

Advancing Honors Project
Academic Excellence Taskforce

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Executive Summary

The University of Utah Honors College is charged with the following four goals:

- Honors cohort leads the way in 4 and 6 year graduation rates for the university
- Honors cohort leads benchmark universities in 4 and 6 year graduation rates *with honors degree (Honors Completion)*
- Honors cohort advances the class profile [cum GPA, retention, awards] of each graduating class of the University of Utah
- Honors cohort is equal to at least 10% of student body each year.

This report addresses the following questions:

- 1) How does UUHonors currently perform vis-à-vis the four goals?
 - a. What do internal data suggest about goals where UUHonors falls short?
- 2) How does UUHonors compare to aspirational and other peers?
 - a. What are the typical structures and features for peer honors colleges?
 - b. How do those structures and features relate to their performance?
- 3) What other areas/strategies might UUHonors pursue to enhance or maintain students' experiences and successes?

Findings indicate that about 10% of UU students are enrolled in UUHonors, and that honors students both advance the class profile and lead 4- and 6-year graduation rates. Relative to peers, however, UUHonors is below average in Honors completion rates. **Thus, the main focus should be on increasing UUHonors students' Honors completion rates.** Based on our evaluation of structures and features at aspirational and peer institutions as well as internal data, we propose enhancements to the current UUHonors model that target Honors completion:

1. Move from a department-specific honors degree to a diploma- and transcript-noted honors designation.
2. Provide greater flexibility by allowing students to complete a thesis outside their primary major.
3. Establish honors contracts in all U Colleges/Schools, expanding options for students in all majors to earn honors credits with major requirements.
4. Increase honors credit options within academic departments.
5. Increase staff-to-student ratios for Honors advising and learning communities, supporting Honors contracts and thesis completion.

Data in this report provide the rationale for these recommendations and other ideas that, in time, could be implemented to advance honors at the University of Utah.

Introduction and Overview

Advancing Honors Project: Context and Rationale

As the University of Utah strives to become a top 10 public university with “unsurpassed societal impact,” enroll 30K undergraduate students, secure \$1B in research funding, impact the lives of all Utahns, and invest in student success, we propose that a high performing honors college is a vital part of that vision. Accordingly, the Academic Excellence Taskforce was charged with evaluating the present performance and structure of the University of Utah Honors College (UUhonors) and providing recommendations for changes that would enhance its performance, particularly in relation to student success. This report addresses the following questions:

- 1) How does UUhonors currently perform vis-à-vis the four goals?
- 2) How does UUhonors compare to aspirational and other peers?
 - a. What are the typical structures and features for peer honors colleges?
 - b. How do those structures and features relate to their performance?
- 3) What other areas/strategies might UUhonors pursue to enhance or maintain student success, especially honors completion?

Why Strengthen UUhonors?

Honors colleges play a key role in recruiting, retaining, and graduating high-achieving, highly motivated students within public universities. Historically, private colleges were presumed to offer a superior post-HS education, in part because big public institutions emphasized technical skills [the “Techs” and “A & M’s”] for large numbers of students to mobilize an intelligent workforce for what the nation needed: managers, farmers, military leaders (e.g., Thelin, 2019). The foundational purpose of a liberal arts and sciences education – training the minds of engaged, culturally-aware, and competent citizens – was less emphasized.

Meanwhile, it became obvious that some students at ALL academic institutions and in ALL degree programs were capable and motivated for more challenging and intellectually-engaging work. Private colleges offered these students the opportunity to complete special projects (such as research theses), unique programs of study, or courses that covered more ground and/or explored topics more deeply than “regular” courses. By contrast, for decades in the second half of the 20th century, big publics did very little to challenge or motivate their most academically advanced students, who given their drive and preparation, typically “did okay,” graduated, and led generally successful lives. In a more competitive higher education landscape, however, these students often will choose universities and colleges that do challenge them and provide unique opportunities – an important role for public honors colleges and programs.

Honors colleges within large public universities are designed to inspire **high-achieving, highly motivated students to maximize their potential**, doing more than “okay.” Honors colleges do so **by creating academic opportunities that support high achievement, including thesis work, and by creating a community that further supports and connects such students to one another in ways that offer the best of a**

small residential college experience within a larger public institution. Graduates of public university honors colleges can then begin graduate and professional studies and/or enter the workplace with experiences and skills that distinguish them from non-honors graduates. Not surprisingly, many appreciate and recognize the value of public honors colleges – prospective and enrolled students, the University itself, and the states that invest in amplifying the potential of honors students. By providing educational opportunities for motivated, achievement-driven students, honors programs attract and retain such individuals within their universities. Given that many graduates settle in the state in which they complete higher education, this is a win-win investment for public universities and the states whose taxpayers support these institutions.

Why Prioritize UUHonors Now?

As noted, honors colleges play a key role in recruiting, retaining, and graduating high-achieving students. Supporting high-achieving students is consistent with our enhanced emphasis on student success for all students. Honors programs in general, and UUHonors in particular, emphasize experiential learning, community engagement, and other high-impact pedagogical practices in ways that enhance the student experience. Honors students engage in research and scholarly work across campus in ways that increase their own capabilities and contribute to the broader scholarly community in their disciplines. Thus, strengthening UUHonors contributes to many elements of President Randall's vision.

In addition, current demographic trends make competition for undergraduate enrollment (and the goal of increasing student enrollment at the University of Utah) increasingly challenging. A strong honors college at the University of Utah will attract and engage prospective students, keeping the University of Utah on the radar in an increasingly competitive admissions landscape. Retaining and supporting those students to reach their potential during and beyond their college years in turn expands the societal impact of the University of Utah.

The Goals

Given the above context, the four goals for UUHonors ensure that we provide sufficient opportunities for high-achieving, highly-motivated students, and that we do so in ways that are achievable for all enrolled Honors students. Table 1 lists the four goals in language that centers on perspectives of the University of Utah, students, and the state.

Table 1: The Charge for UUHonors from three perspectives

| <i>University-Centered</i> | <i>Student-Centered</i> | <i>State-Centered</i> |
|---|---|---|
| Honors cohort leads the way in 4- and 6-year graduation rates for UU | UUHonors supports students who graduate in 4-6 years, despite additional academic requirements and achievements | UUHonors supports the efficient education of high-achieving students, enabling graduates to enter the workforce/professional schools in a timely manner |
| Honors cohort leads benchmark universities in 4- and 6-year graduation rates <i>with</i> honors degree (<i>Honors Completion</i>) | UUHonors provides high-achieving students with accessible, unique, and structured degree options, academic advising, and learning opportunities | UUHonors educates and graduates high-achieving students who become highly skilled workers and engaged citizens within and beyond Utah |
| Honors cohort advances the class profile [HS GPA, retention, awards] of each graduating class of the University of Utah | UUHonors provides programs, degree options, and community for high-achieving, highly motivated students | UUHonors helps recruit and retain high-achieving, highly motivated students from within and beyond Utah, and fosters their lasting connections to the state of Utah |
| Honors cohort is equal to at least 10% of student body each year. | UUHonors is able to accommodate interested and adequately prepared students | UUHonors provides sufficient capacity and resources for high-achieving, highly motivated students within Utah and beyond |

Baseline: How does UUHonors currently perform vis-à-vis the four goals?

See Appendix A for figures from UAIR and other sources that undergird the conclusions below.

UUHonors is 10% of the UU student body across each cohort.

At present, approximately 9% of undergraduate students at UU are honors students. Improved honors programming that increases retention, as well as develops robust pathways into UUHonors for current UU students will help to attain and maintain a 10% enrollment across all cohorts. At present, the Colleges of Science, Engineering, and Social and Behavioral Sciences represent the largest honors enrollments (accounting for approximately 20-22% of honors enrollment each), with Business (12%) and Humanities (8%) next. Increases in overall undergraduate enrollment will require that UUHonors increase its capacity proportionally.

