

Salisbury University

**Thomas E. Bellavance
Honors Program**



**STRATEGIC PLAN
2014-2019**

Salisbury University is a member of the National Collegiate Honors Council, Northeast Regional Honors Council, and the Maryland Collegiate Honors Council

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Introduction Overview

Honors programs and colleges face a growing number of challenges that reflect larger shifts within higher education over the past decade. Reduced budgets, the demands of an increased number of STEM students, greater public accountability, requests to aid in general recruitment, changing general education curricula, and an increased need to define the benefits of honors education to skeptical parents, students, and university personnel are but a few of the issues facing honors directors and deans nationwide. Each of these challenges, however, also provides an opportunity for honors programs to assess and reevaluate their position within the larger academic institution where which they reside. The best honors programs and colleges seek to do what they have always done: maintain a tradition of excellence while simultaneously providing an environment where faculty members and students can encourage each other through innovation, creativity, and scholarly research.

Whether it be in the development of living learning communities, an emphasis on undergraduate research, or the advancement of flipped-classrooms and student-centered learning, honors programs and colleges have been at the vanguard of movements that have since become staples of the undergraduate experience. With a history that dates more than three decades on the Salisbury campus, the Thomas E. Bellavance Honors Program is poised to serve the Salisbury University student body and act as an incubator for innovative education.

The action items in this strategic plan are intended to position the Thomas E. Bellavance Honors Program and Salisbury University as national leaders in honors education by ensuring that campus resources are open and available to exceptional, self-motivated students who wish to take advantage of the educational enrichment that honors education has to offer.

The Bellavance Honors Program mission is to foster close individual contact between students and faculty and bring together engaged undergraduate students with varied interests to explore and enrich their overall academic university experience. In addition, the Honors Program seeks to provide an intellectual

environment where students pursue inquiry, explore curiosity, and exhibit creativity, all while engaging larger communities on the Eastern Shore and beyond. Honors courses and activities are intended to enhance other educational opportunities available to Salisbury University students and to meet national expectations for Honors education.

Defining Honors Education

The Bellavance Honors Program formally adopts the definition of honors education as outlined by the National Collegiate Honors Council.

“The National Collegiate Honors Council recognizes an honors college, program, institute, or equivalent descriptor, as the academic unit on a collegiate campus responsible for devising and delivering in-class and extracurricular academic experiences that provide a distinctive learning environment for selected students. The honors college or program provides opportunities for measurably broader, deeper, and more complex learning-centered and learner-directed experiences for its students than are available elsewhere in the institution; these opportunities are appropriately tailored to fit the institution’s culture and mission and frequently occur within a close community of students and faculty. In most cases, the honors community is composed of carefully selected teachers and students who form a cross- or multi-disciplinary cohort dedicated to achieving exceptional learning and personal standards. The National Collegiate Honors Council recognizes ‘departmental honors’ as educational experiences that are similar but restricted to cohorts of students pursuing the same field of academic study.”

As approved by the NCHC Board of Directors, November 6, 2013
<http://nchchonors.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Definition-of-Honors-Education.pdf>

NCHC Modes of Learning

In addition, the National Collegiate Honors Council has developed a list of “modes of learning,” which are meant as broad characteristics that generally describe the learning outcomes of Honors Programs and Colleges. They are, in no particular order:

- 1) Research and Creative Scholarships
- 2) Breadth and Enduring Questions
- 3) Service Learning and Scholarship
- 4) Experiential Learning
- 5) Learning Communities

Thomas E. Bellavance Honors Program Core Values

In serving the students of Salisbury University, the Bellavance Honors Program has adopted six core values (or learning objectives) that are meant to provide general guidance in defining educational opportunities and curriculum within the Honors Program. Honors courses and extracurricular opportunities are expected to measurably demonstrate the achievement of two or more of these values/objectives.

- 1) Critical Thinking and Breadth of Inquiry
- 2) The Scholarship of Discovery
- 3) Creative Scholarship
- 4) Community Engagement and Leadership
- 5) Experiential Learning
- 6) Learning Communities

Honors Program History

The Honors Program began in 1980 with 20 students, most of whom were members of the university’s Philosophical Society. The original director of the program was Dr. Anthony “Tony” Whall, who believed that the program could “offer an array of courses that would emphasize discussion rather than lecture, and that would

encourage students to think independently about substantive issues and enable them to acquire skills for articulating and defending their insights and ideas.”

The program initially offered only courses that fulfilled general education requirements in the fields of History, English, and Philosophy. In its early years, the Honors Program existed in a back corner of the gymnasium. After a few years, it moved to a house on College Avenue (the current site of the Art House), before once again moving to the Honors Center (commonly and affectionately called the Honors House by many current and former students) in 1994.

In the early years, applicants were required to possess a high school GPA of 3.25 or higher and a minimum SAT score of 1100. The student grades and test scores of today’s incoming freshman class are far higher than those early targets.

The start of the program, however small, aligned with the goals of former SU President Thomas Bellavance, who became president of Salisbury State College in 1980. As president, Bellavance guided the institution from college to university status and helped raise more than \$800,000 for student scholarships.

Shortly before Bellavance passed away in 1996, the university renamed the Honors Program in Bellavance’s honor to recognize his focus on academic excellence.

In 2013 the Honors Program served more than 260 students under the direction of its first full-time administrative director, Dr. James Buss.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

As is the mission of a university, the primary mission of the Honors Program is to **EDUCATE** students and prepare them for a lifetime of learning after graduation. The Honors Program recognizes the many challenges facing 21st century learners, including increasingly regimented degree curricula, vastly changing job markets, and the rising cost of education in relation to its perceived benefit. Today's students, by many estimates, will hold between ten and fifteen different jobs by the time they reach the age of 38. Moreover, the majority of jobs that they will hold ten years removed from the university do not exist at the time they arrive on campus as freshmen.

