

Academic Program Assessment Report

Assessment is a term commonly used to encompass the process of gathering and using evidence to guide improvements.

SACSCOC requires that an institution "identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results".

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Academic Program

Honors College

Submission Due Date

Fall 2025: October 1, 2025

Assessment Coordinator Name

Lillian Craton

Enter Assessment Coordinator Email

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Program Goal

Goal

Goal 1

Program Goals are broad and overarching statements about the skills, knowledge, and dispositions students are expected to gain by the end of their course of study (big picture). They support the Institution's Mission/Goals.

Program Goal

To attract and retain well-qualified students to Lander University.

Pillar of Success Supported

Selective, Competitive Recruitment and Enrollment of Ambitious and Talented Students

Outcomes

Outcome 1

Outcomes are specific, **measurable** statements that reflect the broader goals.

Academic Programs are required to develop **Student Learning Outcomes**, which describe knowledge, skills, and values that students are expected to gain as a result of their educational experiences.

Academic Programs may also develop **Operational Outcomes**, which describe the level of performance of an operational aspect of a program or office (ex. graduation rates, retention, employment data).

Most goals have at least two outcomes measured.

What type of Outcome would you like to add?

Operational Outcome

Enter Outcome

The Honors College will attract and enroll a qualified cohort of new students that is at or near its capacity.

Timeframe for this Outcome

Calendar Year 2024

Performance Target for "Met"

Recruited qualified honors applicants to fill 90 to 100% of capacity.

Performance Target for "Partially Met"

Recruited qualified honors applicants to fill 80 to 89.9% of capacity.

Performance Target for "Not Met"

Recruited qualified honors applicants to fill less than 80% of capacity.

Assessment Measure Used

HONS 211 course enrollment

Frequency of Assessment

annual

Data Collected for this Timeframe (Results)

99 new Honors College members enrolled in HONS 211 in 2024, representing 123% of planned seat capacity

Score (Met=3, Partially Met=2, Not Met=1)

3

Comments/Narrative

We define capacity as the number of seats we budget for the HONS 211 introductory course, typically 80 per academic year, as determined by the program budget and faculty resources available. To measure our recruitment efforts in the Fall 2024-Spring 2025 academic year, we look at enrollment in the Spring & Fall 2025 HONS 211 courses. We exceeded our recruitment goals for the second year in a row and by a wide margin. We believe this success is partly due to the Senior Scholars pilot program launched in Fall 2024, which recognized outstanding dual enrollment seniors and invited them to join the Honors College. It also reflects improvements in recruiting communication over the last two years, particularly the integration of the Honors application into Slate and the use of automated communication to incoming freshmen. We have planned for an additional section of HONS 211 in spring 2025 and will likely raise our recruiting goal to 100 students for our next admissions cycle.

Resources Needed to Meet/Sustain Results

Explanation of How Resources Will Be Used

Outcome 2

Outcomes are specific, **measurable** statements that reflect the broader goals.

Academic Programs are required to develop **Student Learning Outcomes**, which describe knowledge, skills, and values that students are expected to gain as a result of their educational experiences.

Academic Programs may also develop **Operational Outcomes**, which describe the level of performance of an operational aspect of a program or office (ex. graduation rates, retention, employment data).

Most goals have at least two outcomes measured.

What type of Outcome would you like to add?

Operational Outcome

Enter Outcome

The Honors College will play a significant role in the college decisions of its first-year members.

Timeframe for this Outcome

Academic Year 2024-25

Performance Target for "Met"

The Honors College will influence the college decisions of 75% or more of its first-year members.

Performance Target for "Partially Met"

The Honors College will influence the college decisions of 50-74% of its first-year members.

Performance Target for "Not Met"

The Honors College will influence the college decisions of less than 50% of its first-year members.

Assessment Measure Used

2025 Honors College Student Satisfaction Survey

Frequency of Assessment

annual

Data Collected for this Timeframe (Results)

61% of responding incoming Honors College freshmen (31 of 51) in Fall 2025 responding to the survey indicated that Honors had been a factor in their decision to attend Lander.

Score (Met=3, Partially Met=2, Not Met=1)

2

Comments/Narrative

This outcome reflects our level of success in outreach to prospective students and the reputation/perception of the program's value to students. The 2025 result is somewhat lower than our 2024 results of 68%. We have not yet hit our aspirational goal of 75%. We suspect that this year's drop reflects a lull in recruiting last fall during the impact of Hurricane Helene on South Carolina, as new-student applications also came in later than usual last year. We hope that the new Senior Scholars program, our initiative to recruit dual enrollment seniors to Honors, may impact that score. Unfortunately, it does not seem to be affecting the data in its pilot year.

