

*Building
The Future*



 **Lewis**
Honors College

Strategic Plan
2023-2028
(reprint October 2024)



Mission

The mission of the Lewis Honors College is to better the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the world by helping students to explore their purpose, develop intellectually, and lead with integrity.

Vision

The Lewis Honors College will provide a world-class Honors experience that is known for the success of its students, the quality of its faculty and curriculum, the respect of its peers, and the economic and social progress of our communities.

Values

The Lewis Honors College is guided by its core values:

- ◇ Excellence
- ◇ Integrity
- ◇ Innovation
- ◇ Curiosity
- ◇ Mutual respect and human dignity for all
- ◇ Acting against hatred of any person or group
- ◇ Diversity and inclusivity
- ◇ Academic freedom
- ◇ Personal accountability and social responsibility
- ◇ A sense of community
- ◇ Civic engagement and service



LEWIS HONORS COLLEGE

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

PURPOSE IS

LEWIS

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Honors Education at the University of Kentucky

Honors education has a long and proud history at the University of Kentucky (UK). The Honors Program at UK dates back to 1958. For over five and a half decades, it has provided an enhanced academic experience for thousands of students. In the fall of 2015, UK announced its largest single gift in UK history from Tom and Jan Lewis to establish the Lewis Honors College (LHC). Mr. Lewis, a Kentucky native and UK alumnus, wished to “provide a world-class Honors experience that is known for the success of its students, the quality of its faculty and curriculum, the respect of its peers and the economic and social progress of the Commonwealth of Kentucky” (LHC Vision statement).



Honors education is, at its heart, a liberal arts education. Regardless of major, the fundamental goal of Honors education is to provide all students with a broad, critical intellectual base from which they can then engage more deeply and thoughtfully in their chosen fields. Yet it is important to understand that every Honors program or Honors college is also unique, reflecting the character, commitments, and resources of the home institution and, where relevant, the wishes of the benefactor.

UK has its own particular institutional history, which influences the course of Honors education offered here. As a major research

and a land-grant university, UK has a robust research faculty and budget (currently at \$5.6 billion) and large enrollment (22,767 full-time undergraduates in fall 2022). This makes the LHC different from, for example, an Honors program at a small, independent liberal arts college. In a small, independent college, it is reasonable and in line with its mission and resources to expect that all students will have a broad, firm foundation in the liberal arts. Honors programs in such institutions routinely require their Honors students to do work that is specifically interdisciplinary. Such liberal arts college-based Honors programs are relatively small, and that size potentially allows for service, internship, and international experience to be required of all Honors students. What the LHC can require looks different. In a large, land-grant university, the size and scale may allow greater opportunities in some areas (e.g., research and concurrent graduate study), but there are also limitations due to those same factors. The LHC offers an interdisciplinary foundations seminar, and opportunities to pursue interdisciplinary interests, all the while expecting many students to pursue a traditional major. Similarly, a service or internship requirement for 2,000 or more students at an institution of UK’s size would be logistically challenging, if not impossible. Yet, the LHC can often offer students research opportunities they would not find at a smaller institution. The LHC strives to provide the best from both realms. It capitalizes upon the campus’s very high research activity while providing small Honors classes and specific guidance in personal and career development.

The University is, as President Capilouto often says, the “University of, by, and *for* Kentucky.” In his gift to endow and establish the LHC within the flagship, land-grant university of Kentucky, Mr. Lewis ratified and supported this commitment to the students of the Commonwealth by making available a special Honors experience. The mission statement of the LHC begins with the goal of bettering “the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the world” through the education, counseling, and guidance

of Honors students. The size of the LHC is significant, admitting up to 10 percent of the incoming student body, with avenues for students who were not initially admitted (or who were unaware of the opportunity) to apply as rising sophomores or juniors, and enrolling students from every discipline and academic college at UK. As a result, the size and scope of the LHC are thus generous, with 2,200 students currently enrolled at all levels. Additionally, the requirements and offerings of the College, both in terms of curricular requirements and extracurricular offerings, reflect the opportunities and challenges of serving a student body of this size.