For honors students, a well-rounded and rigorous honors education promises to prepare them for the shifting workplace landscape of the 21st century. In an age when universities increasingly focus on technical training and depth of disciplinary research, a majority of employers believe that universities should place a greater emphasis on breadth of learning and broad skills. In recent surveys conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, employers overwhelmingly stressed the need for universities to provide an education that prepares graduates to undertake extra individual responsibilities in the workplace and employ broader sets of skills than in the past. In particular, potential employers asked universities to emphasize "the ability to communicate effectively, orally and in writing," "critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills," and "the ability to analyze and solve complex problems."

The Honors Program at Salisbury University is poised to meet the needs of 21st century learners and employers by empowering students with a flexible, yet challenging curriculum that focuses on critical thinking, experiential learning, breadth of disciplinary coverage, and civic and global engagement. Moreover, with added resources and a dedicated staff, the Honors Program is positioned to undertake an ambitious programmatic strategic plan that will help advance the mission of the university.

Over the course of university's previous strategic plan, the Honors Program experienced some dramatic challenges. Between 2010 and 2013 three different directors, including two interim

directors, led the Program. Changes in staffing translated into high attrition rates within the Program and smaller recruitment classes, as well as lower than expected university retention and graduation rates.

As the university enjoyed a first-year retention rate of 83.7% by 2013, the Honors Program could report only a marginally different rate of 84.91%. The Honors Program six-year graduation rate at Salisbury University, however, greatly exceeded that of the university: 78.37% to 67%. The Honors Program will not be able to sustain that high graduation rate, however, as the retention rate for honors students between the years 2009 and 2011 were below the university average. Fewer retained students at the sophomore level will undoubtedly lead to lower six-year graduation rates in the next few years ahead.

Lower-than-anticipated honors retention rates provide opportunities to reinvest in first-year honors programming, including honors housing and living learning communities, as well as employ new recruitment strategies to attract students that might be more likely to stay at Salisbury University beyond their first year. Five-year honors graduation rates have hovered between 21% and 27% over the past three years (referring to those students who graduate within five years with either university honors or general honors). With only a quarter of students who entered the program graduating with honors, the Honor Program needs to reevaluate its curriculum to encourage more students to pursue an honors degree.

A changing student body demands that the Honors Program **EMBRACE** innovation in order to advance its mission and that of the university. Over the past two years (fall incoming classes of 2013 and 2014), the Honors Program has witnessed an appreciable rise in high school gpa's and test scores—both of which well exceed university-wide averages. For example, the honors fall 2013 class boasted a 4.0-weighted high school gpa (3.71 university wide) and an SAT score of 1806 (1733 university wide). The fall 2014 class earned higher marks with a 4.027 gpa and 1871 SAT scores. While this might be welcome news to a university attempting to raise the overall student profile, it also requires the Honors Program to reassess its course offerings and self-assessment to ensure that coursework

adequately challenges a more advanced incoming honors freshman class. Moreover, the background of these highly qualified students has changed. STEM students now comprise the majority of incoming freshman honors students. In 2013, students from the Henson School represented 39% of all honors students. For 2014, more than 58% of the incoming honors freshmen are from the Henson School. In addition, students in STEM majors outside of the Henson School, such as Exercise Science, make up another 5% of the incoming freshman class. With few science courses offered in the traditional honors curriculum, STEM students experience difficulties fulfilling all of the requirements to graduate with honors.

The Honors Program will need to embrace curriculum change in order to guarantee that each and every student who wishes to engage in honors education can do so. It also requires more closely defined relationships with each of the schools on the Salisbury University campus and outreach to departments that have previously been underserved by the Honors Program.

Expanded honors opportunities and a revised curriculum will **FOSTER** a broader honors community at Salisbury University. Faculty, students, and staff will benefit from a vibrant honors community that encourages experimental course offerings, sponsors on-campus speakers and extracurricular learning opportunities, supports the scholarship of discovery, and promotes faculty-student mentorships. By serving all schools and departments (yet being obligated to none) the Honors Program provides a neutral ground for faculty and students to forge learning communities across and beyond campus. In addition, Honors students typically engage in the surrounding community at greater levels than other students. By facilitating greater community outreach through honors-

sponsored activities, the Honors Program promises to engage students with the city of Salisbury and the greater Delmarva region, leading to improved town-to-gown relationships.

A recent decline in the level of contact between the Honors Program and its alumni also provides an opportunity to renew those relationships and to create new honors traditions that will link honors graduates with current students. Contact between current and former students creates additional opportunities for mentorship and student development.

All of these items will require the university, the four schools within the university, alumni, and Honors Program staff to **PROVIDE** services and financial support in the upcoming years. The Honors Program can contribute to recruiting excellent and exceptional students for each of the four schools, but it will require cooperation and support from Deans to Chairpersons to Faculty Members. Together, the Honors Program and individuals across campus can contribute to forming a vibrant learning environment at Salisbury University.

The Bellavance Honors Program is poised to expand in size and scope over the next five years and to aid Salisbury University in realizing goals in its university-wide strategic plan. The following pages outline honors-centered action items that link directly to university goals. The honors strategic plan includes initiatives both small and large, including a thorough evaluation of honors spaces on the Salisbury campus and a serious consideration of forming an Honors College. In all, the items in this plan seek to position the Bellavance Honors Program in a way that aids the overall university in accomplishing its objectives.

