Downtown Campus (Professor Faerman)
End-of-Semester Celebrations (2 events)
UA Debate (Mr. Smith)
Seminar for Pre-Law Students - Internships (Ms. Kakumba & Dr. Scoville)
Basic Information for Pre-Law Students (Ms. Kakumba & Dr. Scoville)
Conversation with Director of Advisement Services, Suzanne Phillips
Conversation with the Provost, Susan Phillips
Use of Calendars to Improve Academic Performance (Professor Haugaard)
Making Balloon Animals (Professor Haugaard)
How to Relax (Professor Haugaard)