Student Services Fee Request for the 2014 - 2015 Academic Year

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“We acknowledge that the Fee Committee does not award actual dollars, but rather a penny fee that earns dollars based upon student enrollment levels. Any differences between anticipated and actual income resulting from changes in enrollment are the responsibility of the student organization, not of the Fee Committee.”

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Is your organization an IRS 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit? Yes__________ No ___ X _____
If yes, please provide proof of your organization’s 501(c)(3) status.

Funds are being requested for (check all that apply):

General Operating Support: X Start-Up Costs: Capital:

Project / Program Support: X Technical Assistance: Other (List):

Budget

- SSF Dollar Amount Requested $ 9,250
- Total Annual Organization Budget $ 12,250
- Total Program Budget (apart from General Operating) $ 11,250
Important Note: All Student Services Fee applications will be evaluated using the Guidelines for Decision-Making found on pages 20-21 of the Student Services Fee Handbook. It is critical for your application to address these guidelines in your written application. Please reference/describe how your organization meets particular/applicable guidelines in Section 1, Section 3 and/or Section 5 of the written portion of your application and in your program breakdown included in the SSF budget worksheet.

Section 1: Narrative

The University Honors Student Association (UHSA) is dedicated to creating a unique undergraduate experience for high-achieving students at the University of Minnesota. We seek to nurture well-rounded individuals and prepare students for a future of success, understanding, and achievement. We directly represent 10% of the undergraduates at the University of Minnesota, across all colleges and departments (Guideline 4). More broadly, we represent students interested in research, interdisciplinary, or experiential learning. The exclusivity and relative unknown nature of the Honors Program is something we, as the University Honors Student Association, hope to change by creating programming that allows for the greater student population to engage in the Honors Community. Part of our mission states that we facilitate positive social interactions between Honors students, faculty, administration and the community at the University of Minnesota. We see this as an obligation to share the unique learning experience and culture of the Honors Community with the larger Campus Community (Guideline 2). With Student Service Fees money, we hope to be able to do that.

The University Honors Program was established in 2008 by Serge Rudaz with the UHSA following shortly after. The Honors Programs in each college were once fragmented and run independently. They were combined to create UHP. Honors students at the U are admitted to UHP as a part of the freshman application process and are expected to partake in rigorous coursework, outside of the classroom experiences, and complete a thesis before graduation. The Experiences include, but are not limited to, research, internships, creative experiences like performing in a show or composing an original piece of music, community volunteering, etc. The experiential and interdisciplinary approach to learning is one the Honors Program values and we as UHSA hope to help spread to the campus at large (Guideline 1).

The University Honors Student Association is a unique organization because of the similarities to both Student Groups and College Student Boards. Although we currently operate on the budget of the University Honors Program, similar to how the Student Boards operate as a Campus Life Program within the department, we serve students from all colleges and work in partnership with HRL, admissions, and many departments that offer Honors Courses. We thus find ourselves in a constrained position with respect to the goals we have to create a sustainable and effective organization. For this reason, we are applying for Student Service Fees this year, in hopes of using this source of revenue as a way to successfully implement programming budget constraints in the past have not allowed us to have (Guideline 8). As you can see in our budget sheets, we still plan to secure outside funding, but the majority of our budget will come from Student Service Fees. We believe this is justifiable because the events and programming we can offer to the Campus Community at large will reflect the values of the Honors Program and help to expand the knowledge of Honors as well as include the rest of campus in the experiences. With our new move into Northrop and partnership with the U-CAN student group, we believe it is an appropriate time to create an organization that is mindful of the entire student population and seeks to include them in the culture of the Honors Program.

It must be emphasized that we only wish to sever our financial ties with the University Honors Program, not association completely. Indeed, by doing so, both parties will benefit. UHP will be absolved from providing us with our operating funds with an already limited budget, and we would be free to pursue a much broader agenda aimed at engaging the entire Twin Cities campus. From UHP’s perspective, the financial resources otherwise directed toward our group can be put to use enhancing the program itself, likely with a greater focus and efficacy that we could achieve by ourselves. From UHSA’s perspective, this will allow us to offer greater leadership experience for our members and allow for the expansion we are ready to implement. In short, this request should it be successful, will enhance the already symbiotic relationship extant between UHSA and UHP.

It is our hope that by applying for student service fees, we will be able to not only service students whom we represent, but also the campus as a whole. With our recent move to Northrop, we are in a prime position to help enhance the University Honors Program and allow for students in the program and outside of it to experience the unique learning our students do. Already having partnered with Northrop to create a Pop-Up event, we are interested in expanding the idea of creative programming that serves the campus at large and allows for students to be innovative and thoughtful in trying new things.

