

Part 1. General Information

Program(s) Discussed:	Honors
Current Semester:	winter/spring 2023
Date of Assessment Meeting(s):	n/a
Participants in Assessment Meeting(s):	Daniel Kilbride

All Annual Assessment Reports are available to the appropriate Associate Dean, Dean, and the Provost, as well as to other administrators for institutional effectiveness and accreditation purposes. Please indicate the degree to which your program would like this information more widely shared.

Part 2. Assessment Process

2A. Learning Goals

Prompt: Paste your program learning goals here, then, address the following questions in a sentence or two: Did you gather data on all of your program's student learning goals? If not, which student learning goals did you measure in this assessment cycle?

New learning goals for the honors program were introduced in the fall 2022 undergraduate bulletin. The **former** goals were:

- engage in critical and integrative thinking
- apply the knowledge and skills of at least one discipline to ask and answer questions effectively
- engage actively in learning
- communicate effectively and eloquently.

The **new** goals are that students in the honors program will:

- Participate actively in their learning;
- Experience depth or breadth of scholarship;
- Discern and reflect on applying their academic experiences to the needs of the world.

The older learning goals were difficult to assess and, in an environment where the mission-based programs have experienced significant staff attrition, very labor intensive to try to assess. The newer goals are easier to assess and are also more consistent with the mission of the Honors Program:

The Honors Program at John Carroll University is committed to modeling academic excellence to the campus. The Program strives to provide a community where its students participate in innovative, collaborative coursework; engage in intensive experiential learning activities like immersion trips, study tours, and internships; and experience depth or breadth of scholarship. Inspired by the University's Ignatian tradition, the Honors Program seeks to inspire the wider

campus by its commitment to the Liberal Arts, by inculcating its students a lifelong thirst for knowledge, and in encouraging habits of reflection and discernment that inspires students to apply their intellectual talents to meeting the needs of the world.

The program did not gather data on these learning goals because, as I will explain below, it is not necessary to do so.

2B. Measuring Learning

Prompt: In one or two paragraphs, describe your assessment process. What tools did you use to attempt to measure student learning? Where and how were they administered? Who scored them?

The Honors Program depends on the largesse of academic departments to schedule its courses, which are grounded in the “Jesuit Heritage” part of the university core curriculum. The director does not have access to student evaluations in courses in philosophy, theology and religious studies, and issues in social justice. Thus, I cannot be certain that students in these courses are actively participating in their learning. It might be advisable to invite students to complete a survey that asks them to assess the extent to which their courses foregrounded active learning, although the rate of response would probably not be high without incentives. Nevertheless, I try to recruit faculty who have a reputation for engaging students pedagogically, and I also urge faculty to avoid passive methods like lecturing, power points, and extensive use of videos and other media. I have no enforcement authority to ensure those practices are not employed, however. As the instructor in HP 201, a one credit course in “research explorations,” I can attest that students are consistently participating actively in their learning via small group discussions, group work, and the preparation of a group presentation. HP 101, the seminar students take as freshmen in lieu of EN 125 (English composition), also foregrounds active learning in a small, seminar-style class. In short, although I have no quantitative measurements to demonstrate that honors classes foreground active learning, I am certain that they do so.

As for experiencing “depth or breadth in scholarship,” the structure of the Honors Program guarantees that students are doing one, the other, or both. All program students have the option to complete a capstone project that involves intensive research in their major field. As every major at John Carroll includes a capstone experience -- it is a requirement of the core curriculum -- most students who opt to complete the capstone do so in a course in their major field. Many students do a more in-depth project than non-honors students in their major, for example by enrolling in the history senior thesis independent study (HS 4910) instead of the history senior seminar (HS 4900). However, **all** honors students who complete a capstone are required to disseminate their findings publicly, either at the annual Celebration of Scholarship or at another venue -- a publication or a conference presentation, for example. Students may opt out of the honors capstone project by completing a second major or a minor field in an area substantially distinct from their first major field -- for example, by majoring in accountancy and minoring in peace, justice and human rights. By the very nature of their major/major or major/minor combination, these students experience breadth of scholarship.

Students in the Honors Program “discern and reflect on applying their academic experiences to the needs of the world” chiefly in HP 201, in which students are divided into groups with discrete majors (a group of four might have students majoring in marketing, biology, education, and political science) who devote the semester to researching a contemporary social justice issue from the point of view of their major field. However, there is no reflection element embedded in that project currently.

Part 3. Findings

Prompt: Describe, in words, what your program learned about student learning during this assessment cycle. What were your strengths? In what ways did students fail to meet the goals you set for them? Along with this report, please submit the data charts the program used during the assessment meeting.