The National Collegiate Honors Council recognizes the diversity of what defines an “[Honors Education](#)” and notes five primary “modes” of learning. The LHC and UK are fortunate to be able to provide opportunities in all five areas, although to meet the needs of various majors, Honors students are only required to demonstrate experience in three of the modes (the first, second, and fourth). These modes are:

- ◇ Research and Creative Scholarship (“learning in depth”)
 - » This is exemplified by Honors courses taken within the major and the required senior thesis or creative project.
- ◇ Breadth and Enduring Questions (“multi- or interdisciplinary learning”)
 - » HON 140, the foundation course required of all LHC students and other HON courses that meet UK Core Requirements are examples of this mode.
- ◇ Service Learning and Leadership
 - » The Center for Personal Development (CPD) offers a variety of non-curricular opportunities, including the Rising Leaders program, and leadership development workshops. CPD also collaborates with the Singletary Scholars program, Honors College Ambassador Team, and Peer Mentors to provide leadership development curriculum. Service-learning courses are also offered through the LHC and other units across campus.
- ◇ Experiential Learning
 - » Education Abroad, internships, and undergraduate research experiences are also strongly encouraged and facilitated.
- ◇ Learning Communities
 - » Honors students are encouraged to live within the Honors Residential Experience. All Honors students must participate in Lewis Launch, the new student orientation. Events occur throughout the academic year to foster community and engender intellectual engagement on important issues.



The LHC provides students with holistic engagement during their time at UK, both in terms of their coursework and their personal development. This is a demonstration of the College’s commitment to “help students explore their purpose, develop intellectually, and lead with integrity.” The Honors experience is found inside and outside of the classroom; it is to provide shape, support, and structure for students as they grow and mature through their years at UK. CPD and the Office of College Life provide opportunities for personal growth outside of the major, while Honors advisors and Lewis Faculty collaborate with academic administrators and faculty across the University to provide the highest level of intellectual and critical engagement in their chosen fields of study. These tensions must be kept in mind as the LHC meets the needs of today and plans to achieve the goals of tomorrow.

Principles of the Strategic Plan

The LHC Strategic Plan builds upon our current strengths and directs our energies and resources into realizing the mission and vision of the College, informed by our values. The framework of the plan focuses on the four Principles found in the vision statement:



















- ◇ Student Success
- ◇ Quality of the Honors Experience – including curriculum, faculty, and staff
- ◇ Respect of Peers
- ◇ Community Impact

Each Principle is also aligned with “The UK-PURPOSE,” UK’s strategic plan, and will be indicated by the abbreviations listed below. The Five Principles of UK-PURPOSE are:

- ◇ Putting Students First (SF)
- ◇ Taking Care of Our People (OP)
- ◇ Inspiring Ingenuity (II)
- ◇ Ensuring Greater Trust, Transparency and Accountability (TTA)
- ◇ Bringing Together Many People, One Community (PC)

The LHC’s strategic planning process uses the “OGSM,” or “Objectives, Goals, Strategies, and Measures,” model of strategic planning. However, following the University Plan, and to harmonize these plans, it will refer to LHC’s “Objectives” as “Principles.” In this document, each principle is elaborated with specific goals listed below. Throughout the strategic planning process, a number of tactics that are necessary to achieve these principles and goals were brought forward. (These include, for example, developing the ability to use data to make informed decisions, building a long-term sustainable budget, and capitalizing upon the use of facilities.) These strategies and measures can be found in an internal working document which will be referenced, augmented, and updated annually, with responsible parties listed for each strategy.

Principles of the Strategic Plan

		Student Success	Quality of the Honors Experience	Respect of Peers	Community Impact
The UK-PURPOSE	Putting Students First				
	Taking Care of Our People				
	Inspiring Ingenuity				
	Ensuring Greater Trust, Transparency and Accountability				
	Bringing Together Many People, One Community				

Principle 1: Student Success – SF, OP, II, TTA, PC

The LHC provides an *enhanced* course of instruction for outstanding, highly motivated students from all programs of study. Honors students are diverse, innovative, intellectually engaged, and interested in creative thought. UK Honors students are expected to be citizens of their university and world and to possess an inquisitive attitude toward a wide range of ideas and intellectual concepts. While all Honors students share these traits, each student is unique, and defining “Student Success” will perforce be just as individual. There is the success of students in the classroom (see Principle 2), engaging in extracurricular and experiential learning, and career placement, whether that be in graduate or professional school or directly into a career. A world-class Honors experience means that the College must seek to facilitate *opportunities* for our students.



