This report has three sections. The first includes a review of the charge given the Task Force by the Provost, a description of the procedures we followed to complete the charge, as well as a discussion of how we reviewed the existing honors programs and activities at SIUE in light of best practices elsewhere. The second section includes specific recommendations with accompanying rationales and clarification. The final, much briefer section, includes our budget estimates. Two appendices are attached. They consist of our Consultant’s Report and relevant documents from the National Collegiate Honors Council.

I. Task Force Composition, Charge, and Procedures

The Task Force was given the following assignment at its first meeting in September of 2005: “The charge of the Honors Ad Hoc Task Force is to conduct a thorough review of the existing honors programs and activities at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and to offer recommendations for the vision, structure, and administration of a premier Honors program that fulfills the mission, vision, values, and goals of the University. In addition to examining current curricular and co-curricular honors opportunities, an examination of relevant “best practices” of other universities will be conducted. Recommendations can include short, intermediate, and long term proposals. Budget estimates should be included for any proposal that requires additional resources. The Task Force will submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Provost by May 15, 2006.”

Carl Springer, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, was asked to chair the Task Force which included one faculty member from each School/College on the Edwardsville campus and from the Library. Their names follow:

- Rakesh Bharati, School of Business
- John Danley, College of Arts and Sciences
- Patricia Fazzon, School of Nursing
- Gireesh Gupchup, School of Pharmacy
- Betsy Meinz, School of Education
- Brad Noble, School of Engineering,
The Task Force also included one member from the Housing area, two members from the Enrollment Management area, and one member from Academic Counseling and Advising. Their names follow:

   Boyd Bradshaw, Enrollment Management
   Matt Crouse, Housing
   Cheryl Tucker-Lowe, Academic Counseling and Advising
   Emily York, Enrollment Management

The Task Force also included three current Honors Scholars: two Chancellor’s Scholars and one Dean’s Scholar. Their names follow:

  Alison Gray, Chancellor’s Scholar, Business
  Ashley Gray, Chancellor’s Scholar, Criminal Justice
  Sean Hayes, Dean’s Scholar, Biological Sciences

In addition, Sue Thomas, Assistant Provost, served ex officio on the Task Force and Joy Newberry provided clerical support.

The Task Force met twice as a committee of the whole in the Fall. During our first meeting on September 26, we reviewed the Provost’s charge and its immediate context. Among the reasons for conducting such a review at this time in SIUE’s history, the following were cited:

• Lack of clear, consistent, readily accessible information about SIUE’s Honors Program continues to be a nagging problem for faculty, staff, and students. We have spots on the website that are devoted to Honors, but they are not unified or always easy to locate. The information that students are provided by the website and elsewhere is often confusing. Questions have arisen frequently regarding the various academic requirements for Chancellor’s, Presidential, Dean’s, and Provost’s Scholars that remain unanswered. For example: What is the Presidential Scholar’s required minimum GPA (3.0 or 3.25)? Do all or any Honors Scholars have to take English 201? Are all or any Provost’s Scholars Honors Scholars?

• Another set of questions that came up had to do with the coordination of the Honors Academic Program. It is not clear now who is responsible for scheduling Honors classes, assigning faculty, arranging for textbooks, etc. Who is supposed to decide what an Honors 320 seminar is supposed to accomplish (a fairly new course in the Honors curriculum) and how it is different from Honors 120 or a standard IS class? Who is supposed to be assessing the efficacy of
HONS 120 and 320? Is waiving skills courses for all Honors Scholars a good idea? (Not all Honors Scholars are proficient in all skills areas. Chancellor’s scholars are supposed to take a special class each fall, English 201, but it is not actually a requirement. Dean’s Scholars, many of whom have lower ACT scores than Chancellor’s Scholars, are currently not required to take any writing class at all.) Who is responsible for asking and answering this question?

