To: Joanna Goldstein, President, Faculty Senate  
From: Talitha T. Rajah, Chair, Honors Council  
Date: May 18, 2004

Subject: Honors Council End of the Year Report

The following members of the IUS community were appointed to the Honors Council: Stephanie Bower, Social Sciences; Jackie Johnson, Library; Gretchen Kirchner, Natural Sciences; Talitha T. Rajah (Chair), Natural Sciences; Marcia Segal, Ex-Officio, Associate VC Academic Affairs and Dean of Research; and Harry Weger, Arts and Letters.

The Honors Council met approximately once every month and it should be noted that all the members were very faithful in attendance and participated actively.

The current status of the Honors Research Minors Program stands without any student in the Program for at least 2 years, and hence the Honors Council did not have the regular duties of acting as the governing body in controlling admissions, approving transfer credits, leading discussion in the Honors Seminar and ratifying the completion of the minor. However during this academic year (2003-2004), the Honors Council has accomplished a great deal in charting out the options that will be taken in the next couple of years to make the Honors Research Minor Program accessible, viable and successful.

The options discussed herein are identified as recommendations for Revitalization of the Honors Research Minor Program. Please refer to the Figure in Appendix 1. These recommendations correspond with that of IUS Campus Strategic Plan Objective 1.5: “IUS will incorporate an honor program or set of honors offerings to attract and retain high-achieving students to enhance the recognition of the quality of campus offerings.”

It should be mentioned here that the Honors Council approved the Discipline-based Honors Program Proposal set forth by Dr. Cliff Staten, Dean, School of Social Sciences, with one recommendation that this program make accommodations for incoming/freshman students to enter the program. This model presents a decentralized and discipline-based model for the Honors Program. The Honors Council recommends that the Honors Research Program be decentralized and discipline-based for it to be viable and successful. Further, the Honors Council deems the continuation of the Honors Research Minor necessary due to the following reasons: the Honors Research Minor Program seems to be a viable option within Schools/Departments where ‘lab-science’ is conducted; and the Honors Research Minor offers the option of an interdisciplinary customized program. While it is acknowledged that a customized preparation of the curriculum according to each student’s need has presented a lack of clarity in the curriculum and requirements for the program for those unfamiliar with the program, however it is also acknowledged that one of the strengths of the Honors Research Minor
Program lies in the fact that it leaves room for programs of interdisciplinary nature.

Based on the discussion by the Honors Council and input received from various sources (identified at the end of this document), the Honors Council identified 3 areas to revitalize the Honors Research Minor Program: Active Recruitment by enhancing visibility; Developing a Discipline-based Program Structure in Curriculum; and Increasing the appeal and visibility of Incentives (Please see Appendix I).

**Recommendation 1. Active Recruitment by Enhancing Visibility.**
An important way to actively recruit students into the Honors Research Minor is by enhancing visibility. Visibility could be enhanced by one of the following ways:

*Word-of-mouth:* Participating faculty members/Honors advisors could make known the importance of points allotted for research when being admitted into post-graduate work or Professional schools or even jobs.

*Web page:* It is recommended that the Honors Research Minor Program redesign its web page completely. The new web page will be complete with all the details of pre-requisites, incentives, funding sources, participating faculty members, the area of research interests of each faculty member, contact information etc., Currently it is difficult to locate the Honors Research Minor Web page, and hence it is recommended that the redesigned web page be placed on the IUS web page so that it stand out clearly grabbing student’s attention. It might also be worth considering (once the details of the curriculum are worked out) posting “will fulfill Honors Research Minor requirements” in the schedule, Insite, against each course that would fulfill the Honors Research Requirement.

*Brochure:* The brochure for the Honors Research Minor Program also needs to be redesigned and updated with relevant information, detailing advantages to joining the Honors Research Minor Program, participating schools and disciplines with clearly denoted contact information for each school. The brochure was last updated about 8-10 years ago.

*Advertisement:* In addition to enhancing visibility by word-of-mouth, web pages, brochures, the Honors Council recommends that the Honors Research Minor Program be advertised positively through other venues such as Freshman orientation, having a booth set up at relevant campus activities, etc.,

The Honors Council also recommends other means of enhancing visibility with an aim to actively recruit students into the Honors Research Minor Program. These could include Implementation of a research community from various programs probably by having a Campus Research Day, conducting a workshop/conference to showcase achievements by faculty and undergraduate students on campus and inviting high school students to this event, and by having summer research programs for high school students and both of these programs can be used as a recruitment tool. The details of identification of high-achieving high school students, funding for this program, faculty support and research descriptions will need to be worked out.

**Recommendation 2 – Development of Discipline-Based Program Structure.**
For the Honors Research Minors Program to be successful, the Honors Council recommends that the current Honors Research Minors Program be revised into a program with a Discipline-based curriculum. As on of the goals for next year, the Honors Council will be approaching each school/discipline to request for revision/development of the curriculum and the necessary pre-requisites. Some of the precautions that will be taken include a lack of disparity in standards or level of difficulty between the disciplines, pre-requisites (GPA) or other cut-offs that will be chosen, assessment methods (course-work, honors thesis, peer-reviewed papers etc.). It is also recognized that revising the curriculum to a discipline-based curriculum raises the question – What will the role of the Honors Council be in the future when each discipline will be responsible
for the implementation and completion of the Honors Research Minors Program within the discipline. Other caveats that need to be ironed out include the sustenance and governance of Honors Research Minors Program that are interdisciplinary in nature. These issues will be addressed during the next year by the Honors Council.

**Recommendation 3 – Increasing the Appeal and Visibility of Existing Incentives and Adding New Incentives.**

The Honors Council recommends special privileges to Honors students such as longer library checkouts. In addition, the Honors Council feels that it would only be rewarding to have an Honors certificate, instead of a mere mention in the student’s transcript. Further the Honors students could be honored at either the Honors Convocation or the Graduation ceremony. Further, the Honors Council recommends that faculty participating in the program be encouraged by either financial support in the form of travel awards, covering appropriate financial costs toward research supplies, fellowships, or disciplinary support in the form of team teaching. The IUS Research Office offers research support ($300/-) as travel money for participation in conferences. Further, each student can apply for up to $300/- every from student activities to cover for costs of attending national meetings. The Honors Council feels that enhancing the visibility and appeal of such existing incentives and adding other such relevant incentives in terms of financial costs need to be undertaken.

Some of the characteristics that are unique to the IUS student population and worthy of mention is that IUS students are generally first generation college students and hence take longer to realize the importance of research in education and need help and guidance, and have a mind-set that is job-oriented more so than skill-oriented.

**Honors Council Members:**
Stephanie Bower (Social Sciences)
Jackie Johnson (Library)
Gretchen Kirchner (Natural Sciences)
Talitha Rajah (Chair)
Marcia Segal (Ex-officio member, Associate VC Academic Affairs and Dean of Research), and
Harry Weger (Arts and Letters)

**Input received from the following faculty is gratefully acknowledged:**
Gil Atnip (VC Academic Affairs)
Donna Dahlgren (Social Sciences)
Alisa Calpp-Itnyre (English, IU East)
Joanna Goldstein (President, Faculty Senate)
Cliff Staten (Dean, Social Sciences)