SUMMARY

Goal 1: EDUCATE Students for Campus, Career, and Life

Focus Area 1: Academic Programming

1. Curriculum Design (University Strategic Plan Goal, 1.1)

- a.** Meet with deans, students, and other academic units between fall 2014 and spring 2015 to gather feedback
- b.** Present the campus community with a curriculum proposal that incorporates multiple options for an honors curriculum, including departmental honors, that is based on best practices of honors programs nationwide by fall 2015
- c.** Host an open forum or forums in spring 2015
- d.** Present a revised Honors Program curriculum design to the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee for consideration no later than spring 2016

2. Assessment (University Strategic Plan Goal 1.1)

- a.** Develop an assessment process for all HONR 111 courses and standardize common learning objectives for all sections by fall 2015
- b.** Create a senior exit interview process by end of spring 2015
- c.** Work with the University Analysis, Reporting and Assessment to develop a program-wide assessment plan that measures the completion of the honors learning objectives and program values by spring 2016
- d.** Expand assessment to all honors courses and activities by fall 2017
- e.** Develop clear protocol for honors course adoption that incorporates honors-based learning objectives by fall 2017.
- f.** Develop an assessment model that measures Honors Program outcomes against university and national measures (for example, NSSE) by fall 2017
- g.** Begin process of initiating external program review in fall 2015
- h.** Draft an internal program review, based on national standards, by spring of 2016 that includes proposal for transitioning to an Honors College
- i.** Undergo external program review in spring 2017

3. Transparency (University Strategic Plan Goal 1.1)

- a.** Create an annual report to be kept on file in the Bellavance Honors Center and physically distributed to the Deans of Fulton, Henson, Seidel, and Perdue, as well as the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Advancement and External Affairs, and Enrollment Management
- b.** Work with University Analysis, Reporting, and Assessment to share Honors Program data for university assessment purposes
- c.** Post updated “Annual Report” and “Policies and Procedures” documents on Honors Program webpage
- d.** Expand current annual report to include information on honors Living Learning Communities, honors students who are studying abroad, and future honors assessment reports by fall 2016

4. Digital Citizenship (University Strategic Goal 1.2)

- a.** Redesign the one-hour IDIS course to focus on digital citizenship, professional practice and etiquette, financial literacy, information literacy, and undergraduate research by spring 2016

5. National Fellowships (University Strategic Goal 1.3)

- a.** Issue a report each semester to the Office of Nationally Competitive Fellowships that includes the names of potential student applicants beginning in spring 2015
- b.** Work more closely with the Office of Nationally Competitive Fellowships to identify potential student applicants within the Honors Program
- c.** Create a public space within the Honors Center to highlight national fellowship and scholarship recipients

6. Graduate Programs (University Strategic Goal 1.4)

- a.** Work with the Geographic Information Services program to create a specialized 2+2+1 track for transfer students who seek to graduate with an honors degree, as well as a Masters in Science in GIS
- b.** Better promote Salisbury University graduate programs to honors graduates, particularly in education, where honors has seen some success
- c.** Explore mentoring and advising opportunities that introduce graduate students to undergraduate honors students

7. Assistant Director (University Strategic Goal 1.5)

- a.** Train through the attendance of national workshops on honors education
- b.** Participate in state, regional, and national honors conferences
- c.** Serve in leadership positions within state, regional, and national honors councils

8. Honors Program-Size (University Strategic Goal 1.5)

- a.** Expand course offerings to attract on-campus students
- b.** Create opportunities and events not limited to current honors students
- c.** Incorporate alternative experiences within the honors curriculum to reward current students who do not enjoy much flexibility in their course schedules
- d.** Recruit faculty members from across campus to offer a diversity of honors courses that extend beyond the current offerings

9. Honors Program-Incorporation (University Strategic Goal 1.5)

- a.** Retain a robust honors curriculum based in the humanities and social sciences that appeals to liberal arts students and enhances their undergraduate experience
- b.** Develop multiple paths to graduate with university honors that are both rich in breadth and enable students to study more deeply within their majors
- c.** Seek faculty liaisons within each of the four schools that might act as advocates for the honors program and help advise honors students
- d.** Develop student ambassador program that includes students from each of the four schools by fall 2015
- e.** Develop an experimental Honors STEM Living Learning Community by fall 2015
- f.** Invite the Deans and Department Chairpersons to visit the Honors Center and speak with undecided honors students (10% of each year's freshman class)
- g.** Increase the number of incoming honors students from the Seidel School from 11% to 14% by 2019
- h.** Increase the number of incoming honors students from the Perdue School from 10% to 14% by 2019
- i.** Form a task force of faculty members and administrators to develop the designation of "Affiliated Honors Faculty" and explore financial or other types of compensation/rewards by fall 2017
- j.** Offer honors courses each semester that are developed by faculty members in each of the four schools by fall 2017

10. Honors Endowment--General (University Strategic Goal 1.5)

- a.** Increase the number of new individual donors to the Bellavance Honors Program Foundation account by four each year between 2015 and 2019
- b.** Work with the development office to raise an additional \$10,000 toward the Bellavance Foundation Scholarship fund by 2019
- c.** Work with the development office to create funding opportunities for specialized honors scholarships or other honors awards
- d.** Work with the development office to create funding opportunities for specialized honors programming that exists outside of the Bellavance endowment
- e.** Work with the development office to attract one major donor for honors by 2019

Focus Area 2: Recruit and Retain a Diverse Group of Students

11. Recruitment (University Strategic Goal 1.6)

- a.** Transition marketing materials from staff-generated brochures and one-sheets to student-produced newsletters and testimonials
- b.** Work with the Publications Office to update Honors Program webpage
- c.** Investigate the creation of honors scholars and scholarships in each school that are distributed through the Honors Program (i.e. Smith Honors Scholar in the Sciences, John Doe Honors Scholar in Education, etc)
- d.** Continue to work with the Office of Admissions to develop Scholars Day activities that include special programming with prospective honors students
- e.** Develop an expedited application process that targets prospective students who have missed the priority deadline
- f.** Work with the Office of Admissions to extend Honors Program marketing and outreach beyond the Mid-Atlantic region

