

HONORS COLLEGE

1975 DeTrobriand Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84113

Annual Report 2015-2016

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*“The Power of Ideas to
Shape the World”*



The Honors College at the University of Utah

At the Honors College dedicated teachers and motivated learners collaborate to build an innovative educational environment, where everyone is challenged to think, ask questions, take risks and explore the full scope of the world around them. The work is demanding, the standards are high, but here students acquire the intellectual tools that will enrich their lives and enable them to thrive in a rapidly changing global community.

PHILOSOPHY

The Honors College provides intellectually curious, motivated students with the foundations of a rigorous liberal arts education within the context of a world-class research university. Honors College students engage the best of two worlds—an intimate liberal arts experience, including coursework and living-learning opportunities, joined with a world class research university and the opportunity to engage in independent research, working closely with top researchers and scholars.

The Honors College is designed for students who choose to complete a demanding undergraduate curriculum that includes both depth and breadth of study. Students graduating with an Honors Bachelors Degree from the University of Utah will demonstrate distinction in their majors as evidenced by coursework and a research thesis or capstone project, and they will be able to situate their discipline within a larger University context, including a sophisticated understanding and articulation of how their discipline relates to other disciplines, both presently and in the past.

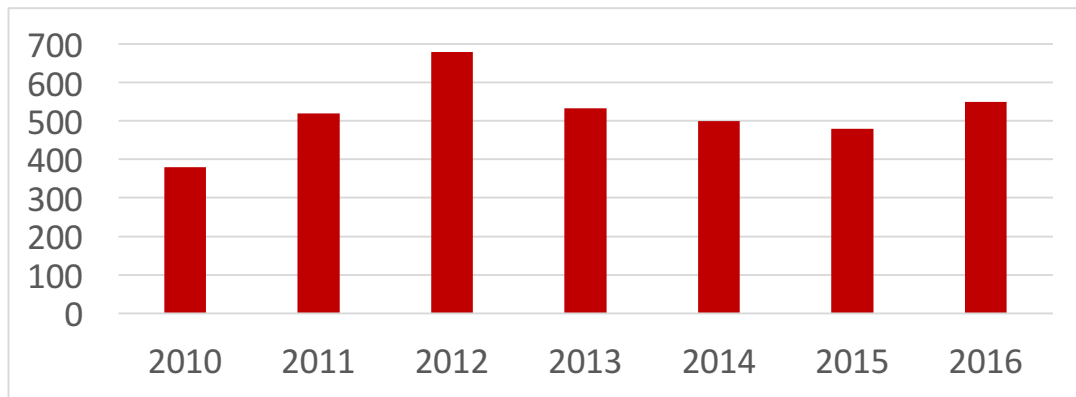
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HONORS STUDENT BODY

The Honors College has a student body of approx. 2300 (Figure 1). For the 2015-2016 academic year, the College received approximately 2300 applicants for 500-600 spots. Applicants are reviewed for GPA, rigor of high school courses, test scores, essay quality and interest in a liberal arts education. To ensure impartiality and reduce subjectivity, two readers review each applicant and approximately 30% of applicants go on to a third reader. In response to a “summer melt,” in 2015 (students who paid deposit in May but didn’t ultimately come to the U), we have increased our acceptance rate from 65% to 70% for 2016 (Figure 1).

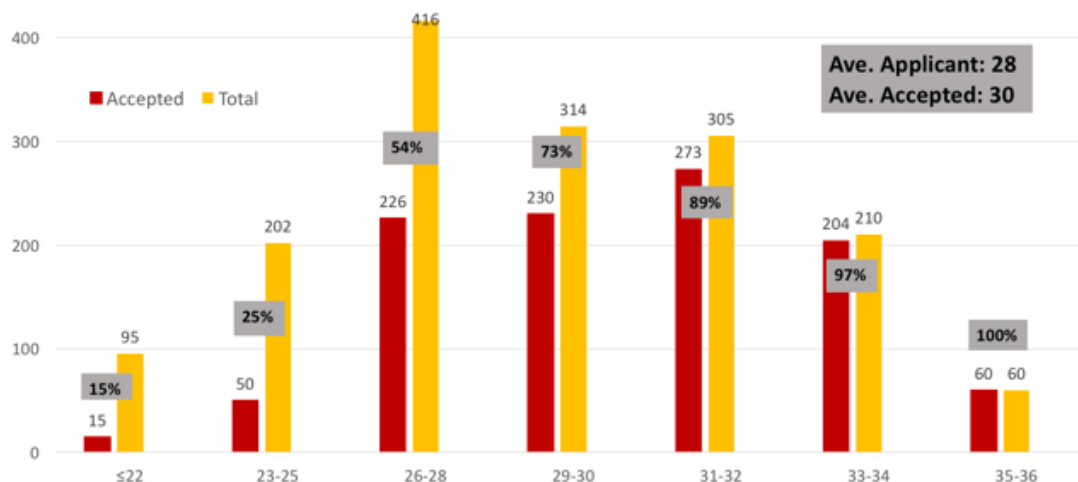
Figure 1. Incoming class size 2010-2015 with projected 2016 numbers.