UUhonors cohorts advance the class profile.

Incoming Honors students at the UU consistently have higher high school GPAs and, when provided, ACT scores than their non-Honors counterparts. While at UU, Honors students are consistently overrepresented in student government, student leadership, and research awards. Compared to their non-Honors counterparts, Honors students have twice the rate of double majors and are overrepresented in nationally competitive scholarships.

UUhonors leads in 4 and 6-year graduation rates for UU.

Unadjusted graduation rate data (Appendix 1) show that Honors students have 4- and 6-year graduation rates that are approximately 20% higher than non-Honors students.

UUhonors leads benchmark universities in graduates with Honors (Honors Completion).

Honors completion refers to U Honor's students who graduate with an Honor's degree. Approximately 4% of UU graduates earn an Honors degree. 32% of students who were affiliated with UU Honors completed an Honors degree. For students affiliated with UUhonors at graduation, approximately 50% receive an Honors Bachelor's degree. These rates are lower than benchmark and aspirational peers.

Insights on Honors completion from Internal Data. UUhonors routinely interviews and surveys students who withdraw from Honors or graduate. Further, Honors faculty member Virginia Solomon conducted a series of focus groups with upper-division Honors students around barriers to completion. There are two common reasons for students not completing an honors degree. Students report that honors "doesn't work with my major" so drop UUhonors relatively early in their careers. This is understandable given that academic departments offer relatively few Honors credits. Students also reported not understanding how to begin and complete an Honors thesis, which many find intimidating. Given the diversity of programs, thesis options, and departmental guidelines available to students, this concern is also understandable.

We commissioned a report from the analytics team (UAIR, Undergraduate Studies) looking at predictors of honors completion among all students admitted to Honors. Results showed that living on-campus, having a higher UU GPA, maintaining full-time enrollment, and majoring in humanities, social sciences, and science were associated with a greater likelihood of Honors completion. Students who majored in business and engineering were less likely to earn an Honors degree. Such patterns are common across Honors Colleges, but suggest that efforts to improve honors completion must address both discipline-specific challenges and general barriers.

How does UUhonors Compare with Peers? The Landscape of Honors Colleges and Programs at Public Universities

To examine how UUhonors compares with peers, we focused on a set of high-performing honors colleges and programs (Barrett at Arizona State, CUNY-McCauley,

University of South Carolina, University of Kansas, Wilkes College at Florida Atlantic, Schreyer Honors College at Penn State, University of Texas at Austin's Plan II Honors program, University of Oklahoma Honors College) as well as additional peers drawn from the AAU, Pac-12, and Big-12 (Oregon State University Honors College, Clark Honors College at University of Oregon, Franke Honors College at University of Arizona, University of Wisconsin Madison Liberal Arts and Sciences Honors, and Ohio State University Honors and Scholars program).

We obtained data from websites, ratings publications (Willingham, 2021), and interviews conducted with honors Deans and Directors. We assessed typical features of programs – relative and absolute size, admissions criteria, rigor (curricular requirements, thesis/capstone requirements), resources (staff and faculty), student success indicators (6-yr graduation rates and Honors completion rates), and whether the program results in degrees or other outcomes (e.g., transcript designations). We also explored structure, such as how honors coursework is offered and how faculty are appointed within colleges/departments. When conducting interviews, we explored the rationale for features and structure, and investigated how honors colleges and programs typically partner with the academic colleges. Finally, we examined how features of programs did or did not contribute to student success. Collectively, these explorations allowed us to assess how UUHonors compares to aspirational and other peers regarding features and structures, and whether those features and structures are related to student success, **especially honors completion**. In what follows, we review ways in which UUHonors is unique or distinctive from peers. Appendix B provides all graphs for these data as well as a data table (note that not all data were available for all of our comparison peers). Here, we show only key figures related to our primary conclusions.

Features.

UUHonors is relatively unique in offering honors degrees housed within academic departments. Virtually all other high-performing programs and colleges designate completion on students' transcripts and, in some cases, on their diploma.

UUHonors had markedly low completion rates (Figure 1). Although peers were selected, in part, based on high honors completion rates, the national average for completion is approximately 50%, significantly higher than UUHonors.

Compared to peers, UUHonors has low staff:student ratios (excluding faculty). UUHonors 24 credits, which is on the lower side of requirements but within range of peers.

Figure 1: Honors Completion Rate

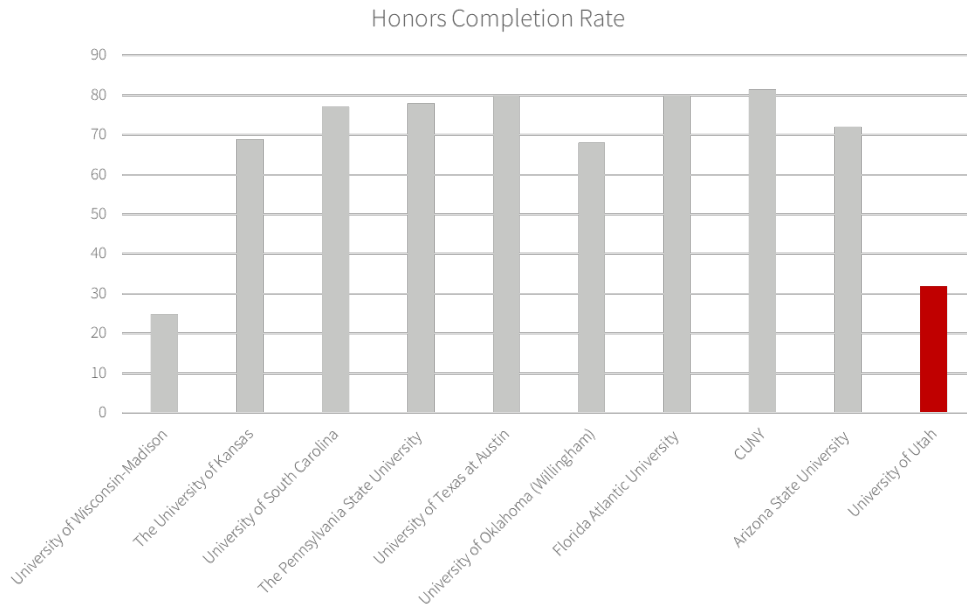
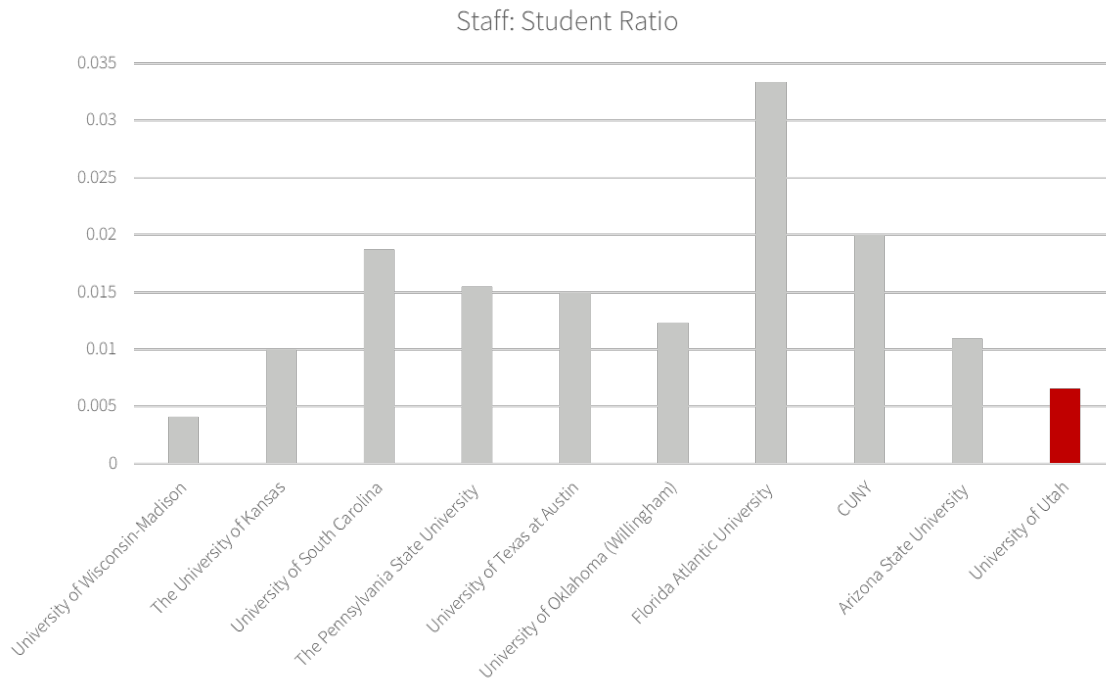