12. Retention and Graduation (1.7)

- a.** Hire an Assistant Director to coordinate the Living Learning Communities and to increase honors programming
- b.** Expand the number of Honors Living Learning Communities to serve more incoming honors students by fall 2015
- c.** Work with Campus Housing to explore the possibility of creating a sophomore Honors Living Learning Community that might serve as mentors for the incoming freshman LLC honors students
- d.** Work with Campus Housing to explore the possibility of creating a specialized honors housing dorm that consists of the Honors Living Learning Communities
- e.** Maintain an average freshman-sophomore retention rate to 92% between 2014-2019.
- f.** Raise five-year graduation rate to 82% by 2019 (will experience slight dip next two years as a result of poor retention between 2008-2011).
- g.** Maintain a retention rate within the Honors Program of at least 75% between 2015-2019
- h.** Raise five-year graduation rate with full honors distinction to 35% by 2018 and then 40% by 2019

Focus Area 3: International Students and Study Abroad

13. Global Learning (1.8)

- a.** Form an exploratory committee to develop an Honors LLC that includes a study abroad component by fall 2016
- b.** Create guidelines for student study-abroad blogs and reports that can be used on departmental websites by fall 2015
- c.** Include full report of honors students who have studied abroad in the Honors Program annual report by fall 2016

Focus Area 4: Recruit, Support, and Retain Faculty

14. Faculty Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activities (1.10)

- a.** Work with the Office of the Provost to explore the possibility of compensating faculty members for teaching in honors by way of scholarship and/or research assistance
- b.** Work with the Office of the Provost to investigate how other universities encourage faculty members to teach honors courses and work with honors students on research, such as offering competitive research grants or leave in exchange for dedicating a year of teaching in the Honors Program

Focus Area 5: Student Advising Process

15. Advising (1.11)

- a.** Work with the Office of the Provost to develop a method of identifying honors students in Gullnet and PeopleSoft and tracking their progress through an online audit by spring 2016

- b.** Meet annually with advising coordinators to provide up-to-date information about the honors advising process beginning in spring 2015
- c.** Work with the Office of Publications to create a section of the Honors Program webpage that helps inform student advisors, students, and prospective students and parents of honors related advising issues by spring 2015
- d.** Implement Honors Committee plan for “at risk” advising by spring 2015

Goal 2: EMBRACE innovation to enhance the Salisbury University experience

1. Academic Commons and Library (University Strategic Goal 2.1)

- a.** Work more closely with librarians to assess honors needs for both instructional and collections development
- b.** Investigate opportunities for the Honors Program to have a place within the new Academic Commons, as it purports to become a hub of academic activity and a symbol of the importance of higher education in the broader community

2. Faculty Learning Communities (University Strategic Goal 2.2)

- a.** Serve as an incubator for faculty learning communities as the Academic Commons is constructed and the Office of Innovation in Teaching and Learning is in the process of being created
- b.** Host a Faculty Learning Community in the fall 2014 dedicated to issues in higher education and teaching strategies

3. Interdisciplinarity and Team-Teaching (University Strategic Goal 2.2)

- a.** Form a task force to determine funding opportunities and administrative structure for compensating and rewarding interdisciplinary and team-teaching within the Honors Program
- b.** Offer team-taught courses as part of its regular offerings by fall 2016

4. Alternative Experiences and Potential Partnerships (University Strategic Goal 2.4)

- a.** Continue to expand undergraduate honors opportunities that include experiential components and extracurricular academic experiences
- b.** Form a community advisory board that will help identify opportunities for internships, practicums, and other such opportunities that can fulfill the honors mission
- c.** Develop a curriculum model that includes credit compensation for innovative learning experiences that do not traditionally fit into the standard university curriculum by fall 2016
- d.** Work with other Honors Programs and Colleges elsewhere in the United States to create experiential class experiences during the summer and winter sessions

Goal 3: FOSTER a sense of community on campus and at the local, national, and international level

1. Transfer Partnerships (University Strategic Goal 3.1)

- a.** Continue to develop a relationship with Northern Virginia Community College by sending Salisbury University representatives to NOVA campuses to recruit honors students
- b.** Invite prospective NOVA honors students to visit the Salisbury campus
- c.** Investigate additional two-year honors program partnerships in the region
- d.** Visit Wor Wic Community campus once per semester and invite Wor Wic students to a an annual transfer day event at the Honors Center

2. Honors Teaching Post-Doc (University Strategic Goal 3.1)

- a.** Work with the Office of the Provost to investigate the creation of an honors teaching post-doctoral appointment to address areas of need (sciences, education, business, global studies, etc)

3. Community Outreach (University Strategic Goal 3.3)

- a.** Devote Honors Program financial resources to class projects that seek to emphasize “community engagement and leadership”

- b.** Develop a method of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of community partnerships and activities offered by honors courses
- c.** Incorporate community engagement as part of revised curriculum design

4. Advisory Board and Alumni Events/Activities (University Strategic Goal 3.5)

- a.** Create an advisory board, consisting of alumni, current students, and community partners, to provide feedback for the program and encourage mentorships between former and current students.
- b.** Host an annual homecoming event at the Honors Center beginning in fall 2014
- c.** Work with the Salisbury University Alumni Association to create a special group of honors alumni by fall 2015
- d.** Distribute issues of the newly reimagined *Saunterer* to members of the honors alumni group beginning in spring 2016
- e.** Create a comprehensive list of honors alumni
- f.** Find Alumni willing to share their stories for a special section of the Honors Program webpage by fall 2015
- g.** Invite select alumni and honored guests to annual spring graduation and honors awards banquet

Goal 4: PROVIDE appropriate programs, spaces, and resources for all members of the campus community

Focus Area 1: Financial Resources

1. Increase Honors Foundation Scholarships (University Strategic Goal 4.2)

- a.** Award a minimum of one four-year \$1,000 Bellavance Scholarship each year beginning in fall 2015
- b.** Award two additional \$500 one-time scholarships per freshman class beginning in fall 2015