- Another problem cited has to do with our inability to keep track of all of our Honors Scholars. Since there is no centralized coordination, it is not surprising that the potential for losing track of the Scholars is enormous, especially when students change majors. Every Honors Scholar is supposed to have a faculty mentor, but by the time they graduate a surprising number of our students appear never to have met with their faculty mentor and not even to know their faculty mentor’s name. We often assign faculty mentors in the spring before Honor’s Scholars get here when many of them have no realistic idea where they are going to end up majoring. If Honors Scholars switch majors, there’s a good chance nobody in their new department will know that they are Honors Scholars or that they need to fulfill special requirements to graduate. To compound the problem, faculty mentors and advisors frequently are not clear themselves as to what the Honors Scholars’ General Education requirements are.

At this stage in SIUE’s development, given what appears to be the changing demographic of our student body (a greater percentage are traditional, 18-22 year old, residential college students) and a growing institutional commitment to “excellent undergraduate education,” it seems more imperative than ever that we have a outstanding Honors Program that is consonant with the University’s ambitious mission. We have spent much time and effort over the years helping underprepared students to succeed at SIUE and have in place a set of coherent and professional programs to achieve this worthy end. Shouldn’t we be devoting the same kind of energy, resources, and coordinated administrative efforts to help our best prepared students achieve academic excellence?

At our next meeting on October 18, we worked on a mission/vision statement for SIUE (after reviewing comparable institutions’ mission/vision statements). The following is a draft statement: The Honors Program at SIUE enhances the quality of a premier university experience by
transcending the boundaries of traditional curricula and instruction. The program creates a vibrant intellectual community to which students and faculty feel privileged to belong.” To this end, the Honors Program at SIUE will offer the following to all Honors Scholars: challenging and cohesive curricula (small class sizes; interdisciplinary; intensive); professional advising; thoughtful faculty mentoring; consistent academic policies; splendid co-curricular opportunities (e.g. social and cultural events; special housing arrangements; service opportunities); full recognition for Honors students’ academic achievements.

In light of the complexity of the charge and the relatively short time frame, the Task Force agreed that it would be prudent to organize ourselves into subcommittees in the interest of increased efficiency. The following subcommittees were organized: Recruitment, Admissions, and Financial Assistance: Boyd Bradshaw (Chair), Patricia Fazzone, Gireesh Gupchup, Sean Hayes, Sue Thomas, Emily York; Curricular and Co-Curricular Opportunities: John Danley (Chair), Rakesh Bharati, Matt Crouse, Allison Gray, Brad Noble; Structure, Administration, and Mentoring: Ann Riley (Chair), Ashley Gray, Betsy Meinz, Carl Springer, Cheryle Tucker-Loewe.

During the next months the subcommittees worked to collect and review a wide range of information about honors programs at institutions that were similar to ours in terms of student demographics, enrollment, and institutional mission, including our peer metropolitan universities: Youngstown State, University of Texas El Paso, Portland State University, Southern Alabama, Towson State, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, University of Nebraska Omaha, University of Nevada Las Vegas, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In addition, we considered best practices at public universities in our geographical region, including Southeast Missouri State, Eastern Illinois, Southern Illinois Carbondale, Western Illinois, Illinois State, Iowa State, the University of Illinois at Urbana, and the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

The subcommittees also referred to a number of publications from the National Collegiate Honors Council, copies of which were provided to each of the subcommittee members. These include: Samuel Schuman, Beginning in Honors: A Handbook (3rd edition, 1995); idem, “New Honors Programs: Some Prior Questions,” Forum for Honors 14.1 (1983), 9-13; “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College” and “Basic
Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program” from the National Collegiate Honors Council web site. (See Appendix II).

The subcommittees also collected information about our own Honors Program by reviewing SIUE’s website and promotional literature and soliciting feedback from faculty, staff, and student members of the STARs organization, including some Honors Scholars. The feedback collected from the STARs and Admissions Counselors provided valuable information. Among items they frequently cited as ingredients for a thriving honors program were the following: a sense of community; greater expectations; community service; more involvement on campus; leadership opportunities; valuable privileges (e.g. priority registration); personalization of communication between faculty, staff and students; scholarly events; opportunities to interact with the president, chancellor, deans and other university administrators; a chance to give back; job placement; graduate school opportunities; study abroad; scholarship dollars; living with other scholars; medallions to wear at graduation; transcript recognition; special opportunities for scholars to interact with one another such as retreats, social events, study tables; participation in campus events, community events and philanthropic events; a formal approach to a well rounded education; greater student engagement; better preparation for the real world; senior capstone experience; formalized involvement in the undergraduate research academy; successful scholars interview day; and central campus location in which “to hang out.” A list of areas of knowledge with which this same group of interviewees thought that it was important for Honors Scholars to be familiar includes the following: application procedures; requirements for admission; deadlines; size of honors program; quality of curriculum; academic makeup of other honors students; expectations, perception of prospective employers, graduate schools and professional schools; the advantage of a rigorous curriculum; ranking; who endorses the honors program; what can SIUE offer that no one else can; placement in internships and coop programs; job placement statistics; professional school placement statistics; admission into dental medicine, pharmacy and medical school.

