Mission/Purpose
The Honors Program, a part of the curriculum of The University of West Alabama, exists to give participating honors students an enhanced academic experience during their time as undergraduate. The program consists primarily of a series of rigorous general course together with a more specialized senior thesis or culminating project/presentation in the student’s major field of student. The Honors education also includes participation in a variety of extracurricular cultural and intellectual activities. Being an Honors student means regular exposure to ideas that stimulate, strengthen, and broaden the mind through classes, organized activities, and informal social interaction with other intellectually curious and highly motivated students.

I. Goals and Outcomes/Objectives, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Achievement Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

A. Goal: Address the major educational issues of the region
Address the major educational, social, cultural, and economic issues of the region and in doing so promote a positive image of the institution and the area

1. Objective: Recruit and retain academically superior students
Recruit and retain academically superior students (a core freshman group of at least 30 students)

   a. Measure: Develop supportive community
   Develop a diverse, inspiring, and supportive community of like-minded students and innovative, creative faculty. Procedures for developing this community include: (1) planning joint recruitment events with Admissions and Alumni Affairs, (2) mailing program information to prospective students, (3) updating and maintaining a program website, (4) inviting faculty members to events and activities, and (5) recruiting one or two faculty members from each College each semester for speaking engagements and team-taught courses.

   Source of Evidence: Administrative measure - other

   1. Achievement Target:
   Procedures for developing this community include: (1) planning joint recruitment events with Admissions and Alumni Affairs, (2) mailing program information to prospective students, (3) updating and maintaining a program website, (4) inviting faculty members to events and activities, and (5) recruiting one or two faculty members from each College each semester for speaking engagements and team-taught courses.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met
(1) Honors students participated in Admissions and Alumni Affairs recruitment events, such as attending the Tuscaloosa County UWA Alumni Chapter dinner and assisting with area College Fairs. (2) Prospective Honors-eligible students received electronic communications (which are more cost effective than postal mailings) about the Honors Program, including requirements, benefits, and course offerings. (3) The new website will be launched in Fall 2011 in accordance with university-wide specifications;
photographs and content areas were edited and prepared for application. (4) Several UWA faculty members participated in numerous Honors events: Dr. Richard Schellhammer, Mr. Arthur Grothe, and Dr. David Taylor visited the Fall Honors Forum to deliver lectures; many faculty members also attended the Fall Honors Cookout and the Spring Alabama Humanities Foundation Twain Lecture. (5) Faculty members from the College of Liberal Arts, the College of Education, and the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics presented lectures both to Honors students and at Honors-sponsored university/community events; Dr. John McCall (Biology) and Dr. Lesa Shaul (Languages and Literature) team-taught an Honors Special Topics course entitled "Science and Literature" in SP 2011 for second-year Honors students.

b. Measure: Retain Honors students
Retain students who enroll in Honors program

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

1. Achievement Target:
Retain 50% of Honors students from one fall semester to the next fall semester.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met
The retention target was met; however, after examining admission standards of other comparably sized institutions, the Honors Program director determined that raising the admission scores (ACT and SAT) of incoming Honors freshmen would generate a body of students more likely to perform at a very high academic level, thereby increasing retention and graduation rates in the program. The director met with the Deans' Council to examine and discuss the implementation of the higher scores, and all involved parties agreed that such a plan would benefit not only the Honors Program but the entire University.