Focus Area 3: Spaces

2. Honors College and Center (University Strategic Goal 4.5)

- a.** Form a working committee to investigate the possibility of transitioning the Bellavance Honors Program to the Bellavance Honors College by fall 2016
- b.** Form a task force to investigate the possibility of creating an Honors Center that is central to the SU campus and includes honors housing, office space, classrooms, computer labs, and student study rooms in a single building by fall 2015

Goal 1: EDUCATE Students for Campus, Career, and Life

Focus Area 1: Academic Programming

1. Curriculum Design (University Strategic Plan Goal, 1.1)

The Bellavance Honors Program offers unique, student-centered, seminar-styled courses meant to challenge students and prepare them for post-graduate careers and lives. Since 2008, the Honors Program curriculum has consisted of four honors-specific courses (HONR 111, HONR 112, HONR 211, and HONR 212) that students can take to replace general education requirements, a series of upper-level interdisciplinary seminars (HONR 311), a creative project/undergraduate research credit (HONR 312), and honors thesis (HONR 490 and 495). This curriculum historically attracted humanities and social science students, whose major and minor requirements were flexible and permitted students to take additional electives that met those of the Honors Program.

In recent years, a shifting student body has revealed that the growing number of students in STEM, business, and pre-professional fields do not enjoy the same flexibility as their counterparts in the humanities and social sciences. These students wish to take advantage of an honors education, but frequently cannot find space in their schedules to take credits from the limited class offerings provided by the Honors Program. In very recent years, the number of students from STEM, business, and pre-professional programs that are interested in honors has skyrocketed. In 2010, 39 incoming freshman students declared majors in the Henson School of Science, while 38 majored in departments within the Fulton School of Liberal Arts. In 2014, 69 declared majors in Henson, while only 28 did so in the Fulton School. A successful Honors Program must serve all students who wish to take advantage of the enrichment that honors education promises to provide both in and out of the classroom. To meet the needs of students, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Meet with deans, students, and other academic units between fall 2014 and spring 2015 to gather feedback
- b.** Present the campus community with a curriculum proposal that incorporates multiple options for an honors curriculum, including departmental honors, that is based

on best practices of honors programs nationwide by fall 2015

- c.** Host an open forum or forums in spring 2015
- d.** Present a revised Honors Program curriculum design to the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee for consideration no later than spring 2016

2. Assessment (University Strategic Plan Goal 1.1)

A successful Honors Program must also assess whether or not it fulfills its mission and that of the university.

The Honors Program historically has tracked enrollment numbers and student evaluations but it has not conducted a programmatic-wide assessment of courses or curriculum. Moreover, the Honors Program has not fully articulated learning objectives or key components that differentiate an honors course from other courses. In 2013-2014, the Honors Program developed six “core values” that are based on national standards established by the National Collegiate Honors Council. These include Critical Thinking and Breadth of Inquiry, The Scholarship of Discovery, Creative Scholarship, Community Engagement and Leadership, Experiential Learning, and Learning Communities. Over the next five years, the Honors Program will attempt to design and offer an honors-based curriculum that provides measurable means for assessment, meets national standards, and is flexible to meet the needs of a changing Salisbury University student body. In order to meet national standards for honors assessment, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Develop an assessment process for all HONR 111 courses and standardize common learning objectives for all sections by fall 2015
- b.** Create a senior exit interview process by end of spring 2015
- c.** Work with the University Analysis, Reporting and Assessment to develop a program-wide assessment plan that measures the completion of the honors learning objectives and program values by spring 2016
- d.** Expand assessment to all honors courses and activities by fall 2017
- e.** Develop clear protocol for honors course adoption that incorporates honors-based learning objectives by fall 2017.

- f. Develop an assessment model that measures Honors Program outcomes against university and national measures (for example, NSSE) by fall 2017
- g. Begin process of initiating external program review in fall 2015
- h. Draft an internal program review, based on national standards, by spring of 2016 that includes proposal for transitioning to an Honors College
- i. Undergo external program review in spring 2017

3. Transparency (University Strategic Plan Goal 1.1)

In order to hold the Honors Program staff accountable, the Honors Program must report its progress and assessment to major constituents on and off campus. In order to accomplish these goals, the Honors Program will:

- a. Create an annual report to be kept on file in the Bellavance Honors Center and physically distributed to the Deans of Fulton, Henson, Seidel, and Perdue, as well as the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Advancement and External Affairs, and Enrollment Management
- b. Work with University Analysis, Reporting, and Assessment to share Honors Program data for university assessment purposes
- c. Post updated "Annual Report" and "Policies and Procedures" document on Honors Program webpage
- d. Expand current annual report to include information on honors Living Learning Communities, honors students who are studying abroad, and future honors assessment reports by fall 2016

4. Digital Citizenship (University Strategic Goal 1.2)

The Honors Program has typically offered a one-hour interdisciplinary seminar in spring semesters as part of its Honors Living Learning Communities. In the past, these one-hour courses have been topic-based and developed at the discretion of the faculty member assigned to teach the course. These previously ill-defined seminars (students have often been confused to whether they are honors courses or might count toward a general education elective) provide an opportunity to engage and educate honors students about internet literacy, digital

citizenship, and professionalization. In order to aid the university in producing graduates with strong digital citizenship skills, the Honors Program will:

- b. Redesign the one-hour IDIS course to focus on digital citizenship, professional practice and etiquette, financial literacy, information literacy, and undergraduate research by spring 2016

5. National Fellowships (University Strategic Goal 1.3)

Salisbury University has seen an increase in students competing for prestigious national fellowships and scholarships. In order to aid the Office of Nationally Competitive Fellowships in recruiting potential scholarship recipients, the Honors Program will:

- a. Issue a report each semester to the Office of Nationally Competitive Fellowships that includes the names of potential student applicants beginning in spring 2015
- b. Work more closely with the Office of Nationally Competitive Fellowships to identify potential student applicants within the Honors Program
- c. Create a public space within the Honors Center to highlight national fellowship and scholarship recipients