The caliber of students accepted to Honors, as measured by the aforementioned metrics, is strong with the average GPA at 3.9 and average ACT at 30 (Figure 2).

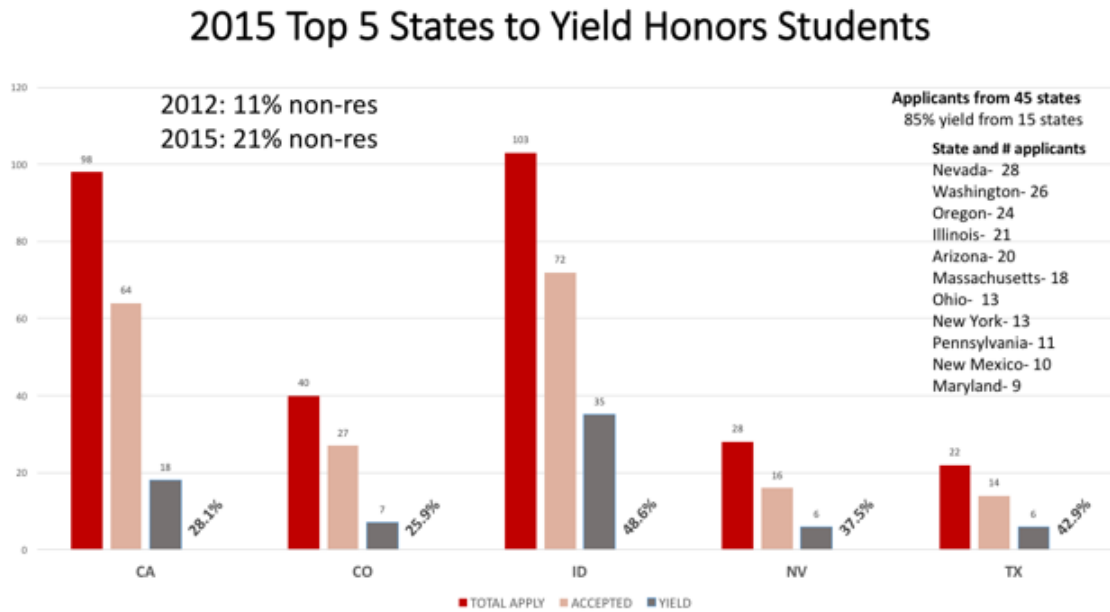
Figure 2. ACT Scores for Applicant Pool and Acceptance Rates.

