Assessment Plan for the Honors Program
Academic Year 2011-2012
Prepared by Dr. Rachel Wifall, Program Director

Honors Program Mission

The mission of the Honors Program is to provide an environment of academic excellence for Saint Peter’s College students who demonstrate high potential, and to educate and develop them for a life devoted to learning. The Program seeks to enlist the most highly distinguished and most dedicated faculty at the College to teach in a program committed to the highest standards of academic excellence possible at Saint Peter’s College, and works to provide a framework for curricular innovation and meaningful scholarly activity among both students and faculty. The Program also seeks to enhance the academic image of Saint Peter’s College, attracting and retaining strong students. The mission of the Honors Program is consistent with the mission of the College; in particular, the Honors Program is wholly committed to academic excellence and individual attention.

Honors Program Goals

The Saint Peter’s College Honors Program is committed to providing strong students both classroom experiences, individual advisement and instruction, and group activities which will enable them to:

1. Challenge themselves to perform well at the highest academic level possible.
2. Form relationships with other students and mentors who share their interests and dedication to learning.
3. Learn to work effectively, both cooperatively and independently.
4. Develop strong communication skills.
5. Develop strong analytical and research skills.
6. Prepare for graduate studies in a chosen field.
7. Commit to a process of lifelong learning.

Honors Program Student Learning Outcomes

- Students who graduate in cursu honorum will demonstrate that they have acquired a well-rounded liberal arts education, after having completed the Saint Peter’s College core curriculum requirements and the requirements of at least one major subject; they will also demonstrate that they excelled in this process.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of methods of research in their major field.
- Students will demonstrate advanced knowledge of their major field, a high level of analytical and organizational ability, and a preparedness for graduate studies.
Direct and Indirect Measures of Honors Program Student Learning Outcomes

Direct Measures

Direct Measure I:
Direct measurement of student learning through the Honors Program may be observed in the completion of the Senior Honors Thesis project, consisting of 3 credits of Research Methodology, followed by 3 credits of Independent Study: an intensive original research project conducted under the direction of an academic mentor from the student’s major field, culminating in a formal paper and oral defense. This capstone project should reflect the accumulated knowledge and skills developed over the course of the student’s undergraduate education and is formally evaluated through the use of the rubric included in Appendix A, included in the guidelines for the senior thesis project.

Direct Measure II: “Quality Control” of Honors-designated classes: all students enrolled in Hp-designated classes must have a minimum GPA of 3.4; new Honors courses must be approved by the Honors Committee—a representative group of faculty, administrators, staff and Honors students; the Honors Director performs ongoing overview of Honors class content, through syllabus review and classroom observation; the development of a student review of Honors classes is underway. Please find current membership of Honors Committee and definition of an “Honors course,” as determined by the committee, in Appendix B.

Indirect Measures

Indirect Measure I: Students graduating in cursu honorum must have completed at least 30 credits of “Honors” credit, which consists mostly of Honors-designated classes which substitute for core requirements. Some of these credits may come from special study experiences, such as study abroad and for-credit internships, with the permission of the Honors Director.

Indirect Measure II: Honors students may work as research assistants to individual faculty members, for a monetary stipend rather than for course credit. The number of students taking advantage of this learning opportunity is at an all-time high this AY 2011-12 (see Appendix C).

Indirect Measure III: In order to enroll in Honors-designated classes and ultimately graduate in cursu honorum, students must maintain an overall GPA of 3.4 or higher.

Indirect Measure IV: Number of seniors successfully completing all Honors requirements each year, including the senior thesis. The number has been generally growing over the past few years (see Appendix D).

Indirect Measure V: Exit survey given to graduating Honors seniors, measuring their satisfaction with the program (see Appendix E).
Appendix A

Guidelines for Senior Honors Thesis, plus Rubric for Evaluation

HP492 Senior Honors Thesis: Independent Study
Fall 2011/Spring 2012

Dr. Rachel Wifall - Director of the Honors Program

Prerequisites: HP390 Honors Thesis: Methods of Research,¹ approval of the Director of the Honors Program and the academic mentor, and permission of the Academic Dean.