Thanks to support from the Provost’s Office we were able to invite a consultant to assist us in our work, Dr. Stephen Rosenbaum, Dean of a flourishing Honors College at University of Nevada Las Vegas, a metropolitan university which shares many characteristics with SIUE. Rosenbaum also served for a number of years as Director of the Honors Program at Illinois State University. The consultant met with a wide variety
of student groups, staff members, faculty who teach Honors courses, upper level administrators, and members of the Honors Task Force during his visit to campus on January 9-10. The consultant’s report (see Appendix I) was delivered to the subcommittees in early February. The three subcommittees prepared final draft reports which they presented to the Task Force as a whole at two meetings held February 24 and March 3. Carl Springer took the three subcommittee reports along with the consultant’s report and produced a “melded” draft document which he distributed to the Task Force on March 13. On March 17, the Task Force recommended a number of changes that have now been incorporated in this draft and at the end of the meeting asked the Chair to present the draft to the Provost for her initial response. The revised draft was circulated electronically and after minor modifications was presented to the Provost on April 5, 2006.

II. Twelve Recommendations
(with rationales and clarifications; in no particular order)

Please note that these are all short term recommendations unless indicated otherwise. We have been particularly careful to distinguish between words like “should” and “might” in our recommendations to indicate the Task Force’s relative support of individual recommendations or arguments.

Recommendation One:
SIUE should establish a central Honors Office, with a full-time faculty Program Director (12 month appointment; 75% administrative duties and 25% to teach in the Honors Program) and a clerical support person. The Director should report to the Provost, sit on the Academic Affairs Council, and manage and lead the Honors Program in all academic respects. The proposed Honors Office might be housed in the planned new Student Success Center. Ideally, it would be a convenient, central location that could also serve as a gathering place for honors students. Location in the new Center would place it near other student service areas.

Rationale: There is, at present, considerable confusion about the administration of the Honors Program and we have students recruited for their high potential who are getting low quality services. High potential students become high potential alumni, and we want them to have good experiences and fond memories of SIUE. A single director who coordinates
all aspects of the honors academic program along with a clerical support person in a single location should help to make the program considerably more coherent and beneficial to students. Since the Honors Program cuts across all the Schools and CAS, the Director should report directly to the Provost and be at the table with other members of the Academic Affairs Council. We are recommending that the Director be a full time position with faculty rank in light of the volume and importance of the work. Work with Honors students is high profile; as the academic quality of our students continues to improve and as we continue to recruit from wider geographic areas, the workload of this Office and Director is likely to increase. The Universities which we studied have central Honors offices and such an arrangement appears essential for a smoothly functioning program. While the model we are proposing does not create an independent school or college with an Honors Dean (possibly something we might pursue in the long term), this proposal still provides much needed, centralized coordination and increased service for a relatively large number of SIUE students scattered throughout a wide variety of programs in CAS and the Schools.

**Recommendation Two:**

An Honors Advisor should be identified to work with the Honors Office and advise all Honors Scholars. Based on the number of students involved (between 400 and 500 at the present time), this would constitute a full-time assignment. In cooperation with the Director and the Honors Council, the Honors Advisor would be responsible for monitoring and updating brochures, curriculum guides, websites, and other sources of information about the Honors Program so that they are accurate and helpful. The Honors Director and Advisor should make it a high priority to assist departmental and school advisors as needed and to train faculty mentors for all of our Honors Scholars.

