

# Program Review Response and Action Plan

## Introduction

The University Honors Program (UHP) provides a transformative learning environment for highly-motivated undergraduate students at Idaho State University. As the only Honors bachelor's degree-granting institution in Idaho, UHP offers students a unique opportunity to develop intellectual curiosity, academic accomplishments, and social consciousness. In recent years, admission to the program has become highly competitive, indicating UHP's importance to the academic landscape of Idaho and the region more broadly. Moreover, UHP provides stable enrollment and high student retention, and Honors students make up a core constituency of active and engaged resident students.

UHP recently completed its seven year review cycle, which included an extensive self-study report as well as an external review conducted by representatives of the National Collegiate Honors Council. UHP leadership appreciated the chance to reflect on the program's strengths, achievements, opportunities, and vulnerabilities. The review process highlighted three areas of significant precarity that necessitate urgent internal and institutional action.

In its 20-year history, UHP's record of success, growth, and contribution to the university is a testament to motivated leadership who dedicated countless hours to building the program. However, the time has come for UHP, in partnership with the university, to shore up its legacy. UHP must put structures in place that make the program sustainable and ensure that current and future generations of ISU Honors students will benefit from the high-impact opportunities offered in UHP. Likewise, such changes will assure that ISU and the community at large can continue to benefit from the creativity, dedication, and commitment of Honors students and alumni.

This document provides a response overview to the review process. It outlines **three critical recommendations** for action related to the future of UHP, all of which align with President Robert Wagner's recently-announced **Opportunity-Aligned Resourcing model (items in bold below)**. The UHP leadership team has discussed and collaborated on this report, and agrees with the major concerns and goals outlined below; they are listed in order of priority.

## Objective 1. Staffing

### Concerns

As indicated in UHP's self study and the external review report, staffing issues present a major source of strategic vulnerability, both to the ongoing functions of the program as well as measures of student success. Indeed, the Program Review Report conducted by the National Collegiate Honors Council recommends that ISU "rectify several current *critical* personnel needs *immediately*" (page 17, emphasis in original). UHP leadership identifies the following concerns related to staffing and primary areas for improvement:

1. Inadequate staffing, particularly over summer months

2. Overly-expansive responsibilities for Instructor/Coordinators
3. Part-time UHP Director position and part-time Academic Support staff member
4. Current staffing situation leaves no room for programmatic growth (number of students served, services available, programmatic offerings, etc.)

### Goals

The UHP leadership team proposes the following timeline for further action related to staffing:

#### **AY 24-25**

1. Successfully complete the (currently running) search for the vacant Instructor/Coordinator position and onboard the new team member in January, 2025
2. Advocate for a seven-year plan for **growing student enrollment** while adjusting UHP's staffing model (see attached memo for thorough details)
  - a. AY 2025-26: convert UHP Director position to a full-time role
  - b. AY 2027-28: convert UHP Academic Support position to a full-time role
  - c. AY 2029-30: assuming growth targets are met, add additional Instructor/Coordinator, specializing in competitive scholarships and fellowships advising and outreach

#### **May 2025**

3. Reassess staffing goals based on leadership feedback and revise strategic action plan for the following years

#### **7-Year Goals**

4. Implement a UHP staffing scheme that:
  - a. Allows at least 25% growth in **student enrollment** in UHP
  - b. Allows for programmatic growth
    - i. **Student success** services
    - ii. Advising capacity and coverage for **student success outcomes**
    - iii. Expanded community and alumni outreach
    - iv. Development of new and existing **external partnerships**
    - v. Expanded fundraising capacity
  - c. Expands UHP's tradition of excellence in **undergraduate research and academic success**
  - d. Improves **staff retention** in order to assure continuity for students and staff
  - e. Assures stability and continuity for current and future Honors Students
  - f. Secures UHP's longevity within ISU

## Objective 2. Budget

### Concerns

In addition to staffing resources, UHP's self study and external review also identified the program's budget as an area of significant concern. Several of the goals listed in the previous section are directly dependent on the UHP budget. UHP has a historical tradition of thriftiness, strategic partnerships with other university units, and the generous goodwill (in terms of time and monetary resources) from staff, UHP leadership, and community benefactors. However, the 7-year review process revealed ways in which

the current budgetary model presents impediments, both to future growth and to the basic maintenance of existing services.

More specifically, UHP has identified several areas of opportunity to improve UHP's budget outlook:

1. Develop additional fundraisers (annual campaigns and one-off specialized campaigns) to complement the longstanding Opportuni-Tea spring fundraising event
2. Strengthen UHP's relationship with ISU's Foundation and development professionals
3. Develop additional funding streams beyond the charitable/foundation funding that is UHP's primary source of operations funds

UHP finds itself at a critical juncture in its financial history. With several endowments (including the new Bobette Wilhelm Endowment) managed by the ISU Foundation, UHP has secured some long-term resources. However, the unrestricted/spendable portions of these funds remain limited. Because so much of UHP's budget relies on Foundation distributions, it limits how and when the program can spend money without drawing down principal funds.