Objectives: The Senior Honors Thesis is the capstone of the Honors Program, which displays the research, analytical, and writing abilities which the Honors student has developed over the course of his/her undergraduate education. Honors students are expected to utilize analytical methods and creativity to design an original research project of approximately 40 pages. To complete this project, they are to apply research methods of their academic discipline to explore their chosen topic and existing academic work and research on the subject. They are to engage in guided study under the supervision of an academic mentor. The culmination of this scholarly work is the submission of a formal paper to the Director of the Honors Program and the student’s academic mentor. After this, an oral defense of the thesis is to be organized by the Director of the Honors Program.

Role of the Academic Mentor: The attached sample syllabus is generic. The faculty mentor will still need to add other more specific information related to the research project and methods of evaluation. In other words, the thesis project should be arranged between the Honors student and the academic mentor, typically in the spring semester of the student’s junior year. A “Tutorial Application” must be submitted to the Director of the Honors Program during registration for fall classes. It should include a syllabus containing a detailed statement of the problem of investigation, the hypothesis to be tested, the method and data to be used to test it, and a preliminary bibliography.

During the fall semester of the Honor student’s senior year, the academic mentor must receive and review a preliminary draft of the honors thesis—or a representative section of it—as the basis for submitting a midterm advisory grade, on or before October 17th. The academic mentor must receive and review a penultimate draft of the honors thesis by December 12th, the last day of classes. This draft will serve as the basis for submitting a final grade of “IP.” If a student wishes to withdraw from the thesis (Hp-492), he or she must do so during the fall semester, on or before the official final date for dropping courses (November 16th, 2011).

During the spring semester of the Honor student’s senior year, the academic mentor must receive a final copy of the honors thesis by March 19th, 2012. He or she must also ensure that the student submit a final copy of the honors thesis to the Director of the Honors Program by this date, in a form which can be put on permanent display in the Bastek Honors House (See Appendix on Honors Thesis Format).

By March 19th, 2012, the academic mentor is responsible for indicating to the Director of the Honors Program that the student’s thesis project has been completed and is worthy of being submitted for oral presentation and defense. He or she will be expected to be present at the Honors student’s oral presentation and defense

¹ An appropriate research course in the student’s major area may be substituted for HP390, subject to the prior approval of the Director of the Honors Program. This course must provide the student with the tools necessary to complete the senior Honors thesis and must conclude in a formal thesis proposal.
of the thesis, which the Director of the Honors Program will arrange sometime between late March and mid April. It is hoped that the academic mentor will engage the student with probing questions that allow the student to show the depth and breadth of their knowledge of the problem investigated.

The academic mentor is then responsible for completing the Thesis Checklist (see appendix) and returning it to the Honors Director; then he or she must complete a change of grade form at Enrollment Services, in order to change the “IP” grade submitted in the fall to a regular letter grade, which is entered on the student’s transcript. When this grade change is completed, the academic mentor should contact the Director of the Honors Program, so that she and the Academic Dean can notify Payroll and the mentor can be paid for his or her efforts.

Role of the Director of the Honors Program: During the spring semester of the Honor student’s junior year, the Director of the Honors Program (and the Dean of the College) must approve the tutorial application. After receipt of the final copy of the Honor thesis and communication from the mentor certifying it—no later than March 19th, 2012—the Director will then arrange for the student’s oral presentation and defense.

The Director of the Honors Program will arrange thesis presentations and defenses at 4:00 on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays between mid-March and mid-April, in a campus location to be announced. If the student needs audio-visual support, he or she should inform Lois Borroum, the Secretary of the Honors Program.