3. Action Plans:
Higher Admission Standards for Honors Program
Based on the findings of the Honors Program director and the UWA Deans' Council, the standardized test scores required for admission to the UWA Honors Program will be raised to ensure increased retention and graduation rates. For example, rather than the baseline composite score of 22 on the ACT (a score lower than that required by honors programs/colleges at comparably sized institutions), the composite score of 24 will be required for admission to the UWA Honors Program. Subscores (English, math, science, reading) will undergo a commensurate increase.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High
Implementation Description: Upon approval by the Deans' Council and inclusion in the 2011-2012 undergraduate catalog, this change will be implemented.
Completion Date: 08/08/2011
Responsible Person/Group: Dr. Lesa Shaul
Budget Amount Requested: $0.00

Tracking of students' progress in the Honors Program
In order to effectively track the retention of Honors students in the program, a bi-annual report will be completed by the faculty mentors involved in each student's thesis/senior project.
Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High
Implementation Description: Mentors will submit reports to the director at the midterm and end of each semester; these reports will describe the student's progress and offer direction for further research and/or writing.
Completion Date: 05/01/2011
Responsible Person/Group: Dr. Lesa Shaul, Director of UWA's Honors Program, and the faculty mentors of students engaged in research projects.
Additional Resources Requested: Copy services
Budget Amount Requested: $0.00

c. Measure: Expose students to various cultural experiences
Honors Program members will attend cultural events (museum visits, arts festivals and exhibitions, book and film lectures, etc.) over the course of one academic year

Source of Evidence: Activity volume

1. Achievement Target:
Over the course of the academic year, the students in UWA's Honors Program will participate in a number of cultural activities. During the fall semester, the students will go on one overnight trip to a location of cultural or artistic interest; for example, in the fall of 2010, Honors students will travel to New Orleans to tour the National WWII Museum and other points of interest throughout the city. In the spring semester, the students will travel to Montgomery to attend a play at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. In addition to these travels, the students will also attend various cultural events on campus and around the area.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met
The students in UWA's Honors Program participated in a number of cultural activities. During the fall semester, the students went on one overnight trip to a location of cultural or artistic interest; for example, in the fall of 2010, Honors students traveled to New Orleans to tour the National WWII Museum and other points of interest throughout the city. In the spring semester, the students traveled to Montgomery to attend a play at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. In addition to these travels, the students also attended various cultural events on campus and around the area.

3. Action Plan:
Cultural Enhancement Activities
The students in UWA's Honors Program will continue to participate in a number of cultural activities. During the fall semester, the students will go on one overnight trip to a location of cultural or artistic interest; for example, in the fall of 2011, Honors students will travel to attend a play at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival and tour other sites of interest. In addition to this proposed trip, the students also attended various cultural events on campus and around the area. Dr. Richard Schellhammer and Dr. Lesa Shaul are working on an overseas trip to Florence and Rome for the summer of 2012.
2. Objective: Provide effective advising
Compliment enhanced course offerings with effective advising.

   a. Measure: Student advising will be effective
   Honors students will complete a Student Satisfaction Survey that will indicate the advisor's role in helping the students plan their coursework, which in turn will help to strengthen the student/faculty bond.

   Source of Evidence: Client satisfaction survey (student, faculty)

   1. Achievement Target:
   75% of Honors students will indicate satisfaction with advisors.

   2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Not Reported This Cycle
   No formal survey of Honors students' satisfaction with advising was conducted during the 2010-2011 cycle. Since the Honors Program does not handle advising (rather, advising takes place within the students' respective degree-granting colleges), any satisfaction surveys would need to be conducted by these colleges. For the 2011-2012 cycle, the Honors Program director plans to collaborate with colleges to determine the satisfaction levels of Honors students.

3. Objective: Supplement coursework with research, internship, artistic, service, scholarly, and other opportunities
Supplement coursework with research, internship, artistic, service, scholarly, and other opportunities

   a. Measure: Honors students will gain admission to graduate and professional programs
   Honors students will gain admission to graduate and professional programs

   Source of Evidence: Graduate/professional school acceptance rate

   1. Achievement Target:
   20% of graduating Honors students will gain admission to graduate and professional programs

   2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met
   100% of graduating Honors students gained admission to graduate programs.

   b. Measure: Honors juniors and seniors will receive assistance with applications
   Honors juniors and seniors will attend workshops and help sessions to assist with graduate/med/law school applications.

