

To: Lisa Bourbonnais, Coordinator, Faculty Senate  
From: Karen de Bruin, Director, Honors Program  
Re: Honors Program Annual Report 2021-22  
Date: Jan 25, 2023

I submit the enclosed informational report to the Faculty Senate for its consideration. This report summarizes activities of the Honors Program during the past 2021-22 academic year. During this time, the program was led by former Honors Director Lynne Derbyshire. I have conserved her narrative and format for this last report of her tenure. During the scheduled Faculty Senate presentation of the Honors Program, scheduled for Thursday January 26, 2023, I will also present new directions for the future.

## **ANNUAL REPORT HONORS PROGRAM 2021-2022**

The Honors Office has three distinct divisions: the Honors Program, which includes the Honors Colloquium; the National Fellowships and Academic Opportunities Program; and the Pre-Health Professions Advising Program.

### **HONORS PROGRAM**

#### **A. Eligibility Standards**

Students may participate in the Honors Program if they meet the following standards: Sophomores, juniors, and seniors must have earned at least a 3.40 cumulative grade point average at URI; transfer students must have received a GPA of 3.40 or better at their previous institution to be eligible for honors courses. Incoming freshmen are invited to participate in the Honors Program based on one of the following:

- a cumulative high school GPA of 3.80 or higher (SAT scores are not considered)
- a cumulative high school GPA of 3.50 and higher AND a combined SAT score of 1300 or higher in Critical Reading and Mathematics (or ACT 27 or higher)

Total students admitted Honors eligible: 1467

#### **B. Early Registration for Honors Program**

Participation in Early Registration advising is a means by which to assess student commitment to completing the Honors Program. Early Registration advising requires both student completion of a form detailing their progress toward meeting program requirements and their signature on a statement confirming their intention to complete the entire program.

*Early Registration advising:*

AY 2021-22: 380 students declaring an intent to complete the Honors Program.

#### **C. Courses and Enrollment**

During the Fall 2021 semester, the Honors Program offered 44 Honors courses (in addition to Honors Projects, Honors Directed Study and Administrative Internships). In the Spring 2021 semester, we offered 45 Honors courses (in addition to Honors Projects, Administrative Internships and Honors Directed Study).

#### Class Enrollments

- Fall 2020: 708 students
- Spring 2021: 636 students

#### **D. Faculty and Staff**

The Honors faculty is drawn from seven of the University's colleges. Over the past several years we have consciously attempted to increase the disciplinary diversity of our course offerings.

#### **E. Honors Colloquium**

The Fall 2021 Honors Colloquium, *Sustaining Our Shores* was coordinated by J.P. Walsh (Graduate School of Oceanography) and Andrew J. Davies (College of Environment and Life Sciences) along with the assistance of Deborah Gardiner and Anna Blake of the Honors Program. This Colloquium was conceived to celebrate the dawn of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. This Colloquium was the first in-person Colloquium since the COVID pandemic and it also marked the twelfth year that the Colloquium was web-streamed live on the URI homepage. This will continue, as will archiving of most public lectures for more widespread use. The URI Department of Media & Technology Services, the URI Department of Communications and Marketing and the URI Publications Office also wonderfully support the Colloquium.

#### **F. Honors Project Virtual Conference and Awards Ceremony**

Honors Projects were presented at the twenty-fifth annual Honors Project Conference on May 4, 2022. The student conference scheduled virtual poster presentations throughout the day for humanities, social science, natural science, and professional college projects. Each student completing a project also contributed an abstract to the conference program. Associate Director, Kathleen McIntyre serves as the primary advisor to students completing the Honors Program and is the main organizer of the annual Honors conference.