The Director will attempt to arrange for students with similar interests to present and defend their theses together, the model being the way in which such presentations and defenses are made at professional academic conferences. The students will be asked to condense the essence of their theses to no more than a fifteen-minute presentation. All scheduled presentations will be heard. The Director will then open the floor to questions from the audience, during which time it is hoped that the academic mentors in particular will ensure that their students are asked probing questions.

The Director of the Honors Program decides if the student graduates in the Honors Program “in cursu honorum.”

Plagiarism is a serious form of dishonesty. It may be defined as stealing or purchasing the ideas and writings of another and using them as one’s own. The most common form of plagiarism is the incorporation of whole sentences and paragraphs from published material into papers submitted as one’s own work or purchasing papers and/or related materials and submitting them as one’s own work. The forms of plagiarism are many and varied, and it is not the intent of this policy statement, therefore, to give a complete catalog. Plagiarism is rarely the result of confusion or misunderstanding. If one conscientiously acknowledges the sources of one’s ideas and citations, plagiarism is effectively avoided. In cases of doubt, students should consult their academic mentor. Students who submit plagiarized work are liable to receive a failing grade for HP492. In more serious cases, the student who plagiarizes is liable to be suspended or dismissed from the College by the appropriate Academic Dean.
Appendix: Senior Thesis Format

Note to the academic mentor: Please instruct the student to use the following format in preparing the Honors Thesis for submission. Past theses are available for student and faculty perusal at the Bastek Honors House, and will be available in the future in an online database.

Format:

Title page:

TITLE
(centered; caps and/or boldfaced, if desired)

by

Your Full Name

Thesis submitted to
the Honors Program, Saint Peter's College

Date of Submission

(Signed w/ your name)

Your Full Name

Page One:

Dedications
— optional —

Preface and Acknowledgements
— optional —
If you wish to thank advisors, informants, or others for their help with this thesis, you may do so here. Label this as you would a chapter, entitling it PREFACE or ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, as appropriate. A preface may also include any additional information concerning the circumstances of the research or writing.
Abstract
In one or two paragraphs, provide an engaging summary of the proposal.

Table of Contents
— one page, labeled as such —
The Table of Contents should include chapter numbers and titles, plus page numbers. If you have illustrations, figures, diagrams, appendices, they ought to be listed with page numbers. Your bibliography must be listed as well.

Body:

Thesis Chapters/Sections and Length
The title page of each chapter/section ought to be clearly marked with a chapter/section number (and name, if desired. You may decide to incorporate an Introduction and Conclusion). Be sure that all pages are numbered.

Theses vary in length, depending on the academic discipline in which you are researching, and other factors. In the past, SPC theses have been about 40 pages in length. Please use a standard size font and margins.

Appendices
— end matter —
If you have additional or supporting data which you did not want to put into the text itself, but want to include in the thesis, you may include them in one or more appendices. Please include appendices only if the material is relevant.

Bibliography
— labeled as such —
This is to be a references cited listing, and ought to use whichever citation format is appropriate to your discipline (MLA, Chicago, APA).

*The final copy of the Senior Thesis must be in acceptable scholarly form. It should be free of grammatical and spelling errors and the bibliography should be complete. Please submit one copy of the Senior Thesis to your advisor and one to Ms. Lois Borroum, Administrative Assistant of the Honors Program, at the Bastek Honors House. Also, please email a digital copy of your paper to Ms. Borroum. You will be asked to sign a release form to either approve or decline the entry of your thesis into a digital database, created by the library staff.
# Thesis Checklist

Upon receipt of the final thesis draft and after the thesis defense, the **advisor** should complete this form and return it to the Director of the Honors Program.