Goals

Cultivate a distinctive, supportive, and diverse Honors community where all students experience a sense of belonging.

A sense of belonging and place is important to student success. From recruitment, through orientation (“Lewis Launch”), advising, counseling, coursework, and graduation, LHC students should feel part of a distinctive, supportive, diverse, and inclusive community. It must also be accessible, in all senses of the term, including opportunities for a qualified student to join the LHC as an upper-level admission.

Continually evaluate the student experience by implementing assessment methods to make data-informed decisions.

While each student’s success will be unique, general measures of their success as well as qualitative reflections should be gathered and assessed on an annual basis.

Enhance awareness of and for student success by utilizing effective communication strategies for relevant constituencies.

From recruitment of new students to ensuring that students, faculty, and staff across the University are aware of the College and the opportunities associated with Honors at UK, a clear and strategic communications strategy is vital. This will be developed with input from all units of the College.

Increase alumni networking and engagement to support student success.

A committed and engaged alumni network is one of the best ways to build up and sustain an academic community. Alumni are also some of the best recruiters. Working with our CPD and philanthropy teams, we will create greater connections with alumni and leverage those relationships to support and enhance our students’ opportunities for internships, career readiness, and post-graduate preparation.



Principle 2: Quality of the Honors Experience – SF, OP, II, TTA, PC

The LHC vision statement calls us to provide and be known for our world-class Honors experience. At the heart of that experience is the powerful combination of our people and our programs, both curricular and co-curricular.

Goal 1: Quality of Curriculum

The [Honors Curriculum](#) consists of 30 Honors credits. All Honors students are required to take HON 140: “Knowledge and Society,” the Honors Foundational Seminar. Students may accomplish their remaining credits in a variety of ways, selecting from a choice of Honors coursework campus-wide, and in most



cases, their Honors course will also meet other UK or major requirements. Of their 30 Honors credits, LHC students are required to fulfill six credits through Honors experiences and their curricular experience culminates in an Honors thesis or creative project in the student’s chosen discipline(s).

Ensure Honors classes are of high quality.

Ensure reasonable access to Honors courses for students of all disciplines so that completion of Honors requirements is achievable.

This effort will require support from the faculty and advisors of all Colleges and leadership from all UK Deans and the Provost’s office.

Align the Honors curriculum with best practices of Honors education by offering courses that are “measurably broader, deeper, or more complex than comparable learning experiences” ([NCHC](#)).

The LHC shall develop and provide information, workshops, and training on the nature of an Honors course; encourage departments to develop “best practices” and standing Honors course objectives based upon their discipline; and work with units across UK to develop models for interdisciplinary courses and combinations of courses that coordinate to address a common problem or topic in a transdisciplinary manner.

Foster support, enthusiasm, direction, and guidance to students and faculty to fulfill the Honors Thesis Requirement.

While some students may elect, with the guidance of a faculty mentor, to produce an interdisciplinary thesis, most will find their final Honors requirement to be a culmination of work in their chosen major(s). This can seem daunting to many undergraduates, so it is important to build this into the Honors culture in a positive and affirming manner.



Provide high-value, recognizably Honors opportunities for students to complete their Experiential Learning requirements.

It is important to encourage our students to utilize all resources at UK, including internship, service-learning, and Education Abroad opportunities provided by other units, but where there are opportunities to do something different or in a unique manner, the LHC should develop distinctive, signature programs.

Goal 2: Faculty and Staff

The Honors Faculty includes the 12 lecturers, who make up the Lewis Faculty, and faculty with academic homes in every college at UK. Honors Faculty are teaching both Honors courses and departmental Honors sections of existing UK courses. The staff of the LHC includes academic advisors, personal development counselors, and staff representing College Life, recruitment and admission, and communications, in addition to a variety of support staff. There are also numerous staff across the University who help to support Honors students, curriculum, and programming. It is vital to the success of the College that faculty and staff be supported and provided with opportunities for professional development.