ACT Scores for Applicant Pool and Acceptance Rates



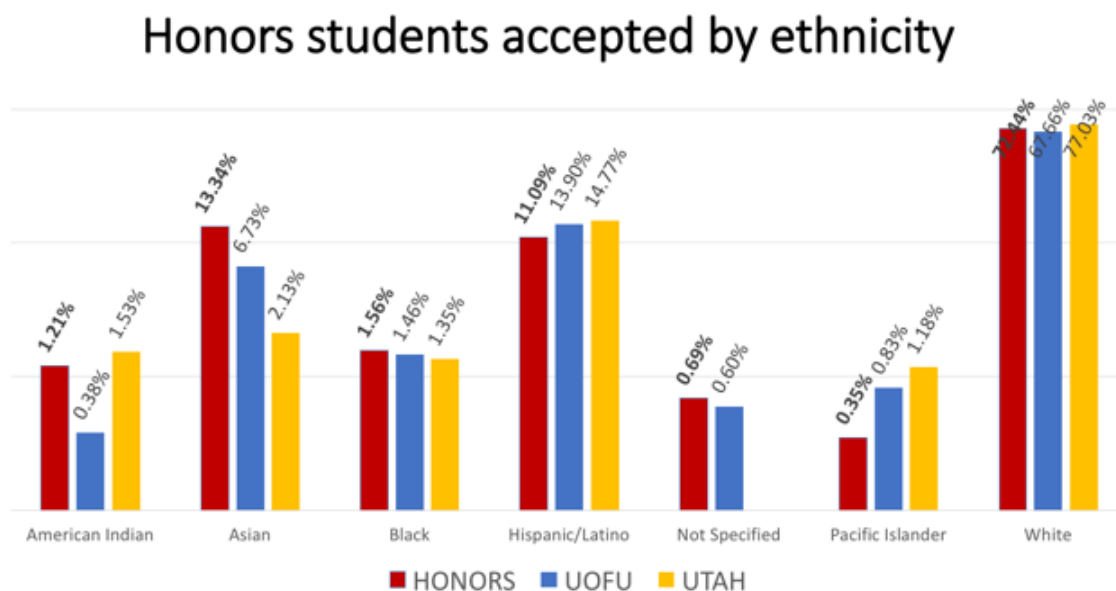
Since 2012, we have grown our out-of-state population from 11% to 21%. Our goal is to have an out-of-state population of approximately 30%. For the fall entering class of 2015, we received applicants from 45 states (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Out of state applicants and yield.



Our ethnic diversity generally mirrors that of the state. Given the expected increase in Hispanic 18-year olds, we are focusing our local recruitment efforts on this population (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Ethnicity in Honors compared to UU and state of Utah.



LIVING LEARNING & LEARNING COMMUNITIES

202

students lived in a first-year
Living Learning Community (LLC)

All students living in Honors residence spaces are also members of a Living Learning Community (LLC) or themed community, where each small cohort of students shares living space, along with selected classes and/or activities. Honors offered **10** different living communities for the 2015-2016 academic year.

127

students lived in a upper division
Living Learning Community (LLC)

“Learning communities can offer more: curricular coherence; integrative, high-quality learning; collaborative knowledge-construction; and skills and knowledge relevant to living in a complex, messy, diverse world.”

Students who participate in these type of communities tend to earn higher grades, graduate on time and feel more connected to the university [1].

358

Honor students participated in
Learning Communities, offering
community-building spaces for
students in non-Honors housing

In the 2015-16 academic year, **all** Intellectual Traditions courses became the central point for the honors learning community. Students enjoy curricular and co-curricular activities, including the Honors and Muse book discussions with peers, faculty and honors staff.

Additionally, students had the opportunity to participate in three other learning communities: Science and Storytelling, Leadership Colloquium, and Next Generation.

2015-2016 COURSES AND ENROLLMENT

The Honors College offered over 100 Honors courses, many of which fulfilled a general education requirement as well as an Honors requirement. Additionally, we worked closely with various entities on campus to offer departmental courses designated as Honors.

<i>FALL 2015</i>	<i>SPRING 2016</i>	<i>SUMMER 2016</i>
51 Honors Courses	42 Honors Courses	7 Honors Courses
971 Students	736 Students	110 Students

We are in the process of reviewing the curricular rigor of our college by assessing our courses and learning outcomes. In 2014, we reviewed our Intellectual Traditions courses. In 2015, we reviewed our lower level writing curriculum and revised the learning outcomes and common assignments. Our focus in 2016 will be on reviewing the entire Honors curriculum and benchmarking it against other excellent public honors colleges.