Our goal is to expand our operations and allow for all students to apply for grants unique to UHSA. These grants would serve a different purpose than SUA & MSA grants, which typically help fund a large event for a group. We hope to be more innovative and stress experiential learning, research, community service, and creative expression when deciding how grant money is allocated. In this way, UHSA will allow all students to be included in the unique learning experiences the Honors Program has to offer, even if they are not a student in the program.
Our desire to move away from our Campus Life funding model is threefold:

1. Expand the reach of the University Honors Student Association (Guideline 2)

   First, we are looking to serve the entirety of the student population by facilitating the access of others to the type of learning and experiences already enjoyed by UHP students. As the Honors Program itself runs on a tight budget, it can be difficult for us to offer opportunities on a scale befitting the size of the Twin Cities Campus as a whole. One of the staples of this plan is the grants program. Under our grants initiative, launched in the spring of 2014, any student can apply to work in partnership with the UHSA board to plan and host an on-campus event, seminar, project, etc. In doing so, students from both within and outside of the program will enjoy the resources and vibrant intellect the honors community can offer. In similar vein, the UHSA board would like to re-start what has previously been known as the Travel Grants program, which would allow students to apply for a travel grant to attend a seminar, speaker, or conference in order to do research to complete a senior project. This program existed in the past with UHP, but had to be cut due to budget constraints. As we are all students of a University dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, this support will be invaluable to otherwise cash-strapped students. While these initiatives are a small sample of the programming we one day hope to offer, they represent the spirit with which we hope to utilize Student Services Fees money to affect positive change.

2. Attain financial independence and create an organizational culture of sound fiscal decision-making

   Second, we are looking to be financially independent from UHP and not rely on a constrained budget (Guideline 8). As it stands, our budget is the single most limiting factor that does not allow for growth of the organization. While we have operated within the budget afforded to us by UHP, the result is programming that does not change or grow from year to year. Quite simply, as a result of our current funding structure, the organizational mindset has been simply executional. That is, we only focus executing the same events we have done for several years as opposed to looking for improvement and growth opportunities. Further, projects are slowed due to the requirements of a Campus Life program. Again, it is important here to stress that we are grateful for the support and guidance UHP has provided us over the years, but we feel that having sole discretion over our own funds will benefit both our board and the student body. From a purely logistical standpoint, we cannot even purchase supplies as simple as nametags, pens, or even paper plates without going through the Honors office. Thus we also desire Student Service Fees to empower our leadership to make independent financial decisions and to simultaneously free up time to better serve the University Community that would otherwise have been spent navigating a laborious process to make simple purchases.

3. Integrate the resources of the Honors community into the wider campus culture (Guideline 1)

   Third, the University Honors Student Association serves a unique purpose than the other Board and Student Associations on campus. We hope the Committee views (and funds) us as a way to academically and intellectually enrich the campus and student community, much like the Culture Centers enrich the community by bringing their unique beliefs and traditions into the student life. As discussed above, the core of the University’s mission is to educate and prepare the students that spend four of the most important years of their life here. While resources for learning abound, from professors to labs to trips abroad, one of the most powerful impacts of the learning process are those with whom you spend time debating, discussing, and listening: your peers. Students in the honors program amass knowledge and experiences throughout their time here at the U of M that can be easily shared with the rest of campus, if the right resources are in place. If awarded Student Services Fees, UHSA hopes to do just this.

   In the long term, we would like to see the organization expand and be the center of advocacy and programming for students who would like to participate in Honors Courses, challenge themselves academically, and who simply wish to get the most out of their college experience. These plans include expansion of our travel grant program and a creation of a database for research opportunities for students at the University. We hope to leverage the fantastic opportunity taking shape this semester in the form of UHP/UHSA’s partnership with the New Northrop. We hope to build connections with students across campus, and we hope to blur the lines-in a positive way-between honors students and the rest of campus in terms of knowledge, experiences, and accomplishment during the undergraduate experience. These expansions would benefit all students and we believe that by moving to a model with student service fees being the primary source of funding, we will have the agency to do so.
Section 2: Organizational Chart
Section 3: Performance Report

Although new, UHSA has enjoyed a significant increase in our programming and campus presence in the last few years. We have improved our performed through increased attendance at events, increased the number of students in our mentor program, and hundreds of responses on a survey administered to students about changes they’d like to see to the Honors Program.