   Source of Evidence: Activity volume

   1. Achievement Target:
   All (100%) juniors and seniors will attend workshops and/or help sessions
2. **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met**  
100% of juniors and seniors attended workshops and/or help sessions concerning application to graduate schools. Some of the workshops were conducted by the specific departments in which Honors students were majoring; other workshops and help sessions were conducted on an individual basis concerning each student's specific needs.

3. **Action Plans:**  
**Investigate collaboration for professional preparation for students**  
This proposed idea is on hold until I can investigate how collaboration between academic departments and the Honors Program can best benefit the students.  
**Established in Cycle:** 2009-2010  
**Implementation Status:** On-Hold  
**Priority:** High  
**Implementation Description:** I will meet with deans and department chairs to find out the needs for professional development among their majors.  
**Responsible Person/Group:** Dr. Lesa Shaul  
**Additional Resources Requested:** I am working with a colleague on a grant through Phi Kappa Phi to supply resources.  
**Implementation Notes:**  
9/13/2011 The Honors Program director has been working with various faculty members to investigate collaboration for professional preparation for students. Dr. Shaul and Dr. Amy Jones continue to look into opportunities for all students, including Honors students, to attend preparatory classes if they (the students) plan to attend graduate or professional schools. The number of students who take the LSAT, GRE, and MCAT is very small, but these students represent the strongest graduates of the University of West Alabama, and we wish to further their successes. Another option available is a grant through the national honorary Phi Kappa Phi; during the Fall 2011 term Drs. Shaul and Jones will correspond with the headquarters to determine if our institution is eligible for funding. Also, Dr. Shaul is in contact with entities at the University of Alabama to see if students from UWA might travel to Tuscaloosa to participate in preparatory seminars.

**Workshops for standardized graduate admissions exams**  
Plans are in the works for GRE/LSAT/MCAT/GMAT prep courses for rising seniors (including Honors students) who intend to apply for graduate/professional programs. These workshops are being planned by Dr. Amy Jones in the College of Liberal Arts.  
**Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011  
**Implementation Status:** Planned  
**Priority:** High  
**Implementation Description:** Dr. Amy Jones in the College of Liberal Arts is seeking grant opportunities for holding prep workshops.  
**Completion Date:** 05/04/2012  
**Responsible Person/Group:** Dr. Amy Jones  
**Budget Amount Requested:** $0.00

c. **Measure: Expose students to various cultural experiences**  
Honors Program members will attend cultural events (museum visits, arts festivals and exhibitions, book and film lectures, etc.) over the course of one academic year.  

**Source of Evidence:** Activity volume
1. **Achievement Target:**
   In conjunction with the junior-level HR 307 courses in which Honors students in their third year of the program's plan work with a faculty mentor on projects to be completed during their senior year, all participating students will supplement their degree-oriented coursework with one-on-one research involving a topic selected by their mentor. This research will be in conjunction with the students' regular coursework, leading to an enhanced approach within their chosen majors.

2. **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met**
   All Honors students in their third year of the program's plan worked with faculty mentors on projects to be completed during their senior year. All participating students supplemented their degree-oriented coursework with one-on-one research involving a topic selected by their mentors.

4. **Objective: Diverse Experiences**
   Expose high-achieving students to a variety of diverse cultural events and academic conferences, thereby broadening their social and global navigability

   a. **Measure: Expose students to various cultural experiences**
      Honors Program members will attend cultural events (museum visits, arts festivals and exhibitions, book and film lectures, etc.) over the course of one academic year

      Source of Evidence: Activity volume

   1. **Achievement Target:**
      As part of the objective to expose students to various cultural experiences, a diversity of events will be planned and executed involving 100% of the students involved in the UWA Honors Program.

   2. **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met**
      100% of students involved in the UWA Honors Program participated in planned cultural events, which were diverse in scope and included all disciplines.

   b. **Measure 7: Create service opportunities**
      Honors Program members will be involved in outreach or service projects

      Source of Evidence: Administrative measure - other

   1. **Achievement Target:**
      75% of Honors Program members will be involved in outreach or service projects on campus or in the Black Belt region

   2. **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Not Met**
      While limited opportunities for service and outreach projects were made available, less than 75% of Honors Program members participated in these projects.