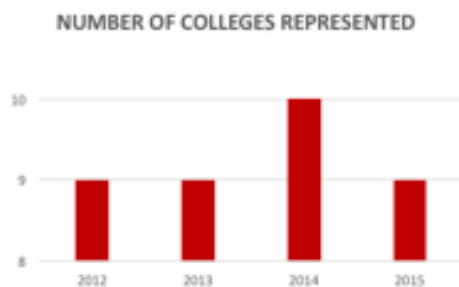
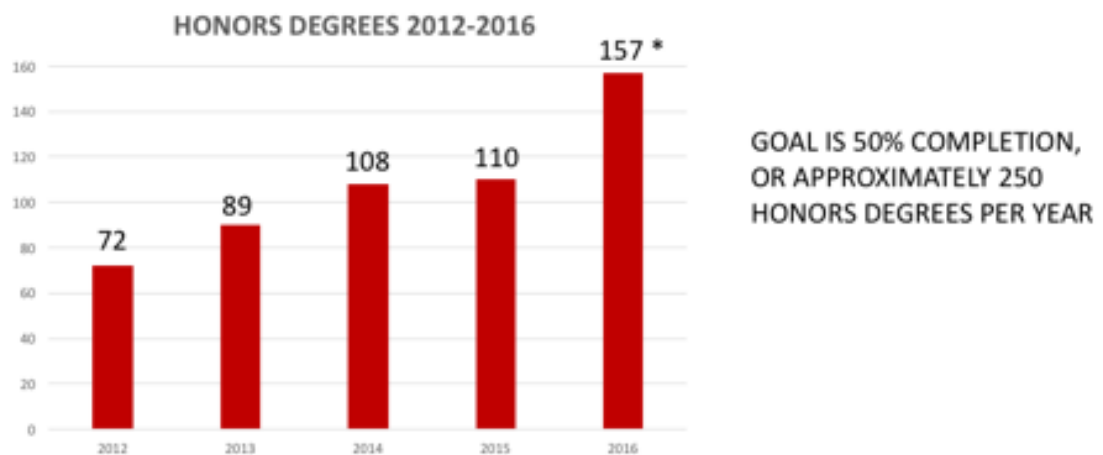
Additionally, the Honors College is committed to create a diverse and inclusive climate in the classroom. Honors faculty participated in a series of workshops in Spring 2016 to discuss privilege and inclusion across the curriculum. Honors also offered various courses that carried the Diversity (DV) education attribute. Courses included:

- Hip Hop and Social Justice
- Critical Race Theory
- Life through the Lens
- Muslim Women's Voices
- Civil Rights Law
- American Religions

For the 2016-2017 academic year, Honors will offer Praxis labs that address issues of social justice and will continue to offer some of the courses listed above.

HONORS DEGREES

The last 4 years have shown a marked increase in number of students earning Honors Bachelor Degrees as well as number of colleges and majors represented by those students. In 2015-2016, students completed a record number of Honors Bachelors Degrees, doubling the number degrees conferred in 2012. Honors staff continues to work with students to reach a 50% Honors Degree completion rate.



157

Projected Honors Degrees

42

Majors Represented

10

Colleges Represented

HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SUPPORT

“I can state without a shadow of a doubt that my week at Oxford was the most impactful, eye opening experience that I have ever had the privilege of taking part in. Intensive, thought-provoking dialogue on promoting human rights globally and in our local community gave me more opportunity for progressing my education than would ever be possible in an everyday classroom.”

Oxford Consortium Participant, March 2016

The Honors College collaborate closely with the Office of Undergraduate Research to help Honors students to engage in independent, original research and to present their work at conferences.

For most students, working closely with a research faculty is the single most transformative experience of their undergraduate careers (recent alumni survey). At the same time, faculty face extraordinary demands on their time and do not always see a direct reward structure for mentoring undergraduate work. We are working with Associate Deans, Department Chairs and Honors Faculty Advisors to find creative solutions specific to each major.

Just as last year, for this year the Undergraduate Research Conference (URS) is the centerpiece of the Honors spring programming. Courses integrated the conference into their syllabi and the entire honors academic team spent most of the day at the conference. **125 Honors students presented at this year’s URS Conference.**

Clint Murray, Honors Bachelors of Science in Ecomics, presenting his Honors thesis at the 2016 URS Conference



The Honors College also supported over **20 students** to attend national conferences through small travel grants. Students had the opportunity to travel to places such as California, North Carolina, and Washington, D.C. For the 2016-2017 academic year, Honors will work towards significantly increasing this number.

In addition, in collaboration with the Tanner Center for Nonviolent Human Rights Advocacy, Honors sponsored **three students** to attend the Oxford Consortium for Human Rights at University of Oxford, United Kingdom.

DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARSHIPS

Churchill Scholarship

Every year the Honors College guides and mentors students throughout the application process for Rhodes, Marshalls, Gates-Cambridge, Boren, Udall, and Churchill. In 2014, the University of Utah became Churchill-eligible. This year **the University of Utah had its first Churchill Scholar**, math senior Mackenzie Simper.

Honors staff is currently working to make the University of Utah eligible to endorse students for the prestigious Luce Fellowship. This fellowship places students in professional settings in their fields across Asia, while supporting formal language instruction and cultural competency training.



Photo Source:
unews.utah.edu/university-of-utah-student-awarded-prestigious-churchill-scholarship/

DAAD RISE Scholarship

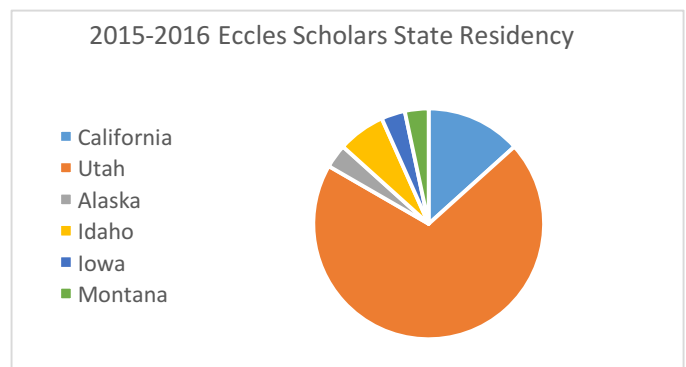
The DAAD RISE scholarships, funded by the German Government, allows undergraduate students in STEM fields from the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada to do summer research at any German University, completely funded. This year the University had **three Honors students** who were awarded this scholarship: Elliot Lee (Biology), Oliver Richardson (Biology/Math/Computer Science), and Naveen Rathi (Biomedical Engineering).

Fulbright Scholar Program

For the 2015-2016 academic year, two Honors graduates received a Fulbright Fellowship. Jason Chen (Biology HBS, Fall 2015) received a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) award to teach English in Tabasco, Mexico. Matthew Kirkegaard (Political Science HBA, Spring 2016) will be spending a year at the University of East Anglia, Norwich to complete a masters program in Water Security and International Development.

The Eccles Distinguished Scholar Program

This program allows us to recruit and support **30** excellent students per year. This program enables the Honors College to compete with Ivy-League schools, which begin early recruiting of National Merit Scholars and PSAT high achievers. For the fall 2016 class, we received 338 applications and interviewed 55 finalists for the 30 spots.



ECOLOGY AND LEGACY MINOR



Honors students in Centennial Valley Montana:
<http://ecologyandlegacy.tumblr.com>

“What will my legacy be and how do I live my life now to better ensure my legacy comes to be?”

The Honors College started to offer the Ecology and Legacy Minor in Summer 2015. **Ten students**, along with Professors Andy Hoffman, Associate Dean Paret, and Dean Torti, participated in an intensive 6-week summer block. Students used science, arts, and humanities to critically think about interactions between humans and their world. They spent two weeks each in the Great Salt Lake, Centennial Valley, Montana, and the Peninsula Valdes in Patagonia, Argentina learning about the different ecological systems.

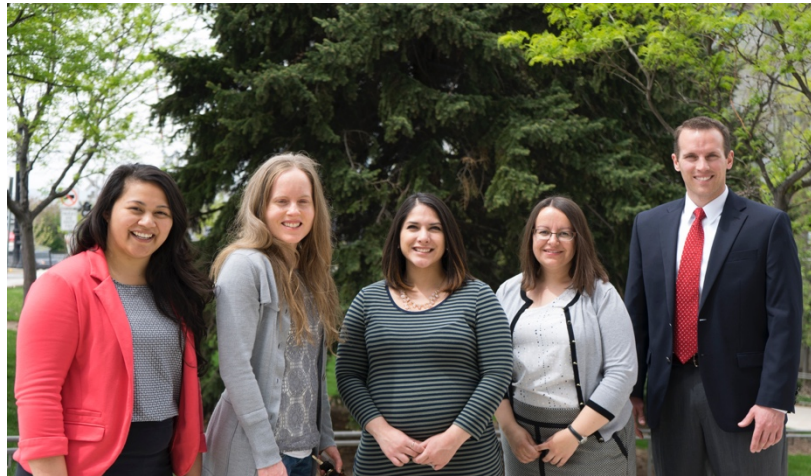
At the end of Fall 2015, all ten students successfully completed the minor and worked on capturing their experiences in a book, publication to come. As a bonus, the minor allowed students to complete most of their Honors Degree requirements, with the exception of the thesis.