Over the last few years, UHP events have seen a significant increase in attendance. Our largest event of the year, the Welcome Picnic, had over 300 students in attendance this year, which we tabulated by the amount of food that was eaten. Honors students, Middlebrook Hall CAs, and students passing by were able to partake in yard games, a burger bar, and DJed music on Coffman’s Front Plaza. In the past, the event has typically yielded 100-200 students, meaning we have doubled our attendance in the last few years. Other successful events have been our “Got Research?” Event and our Freshman Welcome Dinner. The “Got Research?” Event, held in Middlebrook Hall, allowed students to ask questions of faculty and professors on how to secure research opportunities. The event was open-house styled and had over 50 in attendance, tabulated by having people sign-in. Our Freshman Welcome Dinner had over half of the UHP Freshman in attendance and allowed for networking and connecting early on in the school year. Our track record with events in the past allows for confidence that our new programming ideas will be well attended. We estimate that we will be able to serve 2,600 students of the full University Community, with 1,500 of these students served being serviced by Student Service Fees.

Since its inception, UHSA has championed a mentor program matching upper- and lower classmen in groups of two to three. This program has been one of the most impactful in our programming repertoire; underclassmen and upperclassmen alike report they enjoy forming new connections among the honors community. This year, we have greatly enhanced the structure of the program, with all-new time and meeting requirements, logging of hours, online discussion/video forums, and even the opportunity to count the program as an Honors Experience. With over 100 mentees served in these relationships, we have seen a significant increase from our past mentor program. We estimate that we have directly impacted over 100 students in our mentor program this year and can provide documentation of the activities and hours logged by those in the program. We have plans to continue to grow the program as we move into Northrop and have more spaces conducive to gathering on the Honors floor.

One of the key improvements UHSA has made since our start as a student group is the creation of a survey that assesses the strengths and drawbacks of the honors program and the offerings of our student group. We feel that feedback is the most important aspect of effectively serving students at the University, and every year we invite students to offer their suggestions on things they would like to see changed, improved, eliminated, and added. From academic, social, and community service perspectives we gather and analyze hundreds of data points each year that we ultimately present to senior administration---including Director Rudaz---of the honors program. Recurring responses included interest in a stronger alumni network, more opportunities for research, and more support with thesis and senior projects. These three desires are reflected in our programming request for the year and we hope to expand these opportunities to the larger student body.

Another one of the improvements we have made over the past few years is seeking to create partnerships and take advantage of resources available from other groups. Two of our largest events this year were partnerships and had great turnouts. The University Honors Program Welcome Picnic was funded partially through a Coca-Cola Grant from Student Unions and Activities. The picnic enjoyed attendance of over 1,000 individuals, with both honors and non-honors students engaged in the event. Our other partnership event was the “Pop-Up” in conjunction with the new Northrop Auditorium. (Include video in presentation) This event, called the “Validation Station”, allowed for students to come and write an uplifting or contemplative message to another and take one out of a carnival-style “money grab” box as well. It was a positive, thought-provoking, and pay-it-forward themed event that allowed for a little boost during the stressful times before finals. Perhaps most notably, UHSA enjoyed a very positive partnership with the Philippine Student Association during the 2012-2013 academic year, co-hosting a coffeehouse benefit for victims of Typhoon Bopha, which was a cultural celebration involving music, dance, and the spoken word. The event ultimately raised over a thousand dollars for victims of the storm. We thoroughly enjoyed the cultural aspect that PSA brought to our group, and moving forward, UHSA is interested in creating partnerships with more groups on campus: Cultural, academic, social, and otherwise.

Overall, we believe we have directly impacted the life of both Honors students and students who have been able to partake in our events. In the past, we have impacted the lives of honors students by providing opportunities to connect with one another, learn about research opportunities available on campus, as well as share their projects and academic discoveries with fellow students. The true impact on campus life is the opportunity we have provided for students to share the academic culture of Honors students with the larger campus as a whole. In the future, we hope to expand our reach to the larger Campus Community and work with UHP and utilize our location at Northrop to share our research and projects with the larger campus community.
Section 4: Reserve Accounts
At this point, we have not established a reserve account due to our status as a Campus Life Program and our funding model. If we were to continue receiving Student Service Fees, we would evaluate whether this was a financially responsible decision and budget accordingly.

Section 5: Fees Request
This year, UHSA is requesting $9,250 dollars, which would roughly equate to 24.5 cents per student assessed Student Service Fees. This is UHSA’s first Student Service Fees Request and we do not plan on it being a one time request, as we would like to grow our organization over time and allow all students to benefit from the University Honors Program and serve more than just the 10% of the total student body who is in the program. If the Student Service Fee was assessed to only University Honors Program kids, each would pay under $5 for the programming and services we would like to offer. The reason we are requesting Fees is because our budget is limited by the fact we stem out of the University Honors Program. Growing each year, UHP’s budget does not match its growth of students and UHSA has a difficult time representing and providing the resources for 3000 highly motivated students on campus. It is because of this we have decided to expand our scope and seek to represent students who have interest in research, interdisciplinary learning, and experiences outside of the classroom. It is our hope we can expand to the student population as a whole and create programming and events that are accessible to all, much like our Pop-Up and Research Information Event were. With the move to Northrop and the inclusion in the U-CAN student group, UHSA is growing and we would like to see this growth continue both in funding, but also in the amount of students we are looking to represent.