Strengthen relationships among all Honors Faculty and staff across the University.

Continue to recruit and develop talented and supportive Honors Faculty and staff.

The Honors Faculty includes the 12 Lewis Lecturers, who make up the Lewis Faculty, and faculty from across UK who represents all colleges and disciplines. We must continue to support and develop our faculty and staff to meet the needs of our students and reflect the makeup of the student body.

Foster a community within the University where difficult and challenging conversations can be held with integrity and respect.

The Honors community should be a place within the University where difficult and challenging conversations can be entertained. Honors Faculty and staff should exemplify that to students,

demonstrating how to disagree on important topics while being respectful to one another.



Sustain a high level of equitable professional development opportunities for LHC faculty and staff.

As a small college, there are limited opportunities to advance within the LHC, but support for professional development should be robust and readily available.

Principle 3: Respect of Peers – SF, II, TTA

The vision statement of the LHC calls for us to be known for the quality of our program and the respect of our peers. While college rankings often include peer evaluations, such as the *U.S. News and World Report*, there is no such system for ranking Honors colleges. There are fee-based online sites such as *College Kickstart*, *College Transitions*, and *Prep Scholar*, that provide prospective college students advice on selecting colleges. Such sites offer reviews and rankings, but they are not peer-reviewed or accredited. John Willingham had created and published a system for ranking Honors colleges, but he has ceased operations. The last publication was *Inside Honors 2020-2021: Ratings and Reviews of 40 Public University Honors Programs*. (The LHC was not included in the ranking because the college had been in

Lewis Honors College hosted the HERU 2024 Honors Education at Research Universities Conference



existence for only year when the data were collected.) The fulfillment of this principle will be found instead in the College's national and international engagement with its peers. Finally, while much of this effort is focused upon engaging with and earning the respect of our peers within the higher education Honors community, the college must also acknowledge its relationship within UK.

Goals

Be recognized as a national leader in Honors education among other Honors colleges and programs.

Develop LHC graduates who will be highly regarded by graduate and professional programs and prospective employers.

The LHC Dean meets regularly with SEC colleagues and is a founding member of the new [Council on Honors Education](#), an Association for Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) affiliated organization. LHC leadership and faculty will continue to participate in the biennial [Honors Education at Research Universities](#) and the annual [National Collegiate Honors Council](#).

Demonstrate the overall impact of a holistic Honors experience on students' lives and growth.

The assessment of the methods and value of Honors education deserves further exploration and there are colleagues engaged in this area of research.

Be recognized by the UK community for the value of Honors education for UK.

Students in the LHC are enrolled in majors across every discipline and college at UK and many are interested in professional and graduate degrees offered here.



Principle 4: Community Impact – SF, OP, II, TTA, PC

To fulfill the LHC vision statement, the college will make a significant impact on “the economic and social progress of our communities.” This is, of course, the fundamental mission of all land-grant universities and a leading Honors college should have a magnifying effect, by keeping and drawing in the best students in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The key questions to consider in planning and assessing the impact of the College is how it defines its terms: What is “economic and social progress” And, how are “our communities” defined? The mission of the College calls “to better the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the world,” so the definition of community should include expanding circles of impact. These communities include the places where students are recruited, the community at the LHC, the UK community, Lexington, the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and the places Honors students go during their education and post-graduation. How “economic and social progress” is defined and measured is more complex and must be the first order of business.



Goals

Increase community engagement by providing opportunities for students to foster civic responsibility and connection.

A positive impact on communities can be achieved within a student’s time at UK through service-learning, volunteering, and other civic engagements.

Assess the impact of Honors college graduates on the economic and social progress of our communities.

This effort should engage faculty from across the University, but with specific requests to colleagues in pertinent fields, like Education, Social Work, and Economics.