Rationale: Effective academic advising is crucial to student success, and honors students, just like those needing remediation, have distinct needs and problems. Our Honors Scholars are often good at everything, and truly enjoy many subjects, which places unusual pressure on them when making academic choices. Sometimes, not having been challenged by school work before, they panic when faced with initial poor grades. Honors students also have specific questions regarding compliance with Honors Scholars General Education requirements. They are more likely to come in with AP and other college credit that must be aligned with SIUE requirements that would be best addressed by a unique advisor. This advisor could also highlight the
availability of special opportunities and external scholarships and fellowships for which honors students might apply. (The consultant’s report points out that this last item is a current lack in our program.) Monitoring grade point averages of Honors Scholars also needs to be done consistently and routinely for the sake of fairness. The model for this monitoring could be the system in place for student athletes. The Task Force acknowledges that an advisor assigned exclusively to Honors Scholars is expensive (it will cost roughly the same as we currently spend for the advisement of our Student Athletes) but our consensus is that such a position is practically indispensable if we really want to help our Honors students get the most out of their academic experience.

Mentoring, while a wonderful idea, does not always function smoothly under the present system. All Honors Scholars are supposed to be assigned faculty mentors in their major field. Some mentor relationships have flourished, but many have not. Students have been assigned mentors they never meet, mentors have at times received little or no information about their assigned “mentees,” and, in general, expectations of faculty mentors have been unclear. Many students change majors and are not assigned new mentors in their new fields. The Honors Office should offer training and information sessions on mentoring and monitor effectiveness. Students need to be tracked and mentoring experiences assessed. Mentoring can be the best part of a program such as this, as it provides opportunities for students to get to know faculty members, learn about academic careers, and get insider information about how college works. Specific guidelines, reliable information and clear expectations, as well as administrative follow-up, all to be provided by the Honors Office, would help this valuable aspect of our current program function much more satisfactorily.

Recommendation Three:
SIUE should establish an Honors Council with faculty representatives from CAS and the Schools, staff representatives from the Office of Admissions and Student Affairs, a representative from Academic Counseling and Advising (see recommendation two above), and students. This Council should play a critical leadership role in all matters involving curriculum development and assessment and serve as a communication and advisory mechanism for the Honors Office and its Director. SIUE should secure institutional membership in the National Collegiate Honors Council.
Rationale: For the Honors Program to be successful in the future, faculty members and staff from across the University need to be directly involved. A representative advisory and deliberative body consisting of 12-15 people from the areas mentioned should be sufficient to accomplish this goal. A central office needs to hear from all those whom it affects. Feedback from this group will be essential also to assessment activities. The Honors Council will be crucial for the ongoing operation of the program, as it can recommend and approve curricular changes, guide the development of the program, address routine operational questions that come up, and in general help the Director to keep the program responsive and on the desired course. The Director and the Council must monitor and assess the courses offered in the curriculum. This would require that course evaluations be reviewed for each section taught as an honors course, in addition to syllabi, exams and other materials. Inclusion of elected student representatives would offer Honors Scholars another opportunity to gain experience in governance and communication with faculty outside the classroom. The Council would need an initial charge and a preliminary group would need to be appointed to draft by-laws and convene the first meeting, perhaps operating for a semester until the group is established fully. Some liaison relationship would be needed with the University Curriculum Council (e.g. ex-officio representative to sit on the Council). The University should pursue membership in the National Collegiate Honors Council in order to take full advantage of their extensive resources. Institutional membership is relatively inexpensive and, as the Consultant observes (p. 6), “membership in the NCHS could help in the initial redevelopment phases of the program.”

Recommendation four:
The designation “Honors Scholars” should continue to be used to refer to all students in the academic program and to describe the program itself. All winners of Presidential, Chancellor’s and Provost’s scholarship awards should be admitted automatically to the Honors Program. Johnetta Haley Scholars, Harbert Scholars and other foundation scholarships may be invited to join the Honors Program, but are not required to. The confusing system of nomenclature that we currently use to describe Honors Scholars (Presidential, Chancellor’s, Provost’s, Dean’s) should be simplified as soon as possible.