Resources Needed to Meet/Sustain Results

Explanation of How Resources Will Be Used

Outcome 3

Outcomes are specific, **measurable** statements that reflect the broader goals.

Academic Programs are required to develop **Student Learning Outcomes**, which describe knowledge, skills, and values that students are expected to gain as a result of their educational experiences.

Academic Programs may also develop **Operational Outcomes**, which describe the level of

performance of an operational aspect of a program or office (ex. graduation rates, retention, employment data).

Most goals have at least two outcomes measured.

What type of Outcome would you like to add?

Operational Outcome

Enter Outcome

Honors College members will report high satisfaction with their Honors College experience.

Timeframe for this Outcome

Academic Year 2024-25

Performance Target for "Met"

Honors College members will report an average satisfaction level of 4.5 on a 5.0 Likert scale.

Performance Target for "Partially Met"

Honors College members will report an average satisfaction level of 4.0 to 4.4 on a 5.0 Likert scale.

Performance Target for "Not Met"

Honors College members will report an average satisfaction level below 4.0 on a 5.0 Likert scale.

Assessment Measure Used

2025 Honors College Student Satisfaction Survey

Frequency of Assessment

annual

Data Collected for this Timeframe (Results)

When asked about their overall satisfaction with Honors College membership, students had an average response of 4.76 out of 5.0. (On the survey, a score of 4 indicated "I am happy that I joined Honors College" and a score of 5 indicated "I am very happy that I joined Honors College.")

Score (Met=3, Partially Met=2, Not Met=1)

3

Comments/Narrative

Student satisfaction with their Honors College experience reflects strongly on the program's ability to aid in retention and meet students' needs. Scores are consistently high, and in fact our 2025 results were the same as those in 2024. Overall, these scores show that the Honors College continues to meet students' expectations well. We also compare this score to the question "I am happy I chose to attend Lander University," which had an average satisfaction rating of 4.62 this year (slightly higher than last year). While we are delighted with the students' positive responses to this question, the consistency of responses in the last three years suggests that we may need to reassess this goal or how we measure it to ensure this process remains meaningful.

Resources Needed to Meet/Sustain Results

Explanation of How Resources Will Be Used

Outcome 4

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Most goals have at least two outcomes measured.

What type of Outcome would you like to add?

Operational Outcome

Enter Outcome

Honors College members will report that Honors has been a "significant" or "very significant" part of their college experience.

Timeframe for this Outcome

Academic Year 2024-25

Performance Target for "Met"

75% or more of Honors College members will report that Honors has been a "significant" or "very significant" part of their college experience. (4 or 5 on a 5-point Likert scale)

Performance Target for "Partially Met"

60-74% of Honors College members will report that Honors has been a "significant" or "very significant" part of their college experience. (4 or 5 on a 5-point Likert scale)

Performance Target for "Not Met"

Less than 60% Honors College members will report that Honors has been a "significant" or "very significant" part of their college experience. (4 or 5 on a 5-point Likert scale)

Assessment Measure Used

Honors College 2025 Student Satisfaction Survey

Frequency of Assessment

Annually

Data Collected for this Timeframe (Results)

As a whole, 68.7% of respondents (107 of 156) reported that Honors has been a "significant" or "very significant" part of their college experience on the 2025 survey. The average Likert score for that question was 3.87.

Score (Met=3, Partially Met=2, Not Met=1)

2

Comments/Narrative

This data reflects the magnitude of impact the Honors College has on students. Coupled with student satisfaction, it should help us infer how the program affects retention of students. We saw a small increase in this score for the second year in a row (up from 64% in 2023). We believe that the broadening of post-pandemic study abroad and internship opportunities may be reflected in this increase. One aspect of our programming that impacts this measurement is the organization and enthusiasm of the student-led Honors College Leadership Council; this student group organizes social and service opportunities for other Honors College members, so they impact students' level of involvement. Our spring 2025 officers were not particularly active, and a new slate of student leaders

have begun organizing for this academic year. We are eager to measure the impact of new programming on students' sense of belonging within the program.