A few things to note on our fees request are as follows:

- **Alumni Networking Event (Guideline 2 & 3):** When evaluating our survey, the number one request of Honors Students was to have a better alumni network for them to tap into. Students enter the program expecting to make connections with other motivated students. Because of this request, we have budgeted an alumni networking event for UHP graduates to come to so current students may connect to gain advice, referrals, or make connections for future employment. The reason we believe this is justified through Student Service Fees is because we will open up the event to all students who wish to network. Much like the MSA Leadership Reception is designed for Student Leaders to network with one another, we hope to hold an event where current students can network with recent graduates who have tended to do research, completed internships, completed thesis and participated in other non-course learning experiences.

- **Travel Grant Program:** This is a program the Honors Program had in place but ran into financial aid issues with providing students money from a department because it qualified as University contribution (Guideline 8). There are many students who have expressed interest in being able to go to a conference or convention that would supplement their thesis research and we would like to provide all students who are completing a senior project or thesis an opportunity to enhance that project with the ability to travel to these conferences. One of the main reasons we would like to reinstate this program is because there is a graduate student equivalent through GAPSA and this program would provide undergraduates with a similar source of funding.

- **Test Preparation Sessions (Guideline 5):** When surveyed (SERU 2013), 1/3 of University of Minnesota Students said they intend to go to graduate or professional school after graduation. Due to this fact, we believe we are serving the largest number of students with our free Test Preparation sessions. With 10,000 students stating they intend to attend graduate school, we believe we are serving the greatest number of students with a need for the programming by budgeting to offer prep courses to 1000 students. This also helps us to fulfill our organizational mission of supporting high achieving students in their academic endeavors (Guideline 4). The $2,500 would go to compensate the time of a faculty member or individual who could offer test prep sessions for students similar to what they might receive from Kaplan, but for free.

- **Being audited (Guideline 11):** We understand groups receiving fees in their first year are subject to an audit after this first year and will consult with UFinance to create strategies to the upcoming fiscal year for sound book keeping in compliance with audit procedures. Part of what prompted us to apply for fees was the desire to be more financially independent and offer opportunities for growth for our organization as well as the individuals in the positions of Committee Chairs, Treasurers, and President. As it stands, we are afforded a lump sum from UHSA and our bank account is managed outside of our board (Guideline 8). We would like to change this dynamic and allow for growth of our members by giving them real-world financial experience.
Section 6: External Funding

In the past, we have secured funding through Student Unions and Activities Grants as well as been a part of the University Honors Program Budget. In FY 2013-2014, we were budgeted $6,000 as a part of the University Honors Program. We also applied for a variety of Grants and partnered with Northrop to create a Pop-Up this past year. During the spring, we will be applying for a Spring Jam Events Week Grant from MSA for a Spring Thesis sharing event (Guideline 7).

In the future, we will continue to utilize our existing resources from the University Honors Program, as well as apply for internal grants through SUA and MSA. As UHSA is still within the first 5 years of conception, we would like to point out to the committee that because we were a Campus Life program in the past, our funding flowed directly out of UHP and we only budgeted for what events we had pre approved with the program, as they had jurisdiction over the bank account. After discussions with the program and the change this year of moving to Northrop, the University Honors Program and UHSA has come to agree that it is time for legitimacy of the organization and a greater sense of independence. Moreover, we’d like to provide services to the larger campus community by increasing our budget. In the past, our limited budget has taught us to look for money in ways outside of the conventional manner. This has included partnerships, requesting student discounts, applying for grants and now applying for Student Service Fees in the hopes to provide services to all students, rather than those simply in the Honors Program.

As it stands, most of our need for Student Service Fee funding comes from the fact we are interested in creating programs that don’t fit into the traditional mold of programming that receive grants from SUA, MSA, or University Departments. We are requesting 84% of our total budget from student service fees, with 12% coming from Departmental funding and 4% coming from grants. In the future we hope to increase our grant funding in the future and decrease Student Service Fees moving forward (Guideline 7). With our funding, we hope to create programming that benefits all students academically and seeks to enrich their learning experience. Much like the Cultural Centers seek to share their cultures and beliefs with the student population as a whole and enhance the diversity of our student body, we hope to enhance the impact of academics and seek to strengthen this component of our students. As it stands, our funding from the Department limits our potential and grants are not compatible with what we would like to accomplish.

Please be aware that the complete Student Services Fee application, including budget pages (Excel spreadsheets) should be downloaded from the Fee website:  
http://www.studentservicesfees.umn.edu/