Honors Programs

The College of Agriculture offers two honors programs, one of which is designed for continuing students and the other of which is for students beginning their college tenure.

College of Agriculture Honors Program
http://www.agriculture.purdue.edu/oap/honorsprograms.asp
- This program has been in place for some time and offers students the opportunity to pursue an honors thesis or project. Departments may mandate additional requirements.
- Students apply after completing at least 32 credits at Purdue (if transfer students they may apply after completing 16 hours), and must complete a minimum of 30 credits at Purdue.
- Minimum GPA for application is 3.25; thereafter students must have 3.0 each semester.
- Currently there are about 15 students enrolled in the College of Agriculture Honors Program.

Dean’s Scholars Program
http://www.agriculture.purdue.edu/oap/deanscholars.asp
- This program began in fall 2005 with a cohort of ~70.
- Admission for beginning students is based on high school GPA and SAT/ACT and predicated on scholarship eligibility.
- Students enroll in at least 15 hours per semester, maintain a GPA of 3.25, complete at least 12 hours of honors courses, take an honors orientation course, and complete a scholarly thesis or project.
- Transfer and continuing students may apply for admission if they have a GPA of 3.5 or greater and at least 60 remaining credits to complete.
- Currently there are about 150 students in three cohorts.
- In fall 2008 we will offer a Learning Community for the Dean’s Scholars. They will live on two floors (one male/one female) in a residence hall and we will program social events for the group.

University Honors Program
http://www.purdue.edu/provost/honors/info/contacts.shtml
- This university-wide honors program admits about 120 new students each year from across all colleges and disciplines.
- This area also grooms student grooming for application to prestigious scholarships.
http://www.purdue.edu/provost/honors/students/current_scholar_fellow.shtml
Undergraduate Research

Undergraduate students are encouraged to pursue research and design projects. While many are participants in the Honors Program or the Dean’s Scholars Program, the philosophy of the College is to encourage participation regardless of GPA. The hope is that students will become inspired by participation; many mediocre students have been sparked academically by participating in research.

http://www.agriculture.purdue.edu/oap/undergraduateresearch.asp

Two types of funding are offered.

Research Funding
- Any student engaging in research or design may request $500.00 to help defray the research mentor’s costs. These are non-competitive, and virtually every requesting student receives the funding for her/his professor (until the maximum of 20 research pairs is met).

Agricultural Research Fund Scholarships
- In this competitive process some 15 scholarships are awarded per year.
- Each scholarship is awarded for the following academic year, and students receive $1000.00 per semester.
- No specific GPA is required.
- Students submit a research summary and a letter of recommendation from their research mentor.
- Students are expected to display their results at the Undergraduate Research and Poster Symposium.
- While receiving the scholarship a student must be registered for at least 12 hours and must be registered for research credit.

Undergraduate Research and Poster Symposium
http://www.science.purdue.edu/current_students/research_day/
- Students engaging in research or design projects may participate in the annual poster display. The event is now jointly sponsored by the colleges of Agriculture, Science, Technology and Engineering, with a few miscellaneous students from other colleges also participating.
- All Honors Program participants, Dean’s Scholars, and students receiving research scholarships are expected to participate at least once.
- The March 2008 event featured 150 posters, some with multiple student presenters. Almost 1/3 of these were College of Agriculture posters.
- The event requires intensive preparation, MANY volunteer judges, and funding to cover event costs (venue, food, etc.) as well as monetary awards.
Undergraduate Research and Honors Session

Honors Programs

Background
- Do you offer programs at the institutional level? At the college level? At the departmental level?
- Can a student participate on multiple levels?
- How many students do you have in honors programs?

Honors Program Components
- Do you require a research thesis or design project?
- Do students display their results?
- Do you require honors courses?
- Do you require participation in events?

Logistics
- How automated is your tracking system?
- What do you track?
- How many students participate?
- Oversight
  - Do you have a fulltime program administrator?
  - Do you have an honors committee?
    - How do you “train” new members?
    - Do students serve on the committee?

Undergraduate Research
- What opportunities do you offer?
  - Are some of these open to non-honors students?
- Do you offer funding for undergraduate research?
- How do you recruit for research?
- About how many people participate?
- Do you showcase undergraduate research?
Questions for Discussion

What are the biggest challenges you face?

Honors Programs

- How can we persuade incoming students that an honors program is not necessarily more work but rather, better work?
- How can we induce faculty members to offer more honors courses?
  - How can we convince students to take them!
- How can we convince the institution to value the faculty honors offerings when enrollments may be capped so student contact may not be as high as in non-honors classes?
- What is the efficacy of an honors learning community?
- What supplementary activities should we provide for our honors students (learning communities, social activities, service learning opportunities, enrichment activities such as plays, etc.)?
- How can we attract/enroll underrepresented populations?
- How can we retain students?
- How do we assess programs’ efficacy?

Undergraduate Research

- How can we induce more undergraduate students to see the benefits of research?
- How can we reward professors who go the extra mile to work with undergraduate students?
- How can we connect undergraduate researchers with a professor and with one another?

Jane Alexander
College of Agriculture
Purdue University
jalexander@purdue.edu
765.494.8470