As most WCU Faculty Senators are aware, the Honors College has proposed a unique Honors Path Curriculum, i.e., a unique general education for Honors College students. The proposal has been reviewed by the University’s seven college curriculum committees, and by The APRC (Academic Policy and Review Council), LSC (Liberal Studies Committee), and UCC (University Curriculum Committee). Each of these bodies has issued a recommendation of approval or disapproval, but final authority on the matter rests with the Faculty Senate.

The college curriculum committee recommendations are given in a separate document.

The APRC, UCC, and LSC recommend that the Senate not approve the proposed Honors Path Curriculum. The LSC voted 6-0 against approval with one member absent. The APRC voted 11 against--1 abstention--0 for. The UCC discussed the proposal and all members expressed clear opposition, but they did not formally vote on the matter.

Although our committees were univocally opposed to the proposal, we wish to start out by acknowledging some important reasons in favor of it:

(1) Four out of seven college curriculum committees (COB, KS, CHHS, and CFPA) voted in favor of approving the Honors Path Curriculum. We wish to respect the will and judgment of our colleagues. Unfortunately, only one committee with members voting in favor of approval offered a rationale for their decision, and we strongly disagree with it (see item 3 below). [Voting against the plan were: CAS, CEAP, and HL.]

(2) The proposed Honors Path Curriculum has many attractive elements. In particular, we would like to note the appeal of the flexibility that it offers students, the focus on learning outcomes, and the emphasis it puts on the capstone course & internships.

Despite the foregoing reasons, the Committee members believe that the Honors Path Curriculum proposal should be turned down. Our principal reasons are the following:

(1) The Liberal Studies Task Force is currently reviewing our Liberal Studies curriculum, and it has taken the needs and recommendations of the Honors College into consideration. The goals of general education are equally valid for Honors College and non-Honors College students, and the Task Force should be allowed to complete its work and propose a comprehensive plan that members, through collaborative deliberation [and in their collective wisdom], determine to be a good one for all WCU students.

(2) We believe that a general education curriculum is best defined and managed by a cross-section of faculty from multiple disciplines answering to the needs of the students and the University, not those of a single college. One of the main aims of imposing general education requirements is to ensure that undergraduates receive a broad education that transcends the particular aims and perspectives of a program, department, or discipline. An elected faculty committee acting independently from all colleges seems our best hope of achieving that goal.

(3) If we allow the Honors College to define its own liberal studies curriculum, other colleges may follow suit. In their statement of approval for the Honors College proposal, the CFPA Curriculum Committee writes, “We do not object to colleges setting up their own Liberal Studies plans and as such support the Honors Pathway if the rationale is that all colleges or certain professional programs would be granted the same course selection and process rights.” Along with the threat to the quality of general education for all undergraduates, the implementation of multiple liberal studies programs would create enormous bureaucratic difficulties for administrators, faculty, and students.

(4) The burden of SACS accreditation is worth special notice. SACS scrutinizes general education curricula very closely, and it is no easy task to construct a program and success metrics that meet their approval. The Honors Path Curriculum lists several learning outcomes but lacks any viable means of assessing and determining how or if these outcomes will be met. The task of ensuring compliance is demanding and ongoing, and should not be taken lightly.

(5) There is nothing in the proposed Honors Path Curriculum that assures a more rigorous curriculum, only a more flexible one. We have already granted Honors College students unique flexibility by offering them convenient Liberal Studies course replacement. If Honors College students need or want a more demanding Liberal Studies curriculum, we have already provided them a practical mechanism to craft one while respecting the general education requirements set forth by our faculty collectively.

(6) The Honors Path Curriculum defines 10 subject areas (writing, oral communication, wellness, behavioral sciences, humanities, fine arts, social sciences, sciences and technology, mathematics, global/multicultural perspectives, internships/co-op/capstone). In most, it allows that \*any\* course in a given discipline will meet that area requirement. While some find the flexibility gained by this appealing, much would be lost. A psychology class focused on research methods is unlikely to broaden a student’s horizons the way a psychology class focused on death and dying might, for example.