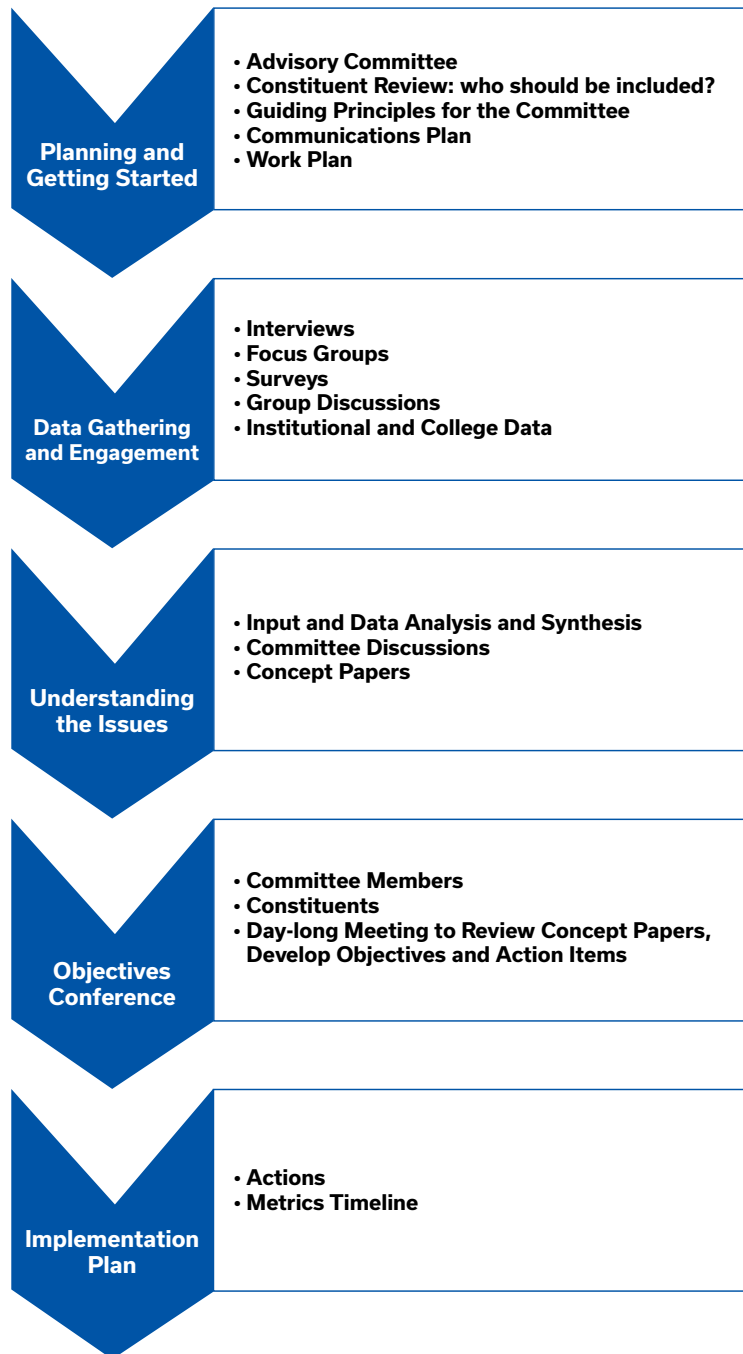


Increase access to the Honors College educational and professional opportunities for students from underrepresented populations.

Across the nation, Honors programs and colleges face challenges in recruiting students of lower economic status, first-generation, and traditionally underrepresented communities.

Appendix: Strategic Planning Process Overview

The LHC began work on this strategic plan during the Spring 2021 semester when Acting Dean Laura Bryan facilitated conversations with faculty and staff about the vision statement. During Fall 2021 semester, the Strategic Planning and Visioning Advisory Committee was formed to implement a collaborative strategic planning process.¹ The committee members were highly engaged in gathering input from their constituents including faculty and staff from across campus, Honors students, alumni, donors, community members, and parents/guardians of students. Over 450 individuals responded to surveys or participated in focus groups, interviews, and group discussions. The committee also reviewed relevant institutional and college data, completed a benchmark study of Honors colleges, and conducted an environmental scan.



¹ Sanaghan, P. (2009). *Collaborative Strategic Planning in Higher Education*. National Association of College and University Business Officers.

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