Figure 2: Staffing Resources

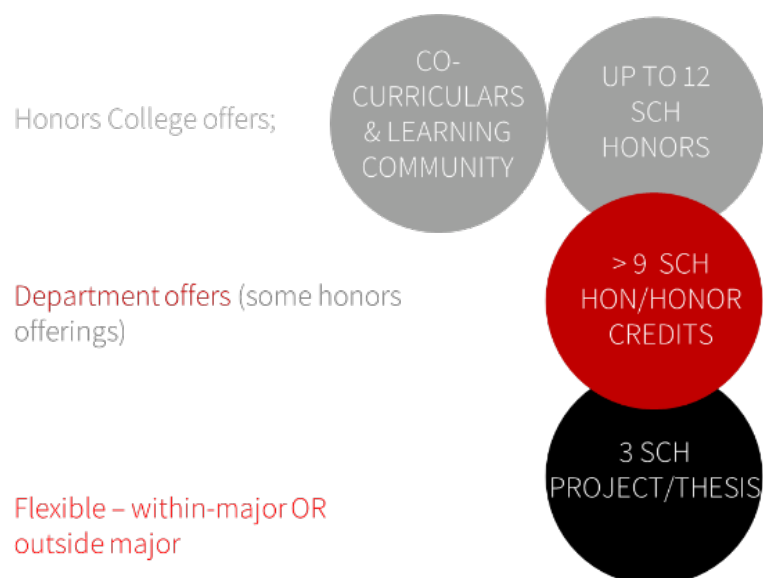


Appendix B shows that UUHonors is in line with peer institutions for relative size, admissions criteria, and faculty resources, including with peers that are high-performing. Like most peers, UU Honors requires a thesis/capstone project.

Structures.

The majority of programs can be classified as having one of two structural models. In structural model 1 (Figure 3 – red highlights departmental contributions to honors completion), faculty appointed within the Honors college offer a foundational Honors curriculum and a small college, close-mentored style experience, often intended for first and second year students. Departmental faculty offer students discipline-specific opportunities, often focusing on third and fourth year students and emphasizing scholarly or creative work.

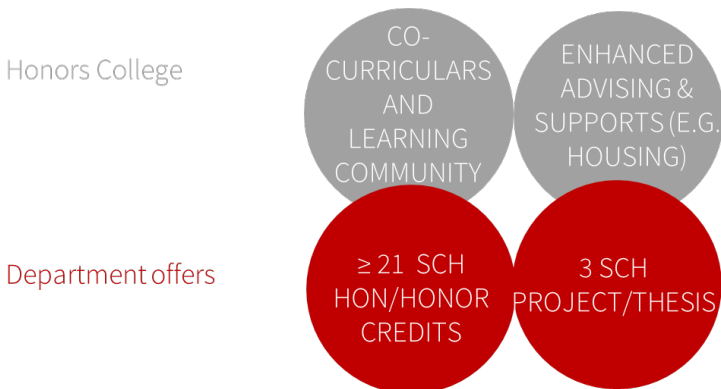
Figure 3: Structural Model 1 (own faculty, shared curricular responsibility)



In structural model 2 (Figure 4, again, with red highlighting departmental contributions to honors), faculty are appointed throughout the Colleges/departments, and the academic Colleges/departments offer all Honors coursework. Honors colleges offer supplemental advising, co-curricular experiences, and extensive supports for students.

High-performing colleges were evident for both models. Model 2 routinely required higher numbers of honors credits than UHonor.

Figure 4: Structural Model 2 (distributed faculty, division of curricular/co-curricular responsibilities)



Interviews with Deans and Directors provided distinctive rationales for these models. For model 1, Deans pointed out that a dedicated faculty, typically in teaching-focused tracks, can provide students with an experience that’s characteristic of the small liberal arts colleges on which honors education is modelled. Further, dedicated faculty enabled colleges to create distinctive, coherent, and purposeful honors core curriculum (viz., ASU-Barrett’s Human Event class) that attracts and retains students and creates a strong community. By contrast for model 2, Deans pointed out that the distributed model exposes even early college students to cutting-edge researchers and scholars, and, when well-resourced and supported, results in a wider range of honors courses available to students. Both models deliver on a “breadth and depth” concept – providing foundational, early-college experiences in small classes with high levels of faculty contact, followed by subsequent discipline-specific experiences of depth with cutting-edge researchers and scholars.

Model 2’s larger credit requirement allows, in principle, delivery of a full liberal arts and sciences foundation, but with similar limitations, fragmentation, and lack of coherence that characterize non-Honors general education (Brint et al., 2016). For Model 2, it can be challenging to assemble a sufficiently broad and balanced array of Honors courses, given that such requires ongoing negotiation with department chairs and deans, sometimes placing foundational, lower division honors offerings in conflict with other priorities for academic colleges and departments. In high-performing honors colleges, this challenge is mitigated by a strong, shared value for the honors college and a shared commitment to serving honors students (see culture, below).

Partnerships with Academic Units. Obviously, different structural models entail different partnerships with academic units, particularly around offering courses. However, among successful honors colleges, students routinely have many options for completing

honors credits within their majors, regardless of whether their lower division honors courses were offered by Honors College faculty or by departmental faculty teaching honors sections. Departmental honors courses range in structure from stand-alone classes, to honors sections of larger classes (sometimes meeting together for lectures, with additional elements offered to honors students), to the widespread honors contracts option. **Honors contracts** are a means by which students and individual faculty who teach non-honors courses document their negotiation regarding additional work and/or experiences that justify Honors students earning Honors credit for an otherwise non-honors course. **Virtually all aspirational peers rely on honors contracts** as a means by which students complete honors credits.

UUhonors has a clear deficit here. While our present structure is similar to model 1 in terms of the division of curricular responsibilities, departments and colleges offer relatively few honors options. In many cases, these honors courses are lower-division general education requirements (e.g., offerings from our College of Science). Some units allow honors undergraduate students to take graduate courses, but with limited seats (e.g., CSBS, Psychology). UUhonors does not presently offer honors contracts, outside a pilot project in the College of Fine Arts. The present pattern reflects historical elements of UUhonors that no longer apply given changes to the Honors foundational curriculum, and general education requirements. Further, the present situation does not serve students well, given our low completion rates and students' expressed sense that "honors doesn't work with my major."

Within UUhonors' present structure, faculty appointed to the Honors College can offer a coherent foundational curriculum, and faculty appointed to other Colleges/Schools can offer discipline-specific courses to high-achieving students. Those offerings, however they might be organized and provided, will give honors students opportunities to complete honors work in their major, and could be structured to position students for successful completion of an honors thesis or capstone project and consequently, higher rates of Honors degree completion. UUhonors will also continue our tradition of partnering with faculty across campus who wish to offer unique interdisciplinary courses through Honors (e.g., Praxis Labs).