6. Graduate Programs (University Strategic Goal 1.4)

The Honors Program currently does not include coursework or opportunities for graduate students at Salisbury University, although it does work with particular undergraduate programs and departments where students might enroll in graduate work after completing undergraduate degrees. In order to help promote graduate programs at Salisbury University, the Honors Program will:

- a. Work with the Geographic Information Services program to create a specialized 2+2+1 track for transfer students who seek to graduate with an honors degree, as well as a Masters in Science in GIS
- b. Better promote Salisbury University graduate programs to honors graduates, particularly in education, where honors has seen some success

- c. Explore mentoring and advising opportunities that introduce graduate students to undergraduate honors students

7. Assistant Director (University Strategic Goal 1.5)

The university strategic plan includes the specific goal of hiring a full-time Assistant Director. In the spring of 2014, the Honors Program and Office of the Provost conducted a national search and successfully hired an Assistant Director. This particular strategic initiative was included in the university plan as a call for adequate and proper staffing of the Honors Program. As it looks to grow and become integral to the Salisbury University campus community, the Honors Program must ensure that staff and faculty are adequately trained to lead the Program in the future. Consequently, the Honors Program expands the university goal to have the Assistant Director:

- a. Train through the attendance of national workshops on honors education
- b. Participate in state, regional, and national honors conferences
- c. Serve in leadership positions within state, regional, and national honors councils

8. Honors Program-Size (University Strategic Goal 1.5)

The Bellavance Honors Program should reflect the larger student body—relative to overall numbers and majors within schools. The National Collegiate Honors Council recommends an Honors Program comprise approximately 6-8% of the undergraduate student body. In 2012, the Honors Program represented only 3.45% of undergraduates at Salisbury University; in 2013 it was less than 3%. An Honors Program representing between 6-8% of the current undergraduate student body would consist of between 478 and 637 students.

Growth must come in the form of increased recruitment efforts both on and off campus. The Honors freshman class of 2013 consisted of 83 students (or 6.5%) of the incoming freshman class, with as many as 50% of those freshmen withdrawing from the Honors Program before reaching their senior year. In order to serve between 478-637 students, the Honors Program needs to recruit an incoming cohort that equals 10% of the freshman class and recruit on-campus students to join the Honors Program or take courses. This growth will not happen overnight. In fact, low retention

accompanied by high attrition rates between 2009 and 2013 will lead to a shrinking honors student body in the near term, while a record incoming freshman class in 2014 indicates that growth is possible. In order to increase the number of students participating in honors to between 6-8% of the undergraduate student body by attracting current students, the Honors Program will:

- a. Expand its course offerings to attract on-campus students
- b. Create opportunities and events not limited to current honors students
- c. Incorporate alternative experiences within the honors curriculum to reward current students who do not enjoy much flexibility in their course schedules
- d. Recruit faculty members from across campus to offer a diversity of honors courses that extend beyond the current offerings

9. Honors Program-Incorporation (University Strategic Goal 1.5)

In 2012 students from all four schools enrolled in honors courses and participated in Honors Program activities. However, the course offerings in honors were limited primarily to courses in the humanities and social sciences. In 2013, the Honors Program offered several courses taught by faculty members from the Seidel and Henson Schools. Those courses were very popular and demonstrated a demand for more science-centered honors sections. This demand reflected growing numbers of students from the Henson School of Science—2010 marked the first year that freshmen declaring majors in the Henson School outnumbered those in the Fulton School of Liberal Arts; Henson students have represented the majority of incoming freshmen since. At the same time, the Seidel and Perdue Schools have been underrepresented in the Honors Program—both in students and in course offerings. In order to offer honors programming to students from all four schools, the Honors Program will:

- a. Retain a robust honors curriculum based in the humanities and social sciences that appeals to liberal arts students and enhances their undergraduate experience
- b. Develop multiple paths to graduate with university honors that are both rich in breadth and which enable students to study more deeply within their major
- c. Seek faculty liaisons within each of the four schools that might act as advocates for the

honors program and help advise honors students

- d.** Develop student ambassador program that includes students from each of the four schools by fall 2015
- e.** Develop an experimental Honors STEM Living Learning Community by fall 2015
- f.** Invite the Deans and Department Chairpersons to visit the Honors Center and speak with undecided honors students (10% of each year's freshman class)
- g.** Increase the number of incoming honors students from the Seidel School from 11% to 14% by 2019
- h.** Increase the number of incoming honors students from the Perdue School from 10% to 14% by 2019
- i.** Form a task force of faculty members and administrators to develop the designation of "Affiliated Honors Faculty" and explore financial or other types of compensation/rewards by fall 2017
- j.** Offer honors courses each semester that are developed by faculty members in each of the four schools by fall 2017

10. Honors Endowment--General (University Strategic Goal 1.5)

The Honors Program controls three budget accounts through the Foundation. The first is a specific account linked to the Roth Thesis Prize, given each year to the most outstanding Honors Thesis. The interest generated through this account provides a small cash prize for the winner (in recent years \$250-\$500). The second account, the Bellavance Foundation Scholarship account, can be used for student scholarships, student travel grants, and any technology needs dedicated to the students of the Honors Program. In recent years, this account has generated annually between \$6,000 and \$9,000. The third is a new account for unrestricted donations used to fund yearly honors activities. In order to recruit students and fully fund students traveling to conferences to present their research, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Increase the number of new individual donors to the Bellavance Honors Program Foundation account by four each year between 2015 and 2019
- b.** Work with the development office to raise an additional \$10,000 toward the Bellavance Foundation Scholarship fund by 2019
- c.** Work with the development office to create funding opportunities for specialized honors

programming that exists outside of the Bellavance endowment

- d.** Work with the development office to attract one major donor for honors by 2019