## Check one for each listed criterion

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<tr>
<th>Criteria for written components:</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Statement of problem is clear and well-conceptualized.</td>
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<td>2. Relevance of problem within the context of previous research is presented.</td>
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<td>3. Research methods are well-selected.</td>
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<td>4. When appropriate, the use of figures, images, maps and other graphics highlight important findings and/or deepened understanding of the problem.</td>
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<td>5. There is appropriate use of primary and secondary sources.</td>
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<td>6. The document is well-written.</td>
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<td>7. Drafts of the document were submitted <strong>on time</strong>.</td>
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**Criteria for oral components:**

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<td>8. The student observed time limitations, spoke with clarity and sense of organization, and overall gave a compelling oral performance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. The student answered the questions asked by faculty and students (i.e. understood the question being asked and answered <strong>that</strong> specific question).</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. The student demonstrated breadth of knowledge in his or her major field.</td>
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<td>11. The student demonstrated an appropriate depth of knowledge in allied fields relevant to his or her specific research area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. The student demonstrated an appropriate knowledge of the literature relevant to their specific research areas.</td>
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**Student’s progress**

- _____ has exceeded expectations
- _____ has met expectations
- _____ is below expectations
- _____ is unsatisfactory

**Notes:**
Sample Syllabus

HP492 Senior Honors Thesis: Independent Study
[Working Title]

Fall 2011

Student: __________________
Advisor: __________________

Prerequisites: HP390 Honors Thesis: Methods of Research (or an approved substitution), approval of the Director of the Honors Program, and permission of the academic mentor.

Objectives: Honors students are expected to undertake an intensive original research project under the supervision of an academic mentor, culminating in the submission of a formal paper to the Director of the Honors Program and the academic mentor, which will be followed by an oral defense of the thesis to be organized by the Director of the Honors Program.

Meetings: Student and academic mentor will meet to discuss progress and possible challenges on a bi-weekly basis.

Topic/Tentative Thesis: [This is an important section!]

Readings: Readings will be based primarily on literature searches which the student conducts, which may include:

[Insert Mini Bibliography Here]

Drafts: The student will be asked to submit the following drafts and research materials:

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review. The student will explain the main arguments of his or her research project, review major primary and secondary sources, and relate his/her project to past and current research.

Chapters 2-4: In these chapters the student will analyze and interpret specific primary and secondary sources in much more detail and further develop his/her argument.

Due Dates:

Introduction and Chapter 1: October 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2011
Chapters 2-4: December 12\textsuperscript{th}, 2011
Final draft: March 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2012
Appendix B

Honors Committee Members for AY 2011-2012:

Chair: Rachel Wifall, Director of Honors Program

Faculty: Lori Ann Buza (Business Law), Marilyn Cohen (Sociology), Matthew Fung (Finance), David Gerlach (History), Susan Graham (Theology), Beatrice Mady (Fine Arts), Alexander Mirescu (Political Science), Patricia Redden (Chemistry), Laura Twersky (Chemistry)

Library: Daisy Decoster

Administration: Velda Goldberg, Academic Dean

Students: TBD

“Honors” Course Description

All courses offered in Honors (designated by an Hp suffix) should introduce students to more advanced topics and higher levels of thought than they would encounter in a standard undergraduate class.

“Hp”-designated classes should typically incorporate more in-depth reading, writing, research, independent work and analysis than regular classes, as well as close interaction between student and professor.

Honors classes should offer students ample opportunity for in-class and possibly online discussion—especially considering that they are typically smaller than average core classes. They may also incorporate special programming and experiences such as relevant speakers and field trips. Overall, Honors courses should be geared to the needs of advanced undergraduates, teaching them how to acquire knowledge through research, honing their skills in writing and oral communication, and helping them to become more independent and critical thinkers.

Honors courses are open to students who are enrolled in the Honors Program, and to “Honors Associates”: interested St. Peter’s students with overall grade point averages of 3.4 or better.

