

Honors Equity Think Tank Minutes

Spring 2016

Meeting #1: Forum

Thursday, January 21, 6:00 p.m. Centennial Room, Kansas Union

- **Welcomes**
 - Sandy Sanchez & Constanza Castro, Honors students
 - Bryan Young, Honors Director
 - Introduction of Honors staff: Anne Dotter, Anne Wallen, Ujash Patel, Lesley Owens)
 - Additional attendance: Professor Shannon Portillo, Professor Clarence Lang, Juzer Zarif, Danielle London, Caleb Bobo, Daisy Crane, Rachel Atakpa, Omar Rana, Trinity Carpenter, Jeffery Durbin, Terri Harvey, Hannah Morrow, Sam Eastes, Mara McAllister, Ashlie Koehn, Emily Donovan, Evan Traylor, Taylor Zabel, Jameelah Jones, Alex Kong, Imam Adeyoyin, Theresa Amante, Chance Maginness, Collin Clay, Karen Chin, Peter Haney, Lynn Villafuerte, Ami Nanavaty, Ethan Scharf, Lara Korte, Dana El-Shoubaki, Zaira Torres, Owen MacDonald
- **Main Concerns Discussed by Attendees**
 - Admissions
 - Need for transparency in application review process
 - Discussion of what constitutes "merit" in Honors, higher education
 - Need to improve clarity and navigation on the Honors website to make sure different groups of applicants can make it to the correct information
 - Recruitment
 - Some applicants are not aware that Honors is an option for incoming freshmen, which points to a need to improve outreach to all KU applicants
 - Some potential applicants felt unwelcome to apply to Honors due to word of mouth, personal interactions, and/or the ACT and GPA statistics listed on the Honors website
 - Need to reach out to students of color, non-traditional students, and veterans, in part by better connecting with other organizations on campus
 - Website
 - Should list demographic information and make a clear statement about social justice on the Honors website
 - Need to promote student successes from a variety of students and not rely on lauding the same students repeatedly
 - Tokenization
 - Students living in student housing and enrolling in Honors classes have felt out-of-place as people of color within these largely white communities
 - Students have felt that the website shows more diversity than is actually present in the program
 - General issues within the program
 - Advising: Some Honors students have found it difficult to find advising and help within the program
 - Classes: Students felt that Honors classes can be inconsistently challenging
- **For Next Meeting**
 - Will start discussing concrete solutions to some of these issues

Honors Equity Think Tank Minutes

Spring 2016

Meeting #2: The Honors Admissions Process

Monday, February 8, 2016, 6:00-7:30 p.m. Alderson Auditorium, Kansas Union

- **Attendance**
 - Honors Staff: Bryan Young, Anne Dotter, Anne Wallen, Ujash Patel, Lesley Owens, Ellie Eastes
 - Faculty: Professor Shannon Portillo
 - Students: Hannah Morrow, Jeffrey Durbin, Taylor Zabel, Sandy Sanchez, Nicole Humphrey, Evan Traylor, Leah Spreckelmeyer, Rachel Hagan, Taylor Klalenczyk, Alexander Dang, Dominic Carlina, William Sandiford, Emily Donovan, Caleb Bobo, Jade Hall, Juzer Zarif

- **Welcome, Previous Minutes, & Format Overview**, Lesley Owens
- **Overview of Honors Admissions Processes**, Ujash Patel
 - Incoming Freshmen Admissions
 - Current KU/Transfer Students Admissions
- **Main Points of Discussion**
 - Discussion of who reads the applications, the diversity of our review committee, and the training reviewers receive in norming sessions
 - Discussed the possibility of removing names from applications to avoid unconscious biases
 - Questions about how we reach out to smaller rural schools in Kansas and schools with underrepresented populations
 - Questions about the diversity of our applicants both in terms of race and region
 - Discussion of the purpose of an honors program, the resources it provides, and who it serves
- **Primary Action Points**
 - For meeting #3, Honors staff will provide . . .
 - An overview of what Honors provides for our students
 - A breakdown of Honors applicants by ethnicity and region of origin
 - A breakdown of Honors current students by ethnicity
 - Work on improving the application review process
 - Have Honors staff receive training on unconscious cultural biases
 - Investigate ways to diversify application reviewers by identifying additional readers (faculty, additional staff, alumni, etc.)
 - Investigate the possibility of removing names from Honors applications
 - Use the next meeting to discuss ways of diversifying outreach to high school seniors and current KU students

Honors Equity Think Tank Minutes

Spring 2016

Meeting #3: Recruitment & Outreach

Monday, February 29, 5:30-7:00 p.m., Sabatini Multicultural Resource Center

- **Attendance**
 - Honors Staff: Bryan Young, Anne Dotter, Anne Wallen, Ujash Patel, Lesley Owens, Ellie Eastes
 - Jade Hall, Jeffery Durbin, Emily Donovan, Hannah Morrow, Masashi Kunisawa, Anna Balmilero, Owen MacDonald, Ami Nanavaty, Caleb Bobo, William Sandiford, Sandy Sanchez, Constanza Castro, Lara Korte, and Emily Gullickson (OMA)