3. **Action Plan:**
   **Additional Service and Outreach Projects**
   In conjunction with the Office of Student Life and the Center for the Study of the Black Belt, the Honors Program plans to create additional service and outreach projects on campus and around the area. The Committee for Service
Learning is in the process of seeking opportunities for all students on campus, and Honors students will have a service project as part of the program requirements.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011  
Implementation Status: Planned  
Priority: High  
Implementation Description: Create service learning opportunities for Honors students on campus and around the area.

Completion Date: 05/04/2012  
Responsible Person/Group: Dr. Lesa Shaul, Dr. Tina Jones, and Dr. Russ Davis

Additional Resources Requested: Transportation, necessary materials for specific projects  
Budget Amount Requested: $500.00

c. Measure: Mentor students in competing for enhanced academic opportunities

Honors Program members will attend discipline-related academic conferences or compete for study-abroad programs or off-campus internships

Source of Evidence: Performance in subsequent schooling feedback

1. Achievement Target:

10% or more of Honors Program members will attend discipline-related academic conferences or compete for study-abroad programs or off-campus internships

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

20% of Honors Program members attended discipline-related academic conferences and participated in off-campus internships. For example, five members of the Honors Program gave presentations at the Sigma Tau Delta conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in March 2011. Five other Honors Program members individually took part in discipline-specific field experiences and summer internships.

II. Other Plans for Improvement

A. Items In Progress

1. Increase on-campus events and activities

Increase the number of on-campus events and activities that bring Honors students together socially and academically.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011  
Implementation Status: In-Progress  
Priority: High  
Implementation Description: Move Honors Program office into the new facility in the Brown House; facility will be shared with the International Program. Sponsor events that bring students and faculty together for discussions. Host gatherings for Honors students and visiting Fulbright Scholars. Invite faculty members to visit Honors Forum for lectures on their specific academic field or other area of interest.

Responsible Person/Group: Dr. Lesa Shaul

Budget Amount Requested: $0.00

Implementation Notes:  
7/18/2011 The Honors Program will share a facility with the International Program beginning August 8, 2011. The Honors Program hosted four new events that featured not only UWA faculty but also speakers from external agencies. As the Program continues to grow, additional activities will be added; these activities will be reviewed at the end of each academic year to determine their viability.
B. Items Planned

1. Increase the number and range of cultural events for Honors students
   Increase the number and range of cultural events for Honors students
   
   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: Planned
   Priority: High
   Implementation Description: Contact other state and regional college and universities to work out partnerships; creating larger groups might offset travel and lodging costs and broaden the geographical range for trips.
   Completion Date: 05/04/2012
   Responsible Person/Group: Dr. Lesa Shaul
   Additional Resources Requested: Expense reimbursements for faculty = $200
   Travel expenses for students = $5,000
   Budget Amount Requested: $5,200.00

2. Recruit faculty to teach-team HR 200
   Recruit faculty from across campus to team-teach HR 200, Honors Special Topics Seminar
   
   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: Planned
   Priority: High
   Implementation Description: Offer stipends to faculty who team-teach Honors courses; these stipends would be based on adjunct pay at an hourly rate
   Completion Date: 11/04/2011
   Responsible Person/Group: Dr. Lesa Shaul
   Additional Resources Requested: Stipends for team-teachers
   Budget Amount Requested: $1,000.00

3. Update the UWA Honors Handbook
   Update the UWA Honors Handbook
   
   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: Planned
   Priority: High
   Implementation Description: Create a committee of Honors students from each year as well as faculty experienced in working with Honors Program
   Completion Date: 12/02/2011
   Responsible Person/Group: Dr. Lesa Shaul
   Additional Resources Requested: Stipend for student work = $250
   Budget Amount Requested: $250.00

4. Update the UWA Honors Website
   Update the UWA Honors Website. The newly updated general UWA website will include a similarly updated UWA Honors Program page. The content and photos have been collected and edited; the new site will be launched during the Fall 2011 semester.
   
