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College and Community Relations

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Grossmont College Students Agree That Honors Program Courses are “Fun and Challenging”

El Cajon - For students with an appetite for a different type of intellectual seasoning in their coursework, Grossmont College offers a menu of classes flavored with some baccalaureate bite. Honors classes at Grossmont are designed for students who are interested in a class environment that provides greater depth and breadth of discussion compared to the typical lower division general education program. Generally, honors classes involve more individual participation and deeper reflection on the topics to be covered.

Dr. John Oakes, chemistry instructor, coordinates the Grossmont College honors program. According to Dr. Oakes, “If you want to be in a class in which both the students and the instructor are highly motivated to delve deeply into the subject, then honors classes are right for you.” A current student who is completing the first-year program of honors-linked classes is Mars Rafto, who says, “These classes are fun and challenging.” Rafto is thinking about majoring in music, but has wide-ranging interests he is pursuing.

Brittany Bailey, a fellow student in Oakes’ Science 110 class, believes that “teachers help you take a subject apart and really know what you are talking about.”

Bailey is considering a history major, but is concentrating on completing her general education requirements.

Tim Martin found himself in Oakes' honors section almost by accident. (He had selected it because it was a good fit in his schedule.) The El Capitan High School graduate decided to "go with it anyway" and has been pleased with the experience. Martin plans to transfer to Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo to major in aerospace engineering. As a high school student, Martin took advantage of the high school co-enrollment opportunity during summer session and completed four units of organic chemistry. He was able to apply those credits to fulfilling the requirement for fourth year high school science.

Kris Miller, who is an "undeclared" major completing his fifth honors class, said he believes "the teachers are very passionate about what they teach.... and it looks good on your record."

One great advantage of being involved in honors classes at Grossmont College is for those who are planning on transferring to four-year institutions. All classes are designated as honors on the student's transcript. It is Oakes' opinion that transfer institutions consistently give greater weight to honors classes when community college students apply. In addition, through the Honors Transfer Council of California (HTCC), Grossmont College has established preferred admission and even guaranteed admission to a number of both public and private institutions such as USD, UC Irvine, Cal State Fullerton, UCLA and many other partner institutions. More information about transfer agreements is available at the honors web site www.grossmont.edu/honors.

Another advantage of participation in the honors program is the opportunity to attend special events, such as a recent Stem Cell Research Symposium at UCSD, which Bailey said was “incredible.” Rafto’s honors history class visited the King Tut Exhibition in Los Angeles last fall.

All four students agreed that participation in honors classes requires them to be “more organized” and advise new students to prepare by knowing “what you are getting yourself into. Find out all you can by asking people who have been in the class; get a feel for how the professors approach the subject by checking out their web site. Use the catalog.” They also agreed that while college teachers are understanding and kind, they are not going to take flimsy excuses with the expectation that “you’re an adult now.”

Bailey recommends that new students take study skills classes and workshops, which she took during the summer to “get into the habit of college level class work.” Martin suggests that students use on-campus tutors as he did. Today he keeps his math skills sharp by working as a tutor in the math lab.

The honors program at Grossmont College has been in place for three years. Any student who completes 18 units of honors credit at Grossmont College and maintains at least a 3.2 GPA will receive the honors designation on their transcript. Interested students are encouraged to consult faculty members or the Counseling department at Grossmont College. Students may also contact the honors program coordinator, John Oakes, directly at (619)644-7345, or at john.oakes@gcccd.edu.

Those planning on being involved in the program should be motivated, committed to a high level of academic performance, and meet the following requirements. Entering Grossmont students must come to the college with a 3.2 GPA. Those already at

Grossmont must have at least a 3.2 GPA in at least 12 applicable units. The other requirement is eligibility for English 120 or higher as well as Math 103 or higher.

Whether students are interested in taking a single honors class or in completing the 18 units for honors designation, they are invited to consider the honors class offerings for fall, 2006. Classes begin August 21.

In addition to Dr. Oakes, honors class instructors include Richard Albert, Tina Perez, Linda Mitchell, Gwennyth Mapes, and Leon Ennis.

- Science 110, Introduction to Scientific Thought (Dr. John Oakes and Richard Albert)
- Communication 122, Public Speaking (Tina Perez)
- English 120, College Composition and Reading (Linda Mitchell)
- Humanities 110 Principles of Humanities (Gwennyth Mapes)
- History 105, Early Western Civilization (Leon Ennis)

For entering students, the honors link, which includes English 120, Humanities 110 and History 105 honors classes, is ideally suited. The students in these classes develop close relationships and share the learning experience together. Once they complete the link, they are halfway to completing the honors program requirements. All three classes are considered general education transfer courses.

For more information, www.grossmont.edu/honors.