Honors offers the Ecology and Legacy minor every other year. It will be offered again during the 2016-2017 academic year.



Peninsula Valdes in Patagonia,
Argentina

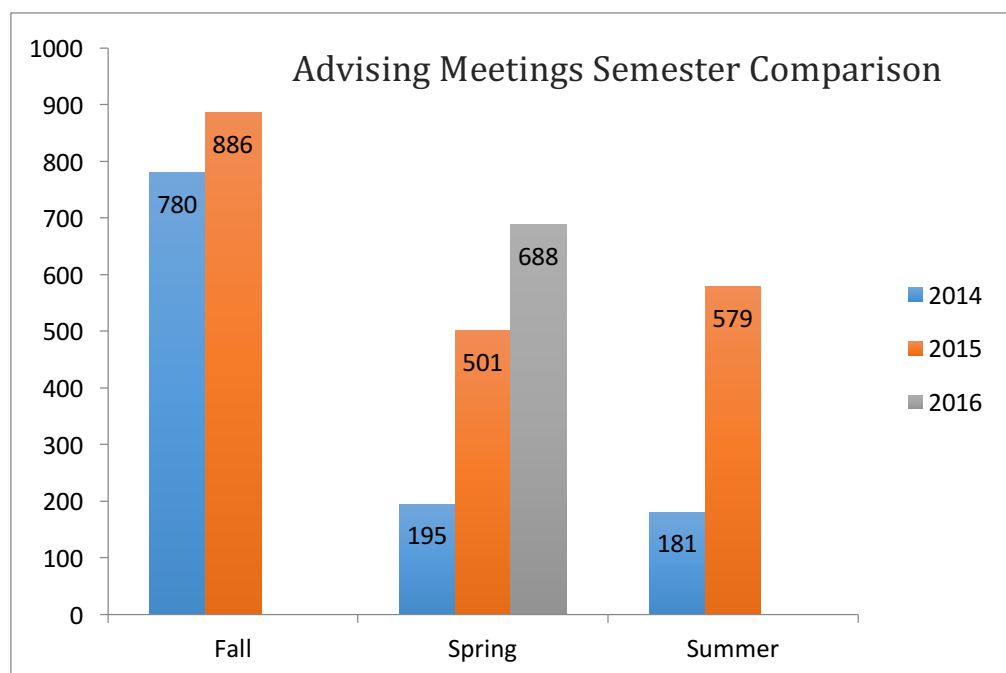
HONOR ACADEMIC ADVISING



Honors Advisors (Left to Right): Laneta Fitiesemanu, Michelle Taliaferro, Lili Diaz, Erica Rojas, Aaron Reynolds

The expansion of the advising team from 1.75 FTE to 4 FTE has allowed for **Mandatory Freshmen Advising** for all honors students in the fall of their first year and **Mandatory Sophomore Advising** for all honors students in the second semester of their second year.

Honors Advisors are organized around University colleges. This “bridge-like” structure allows Honors advisors to know and understand the nuances of each major, as well as build relationships with advisors and faculty thesis mentors in each department, leading to better integration of the Honors curriculum and more personalized advising. Student response to this structure and to their advising options has been overwhelmingly positive.



PRAXIS LABS: THEORY + ACTION 2015-2016

The Honors College celebrates its 10th year of offering Praxis Labs, previously known as Think Tanks.

Over the years, Praxis Labs have addressed a multitude of societal challenges in Health & Society, Energy & Environment, and Social Justice.

In 10 years, the Honors College has offered

37 Praxis Labs

and served

424

Students Participants

Fueling Up (Honors College, CSBS, College of Mines & Earth Science and Salt Lake Libraries)- This Praxis Lab provided an interdisciplinary venue to explore the science, engineering, policy, environmental consequences, economics, and sociopolitical complexities of energy systems. Students studied all available and emerging energy resources and technologies, including those present in the state of Utah. They analyzed the complex nature of energy systems, while considering the links between geoscience, engineering, ecosystems, and socioeconomic systems.

