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TO: Kim Wilcox, Provost
Doug Estry, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education
Linda Stanford, Associate Provost for Academic Services

FROM: Ron Fisher, Dean

SUBJECT: Academic Scholars Program

The Academic Scholars Program was recommended by the Office of the Provost and Honors College and implemented for Fall Semester 2001, initially on a pilot basis, in accordance with a recommendation from the University Committee on Academic Policy. Given the continuing success of the Academic Scholars Program, Honors College now recommends that it be made permanent.

Consideration and approval by UCAP was deemed appropriate because participants in the Academic Scholars Program may substitute a specific set of classes for the University's general Integrative Studies requirements. Accordingly, the University Committee on Academic Programs approved the Program on a two-year trial basis on November 30, 2000. The University Committee on Honors Programs (which is an advisory committee) also reviewed the ASP proposal. At its meeting on October 24, 2002, the University Committee on Academic policy approved the continuation of the Academic Scholars Program for an additional three-year period.



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The Academic Scholars Program is targeted to incoming freshman students with strong academic records that place them near, but just short of, eligibility for Honors College membership as incoming freshmen. The overall goal for the Academic Scholars Program is to provide additional options for academic enrichment for this group of students, which might provide a pathway to joining Honors College or other campus academic options later, if desired, and encourage more students of this type to enroll at MSU. Specific attractions for the students include 1) the opportunity for more challenging classes in the first two years than provided through standard MSU programs, included some prescribed substitutions for Integrative Studies; 2) access to smaller classes; 3) the opportunity to begin Honors work sooner and more extensively than otherwise; 4) the option to reside with other Scholars in a single residence hall floor (Holden Hall); 5) recognition of academic achievement in high school; 6) recognition of the Scholar's enhanced work at MSU through special notation on the student's transcript and diploma and at Commencement.

Admitted students are invited to join ASP if they have a high school GPA of 3.8 or higher and an ACT score of at least 28 or an SAT score of at least 1240. The Program accepts approximately 200 freshmen students each year. Beginning in 2005, students from outside Michigan invited to join ASP received a partial tuition scholarship. Participants are expected to (i) take one Honors course or section in Integrative Studies, (ii) take one additional Honors course or section in any area, (iii) take two additional enhanced classes (Honors courses or sections, Honors options in regular courses, and substitute courses for Integrative Studies approved for the Academic Scholars Program), and attain at least a 3.0 GPA by the end of the second year. Professor Tess Tavormina, Department of English and Honors College, serves as faculty coordinator for the Program. While Professor Tavormina is on sabbatical for the 2006-07 year, Professor Lynmarie Posey, Department of Chemistry, is serving as faculty coordinator.

The expectation that ASP participants take both Honors IS classes and approved substitutes for IS classes was anticipated to increase demand for such classes. Accordingly, the Office of the Provost provided additional resources to five departments and colleges, initially on a specific, non-recurring basis, to cover the cost of additional classes. Those resources have now been made recurring allocations in the respective units' budgets.

The following reflects the continuing success of the Academic Scholars Program:

- The Academic Scholars Program continues to help attract substantial numbers of highly qualified students to MSU. More than 7,000 admitted students have been invited to join ASP in the past six years, with more than 2,000 of them enrolling at MSU. Given the target annual new membership of 200, approximately 1,200 participated in ASP.
- ASP is increasingly effective in attracting out-of-state students. For 2006, more than 20 percent of incoming ASP students were from outside of Michigan.
- Students participating in ASP are doing well academically; participants have a 3.5 average GPA after two years, just slightly less than for all Honors College members, but substantially higher than the MSU student population in general.
- ASP has been an effective path to join Honors College for many students, with 38 percent of ASP participants joining Honors College at the end of the first year.
- ASP participants clearly are pursuing enhanced academic programs compared to regular MSU undergraduates. Among students in the first five cohorts (entering MSU in 2001 to 2005), 58 percent of the participants either completed the four enhanced classes during the first two years or joined Honors College (with an even greater enhanced class expectation).