Culture of Valuing Honors. Interviews with deans of successful programs all pointed to a highly positive culture around honors as key to their success. Thriving Honors colleges have faculty across campus who are eager to participate in and engage with honors – through offering honors courses, negotiating honors contracts with students, and mentoring students as they complete a thesis or project. In some organizations, this work is acknowledged explicitly within college and departmental workload policies and credited either as teaching or service. Where honors colleges receive tuition-based incentive funding, they redistribute such funding to departments to support Honors-related investments (UUhonors does not receive such funds). But, in interview after interview, many honors Deans noted providing **no additional revenue** for honors offerings in the colleges/departments, and most do not provide additional compensation (outside workload) faculty who teach an honors section of a non-honors course or mentor honors students. Contributing to Honors was seen as important, worthwhile, and a shared priority.

Asked about creating this type of cultural buy-in, one Dean suggested that he had inherited this culture and was primarily seeking “not to mess it up.” Similar concerns led to significant reluctance among some honors Deans to provide resources from honors to departments.

How are features and structures related to Honors completion?

The last question we explored was whether structures or features were related to honors completion. As noted, both model 1 and model 2 above were associated with high completion rates. Features common to highly successful honors colleges, and distinct from UUHonors, were as follows: 1) conferral of an Honors designation rather than an Honors degree; 2) flexibility for students to complete a thesis or project outside their major; 3) wide use of honors contracts and honors courses within students’ majors; 4) academic units’ strong culture of attention and investment in honors; and 5) a staff:student ratio of at least 1:100.

While it is unlikely that the degree/designation difference is related to completion in and of itself, flexibility in completing a thesis or project seems important. Interviews with Deans and Directors suggested that even with flexibility, 75-80% of their students completed a thesis or project in their chosen major. The flexibility of the outside option, however, made the project feasible for 20-25% of students, whether because they could pursue something tied to a future that wasn’t well-aligned with their major, or because it offered greater flexibility when they were unable to adhere to timelines within their major.

Widely available honors credits within the majors, whether through honors contracts or honors-specific classes, makes honors completion more feasible. While honors credits offered through UUHonors typically fulfill general education and bachelor’s degree requirements, as is the case at peer institutions, offering Honors courses within majors more fully delivers on the “breadth and depth” promise of Honors education, makes honors completion more attractive for many students because they can see how honors unfolds within their major, and certainly makes it more feasible for students to amass needed honors credits, alongside both general and major-specific requirements.

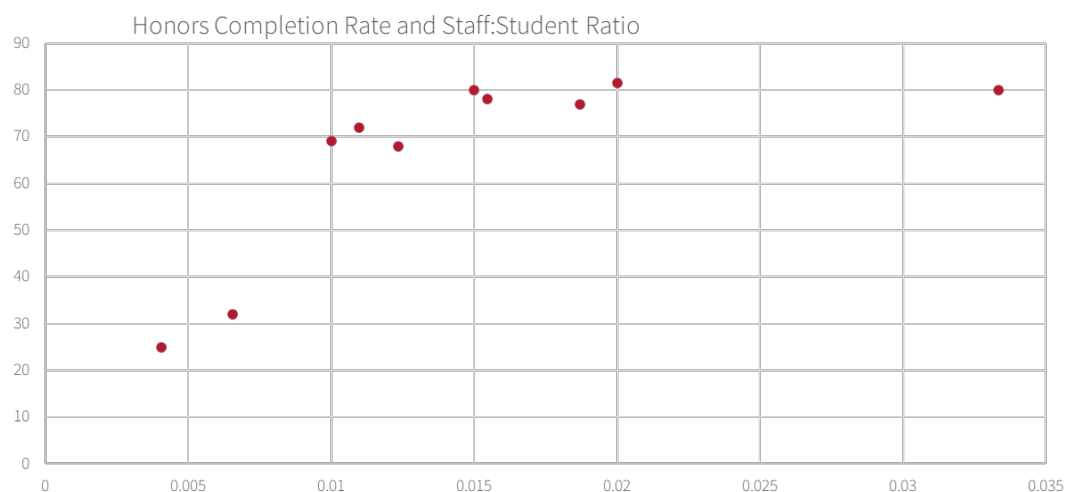
A culture of investing in and valuing an Honors program supports the availability of thesis mentors and honors credits across campus. Because we didn’t encounter Deans engaged in building this type of culture, the steps to build up this type of investment across campus are unclear – particularly for a long-established program/college like UUHonors.

Finally, we plotted some features we assessed (e.g., indicators of scale, selectivity, rigor, and resourcing) against honors completion rates to provide a visual examination of possible relationships. For peers we examined, Figure 5 shows that honors completion appears to have a threshold relationship with the staff:student ratio, such that staffing below 1:100 is associated with lower completion rates. Other explorations suggested either smaller impacts (e.g., honors completion is slightly higher with a core faculty housed within the honors program), or no relationships (scale, selectivity, and number of honors credits required did not appear strongly related to completion within the examined colleges and programs).

Historically for UUHonors, increasing honors advising staffing was key to increasing honors completion rates from 12% to the present 32%. The apparent staff:student ratio

effects on honors completion suggest that UUHonors would benefit from increasing staffing, but likely doing so in relation to specific strategic initiatives that will either support students directly (staffing for advising and learning communities) or which support departmental/campus partners in creating more departmental honors courses and/or provide flexibility for these or projects (staffing to support the expansion of honors contract options). Shared services, **depending on the specific ways that those are implemented**, could enable these staffing changes to happen within the existing Honors budget.

Figure 5: Honors Completion and Staff:Student Ratios



What other strategies might UUHonors pursue to enhance or maintain students' experiences and successes?

Honors Deans and Directors also shared approaches and practices that they believe relate to higher honors retention and completion in their organizations. These include 1) High quality first-year experiences and supports for thesis/capstone work throughout students' time at the University; 2) A solid, engaging, challenging, and attractive honors curriculum; 3) Strategies for building strong community and connections among students, faculty, and staff; and 4) Working to ensure that partners across campus can focus on what they are uniquely able to do (provide honors students with transformative experiences at the cutting edge of their disciplines), with support from honors for doing so (e.g., overseeing and administering honors contracts). As UUHonors returns to strategic planning in Spring of 2025, these points of advice can be connected with ongoing initiatives, and new strategies and actions.

Summary and Proposed Changes

Taken together, our findings suggest that shifting to structural model 1 could improve the UUHonors completion rate. This shift would involve a series of changes in the near-term, which are outlined below with brief rationales and remaining questions.

Shift to a diploma-designation rather than separate degrees and enable thesis completion outside a students' major

As noted, the conferral of departmental degrees means that departments set the requirements for the thesis/capstone in their major. This leads to substantial administrative work in maintaining multiple degree paths (for honors and non-honors), declaring students in the correct major (the honors or non-honors paths). It is likely that such work does not contribute positively to student experiences or educational outcomes. It also requires students to complete thesis work in their major. At present, some units offer substantial flexibility in thesis projects, and others less so. In some cases, students who do not begin thesis work very early in their careers (e.g., getting into research engagement in year 2) are disadvantaged in thesis completion options. Flexibility for thesis topics could benefit a substantial minority of students.

Allowing more flexibility in the thesis can be done in varied ways. Interviews with Deans and Directors suggested a range of options from the student merely needing a faculty advisor and a second reader (University of South Carolina), or a committee with a defense (ASU Barrett), to students being able to petition a different department to do a thesis within that department, complying with the policies/rules for that department (e.g., Schreyer at Penn State). Determining what will work for UUHonors at the detailed level must be a focus of communications/consultations. Further, it will be important to understand how UUHonors can support departments and colleges in enabling thesis flexibility.