Local Food and Human Diet (Honors College, College of Health and CSBS)- This course explored the relationships between local food, human diets and cultural formations. They investigated how our omnivorous diets evolved out of foraging for wild resources; the ways in which our ancestors modified environments to domesticate plants and animals; the dynamic interactions between culture(s), industrialized agriculture, urbanization and human population growth; the growing acknowledgment of environmental and social responsibility to eat local; and the attempts to commercialize and co-opt local food movements.

Mental Health and Culture (Honors College, University Neighborhood Partners and Latina NAMI)- The Salt Lake Valley is inhabited by immigrants from over 59 different ethnicities and countries (Utah's Refugee Voices, 2006) whose perspectives on mental health and substance use, resilience and recovery are unknown to the professionals and to larger systems. Culture informs and shapes how mental health and substance use issues are present in all these groups. Any effective path to recovery must take into consideration the culture of impacted individuals.

How We Die (Honors College, Health Sciences). Current political ferment over end-of-life medical practice and right-to-die legislation is exploding into the public arena: it is these issues we wish to explore and, in doing so, construct more sensitive and effective ways of responding to them.



SCHOLARS GROUPS

Students from a variety of disciplines work with faculty and community members to explore their interests, consider career opportunities, develop professional skills and investigate and implement solutions to pressing problems in the community and in the world. Scholars Groups included the following:

- **Global Health Scholars Group** - The Honors College works with Dr. Steven Alder at the Office of Global Health/Division of Public Health to help students confront health-related issues of the present and future in a local and global context, and work one-on-one with local refugee communities. Summer study/work abroad programs optional in Ghana, Peru and India.
- **Legal Scholars** – Students who are interested in how legal issues interact with social, political, business and cultural realities meet with Randy Dryer to discuss major judicial opinions, addressing current legal trends, observing actual court proceedings and interact with judges and practicing lawyers.
- **Urban Ecology and Sustainability Scholars**—Students who are interested in the long-term health of their communities work with Stephen Goldsmith to imagine and implement new energy-saving solutions on campus. Their many successes are showcased on their website. <http://urbanecologyscholars.org/>
- **Social Justice Scholars** –Social Justice Scholars think critically about questions of race, class, gender, religion and sexual orientation as they relate their various disciplines and career goals. The group’s goal is to bring together new community and new ideas.

102

students benefited from a Scholar Group during the 2015-2016 academic year.

Students engaged in:

- Advocacy
- Service
- Discussions
- Project Development
- Mentorship
- Career Advising
- Networking Opportunities

GOALS FOR THE 2016-2017 ACADEMIC YEAR

Continue to define college as extremely competitive liberal arts program.

- We are reviewing the curricular rigor of our college by assessing our courses and learning outcomes. In 2014, we reviewed our Intellectual Traditions courses. In 2015, we reviewed our lower level writing curriculum and revised the learning outcomes and common assignments. Our focus in 2016 will be on reviewing the entire Honors curriculum and benchmarking it against other excellent public honors colleges.

Increase scope and competitiveness of students for distinguished scholarships (e.g., Rhodes, Marshall, Truman, Churchill, etc.).

- One advisor, Dr. Michelle Taliaferro, runs the distinguished scholar mentoring program. While her main duties are advising all honors science students, she also dedicates 25% of her time to this effort, she has been successful in mentoring students to prepare and compete for these opportunities. The last two years have resulted in 1 NSF Predoctoral Fellowship, 1 Rhodes finalist, 1 Gates-Cambridge award and 1 Churchill Award.

Publications and presentations.

- We have collaborated with Marketing and Communication to support a half-time marketing staff person who writes content promoting honors students work. We share this information with College deans and departmental chairs in order to communicate the continued success of their students. In addition, the dean is writing publications for journals and pieces for the general public.

Alumni survey and determining the “value” of the Honors Degree.

- We have begun to survey alumni after they leave the college to determine where they go and the value of the honors degree (Figures 9 & 10). We will be comparing the following cohorts:
 - Graduates from 2010-2015 with and without degree
 - Graduates from 2005-2009 with and without the degree
 - Graduates from 2000-2004 with and without the degree

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