Resources Needed to Meet/Sustain Results

Explanation of How Resources Will Be Used

Goal Summary

Goal Summary/Comments

We have high expectations for our outcomes for this goal, which is important motivation to continually strive for improvement. Though student life and recruitment faced serious challenges during the pandemic, we believe that we have fully rebounded from that period of negative impact. Hurricane Helene in Fall 2024, however, brought new temporary challenges in recruitment; a long delay in our return to campus and our use of electronic outreach during a time of widespread power outages disrupted our fall recruitment season. We eventually exceeded our recruiting goal, but more applications were received in spring and summer than is typical. This likely impacted our ability to influence students' college choice through their admission to Honors College. In general, though, this was a successful year. We maintain some aspirational goals (such as 75% rating for significance of the honors experience) that we have not yet met, but we do not wish to lower our goals; these areas remain our focus for improvement.

Changes Made/Proposed Related to Goal

Several small initiatives are underway to enhance recruiting and onboarding of new students. To reflect student feedback from this assessment period, we recently made changes to the wording and structure of the application to clarify the steps for applying without SAT or ACT scores. We also created an updated brochure about the program's structure to better address applicant questions. And, students in the Honors College Leadership Council are planning to write and send personalized postcards to admitted students. Most significantly, we launched a pilot program in Sept. 2024 designed to increase Lander's ability to retain high-performing dual enrollment high school seniors by offering them automatic admission to the Honors College and an early start to their Honors coursework. The disruption caused by Hurricane Helene limited our ability to measure the initiative's success, but we did have 11 students recruited through that program (of 54 who we targeted) accept our offer and enroll in both Lander and Honors College as full-time students. This provides a baseline for measurement of the initiative's success in the coming year.

Upload Rubrics/Other Files

Goal 2

Program Goals are broad and overarching statements about the skills, knowledge, and dispositions students are expected to gain by the end of their course of study (big picture). They support the Institution's Mission/Goals.

Program Goal

To promote academic success and academic enrichment among Lander students.

Pillar of Success Supported

Robust Student Experience

Outcomes

Outcome 1

Outcomes are specific, **measurable** statements that reflect the broader goals.

Academic Programs are required to develop **Student Learning Outcomes**, which describe knowledge, skills, and values that students are expected to gain as a result of their educational experiences.

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Most goals have at least two outcomes measured.

What type of Outcome would you like to add?

Operational Outcome

Enter Outcome

Continuing Honors College members will maintain a meritorious institutional GPA (defined as 3.5 or higher, the threshold for Cum Laude Latin honors at graduation).

Timeframe for this Outcome

Academic Year 2024-25

Performance Target for "Met"

75% or more of Honors members will hold cumulative GPAs of 3.5 or higher.

Performance Target for "Partially Met"

60-74% of Honors members will hold cumulative GPAs of 3.5 or higher.

Performance Target for "Not Met"

Less than 60% of Honors members will hold cumulative GPAs of 3.5 or higher.

Assessment Measure Used

2024-25 official Honors College roster / Banner

Frequency of Assessment

annual

Data Collected for this Timeframe (Results)

71.5% (184 of 257) of Fall 2025 Honors members with 15+ college credit hours had meritorious cumulative GPAs of 3.5 or above.

Score (Met=3, Partially Met=2, Not Met=1)

2

-
Appx 8% (21 of 257) had GPAs that fell below 3.0, the threshold for state scholarship renewals and the minimum GPA expected of members. Most of these students have been inactive in Honors College.

Comments/Narrative

This measurement shows the overall academic success of the students enrolled in Honors College. Although this metric is not fully within our control, it reflects both the ability of our admissions process to identify academic potential as well as the ability of the program to motivate student success. We dipped slightly this year, dropping from 75% to 71.5%. While this change does not seem to reflect a major trend, it drops us below our goal's threshold. Students attending Lander during and immediately after

the pandemic have now graduated, and some of those students had GPAs inflated by the temporary pass/fail policy implemented as a response to the pandemic. That cohort change may have impacted the downward shift, as might the disruptions of Hurricane Helene last fall. However, student performance remains strong overall.

Resources Needed to Meet/Sustain Results

Explanation of How Resources Will Be Used

Outcome 2

Outcomes are specific, **measurable** statements that reflect the broader goals.

Academic Programs are required to develop **Student Learning Outcomes**, which describe knowledge, skills, and values that students are expected to gain as a result of their educational experiences.

Academic Programs may also develop **Operational Outcomes**, which describe the level of performance of an operational aspect of a program or office (ex. graduation rates, retention, employment data).

Most goals have at least two outcomes measured.

What type of Outcome would you like to add?

Operational Outcome

Enter Outcome

Students will complete the necessary challenges to earn an Honors College graduation award (the Honors Medal or the Honors Pin).