Given our current limited staffing, UHP acknowledges that our funding model may need to suffice for the immediate future. However, reconsidering certain aspects of UHP's budget model may result in solutions that could be implemented down the road.

## **Goals**

### **AY 24-25**

1. Cultivate a collaborative relationship with the ISU Foundation that encourages new fundraising approaches and better utilizes the fundraising expertise of our Philanthropic Advisor
2. Consider adjustments to the Opportuni-Tea for both Spring 2025 and the long-term
3. Develop additional fundraising campaigns to complement the Opportuni-Tea
4. Identify and advocate for additional sources of university financial support
5. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of adopting a student fee model
6. Propose possible solutions to the existing budget model to ASAP leadership

### **May 2025**

7. Reassess financial goals and develop a strategic action plan for AY 25-26 and AY 26-27.

### **7-Year Goals**

8. Develop and implement a UHP budget model that
  - a. Reduces UHP's exclusive dependence on charitable donations and foundation funds
  - b. Enables UHP to continue to plan on a multiple-year basis for longer-term programmatic initiatives, such as:
    - i. New fundraising campaigns
    - ii. Expanded student opportunities (service learning, scholarships)
    - iii. Staffing expansion (see Objective 1)
  - c. Cultivates additional stable sources of funding within the University budget

## Objective 3. Institutional Visibility, Support, and Collaboration

### Concerns

Finally, UHP's self study and external review identified institutional visibility, support, and collaboration as another area for improvement. These issues arose in several areas of the review process, but are particularly evident in Objective 5 of our self-study ("Enhance Programmatic Clarity About the Honors Program," page 56) and 1B of our external review. External reviewers noted that although UHP benefits from many strategic partnerships with units across the university, Honors leadership is not currently "part of the institutional strategic planning process or strategic enrollment process" (Program Review Report, page 3). While UHP relies on the steadfast advocacy of Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Initiatives, Dr. Cynthia Hill, UHP's core staff is currently spread too thin to be able to engage in effective outreach across campus. Because the program depends on the goodwill and collaboration of all departments, colleges, and units, inconsistent visibility and sustained collaboration is a detriment to student outcomes.

### Goals

#### **AY 24-25**

1. In collaboration with members of university upper administration, develop ways UHP can be better aligned with ISU's values of **teamwork, collaboration, and shared responsibility**
2. Cultivate new administration partnerships that can help promote the mission, activities, and status of the UHP
3. Meet with representative groups (e.g. Leadership Council, Deans' Council, college-level Chairs' Councils, Faculty Senate, Admissions, Scholarships, Academic Advising) to disseminate consistent messaging and increase awareness about UHP
4. Reconstitute the UHP Advisory Committee and ask members to serve as ambassadors to their home departments and colleges

#### **May 2025**

5. Reassess programmatic visibility goals and develop a strategic action plan for AY 25-26 and AY 26-27.

#### **7-Year Goals**

6. Develop strategic partnerships (internal and external) that
  - a. Promote UHP's presence and value to the university
  - b. Enable UHP to contribute to university strategic planning discussions
  - c. Equip UHP to align and integrate its programs with broader university initiatives
  - d. Establish consistent lines of communication between UHP leadership and university- and college-level administrators

## Objective 4. Assessment

### Concerns

Finally, UHP acknowledges the need to revise several components of our programmatic assessment procedure. Due to staffing turnover during the last five years, several assessment mechanisms have been inconsistently implemented, including data collection, regular analysis, and the submission of annual

reports. These inconsistencies have been exacerbated by workload concerns as outlined in Objective 1 above; UHP simply has not had the staff time to thoroughly evaluate existing assessment plans and propose changes. Assessment is an essential requirement for UHP to be able to reflect on performance, adjust procedures as necessary, and think critically about the future.

## **Goals**

### **AY 24-25**

1. Schedule extended meeting time during Spring 2025 for UHP staff to holistically review our assessment procedures and propose/implement changes. Known needs include:
2. Redesign data collection to directly align with UHP's stated programmatic learning objectives.
  - a. Develop streamlined mechanisms for collecting student data (through surveys or other tools); refine survey questions
  - b. Implement intuitive data storage strategy
  - c. Establish annual routine for preparing and executing assessment activities
3. Update Program Assessment Plan
  - a. Align Assessment Plan with current UHP capacity
  - b. Develop more direct instructions for annual review procedure
  - c. Add specific instructions that link collected data with learning objectives
4. Update GERC Assessment Plans for Honors Humanities I and II (HONS 1101 and 1102)
  - a. In collaboration with the English Department, which currently teaches these courses, develop an equitable system for assigning assessment responsibilities.
  - b. Refine existing Assessment Plans for these courses to eliminate ambiguous instructions and excessive steps.
  - c. Submit revised Assessment Plans to GERC for approval.

### **October 2025**

5. Reassess programmatic assessment based on the experience of year one, if necessary.
6. Create a strategic action plan for AY 25-26 and AY 26-27.

### **7-Year Goals**

7. Develop assessment policies and procedures that
  - a. Align with UHP's vision, goals, values, and staff capacity
  - b. Are easy to implement on a predictable annual schedule
  - c. Facilitate easy and long-term data collection, storage, and reference