Faculty teaching in the Honors Program must submit a course syllabus to the program director each time their Hp course is offered; syllabi must demonstrate that the above requirements are met. The Director will also solicit input from both Honors students and faculty each year, for ideas about how we can keep the quality of our Honors offerings consistently excellent.
Appendix C
SPC Honors Students Working as Faculty Research Assistants

Spring 2007 (6 students)
Edward Hennessy/Dr. Thurston (Po) Boryana Dimitrova/Dr. Henson (Ba)
Michael Smith/Dr. Graham (Th) Gilbert Miller/Dr. Shaik (Cu)
Kristofer Gryte/Dr. Jose Lopez (Pc) Maria DelaPaz/Dr. Luhr (El)

2007-08 (10 students)
Samik Adhikari/Dr. Zhu (Pc) Ivan Petkov/Dr. Dickens (Ec)
Maria DelaPaz/Dr. Palmegiano (Hs) Vishal Upadhyay/Dr. Hopkins (Ma)
Boryana Dimitrova/Dr. Matteo (Ba) NancyMarie Mattner/Dr. Luhr (El)
Evgeniya Pavlova/Dr. Hamilton (Ps) Parul Monga/Dr. Dickens (Ec)
Ivan Petkov/Dr. Dickens (Ec) Stephanie Danis/Dr. O’Neill (Pl)

2008-09 (6 students)
Thomas Cleary/Dr. Palmegiano (Hs) Rabindra Shrestha/Dr. Bartlett (Ec)
Stephanie Danis/Dr. O’Neill (Pl) Amanda Staub/Dr. Chew (Cc)
Susan Mascolo/Dr. Shaik (Cu) Christopher Wall/Dr. Dickens (Ec)

2009-10 (11 students)
Amelia Rotondo/Dr. Safford-Ramus (Ma) Nicholas Lambrianou/Dr. Palmegiano (Hs)
Samik Adhikari/Dr. Hopkins (Ma) Dimana Neykova/Dr. Wifall (El)
Thomas Cleary/Dr. Palmegiano (Hs) Sayrah Rauf/Dr. Twersky (Bi)
Frank DeMichele/Dr. Epstein (Ch) John Rocchio/Dr. Bartlett (Ec)
James Driscoll/Dr. Luhr (El) Mia Rhodora-Severino/Dr. Graham (Th)
Shishir Khadka/Dr. Mitchell (Cs)

2010-11 (6 students)
Nicholas Lambrianou/Dr. Palmegiano (Hs) Tsvetelina Encheva/Dr. Matteo (Ba)
Amelia Rotondo/Dr. Safford-Ramus (Ma) Mindy Wang/Dr. Almonte (El)
Samik Adhikari/Dr. Hopkins (Ma) Yanitsa Toneva/Dr. Graham (Th)

2011-12 (13 students)
Nicholas Lambrianou/Dr. Palmegiano (Hs) Adam Purcilly/Dr. Nieves (Ma)
Amelia Rotondo/Dr. Safford-Ramus (Ma) Karla Mendez/Dr. Malone (So)
Enhui Chen/Dr. Yazdekhasti (Ch) Mary Steele/Dr. Graham (Th)
Danny Palacios/Dr. Yazdekhasti (Ch) Charlil DelBridge/Dr. Trillo (So)
Sunita Kumar/Fr. DeStephano (MI) Afsha Gouse/Dr. Epstein (Ch)
Rosemarie Driscoll/Dr. Chew (Cc) Michael Krohn/Dr. Larsen (Cj)
Shailesh Khadka/Dr. Matteo (Ba)
Appendix D
St. Peter’s Students Graduated “with Honors” (in cursu honorum)

Saint Peter’s College enrolls approximately 450-500 freshman students each academic year. The Office of Admissions and Honors Director seek to recruit approximately 10% of this population to the Honors Program. A typical Honors class cohort is 50-60 students. Over recent years, the number of seniors who complete the requirements of the Honors Program and graduate in cursu honorum has been increasing, overall, to the level of 5% of the graduating senior class.

Please see attached for details.

Appendix E
Graduating Honors Student Exit Survey – Class of 2011
Please see attached.