   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: Planned
   Priority: High
   Implementation Description: Meet with UWA webmaster to determine web standards and create site content
   Completion Date: 12/02/2011
   Responsible Person/Group: Dr. Lesa Shaul
   Additional Resources Requested: Stipend for student work = $250
   Budget Amount Requested: $250.00
5. **Work with COLA to identify and mentor students interested in law school and graduate school**

   Work with department chairs in Liberal Arts in identifying and mentoring students who are interested and capable of succeeding in law school and graduate school. Also, offer stipends to students who wish to apply to law schools or graduate schools but need financial assistance with application fees. Dr. Amy Jones is working on a plan to implement prep workshops for students interested in taking the GRE/MCAT/LSAT/GMAT.

   **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011  
   **Implementation Status:** Planned  
   **Priority:** High  
   **Implementation Description:** Collaborate with Drs. Mark Davis, Tim Edwards, Amy Jones, and Rob Biser to create a pre-professional course for Liberal Arts majors based on the one currently taught in the CNSM.  
   **Completion Date:** 02/24/2012  
   **Responsible Person/Group:** Dr. Lesa Shaul  
   **Additional Resources Requested:** Sample tests and booklets = $500  
   **Stipends for financial assistance = $500**  
   **Budget Amount Requested:** $1,000.00

### III. Analysis Answers

**A. What specific strengths did your assessments show? (Strengths)**

In its efforts to enhance the academic and cultural experiences of its members, the UWA Honors Program succeeded in a number of areas. The recruitment of academically superior students is one of the program's strengths in that the caliber of students entering UWA and choosing to join the Honors Program has risen. By raising the ACT admission score from 22 to 24, the Honors Program saw in Fall 2011 one of the academically strongest entering freshman classes it has ever seen. Providing a variety of culturally diverse activities both on and off campus has strengthened retention and enhanced overall student satisfaction with the program. The Honors Program has also seen an increase in the number of students engaged in undergraduate research and conference opportunities.

**Documents available in the Document Repository:**

- Honors Forum Syllabus for Fall 2008
- Honors Forum Syllabus for 2009
- Honors Forum Syllabus for Fall 2010

**B. What specific weaknesses or challenges did your assessments show? (Weaknesses)**

One of the most significant challenges that the Honors Program has faced and continues to face is meeting the needs of high-achieving students in all majors. Like many Honors Programs across the country, UWA's program is not a degree-granting entity in and of itself; rather, it serves as an additional support program that enhances the educational and cultural opportunities afforded to students in a university setting. Most of the members who stay in the Honors Program throughout their degree program and graduate as "Honors Scholars" are from the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. The format and research orientation of the Senior Honors Project favors majors in the fields associated with Liberal Arts and NSM, but strides are being taken to address the needs of education and business majors as well as students in the nursing program. At first glance it would appear that students in the Honors Program are not engaging in the kind of outreach and service learning outlined in the goals; however, while the Program itself has not implemented a consistent service-learning plan, the students who belong to the Honors Program are indeed engaged in outreach and service-learning projects on and off campus, only through other venues. The types of high-achieving students who are eligible for Honors Program membership often also gravitate toward other leadership positions on campus, which means that their time and
talents are utilized by a variety of agencies and organizations. However, the Honors Program continues to explore opportunities for service learning in conjunction with the faculty Service Learning Committee and the Division of Educational Outreach.

C. **What plans were implemented?**
The plans that were implemented include the following: joint ventures between the Honors Program and the Office of Alumni Affairs (recruitment); a lecture series that brings members of the Honors Program together with University faculty and community members; advising for Honors students planning to attend graduate or professional programs; excursions to sites of cultural interest; attendance of on- and off-campus events that foster the Honors mission statement; improvement of advising and mentorship of Honors students; and the creation of Honors courses that offer an interdisciplinary approach to a broad topic.