Establish honors contracts and increase honors credit options within academic departments.

We also found that at UU, departments offer relative few options for honors credits, and we do not have honors contracts as an option across campus, in contrast to our aspirational peers. We have mechanisms in place for departments to increase these options and to implement honors contracts, and a variety of flexible ways that this can be done. Increasing honors credit options via courses can be pursued immediately, given that there are existing structures for handling such changes (e.g., the Honors Policy Board), processes and requirements, and established, highly flexible ways of doing so.

Creating the possibility of honors contracts requires more groundwork in determining constraints and evaluating the implications such contracts might have on faculty and departments. It would also benefit from a clear support structure within Honors that can limit the burden of providing honors contracts as an option. Evaluating the resource implications and barriers to honors contracts across campus will be an important first step towards making these possible for all students. Rolling out honors contracts

across campus will also require substantial communication across faculty and academic advisors to ensure good outcomes.

Increase/re-orient Honors staffing to support academic partners with the above changes.

Based on peer interviews and quantitative examinations of staffing, we will need to support academic partners in the implementation of honors contracts and thesis flexibility. The combination of the pilot program with College of Fine Arts, our interviews with Deans and Directors, and consultation with academic leaders on campus, will allow estimates of the staffing needs for providing this support. At present, we anticipate that one additional advisor and a half-time administrative assistant could provide the necessary support for the entire campus to offer these options.

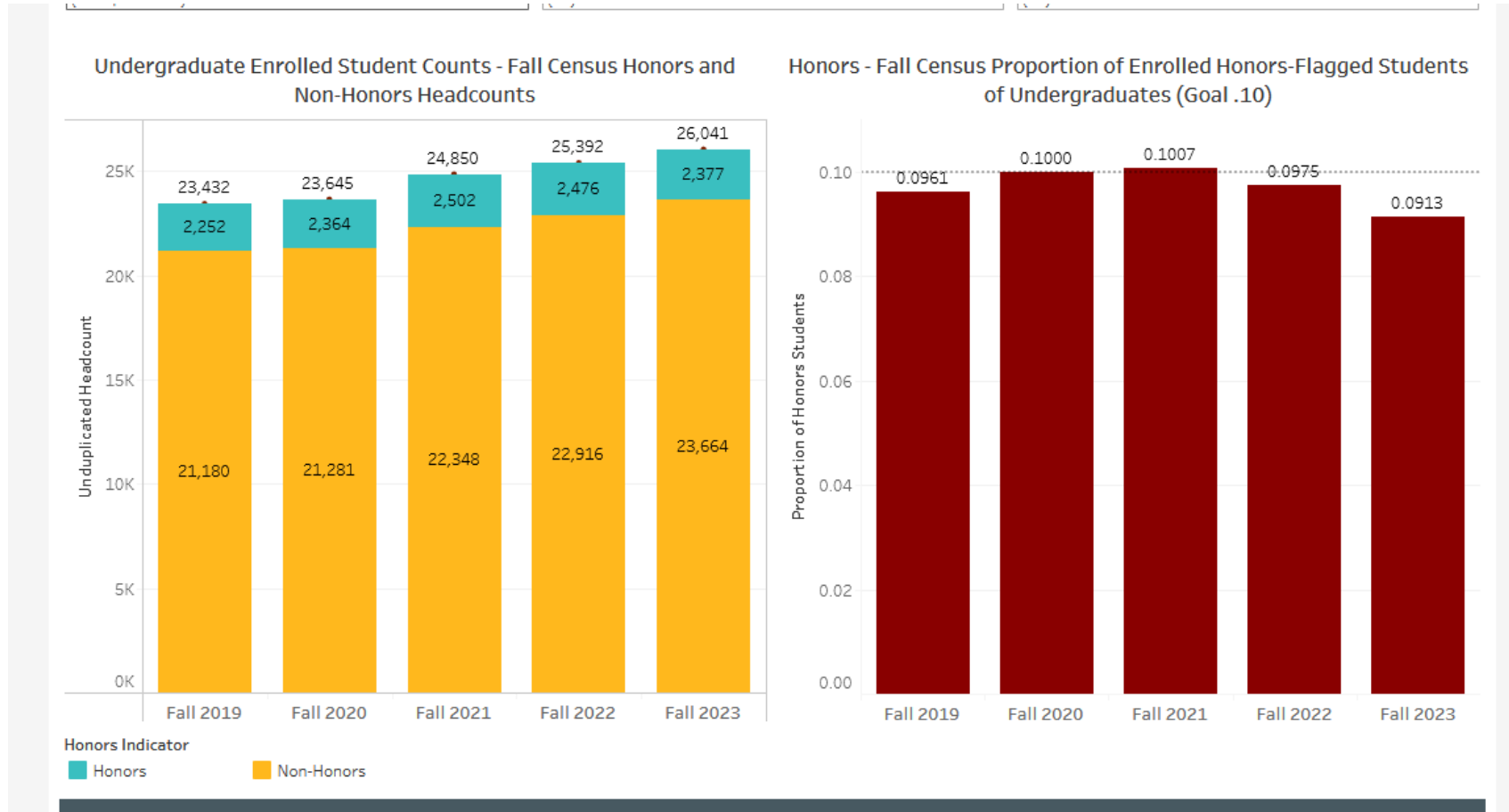
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APPENDIX A

Baseline Data vis-à-vis Project Goals

Honors population equal to 10% of student body per cohort.



Honors is Charged with Advancing the Class Profile

- Recruitment, retention
 - Honors GPA & ACT: 3.9 (2023), 30 (non-Honors = 3.5, 25)
 - Yields: 57% for in-state, 31% for out-of-state (UU average is 30%)
 - 8% higher retention at the U from 1st to 2nd year
- Catalyzer of high levels of student achievement, engagement, leadership
 - 47% of undergraduate research awardees
 - 30% of ASUU membership
 - Double rates of double-majors;
 - Double-rates of student leadership
 - 20% of study abroad participation