As an example of how Honors projects lead to awards, scholarships and fellowships, Emma Hayes ('22 Comm. Studies/GWS major) won the Center for Humanities Undergraduate Excellence Award based on her HPR 401 project which was a podcast, "Sex, Suffrage and Scandalous Ladies." Gillian Hodge ('22 International Diplomacy, Chinese, Pol. Science) was awarded a Boren Fellowship, building on her HPR 401 research project, "The Future of Taiwan." Noura Rayes ('22 Mechanical Engineering) was a Fulbright semi finalist. Her HPR 401 project was entitled, "Ballasting System for an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle." This was also the first year that we gave out the Donald H. DeHayes Provost Honors Excellence Award of \$1,000 to "a student who has completed the URI Honors Program and has achieved

the highest level of academic achievement as evidenced by their academic record, completion of an innovative or highly impactful honors project, and potential for leadership and future contributions to society.” The recipient for this year was Patrice Geffard, a political science/economics major.

I want to express sincere appreciation to the faculty sponsors who devoted their time to mentoring the students completing their Honors Projects. Their contribution is particularly remarkable in that *forty-six* of these faculty members were not teaching an Honors course in 2020-2021. Together with the *sixty* faculty teaching Honors courses, this brings the total number of faculty participating in the Honors Program during 2021-2022 1 to *one hundred-six (106)*.

### **NATIONAL FELLOWSHIPS, AY 2020-2021**

Led by Honors Assistant Director Kathleen Maher, the Office of National Fellowships and Academic Opportunities offers guidance and support to students applying for prestigious external fellowships and scholarships. It is important to note that these opportunities are not restricted to Honors Program students; the office works with students from any student background who meet the eligibility requirements. This includes graduate students for certain international awards, as well as recent alumni. Kathleen Maher recently published a beautiful annual report on the many student success stories related to national fellowships and academic opportunities that can be read at the following link:

[https://issuu.com/katiemcgwin/docs/annualreport-officeofnatlfellowships\\_academicoppor](https://issuu.com/katiemcgwin/docs/annualreport-officeofnatlfellowships_academicoppor).

### **PRE-HEALTH PROFESSIONS ADVISING PROGRAM**

Assistant Director Andrew Simmons leads the Pre-Health Professions Advising Program and chairs the Health Professions Advisory Committee (HPAC). His primary advising is with juniors, seniors, and recent alumni. The program has also had an advising position shared with the College of the Environment and Life Sciences (CELS); this position focused on advising for students majoring in Biology, Biological Sciences, and Cell & Molecular Biology as well as freshman-sophomore pre-health advising. Currently, the position is vacant pending review and potential reorganization of the Honors Program.

The Pre-Health Program supports student and recent alumni preparing to apply for admission to medical, dental, optometry, physician assistant, and other health profession training programs that require a degree beyond the baccalaureate (with the exception of pre-veterinary, which has a program in CELS). Though housed in the Honors Program, Pre-Health Advising is open to all URI students.

The program is guided by four goals:

1. **Knowledge**—students will gain knowledge of their intended profession sufficient to make an informed career choice related to their abilities, attributes, and values--even if this ultimately leads them to careers outside of the health professions.

2. **Planning**—students will create and continuously refine a rigorous and personally fulfilling academic and experiential pre-health plan. Such a plan will facilitate development of the high-level knowledge, skills, and personal attributes (as defined by the various health professions) needed for success in the admission process as well as the study and practice of health care.
3. **Reflection**—students will continuously assess and/or reflect on their learning in order to understand areas of strength and those in need of improvement, and to become increasingly aware of and understand their own motivation for a career in the health professions.
4. **Application**—students will develop carefully planned and well-timed applications to health profession schools.

Each of these goals is addressed through workshops, events, web and print resources, outreach, and individual advising. The pre-health program plans and implements over 20 workshops and events each year. The program also maintains a list of around 1,000 students and recent alumni interested in health professions.

Students and recent alumni receive comprehensive support for their applications through the Application Prep Program. There are two Application Prep Tracks:

**Track A** supports students and recent graduates applying for admission to medical, dental, optometry, or podiatry school. These health profession schools will accept a letter of recommendation from undergraduate institutions' pre-health committees—at URI, this is the Health Professions Advisory Committee (HPAC), which consists of faculty along with some staff with key roles in supporting curriculum and advising relevant to pre-health. Committee members come from the sciences as well as those outside the sciences related to health care. The current committee member is as follows:

- Alana Bibeau, Teaching Professor, Sociology
- Jodi Camber, Associate Professor, Cell and Molecular Biology
- Aura Grandidge, Interim Assistant Dean, Diversity and Student Success, CELS
- Matthew Kiesewetter, Associate Professor, Chemistry
- Jason Kolbe, Associate Professor, Biological Sciences
- Andrew Simmons, Chair, Assistant Director, Honors Program

Each year, HPAC conducts a pre-application process for potential candidates for admission. The process begins with a self-assessment interview with the HPAC Chair to determine their readiness for the process. Applicants deemed to be ready then submit a comprehensive dossier that includes a personal statement, list of activities, and academic information. During the spring semester each student participates in a

multiple mini interview session with HPAC, and then one individual interview with a committee member.

With information gathered from the dossier and interviews, along with recommendation letters submitted by individuals familiar with the applicant's work, the HAC Chair prepares the committee letter of recommendation from HPAC, which is forwarded to each applicant's designated schools along with their supporting letters of recommendation. This committee letter is strongly preferred by medical and several other health profession schools.

**Track B** supports students applying for admission to physician assistant schools. The process starts with virtual group information sessions; after that, potential applicants complete a pre-application assessment form and review it with Dr. Simmons (if needed and appropriate, Dr. Simmons writes letters of recommendation for PA school applicants). Students wishing to pursue the URI-Johnson and Wales linkage (see below) must complete a section of the pre-application assessment for review by Dr. Simmons. All potential PA applicants are encouraged to attend an essay-writing workshop and share with Dr. Simmons a draft of their personal statement.

Applicants on both tracks receive comprehensive support throughout the year-long admission processes. We offer the following for every applicant:

- Individual advising on any number of issues applicants may have during the process.
- Individual admission essay critique.
- Test-preparation study and support group.
- Essay writing workshops conducted in conjunction with the URI Writing Center.
- A workshop on building a list of medical school (applicants for other professional schools are encouraged to share their school list with Dr. Simmons).
- A meeting at the end of the HPAC process to review the various applications and to get advice from alumni who successfully applied for admission in the prior year.
- Help with interview preparation, including mock interviewing and dissemination of sample interview questions.
- Advising for applicants throughout the cycle on issues such as sending updates to schools, dealing with wait lists, paying for health profession schools, military scholarship applications, dealing with multiple acceptances, and deferring admission.

### **Special Admission Routes:**

*The Brown Early Identification Program:* URI has an agreement with the Alpert Medical School at Brown University (AMS) whereby our most highly qualified premedical students from Rhode Island can apply for an early contingent admission. Students apply during the fall term of their junior year. They must be nominated to AMS by the Health Professions Advisory Committee. Nominated applicants then apply to Brown with HPAC’s letter of recommendation. In the fall of 2021, HPAC nominated three students for the EIP and all three were admitted. In the fall of 2022, one student was nominated and she has been selected for interview by Brown. The final result will not be known until early February 2023.

*The URI-Johnson and Wales Master of Physician Assistant Studies Linkage Agreement:* under this agreement, students who meet eligibility requirements are nominated by URI to be interviewed for admission to the JWU PA program. In 2021 (for the 2022 admission cycle), URI nominated 10 students and alumni. Of these, three chose not to interview with JWU and one decided to postpone her application for a year. Of the six who interviewed, three were admitted (of which just one chose to attend JWU), two were waitlisted, and one was rejected.

In 2022, for the current 2023 admission cycle, 16 were nominated. Two withdrew from the process and 14 were interviewed. Of these, five have been admitted, one rejected, and eight were waitlisted. From the latter group, four have been admitted elsewhere.

**2023 Admission Outcomes as of January 23, 2023**

	Admitted	Not Admitted or No Result	Wait List
Medical School (MD, DO, foreign)	16	7	0
Dental	3	4	1
Optometry	1	0	0
Physician Assistant	17	6	4
Other	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>

## 2022 Admission Outcomes

	Admitted	Not Admitted
Medical School (MD, DO, foreign)	19	6
Dental	0	3
Optometry	1	0
Physician Assistant	9	7
Other <i>graduate school, direct-entry nursing, post-baccalaureate premedical program</i>	5	0
TOTAL	34	16