Rationale: We believe that the designation “Honors Scholars” continues to best describe the academic program’s commitment to academics and should be retained. While it is very important to distinguish carefully between
“scholars” and “scholarship award winners,” we still feel that the word “scholar” is the best term to use insofar as it denotes the following academic characteristics and qualities (identified by current students and staff members): knowledge; intellectual dynamism; mentorship; research; opportunity; scientific inquiry; reasoning; sense of movement and potential; increasing levels of learning; engaging, rich and rigorous curriculum; intense advising.

**Recommendation five:**
The Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management should continue to be solely responsible for the administration of all University merit based scholarships. Together with the director of the Honors Program and the Assistant Provost for Planning, the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management would be responsible for the coordination of the Honors Scholars Interview Day.

Rationale and Clarification: It is essential that the Honors Program work in a coordinated fashion and have a direct link with the Office of Admissions which should continue to take the lead, as it has in the past, in recruiting prospective honors students and managing the scholarship award process. The Honors Program staff should coordinate travel and attend staff meetings in the Office of Admissions to assist in the recruitment process. A coordinated effort courting prospective scholars should include: campus tours; meeting with faculty who teach honors classes; experiencing “a day in the life of an SIUE honors student” by visiting honors classes and spending the night on campus in an honors students/honors wing; development of an interactive website and recruitment brochures designed specifically to advertise our Honors Program. The Office of Admissions should continue to coordinate University efforts to target high achieving students by using the resources available from student lists provided by ACT, College Board, and NCRRUA. Efforts should be made to recruit students who are National Merit Semifinalists and Illinois State Scholars. Special incentives should be given to prospective Honors Scholars, such as waiving admission application fees and early registration.

**Recommendation six:**
Additional fundraising emphasis needs to be in place to create endowed scholarships specifically for the Honors Program.
Scholarship awards should continue to be used as the primary way to recruit our best prepared freshmen into the program. This practice has served us very well in the past and we see no reason to change the practice. If so, however, additional resources, most likely from external donors, need to be identified and cultivated in order to target and attract prospective honors students to campus. Without an increase in scholarship resources, we cannot be competitive with other schools in making these students feel we truly want them. A long term goal could be to offer every Honors Scholar in the program some kind of financial award.

Recommendation seven:
The Honors Program should have separate admission requirements for first-time freshmen, transfer students and continuing students. The Honors Program should be primarily built upon the Fall Semester freshmen class. Admission to the Honors Program should be limited to the Fall Semester.

Clarification: The criteria to be used for determining admission to the Honors Program should include a minimum GPA, or a minimum Class Rank, a minimum ACT (SAT equivalent) score, activities, community service involvement, essay and/or interview. For freshmen, the minimum admission requirements should be consistent with the minimum admission requirements for scholarships. The recommended ACT (SAT equivalent) minimum is 27 and 3.75 cumulative GPA or top 10 percent class rank. For transfer students, the minimum requirement is a 3.5 cumulative GPA and 30 hours of transferable credit. For continuing students, the recommendation is a minimum 3.5 cumulative GPA in at least 30 hours of course work at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. The deadline for admission to the Honors Program should be consistent with the Office of Admissions Priority Admission Deadline and Scholarship Deadline. An application process for the Honors Program should be separate from the admission process to the University, but should be connected with the scholarship application process.

Recommendation eight:
The program should certainly not grow any larger in size at this time and might actually be reduced in the near future.

Rationale: In order to maximize efficiency and quality, the Honors Program should not be allowed to exceed 500 students at the most unless there are
significant new resources allocated to the Program. The goal would be to enroll 75-100 freshmen (each fall); 15-20 transfer students (each fall) and 25-50 continuing students (each fall). The program could be reduced significantly in size (not to exceed, say, 350) students, if we cannot afford the proposed recommendations for improvement or ensure quality in other ways.

**Recommendation nine:**

Honors programming should be provided for transfer students. Every effort should made to ensure that Honors Scholars who do not receive financial awards have exactly the same academic expectations and opportunities as scholarship award winners.