INCOMING CLASS (FALL 2024): 550 Students

3.90 Mean GPA, 3.96 Median

53% Women, 15% First-Generation

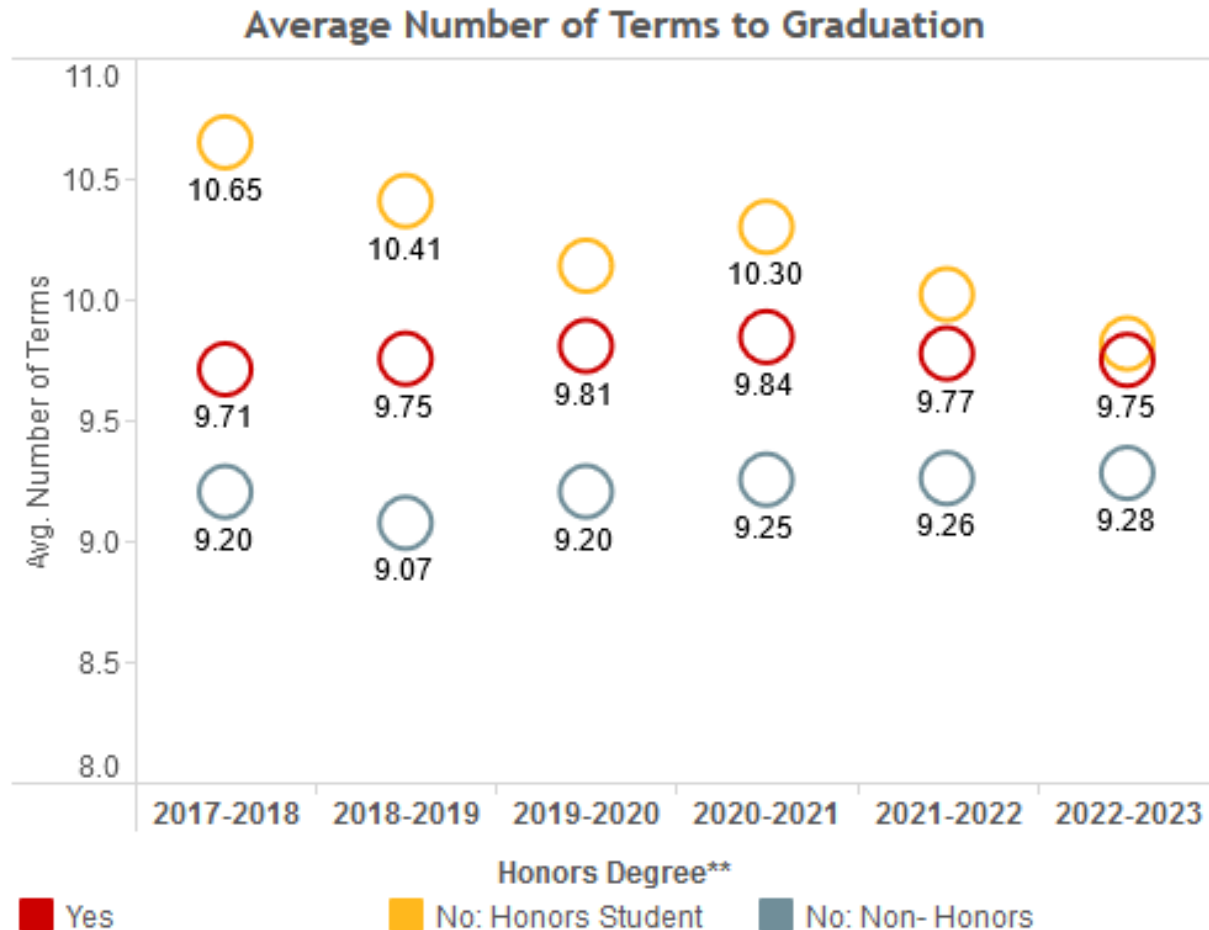
60% Utah Residents

40% Non-Residents

Top 5 States (not UT): California, Idaho, Colorado, Washington,
Oregon (tie), Arizona (tie)

Top Colleges: Engineering (22%), Science (21%), CSBS (15%),
Business (10%), Undecided (9%)

Honors students take slightly longer

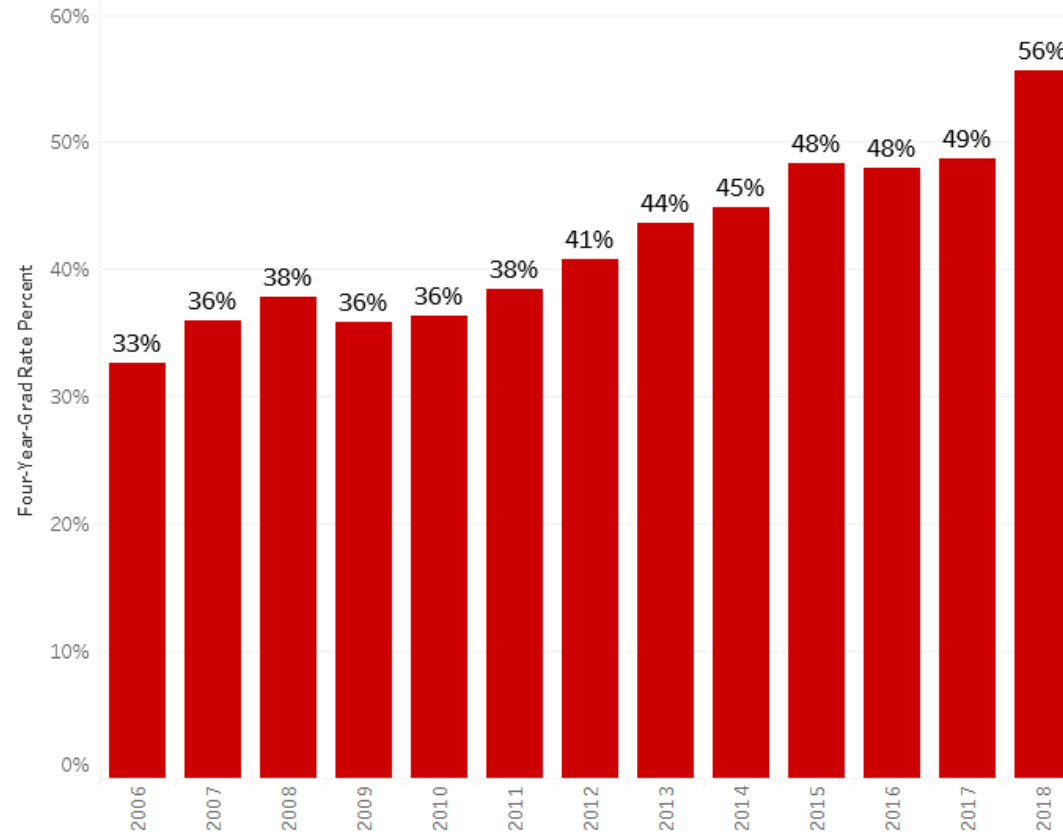


Note that the additional time is not due to completion of the thesis (thesis completers are faster than non-thesis completing Honors students)

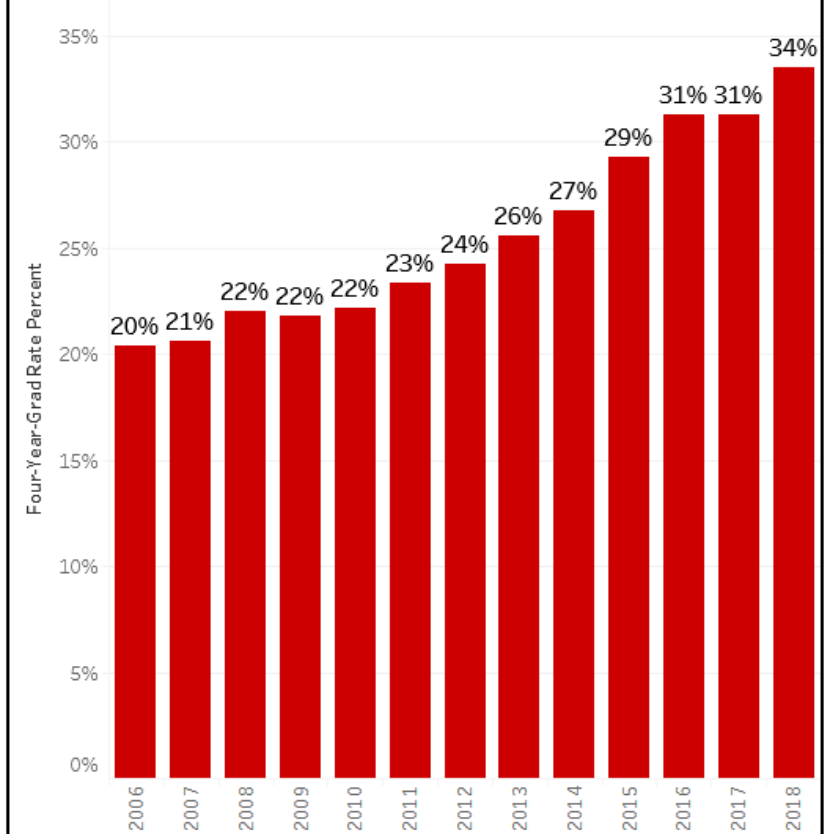
Additionally – recall that honors students are more likely to double-major, which might account for the differences here.