Focus Area 2: Recruit and Retain a Diverse Group of Students

11. Recruitment (University Strategic Goal 1.6)

In implementing the enrollment master plan, the Honors Program will seek to continue recruiting 10% of the incoming freshman class and maintain the quality of students based on benchmarks established in 2014-2015--4.027 weighted high school gpa, SAT superscore 1871, ACT composite of 27.75. The Honors Program also seeks to recruit more students from out-of-state (OOS) and from diverse backgrounds--OOS students in the 2014-2015 equaled 16.1%. To maintain the quantity and quality of incoming students, as well as diversify its annual cohort, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Transition marketing materials from staff-generated brochures and one-sheets to student-produced newsletters and testimonials
- b.** Work with the Publications Office to update Honors Program webpage
- c.** Investigate the creation of honors scholars and scholarships in each school that are distributed through the Honors Program (i.e., Smith Honors Scholar in the Sciences, John Doe Honors Scholar in Education, etc)
- d.** Continue to work with the Office of Admissions to develop Scholars Day activities that include special programming with prospective honors students
- e.** Develop an expedited application process that targets prospective students who have missed the priority deadline
- f.** Work with the Office of Admissions to extend Honors Program marketing and outreach beyond the Mid-Atlantic region

12. Retention and Graduation (University Strategic Goal 1.7)

Honors Programs and Colleges typically benefit their institutions by retaining students at higher rate than the general student body. As Salisbury University reached an 83.7% freshman to sophomore retention rate by 2013, the Honors Program likewise saw an increase in its rates. However, the Honors Program

did experience low retention rates between 2008 and 2011 (under 80%), and its 2013 rate of 84.91% was only one percentage point higher than the university average. Moreover, the rate at which the Honors Program itself retained students within honors, fell to 44% and 53% in 2011 and 2012.

Together, several years of low university retention rates and recent honors retention rates will seriously affect the ability of the Honors Program to graduate Salisbury University students with "university honors." For example, the 2008-2009 Honors Program cohort, with a university retention rate of 79% and an Honors Program retention rate of 77%, witnessed a mere 28% graduation rate with full university honors.

In 2013-2014, the Honors Program took several steps to increase freshman-to-sophomore retention, including a reinvestment in the Honors Living Learning Communities (both time and money), the addition of specialized freshmen advising, and an increase in the number of honors extracurricular activities. As a result, honors students were retained at a much higher rate than in previous years (95.45% university, 94.32% within honors). In order to maintain these numbers in order to better serve students, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Hire an Assistant Director to coordinate the Living Learning Communities and increase honors programming
- b.** Expand the number of Honors Living Learning Communities to serve more incoming honors students by fall 2015
- c.** Work with Campus Housing to explore the possibility of creating a sophomore Honors Living Learning Community that might serve as mentors for the incoming freshman LLC honors students
- d.** Work with Campus Housing to explore the possibility of creating a specialized honors housing dorm that consists of the Honors Living Learning Communities
- e.** Maintain an average freshman-sophomore retention rate to 92% between 2014-2019.
- f.** Raise five-year graduation rate to 82% by 2019 (will experience slight dip next two years as a result of poor retention between 2008-2011).
- g.** Maintain a retention rate within the Honors Program of at least 75% between 2015-2019

- h.** Raise five-year graduation rate with full honors distinction to 35% by 2018 and then 40% by 2019

Focus Area 3: International Students and Study Abroad

13. Global Learning (University Strategic Goal 1.8)

The Honors Program has supported study abroad opportunities for its students since its founding. In fact, since 2008 the Honors Program has permitted students to substitute a study abroad experience in place of one upper level class. In order to encourage more honors students taking advantage of study abroad opportunities, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Work with the Center for International Education to create online space for honors students studying abroad to post blogs and link those to Center for International Education and Honors Program webpages by fall 2016
- b.** Create guidelines for student study-abroad blogs and reports that can be used on departmental websites by fall 2015
- c.** Include full report of honors students who have studied abroad in the Honors Program annual report by fall 2016

Focus Area 4: Recruit, Support, and Retain Faculty

14. Faculty Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activities (University Strategic Goal 1.10)

Honors Program and Colleges include opportunities for faculty members to engage in research and creative projects with students, as well as support the larger institution's mission of encouraging faculty scholarship. In order to aid Salisbury University in fulfilling these goals, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Work with the Office of the Provost to explore the possibility of compensating faculty members for teaching in honors by way of scholarship and/or research assistance
- b.** Work with the Office of the Provost to investigate how other universities encourage faculty members to teach honors courses and work with honors students on research, such as offering competitive research grants or leave in exchange for

dedicating a year of teaching to the Honors Program

Focus Area 5: Student Advising Process

15. Advising (University Strategic Goal 1.11)

The Honors Program provides secondary advisement for all “active” students enrolled in the Honors Program. Students select Honors courses and submit requests directly to the Honors Director, who places students in classes based on student need and availability. In addition, each semester the director and assistant director of the Honors Program meet with students who are in jeopardy of losing “active” status. In order to improve honors advisement, the Honors Program will:

- e.** Work with the Office of the Provost to develop a method of identifying honors students in Gullnet and PeopleSoft and tracking their progress through an online audit by spring 2016
- f.** Meet annually with advising coordinators to provide up-to-date information about the honors advising process beginning in spring 2015
- g.** Work with the Office of Publications to create a section of the Honors Program webpage that helps inform student advisors, students, and prospective students and parents of honors related advising issues by spring 2015
- h.** Implement Honors Committee plan for “at risk” advising by spring 2015

Goal 2: EMBRACE innovation to enhance the Salisbury University experience

1. Academic Commons and Library (University Strategic Goal 2.1)

The construction of the new Academic Commons building offers an opportunity for the Honors Program to meet an internal goal to expand across campus and be more visible to non-honors students and the larger campus community. In order to do so, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Work more closely with librarians to assess honors needs for both instructional and collections development
- b.** Investigate opportunities for the Honors Program to have a place within the new Academic Commons, as it purports to become a hub of academic activity and a symbol of the importance of higher education in the broader community