Rationale: Some community colleges now have honors programs and provide us with outstanding transfer students, and SIUE would like to attract those students, too, into the Honors Program, especially since students’ academic choices increasingly are influenced by financial issues rather than academic ability. In the spirit of public higher education, we must make allowances for students whose achievement levels increase later in their academic careers, including those who begin at SIUE. So that our students are able to have a high quality honors experience, however, some limit must be placed on late entry, so we might recommend a restriction to students with 70 credits hours or less. In addition, while there will continue to be extra curricular and social programming that is available only for Chancellor’s and Presidential Scholars, we need to take special care that Honors Scholars who are not scholarship award winners are not disadvantaged academically or perceive themselves as “second-class citizens” in the Honors Program. The same academic opportunities should be provided to all Honors Scholars, regardless of scholarship award status.

**Recommendation ten:**

A vibrant curriculum is the single most important ingredient in a successful honors program and we have, therefore, devoted the most space to that subject. The specific recommendations below are offered as a model for an honors program that could be implemented almost immediately with little marginal costs. A more robust honors program could be built upon this foundation, but that would be the responsibility of the Director and Honors Council as the core program begins to function. Please note that all curricular changes would need
to go through SIUE’s shared governance process and are subject to final approval by the Faculty Senate.

We recommend establishing a framework that would include a general education honors program, a discipline based honors program, and a full honors program.

A. General Education Honors Program
B. Disciplinary Honors Program
C. Full Honors Program – satisfies requirements for both of the above.

We recommend that the honors program begin with a modest requirement of 24 - 30 hours, incorporating certain features of the existing program. Whatever its exact requirements are, they should be the same for all Honors Scholars (Chancellor’s, Presidential, Provost’s, and Dean’s):

Clarification:
Honors 120 – Freshman seminar 3 – 6 hours
A 6 hour course might be developed to emphasize oral presentation skills, or clustered with other topics.
Skills - Honors Critical Thinking / English Comp 6
Honors 320 3
Thesis / Project (see below) 3 – 6 hours
Other Honors Courses (see below) 9

Service requirement – no credit. 50 hours, during the first two years. (To be coordinated with the Kimmel Leadership Center.)

We also recommend that SIUE encourage the development of disciplinary honors programs and that each program be required to satisfy certain minimum requirements, the specifics of which would be established by the Director and Honors Council upon approval through the shared governance process.

Rationale and Summary: This recommendation stipulates a minimum of 24 - 30 hours of honors credit. National Council recommends no less than 15% and generally in the range of 20% – 25%. At SIUE that would be a minimum of about 18 hours and the 25% would be over 30. A few of the programs that we examined had over 40 hours. Our current program requires 33 hours outside the major. Our suggestion is that we should begin modestly, and then provide a framework for building and expanding the program at the departmental level. SIUE has few if any disciplinary honors
programs, but such programs appear to be very popular elsewhere. For example, UNC Greensboro has the following requirements for honors in a major:

- GPA 3.3 or higher at graduation
- 12 hours of honors courses
  - 6 – 9 hours of honors in the major
  - 3 hours Senior Honors Project
  - 0 – 3 other Honors courses (upper level?)

We recommend that honors students not be excused from satisfying the requirements of all GE skills courses. The committee recommends that Honors courses in English Composition and Critical Thinking be established and that Honors Scholars be required to take these. IF various departments wish to offer skills courses as an honors course, honors students should be allowed to count an honors skill course as one of the “other courses.”

Rationale: Currently, one of the only incentives to become an Honors Scholar is that general education skills course requirements are waived. We believe that a vibrant Honors curriculum needs to be characterized by more than the absence of something and we are not convinced, either, that it is wise to assume that Honors Scholars necessarily have no weaknesses in the areas of communication and critical thinking skills. Honors Scholars, like all of our other freshmen, would have the opportunity to take a proficiency exam to test out of one or more skills areas. For several years Chancellor’s and Presidential Scholars have been automatically enrolled in ENG 201, even though this is not required. Such practices should be discontinued unless they have been approved through the curricular approval process. We believe, too, that the Honors program should encourage the development of oral presentation skills and recommend that serious consideration be given to expanding Honors 120 to 6 hours, and that oral presentation skills should be one of things emphasized in the expanded offering.

We recommend continuation and possible expansion of our 300-level Honors Seminar. Currently, Honors 320 is offered. Several more sections of these would probably need to be offered in any year if the number of students is expanded. The seminar might be expanded to more than 3 hours. If the seminar has variable topics, students could repeat the seminar.
Rationale: The Consultant’s Report recommends this kind of seminar and suggests that they “could be somewhat experimental in the way envisioned by the NCHS in its suggestion that honors programs can serve as curriculum laboratories for the university.”

