October 1, 2015

To: All University Faculty

From: Serge Rudaz, Professor of Physics and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education
Founding Director, University Honors Program

Re: Call for proposals of Honors Seminars for 2016–2017

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to request your help by contributing to the University Honors Program’s curriculum for the academic year 2016–17. In particular, I would like to invite you to consider teaching an Honors Seminar in your area of expertise.

The campus-wide University Honors program (UHP) aims to provide an ever more engaging interdisciplinary undergraduate experience to its outstanding students. The University is committed to offering a rewarding and challenging experience for all of these exceptional students, and the UHP curriculum continues to be strengthened as a means toward that goal. The Honors curriculum includes an expanded selection of departmental Honors courses and topical Honors Seminars: You will find a list of Honors Seminars taught this year on the UHP website.

Honors Seminars taught at the 2xxx level for freshmen and sophomore students are designed to be introductory, yet comprehensive courses focused on innovative ideas and topical issues from disciplines across campus (for example, an HSEM at this level can be an expanded version of an especially successful Freshman Seminar.) Seminars at the 3xxx level are typically aimed at juniors and seniors and may address more complex themes through advanced reading, writing, and critical thinking. Honors Seminars at either level are offered for two or three credits, usually without specific course prerequisites (although appropriate proficiencies can be expected of the students). HSEM enrollment is typically limited to no more than 20–25 students. The University Honors Program is seeking to offer between fifteen and eighteen Honors Seminars each semester.

If you enjoy teaching fully engaged students in an interactive environment, as well as experimenting with a variety of instructional styles (for example, consider team-teaching with a colleague) you will find teaching an Honors Seminar a richly rewarding experience. As the program grows we want to expand our honors offerings with new seminars from faculty across...
the University who are addressing the technical, economic, societal, cultural, and ethical aspects of the many challenges facing our society in the 21st century

Honors seminars carry the HSEM designator which is specific to UHP and is not attached to any college—however, tuition revenues from Honors Seminars will be returned to the offering unit or college. If you are non-teaching faculty, a per-credit payment will be arranged.

I hope you will give careful consideration to offering an Honors Seminar next year, especially if you have some flexibility in your teaching duties. If you have taught an HSEM in a previous semester and wish to offer it again, you will need to resubmit the course through this year’s process.

Planning for an Honors Seminar should be done in consultation with your department chair or other person responsible for your department’s undergraduate curriculum. The University Honors Program has set aside some funds for the development of a limited number of HSEMs from departments for which this would be a new initiative.

Do not hesitate to contact me at rudaz001@umn.edu with any questions you may have about the program or about preparing a seminar proposal. To propose an Honors Seminar, please complete the Honors Seminar Proposal form. If you have questions about the proposal process, please contact UHP’s Associate Director, Pamela Baker, at p-bake@umn.edu. We would like to have proposals submitted by the priority deadline of November 23, 2015; if you are interested but unable to complete the proposal form in full within this time frame, please email us to let us know. Proposals submitted after the priority deadline will be considered until projected targets are met.

Please note that if your Honors Seminar proposal is accepted for a particular semester, there is no guarantee that it can be switched to another semester should your schedule change because of the need to manage enrollments. UHP staff will attend to room scheduling, the ordering of textbooks, and other important details for approved Honors seminars.

Thank you very much for contributing to the University Honors Program curriculum!