Honors cohort leads 4-year graduation rates

Honors Students: Four-Year-Grad Rates by Starting Cohort Year

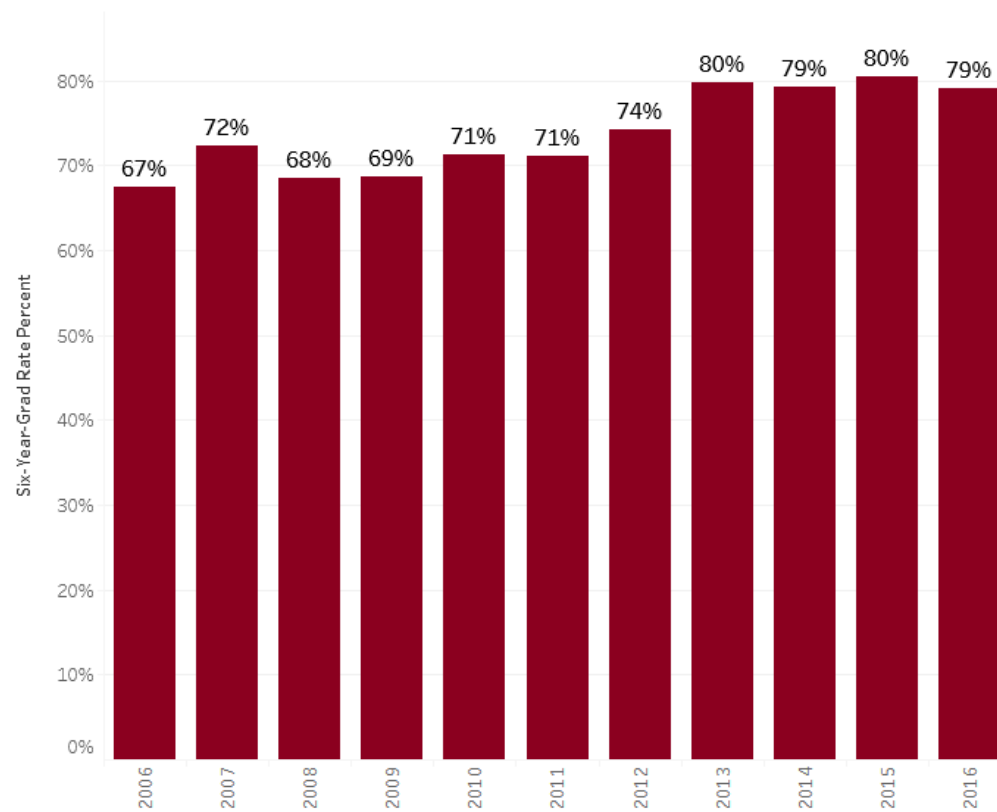


University Comparison: 4YR-Grad-Rates

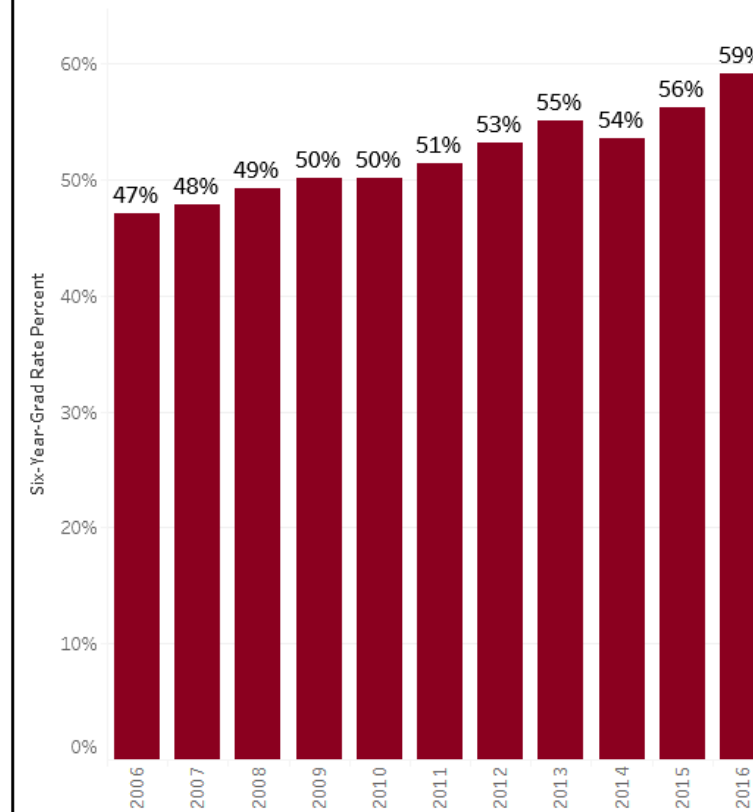


Honors cohort leads 6-year graduation rates

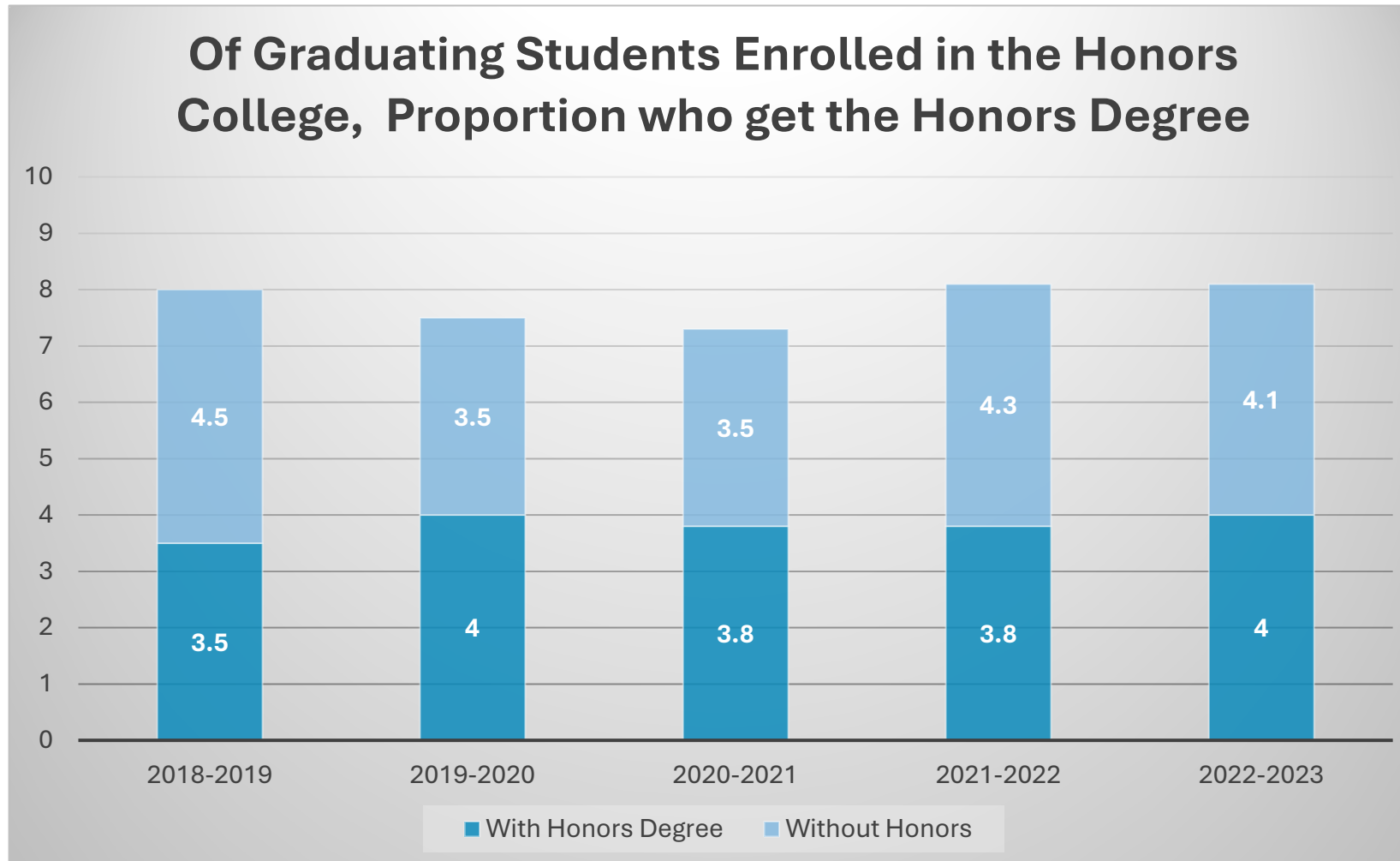
Honors Students: Six-Year-Grad Rates by Starting Cohort Year



University Comparison: 6YR-Grad-Rates



Honors cohort leads 4 and 6-year graduation rates, with Honors degrees.