We recommend that we consider offering our Honors Scholars the opportunity to complete an Honors Thesis / Project. This is a delicate and difficult issue. Several programs at peer institutions require an honors thesis or project of some kind. It may be possible for Honors Scholars to use a University Research Academy experience to fulfill this requirement. Existing departmental thesis options might also be adapted for use. One model that we could consider is from Towson State, for which they give 6 – 9 credit hours. There are 5 options (quoting from webpage):

- The traditional thesis, which is particularly well suited for students who plan to attend graduate school. This option includes Honors Directed Readings and Honors Thesis.
- The community service project is based on a student's interest and current research about social issues. A journal and formal paper with a research focus are required.
- The supervised internship is a guided practical experience with an applied focus. It may also fulfill a departmentally required internship. A formal integrative paper is required.
- The teaching project is especially appropriate for students who are interested in education or the teaching/learning process. The project must be at the collegiate level and includes a formal paper, which includes a discussion of pedagogical issues.
- The education abroad project may include research, teaching, community service, or an internship completed while a student participates in an approved education abroad program. Results are presented in a formal paper.

It is our recommendation that additional Honors seminars be created to meet current general education requirements or, longer term, be incorporated in additional honors program requirements for honors students completing disciplinary honors. The consultant observed that interdisciplinary or creative seminars courses are at the heart of a solid
honors program. These types of classes engage our faculty and students in a creative learning process that can be more meaningful for our honors students. This seems to be an area where the SIUE “Honors Faculty” are already succeeding and have much interest.

Clarification: A mechanism will be needed to determine which courses would be designated as honors courses and how other honors hours would be granted. The Director and the Honors Council could be responsible for determining which other courses will be allowed to count for honors credit.

- “Contracted” honors hours might mean that students write an extra paper or do extra work in a class (with permission of the Director and the Honors Council).
- Honors classes that are designated as such and offered regularly, might not have enrollment closed to non-honors students.
- Honors classes that are designated as such and offered regularly, might have closed enrollment.
- Regularly scheduled honors seminars might also be developed.

While we do not currently have the formal designation “Honors Faculty,” it might be a long term goal to provide for a core of outstanding faculty who would assigned exclusively or primarily to teach Honors courses.

We recommend that honors students be free to take or not to take a foreign language course and that they be encouraged but not required to study abroad.

Some honors programs require foreign language study. If the Department of Foreign Language seeks to offer honors sections of some courses, it should be allowed to do so. Honors designation for foreign literature / culture courses would be accepted as “other hours.” We examined one extensive Honors program that emphasized international experience and required foreign language competency at the second year level. Although it might be nice to require international travel, perhaps the best course initially is to allow “honors” credits for international travel, provided that certain requirements are satisfied. One peer institution subsidizes honors students to travel abroad in summer study. Others merely provide information about opportunities.

Recommendation eleven:
Recognition for Honors Scholars needs to be restructured to provide greater incentives for our students. Honors recognition at graduation,
through program listing or other means, and notations of honors on
diplomas and on transcripts are two standard ways to do this. We
recommend that both of these be implemented as soon as feasible.
Another possible suggestion is to start permanent recognition for top
Honors graduates, such as a stone or bronze tablet with the top 1-2% of
a year’s graduates’ names engraved, displayed in the Library or other
busy location permanently.

Rationale: The student members of our Task Force emphasized the
importance of recognition and observed its absence in the present program.
Honors students appreciate selectivity, take pride in significant achievement,
and are quick to recognize awards “everybody gets.” The measures listed
above would represent a shift toward a new emphasis on recognizing high
academic achievement, with more long-lasting rewards. Families of
graduates love recognition at commencement; notation on diplomas and
transcripts can and should be able to done fairly routinely, especially with
the advent of a new student information system on campus, and these are
inexpensive gestures. Recognition also helps to strengthen ties with alumni,
an increasingly important part of building long-term support for the
institution. Early registration will not mean much after graduation, but
diploma notations and permanent recognition on campus for top graduates
last, and generate feelings of pride in SIUE indefinitely. Older universities
have long understood this, and there are many examples of similar practices,
such as the Bronze Tablet at the University of Illinois, Urbana.