- **Welcome, Previous Minutes, & Meeting Format Overview**, Lesley Owens
- **Overview of Honors Program Services**, Lesley Owens
- **Overview of Honors Recruitment & Outreach**, Ujash Patel
 - Incoming freshman recruitment and outreach
 - Current KU student outreach
- **Main Points of Discussion**
 - There is often confusion about who can take Honors classes and how they can get enrolled
 - Identifying advisors can be challenging for Honors students
 - Perhaps our messaging to prospective student can focus on recruiting “active learners”
 - While the new Faculty Nomination Form could be helpful, it could also just reproduce privilege—Honors should focus on actively reaching out widely to faculty of color, GTAs, etc.
 - Could we do more to help first generation high school students overcome barriers to applying, possibly by giving them advice on completing the FAFSA, essay and resume coaching sessions, etc.?
 - As much as possible, we should diversify our outreach in terms of geography, connecting with areas in more remote Kansas counties and Kansas City beyond Johnson County—perhaps Periscope, Skype, current Honors students returning home for breaks, etc. could offer us solutions?
- **Most Common Card Comments Themes**
 - Questions about additional outreach to smaller counties in Kansas and out-of-state students
 - Suggestion to start a multicultural and first generation student group in Honors and/or to offer workshops for navigating college for underrepresented populations
 - Suggestion to add more advisors and faculty of color and to diversify advisors in terms of home schools and departments
- **Primary Action Points**
 - For meeting #4, Honors staff will provide . . .
 - Information on the retention of students of color within the University Honors Program
 - Honors staff will continue working on the following ideas:
 - Work with departments to clarify the process for getting into Honors classes
 - Work on better communicating how to identify one’s Honors advisor and/or request a new one
 - Craft a careful communication plan to roll out the faculty nomination form so that we reach a broad, diverse group of faculty
 - Reframing our promotional strategy to target active and engaged learners
 - Re-assess our recruitment and outreach strategy to cast as wide of a net as possible in the hopes of getting a student body that is as diverse as possible

Honors Equity Think Tank Minutes

Spring 2016

Meeting #4: Advising, Classes, & Curriculum

Tuesday, March 22, 4:00-5:30 p.m. Kansas Room, Kansas Union

- **Attendance**
 - Honors Staff: Bryan Young, Anne Dotter, Ed Healy, Lesley Owens, Ujash Patel, Ellie Eastes
 - Faculty: Peter Haney, Latin American & Caribbean Studies; Shannon Portillo, Public Affairs & Administration
 - Students: Anna Balmilero, Emily Donovan, Jade Hall, Ashlie Koehn, Danielle London, Hannah Morrow, Vivek Patel

- **Welcome**, Lesley Owens
- **Presentations on Current Practices**
 - Learning Outcomes in Honors Education, Anne Dotter
 - Honors Courses, Anne Dotter
 - New Honors Requirements in Fall 2016, Anne Dotter
 - Honors Advising, Ed Healy
- **Main Points of Discussion**
 - Availability of faculty of color and LGBTQ faculty to teach Honors courses and advise
 - The importance of instructors educating themselves on issues of race and equity, and the value of instructors responding directly to current events on campus in their classrooms
 - Whether the new Honors curriculum should include a separate category for social justice and cultural competency experiences in addition to identity and cultural awareness being folded in to most experience categories
 - Ways of including social justice training in Honors courses, freshman seminars, the new curriculum, orientation, etc.
 - To help first generation and underrepresented student groups succeed at KU, advisors could share information on work study and campus jobs, money management, student loans, resume and cover letters, other communities of support available on campus, academic resources, etc.
 - The importance of having a diverse body of advisors—when advisors are from dominant cultural groups, they need to be well-trained in equity issues
- **Primary Action Points**
 - Offer diversity and inclusion trainings for seminar instructors/advisors and seminar assistants prior to Fall 2016
 - Include Social Justice/Cultural Literacy experience category in new Fall 2016 Honors curriculum
 - Creating programming to introduce incoming freshmen to retention-focused resources that advisors may not have time to cover

Honors Equity Think Tank Minutes

Spring 2016

Meeting #5: Fostering an Inclusive Honors Community

Tuesday, April 12, 6:30-8:00 p.m., Kansas Room, Kansas Union

- **Attendance**
 - Honors Staff: Bryan Young, Anne Dotter, Anne Wallen, Ujash Patel, Lesley Owens, Ellie Eastes
 - Faculty & Staff: Emily Gullickson, OMA
 - Students: Theresa Amante, Anna Balmilero, Dominic Carlina, Sam Eastes, Jade Hall, Tobi Imam, Masashi Kunisawa, Hannah Morrow
- **Presentations on Current Practices**
 - The Freshman Experience in Honors, Anne Dotter
 - Honors Student Code of Conduct Creation, Anne Dotter
 - Honors Programming, Lesley Owens
 - Communication with Stakeholders, Lesley Owens
- **Main Points of Discussion**
 - Honors programming (especially during Hawk Week and early in the first semester) should work to break down cliques in residence halls and scholarship halls to allow more inclusive communities to develop
 - Need for social connections between Honors students in the residence halls and scholarship halls—could programming be located in different locations, like in residence halls, scholarship halls, and central spaces across campus?
 - Possibility of co-sponsoring meet & greet social events across campus to build student communities across silos
 - Possibility of breaking the Honors community down into smaller groups or “houses” based on interests, etc. to give students new avenues for building connections
 - Discussion of how to better support students facing mental health challenges
 - Possible development of a university-wide student affairs task force to share ideas and issues across campus services, particularly with mental health initiatives in mind
 - Discussion of the possibility of creating an Honors Code of Conduct and how it could function (would the Code mostly communicate our values, or would it serve as a policy document that makes reprimands possible?)—more research is required to make an informed decision
 - Programming around current issues and conversations on campus would be useful
 - Partnering with alumni of color sub-chapters to connect them with current students of color for mentoring opportunities
 - Encouraging Honors staff, faculty, and advisors to be more visible in different spaces on campus—perhaps ask individual staff members to be liaisons to different groups?
- **Primary Action Points**
 - As co-curricular programming is scheduled for Fall 2016, all programming recommendations will be kept in mind (programming in different locations across campus, co-sponsoring social programs with other units, programming around current issues on campus, etc.).
 - Continue researching the implications of creating an Honors Code of Conduct.