APPENDIX B

Peer Comparison Methods Notes

Top Ranked Public Honors Colleges

Evaluation Criteria

- **Selectivity** – HS GPA, ACT, Percent of total student body
- **Rigor** – credits required, thesis/capstone required, minimum GPA
- **Benefits** – unique course offerings, scholarships, additional advising/mentoring, housing, priority registration, learning communities
- **Student Success** – 6 yr graduation rates, Honors completion rates

Top-Rated/Ranked Programs

Arizona State, Barrett Honors College*

Penn State, Schreyer Honors College*

South Carolina Honors College*

City University of New York (CUNY), Macaulay Honors College

Kansas University Honors Program

University of Georgia

University of Connecticut

Texas A&M

Purdue University

University of Michigan

University of Pittsburgh

University of Virginia

| University Name | College/Program Name |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Arizona State University | Barrett College |
| CUNY | Macauley Honors College |
| Florida Atlantic University | Wilkes Honors College |
| University of South Carolina | S. Carolina Honors College |
| The University of Kansas | KU Honors Program |
| The Pennsylvania State University | Schreyer Honors College |
| University of Texas at Austin | Plan II Honors Program |
| University of Oregon | Clark Honors College |
| The University of Arizona | W. A. Franke Honors College |
| Michigan State University | MSU Honors College |
| University of Oklahoma | McLendon Honors College |
| The Ohio State University | Honors & Scholars Program |
| University of Wisconsin-Madison | Arts & Sciences Honors Program |
| University of Utah | |

PEERS IN FOCUS

Peers were chosen based on AAU membership, public institutions, and/or prominence of honors college on national ranking/ratings lists.

Additionally: Deans/Directors were interviewed for:

Penn State, ASU, University of Arizona, University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of South Carolina, and additionally: Oregon State University, University of Pittsburgh, University of Alabama, University of Kentucky, *****MARK*****

AREAS EXAMINED

- Scale/Admissions/Selectivity
 - Size (number of students) in relation to university undergraduates
 - Number of applications, admitted, and number of spots **
 - HS GPA and ACT/SAT scores of admitted students**; SAT differences between university population and honors population (Willingham book)
- Program Rigor
 - Thesis/capstone requirement
 - Number of honors credits required
- Student success
 - Honors completion rate
 - 6-year graduation rate for Honors students
- Resources/Program Model
 - Faculty structure
 - If Honors-housed faculty, number of faculty
 - Number of Staff

**This data was not consistently available

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Shared Responsibility

- What does shared responsibility look like between your Honors college and other academic departments in having students graduate with Honors?

Curriculum Integration

- How are honors degree requirements coordinated with Gen Ed, bachelor's and/or major requirements at peers?

Degree Program-embedded Honors Courses

- How are honors courses assigned, compensated/budgeted and evaluated?

Resourcing

- Do you have dedicated Honors faculty with Honors as a home unit, and what is their academic status for HR purposes (ex. teaching faculty vs. instructors, etc.)
- how does honors-related work intersect with faculty workload?
- What is the overall budget for the Honors College, and what revenue sources (central allocations, tuition revenue, fees, donor funds, grants) make up that budget?
- How is Honors-related work by faculty across campus (teaching/offering honors experiences, mentoring honors capstones) acknowledged, rewarded/compensated, or accounted for in workload, RPT, and other processes?

Nature of Thesis Requirement

- Is there a thesis or capstone required for graduation and what are the requirements and acceptable variations?
- If you had one piece of advice on improving the rate of graduating with Honors, what would it be?

National Conversations

- There are a number of national conversations occurring regarding higher education. Which of these are on your radar as to impacting honors and why?

DATA SOURCES

- Badenhausen, R., Ed. (2024). Honors Colleges in the 21st Century.
- Willingham, J. (2020). Inside Honors 2020-2021: Ratings and Reviews of 40 Public University Honors Programs.
- American Public Land Grant Universities Council on Honors Education (APLU-COHE; 2023). 1st Cross-Institution Survey Report.
- Websites for Peer Programs
- Interviews with Deans and Directors (conducted by Mark Jacobs and Monisha Pasupathi)
- Chalimar stuff?

MISSING DATA AND EXTRAPOLATION

- Data were not consistently available from the various peer institutions, given the range, variety, and lack of consistency in how Honors programs are structured, resourced, and evaluated.
 - Institutions missing data on completion rates and graduation rates and faculty status were excluded from those results.
 - Data on scale were extrapolated in some cases from data on the incoming class size (multiplying by 4.5).

| University Name | College/Program/Naming Endowment | Undergrad Population (All Programs - UAIR) | Number of Honors Students | Ave FY Student HS GPA (weighted/unweighted is not known) | Honors HS GPA (includes weighted and unweighted) | Ave FY Student SAT/ACT | Honors SAT/ACT | Honors Completion | Honors 6-year graduation |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|--|------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Arizona State University | Barrett College | 65174 | 7200 | 3.5 | 3.8 (unweighted) | | 29 | 72 | 88 |
| CUNY | Macaulay Honors College | 11929 | 520 | 3.4 | 4.0 | | 31 | 81.5 | 87 |
| Florida Atlantic University | Wilkes Honors College | 24229 | 600 | 3.8 | 4.17 (weighted) | | 29 | 57 | 82 |
| University of South Carolina | S. Carolina Honors College | 28470 | 2300 | 3.7 | 4.8 (weighted) | | 33 | 77 | 94 |
| The University of Kansas | KU Honors Program | 20696 | 1700 | 3.65 | 3.93 (unweighted) 3.76 (unweighted) | | 32 | 69 | 95 |
| The Pennsylvania State University | Schreyer Honors College | 42223 | 1940 | 3.67 | | | | 78 | 97 |
| University of Texas at Austin | Plan II Honors Program | 42444 | 800 | | | | | 80 | 97 |
| University of Oregon | Clark Honors College | 19963 | 1360 | 3.75 | | | | | |
| The University of Arizona | W. A. Franke Honors College | 41899 | 4000 | 3.5 | 3.91 (unweighted) | | 31 | 31.5 | 83 |
| Michigan State University | MSU Honors College | 40483 | 4000 | 3.8 | | | | | |
| University of Oklahoma | McLendon Honors College | 22025 | 2500 | 3.6 | 3.72 | | | 68 | 88 |
| The Ohio State University | Honors & Scholars Program | 45728 | 5000 | | | | | | |
| University of Wisconsin-Madison | Arts & Sciences Honors Program | 36797 | 1600 | 3.9 | | | | 25 (with thesis)/50 overall | |
| University of Utah | | 26827 | 2500 | 3.5 | 3.9 | 25 | 31 | 32 | 80 |