Recommendation twelve:
The Honors Office should work closely with Student Affairs, especially
representatives from the Kimmel Leadership Center and Housing.
Special living/learning arrangements for Honors Scholars such as we
currently have should continue to be developed, improved, and
expanded. The Assistant Provost for Planning should continue to be
solely responsible for all non-academic programming (e.g. social events)
for Chancellor’s and Presidential Scholarship awardees. Schools and
Departments should continue and expand non-academic programming
for other Honors Scholars (e.g. CAS Annual Barbeque).

Rationale: Sections of the Residence Halls should be open to all Honors
students. Guidelines for who gets to live there should be clear. Our
Chancellor’s and Presidential Scholars greatly appreciate the special, non-
academic programming made available to Chancellor’s and Presidential
Scholarship awardees and currently coordinated by the Assistant Vice Provost who we believe should continue those duties, since it is unlikely that an Honors Director who also teaches in the program would have sufficient time to devote to these kinds of activities. One area where students did perceive a lack of attention was non-academic programming for those Honors Scholars who are not Chancellor’s or Presidential Scholars. We strongly encourage the Schools and CAS to develop and continue their efforts in this regard. We believe that clearer central coordination and planning could lead to more and better cultural and social events that included all Honors students.

III. Proposed Tentative Budget (estimates only)

Honors Director c. $60,000 - $100,000 per annum (the salary range needs to be this broad if we want to attract applicants from different ranks and with varying levels of experience)

Secretary III or IV c. $23,000 per annum

Honors Advisor c. $33,000 per annum

Professional Development c. $3,000 per annum

Equipment, supplies, etc. c. $8,000 per annum

Membership in NCHS: $500 per annum

Total recurring costs: c. $127,500 - 167,500 per annum

(There would be one time expenses involved with furnishing office space for a Director, Advisor, and a Secretary along with a reception/meeting area of Honors Scholars. We estimate these expenses to run around $25,000 although this would vary depending upon how much space was made available.)

These recommendations do realize some savings. Since we are recommending that the recruitment of Honors Scholars continue to be the province of the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management, we will make no allowances for those expenses in this budget as they are already covered. Since we are recommending that the provision of non-
academic programming for Chancellor and Presidential Scholars continue to be overseen by the Assistant Provost for Planning, and that CAS, Schools, and Departments continue and expand social and cultural offerings for other Honors Scholars, there is no provision for those expenses here, either, since they would be covered in currently existing budgets.

The Task Force did consider the question of phasing in some of the budgetary items listed above and while we believe that it might be possible for there to be a phase-in-period (say six months after the director is hired before the secretary or advisor is hired) such a transitional period should be brief. Rather than phasing in costs, we believe that it is better to wait until we can provide this initiative with sufficient resources at the front end in order to ensure its successful development.

One indirect expense which it is hard to project exactly has to do with the offering of Honors Courses. In the past, the Provost’s Office has used up to $30,000 per annum to provide departments who supply faculty to teach in the program with part time replacement faculty. If Deans and Chairs were willing and able to release faculty without such compensation it would free up $30,000 annually that could be used for partial funding of the new Honors Office. (If the Honors Director were to teach one course per semester that would free up roughly $6,000.) These savings would reduce the costs listed above from the $127,500-$167,500 range to the $97,500-$137,500 range. We recommend that Deans and Chairs be consulted about their interest and ability to allow their best faculty to teach in the program as they become available without such compensation. This would be more difficult in departments where there is currently too much demand already for popular majors, but they already have difficulties in releasing faculty even if there is compensation. Such arrangements might be relatively easier elsewhere, for example, in programs where there is less demand for specialized courses. Schools and Departments would, of course, continue to be given credit for the student credit hours that their faculty generate even if the courses they teach are outside of the Department and School or College. And, it should be remembered in general that outstanding Honors programs provide enormous benefits for everyone associated with them, not only students and faculty and staff, but also parents, alumni, donors, and community leaders. We believe that the time is ripe for all of us at SIUE to pull together to support the development of an Honors program that really fulfils our expectations for excellence.