**Documents available in the Document Repository:**
- Honors Forum Syllabus for Fall 2008
- Honors Forum Syllabus for 2009
- Honors Forum Syllabus for Fall 2010

D. **What plans were not implemented?**
The plans for service-learning opportunities were not implemented but are still under consideration. Also, the workshops specifically geared toward students planning to take the GRE/LSAT/MCAT were held by Dr. Amy Jones and Honors students were encouraged to attend, but because of low turnout these workshops are being reexamined for future consideration. Since Honors students are the ones most likely to attend graduate or professional school, they are the target audience for such preparatory workshops; however, the number of participants in such tutorials has been low, so the workshops have been discontinued for the time being.

E. **How will assessment results be used for continuous improvement?**
The UWA Honors Program has been in existence for over twenty-five years, and the vision for this program has evolved during that time. At first the Program was envisioned as a kind of "Great Books" program with a heavy emphasis on a liberal-arts approach; later, the Program served as a formalized outlet for high-achieving students to work at a level beyond what was afforded in most general classes. Since planning and assessment efforts by the Honors Program director began in 2008, what has emerged is a broader approach that encompasses more students in more majors across campus. With each cycle of planning and assessment, the director can see how recruitment and retention can be improved--for example, since UWA competes with other state institutions for academically superior students, the Honors Program can help general University recruitment in drawing these students to UWA. Although the UWA Honors Program is not a degree-granting entity, the opportunities that the Program offers do affect the ways in which the top students progress toward their respective degrees and their overall satisfaction with this experience. Evaluating retention efforts is just as important as formulating effective recruiting strategies, and finding out from each "generation" of Honors Program members what works and what does not influences not only the Program's success but also the success of the Colleges in which majors are housed. Assessment results also help the Program gauge the need and efficacy of other educational support plans, such as providing workshops for students who plan to take graduate or professional standardized admissions tests. The University of West Alabama's Honors Program serves a vital need for high-achieving students on this campus. Many Program members are first-generation college students who have the opportunity not only to obtain their degree but also have the drive and the academic ability to continue their education beyond the bachelor's level. The Honors Program provides guidance for these
students, and the assessment results are the maps that help the director and other involved faculty members plot the course for the students' success.

IV. Annual Reports
   A. Key Achievements
      The key achievements of the UWA Honors Program for 2010-2011 are as follows: the launch of a lecture series that brings Honors students, faculty, and members of the UWA and Livingston communities together to hear a presentation and participate in a discussion led by an expert in a particular field. For example, in the spring of 2011, Dr. Elaine Hughes, a "Road Scholar" with the Alabama Humanities Foundation Speakers' Bureau and Professor Emerita of English at the University of Montevallo, delivered a lecture on the newly released, expurgated version of Mark Twain's _The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn_, and she participated in a round-table discussion that followed her lecture. The event was very well attended and set a strong precedent for events to come. The Honors Program welcomed one of its largest recruitment classes in the Program's existence in the fall of 2010, and recruitment efforts in the spring forecast an even stronger freshman class in the fall of 2011.

   Documents available in the Document Repository:
   
   Honors Forum Syllabus for Fall 2008
   Honors Forum Syllabus for 2009
   Honors Forum Syllabus for Fall 2010

   B. Faculty Achievements
      Since the Honors Program is not a college or department and therefore has no specific faculty, and all faculty members associated with the Honors Program are members of specific departments (including the director, whose achievements will be reported in assessment of the Department of Languages and Literature), there are no relevant faculty achievements to be reported here.

   C. Public/Community Service
      The Honors Program has no program-wide public or community service achievements to report, although the Program has worked in conjunction with other honoraries and honor societies on service projects (for example, Honors Program members joined members of Sigma Tau Delta, the English honorary, in participating in Read Across America at local schools).