2. Faculty Learning Communities (University Strategic Goal 2.2)

Honors Programs and Colleges typically serve as incubators for instructional innovation and the development of experimental courses and student-centered learning. In addition, Honors Programs and Colleges are composed of carefully selected instructors who demonstrate expertise in learner-centered and learner-directed education. As Salisbury University seeks to create an Office of Innovation in Teaching and Learning to foster instructional development toward these ends, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Serve as an incubator for faculty learning communities as the Academic Commons is constructed and the Office of Innovation in Teaching and Learning is in the process of being created
- b.** Host a Faculty Learning Community in the fall 2014 and spring 2015 dedicated to issues in higher education and teaching strategies

3. Interdisciplinarity and Team-Teaching (University Strategic Goal 2.2)

Since they serve all schools and disciplines on a university campus, Honors Programs and Colleges typically offer a curriculum that is interdisciplinary in nature. In addition, many programs offer team-taught courses that facilitate deeper exploration of cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary themes and

issues. In order to support innovative collaborative teaching, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Form a task force to determine funding opportunities and administrative structure for compensating and rewarding interdisciplinary and team-teaching within the Honors Program
- b.** Offer team-taught courses as part of its regular offerings by fall 2016

4. Alternative Experiences and Potential Partnerships (University Strategic Goal 2.4)

According to the National Collegiate Honors Council, Honors Programs and Colleges provide “opportunities for measurably broader, deeper, and more complex learning-centered and learner-directed experiences for its students than are available elsewhere in the institution.” As such, the Bellavance Honors Program at Salisbury University will:

- a.** Continue to expand undergraduate honors opportunities that include experiential components and extracurricular academic experiences
- b.** Form a community advisory board that will help identify opportunities for internships, practicums, and other such opportunities that can fulfill the honors mission
- c.** Develop a curriculum model that includes credit compensation for innovative learning experiences that do not traditionally fit into the standard university curriculum by fall 2016
- d.** Work with other Honors Programs and Colleges elsewhere in the United States to create experiential class experiences during the summer and winter sessions

Goal 3: FOSTER a sense of community on campus and at the local, national, and international level

1. Transfer Partnerships (University Strategic Goal 3.1)

The Honors Program has only one existing relationship with an area community college: Wor Wic Community College. In the past year, the Honors Program Director has begun working with Northern Virginia Community College to offer direct honors-to-honors articulation and to identify university programs that might be of interest to NOVA students. Over the next five years, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Continue to develop a relationship with Northern Virginia Community College by sending Salisbury University representatives to NOVA campuses to recruit honors students
- b.** Invite prospective NOVA honors students to visit the Salisbury campus
- c.** Investigate additional two-year honors program partnerships in the region
- d.** Visit Wor Wic Community campus once per semester and invite Wor Wic students to a annual transfer day event at the Honors Center

2. Honors Teaching Post-Doc (University Strategic Goal 3.1)

As Salisbury University explores the option of creating selected post-doctoral teaching appointments to help increase the diversity of campus, the Honors Program could host one of these instructors, who will aid in fulfilling teaching needs within the Honors Program. In order to determine if a post-doctoral could benefit the Honors Program and the campus, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Work with the Office of the Provost to investigate the creation of an honors teaching post-doctoral appointment to address areas of need (sciences, education, business, global studies, etc)

3. Community Outreach (University Strategic Goal 3.3)

Beginning in 2014, the Honors Program will begin to implement its core values and learning outcomes throughout the honors curriculum. Since the core values include “community engagement and leadership,” the Honors Program will:

- a.** Devote Honors Program financial resources to class projects that seek to emphasize “community engagement and leadership”
- b.** Develop a method of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of community partnerships and activities offered by honors courses
- c.** Incorporate community engagement as part of revised curriculum design

4. Advisory Board and Alumni Events/Activities (University Strategic Goal 3.5)

In order to more fully engage Honors Program alumni, as well as create traditions and attachments among current honors students, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Create an advisory board, consisting of alumni, current students, and community partners, to provide feedback for the program and encourage mentorships between former and current students.
- b.** Host an annual homecoming event at the Honors Center beginning in fall 2014
- c.** Work with the Salisbury University Alumni Association to create a special group of honors alumni by fall 2015
- d.** Distribute issues of the newly reimagined *Saunterer* to members of the honors alumni group beginning in spring 2016
- e.** Create a comprehensive list of honors alumni
- f.** Find Alumni willing to share their stories for a special section of the Honors Program webpage by fall 2015
- g.** Invite select alumni and honored guests to annual spring graduation and honors awards banquet

Goal 4: PROVIDE appropriate programs, spaces, and resources for all members of the campus community

Focus Area 1: Financial Resources

1. Increase Honors Foundation Scholarships (University Strategic Goal 4.2)

The Honors Program seeks to aid the SU Foundation in its goal of increasing the percentage of students who receive scholarship support from the Foundation by 15%. Hence, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Award a minimum of one four-year \$1,000 Bellavance Scholarship each year beginning in fall 2015

Focus Area 3: Spaces

3. Honors College and Center (University Strategic Goal 4.5)

As the Honors Program grows from 220 students to 440-plus students over the next five years, as well as the possibility that it transitions from an Honors Program to an Honors College, the current Bellavance Honors Center and Manokin dormitory will no longer meet the needs of the program. This growth will necessitate not only more space, but also more flexible and innovative learning environments for students in the program. To anticipate these needs, the Honors Program will:

- a.** Form a working committee to investigate the possibility of transitioning the Bellavance Honors Program to the Bellavance Honors College by fall 2016
- b.** Form a task force to investigate the possibility of creating an Honors Center that is central to the SU campus and includes honors housing, office space, classrooms, computer labs, and student study rooms in a single building by fall 2015