For several years before fall 2022, students in the honors program received an annual \$5000 scholarship by virtue of membership in the program. Many students remained in the program not because they were committed to its mission but because they wanted to keep their scholarship. Although many students avidly sought high grades, it was less clear that they were committed to or interested in learning. Frequent requests to substitute non-honors classes for those in the honors curriculum reinforced this impression. It was that understanding that led to thoroughgoing changes in the program's learning goals, mission statement, and recruiting strategies. The program's website communicates our wish to recruit students who are committed to the academic experience at John Carroll -- biology students who are eager to take courses in philosophy and political science, for example. In short, the conclusion that our current students were not committed to learning for its own sake -- and may have been the program because they were essentially bribed to do so -- spurred a host of changes designed to change the culture of the program and bring in a different kind of student. We will need to find ways to assess whether we have been successful in that endeavor.

It is also clear that we do not have solid data on whether our students are actively participating in the learning in most or all of their honors coursework.

Part 4. Planned Changes to the Assessment System

4A. Changes to the Assessment System

Prompt: What changes, if any, do you need to make to your assessment system? (Questions to consider include: 1) Do your measures and processes provide useful data with a reasonable amount of effort? and 2) Are your measures reliable, valid, and sufficient?) On which student learning goals do you plan to focus your attention during the next assessment cycle? Do you need to implement additional formative assessment tools to better understand some of your findings? If so, describe those here.

We don't so much need to change our assessment system; we need to create one. As I have stressed in my answers to previous prompts, the very structure of the program and its curriculum practically guarantees that we are meeting our learning goals, but the fact remains that we do not have hard or even soft data to determine that. Organizationally, there are constraints on my access to important data -- for example, student evaluations to courses I do not personally lead. I would appreciate the guidance of the institutional assessment committee to devise some appropriate measures.

The 2016 assessment report stated that the program had established three main sources for assessment measures: course evaluations (indirect), senior exit interviews (indirect), and the senior honors project (i.e., capstone -- direct). As I have stated, I have no access to course evaluations short of HP classes. Senior exit interviews do not seem to have been conducted after 2017. The senior capstone project continues, although it is not mandatory if a student wishes to take the "breadth of scholarship" route.

4B. Changes to the Program in Response to Data

Prompt: What changes, if any, do you need to make to your program in response to what you now know about student learning? (Possibilities include changes to learning goals, pedagogy, assignments in particular classes, activities, and curricular requirements and/or structure.) What is your anticipated timeline for both implementation and assessment of the planned changes?

I have already addressed these changes and why they were necessary. See parts 2A and 3. Assessment data from 2018-22 (course evaluations and senior exit interviews) does not seem to have been collected.

Part 5. Institutional Assessment Committee Interactions

5A. Feedback from IAC

Prompt: Briefly summarize the feedback you received from the Institutional Assessment Committee about your last report.

I cannot locate feedback from the 2016 report.

5B. Response to Feedback

Prompt: Briefly describe how your program has made use of the feedback.

See above, 5A.

5C. Request for Feedback

Prompt: Do you have questions or concerns you would like the IAC or the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to address?

Yes please. Since the program needs to essentially start an assessment regimen from scratch, we need pretty comprehensive feedback. In particular, I would use suggestions on how to find out whether students are engaged learners in the honors classes. I would also like to measure whether efforts to change the program's culture are bearing fruit.

Part 6. Evidence

6A. Of Changes

Prompt: Look at previous Annual Assessment Reports to see what changes that the program planned to make at that time. If the changes have been made, please submit evidence of the change (department meeting minutes, syllabi or Bulletin pages from before and after the change). If you have decided to not make change, please provide your rationale.

The most significant change proposed in the 2016 report was to phase out honors classes that were open for all students to enroll and to switch to courses that were open only to students in the program. That change was phased in at the same time as the integrative core curriculum and it has been in place for several years. It was an important and necessary change. Many honors classes enrolled a small minority of honors students, and the identity and sense of community in the program inevitably suffered. Moreover, the 2016 report suggested that satisfaction with open honors courses was not as strong as honors-exclusive courses. I cannot document that but I am certain it is correct, based on my experience as an instructor back then.

6B. of Impact of Changes

Prompt: Consider the changes reported in Part VI of this and previous reports. What impact has the change had? When the impact of the changes has been assessed, discuss whether changes have had the intended impact and how you know. If the change is too recent or assessment is ongoing, you may wait for a future report.

The transition to honors-only classes has had mainly positive impacts. On the negative side, it has made scheduling more challenging for both students and the director, because we have to offer fewer sections of classes than we did when any course could be designated as honors. However, the shift has enabled instructors to implement pedagogically innovative and student-centered approaches and it has created a much stronger sense of identity and community in the program.

6C. Academic Program Review Action Plan Update

Prompt: If your program has completed an Academic Program Review since 2011, please review your Action Plan from your most recent Academic Program Review, and add a column indicating the progress made on each item. Attach your update to this report.