Timeframe for this Outcome

2024-25

Performance Target for "Met"

50% or more of the graduating Honors cohort will earn the Honors Medal or Honors Pin.

Performance Target for "Partially Met"

25-49% or more of the graduating Honors cohort will earn the Honors Medal or Honors Pin.

Performance Target for "Not Met"

Less than 50% of the graduating Honors cohort will earn the Honors Medal or Honors Pin.

Assessment Measure Used

2024-25 Honors College Official Roster

Frequency of Assessment

Annually

Data Collected for this Timeframe (Results)

50% (40 of 80) of the graduating cohort received either the Honors Medal or Honors Pin during the 2023-24 academic year

Score (Met=3, Partially Met=2, Not Met=1)

3

Comments/Narrative

This objective measures success in retaining students at Lander University and motivating them to

continue their participation within Honors College. We calculate this percentage based on the number of awards conferred in association with the December '24 and May '25 graduation ceremonies, divided by the size of the cohort that entered during the 2021-22 academic year. While the percentage dropped slightly this year, we have successfully met this goal for the second time.

Resources Needed to Meet/Sustain Results

Explanation of How Resources Will Be Used

Goal Summary

Goal Summary/Comments

The goal captures the strength of our Honors community, as students inspire and motivate each other in a culture of achievement. It also reflects our ability to motivate students to prioritize academic success and pursue high impact practices beyond Lander's graduation requirements. We monitor the number of students experiencing academic success and distress in order to recommend resources, and we track that data here to identify possible blind spots within our application process. While our number of students achieving meritorious GPAs dropped slightly this year, we do not necessarily see a pattern forming yet. We monitor students' progress to graduation honors as feedback on whether our criteria for those awards balance rigor and accessibility. We are thrilled to have met the threshold for Outcome 2 for the second time in program history. We believe that ongoing success was enhanced by some small but helpful changes discussed below.

Changes Made/Proposed Related to Goal

To help us maintain the success measured in Outcome 2, we made updates to the formatting of the Break Away Proposal document, implemented a thorough and consistent program orientation as part of the HONS 211 class, and collaborated with the Study Abroad office to increase student outreach for study abroad, including a Spring 2025 social media campaign and interest sessions throughout the 2025-26 academic year.

Upload Rubrics/Other Files

Goal 3

Program Goals are broad and overarching statements about the skills, knowledge, and dispositions students are expected to gain by the end of their course of study (big picture). They support the Institution's Mission/Goals.

Program Goal

Students will gain key academic skills that increase their readiness for graduate school and professions.

Pillar of Success Supported

High-Demand, Market-Driven Programs

Outcomes

Outcome 1

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Academic Programs are required to develop **Student Learning Outcomes**, which describe knowledge,

skills, and values that students are expected to gain as a result of their educational experiences.

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Most goals have at least two outcomes measured.

What type of Outcome would you like to add?

Student Learning Outcome

Enter Outcome

Students will demonstrate strong verbal communication skills by explaining complex ideas and maintaining composure in response to questions.

Timeframe for this Outcome

Academic Year 2024-25

Performance Target for "Met"

The average score for verbal communication is 2.75 or higher.

Performance Target for "Partially Met"

The average score for verbal communication is 2.5 to 2.74.

Performance Target for "Not Met"

The average score for verbal communication is below 2.5.

Assessment Measure Used

Formal dress rehearsal conference presentation completed in HONS 499.

Frequency of Assessment

Annually

Data Collected for this Timeframe (Results)

The average verbal communication score was 2.9.
(30 out of 35 students fully met the goal.)

Score (Met=3, Partially Met=2, Not Met=1)

3

Comments/Narrative

Honors courses are discussion-heavy and typically feature multiple student presentations, so we believe that students completing the Honors College curriculum should be able to demonstrate confidence in verbal communication. As in previous years, we find that they do, with only a few exceptions; all students met or partially met this goal, on par with the last two years. Three of the five students were business majors, which confirmed that students in that field tend to have less research experience than in other majors and may require more support for their senior project. However, those three are capable public speakers; the weak area was preparation of content. To improve performance for students in that major, we will focus on content-development rather than on public speaking skills.

Resources Needed to Meet/Sustain Results

Explanation of How Resources Will Be Used

Outcome 2

Outcomes are specific, **measurable** statements that reflect the broader goals.

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Most goals have at least two outcomes measured.

What type of Outcome would you like to add?

Student Learning Outcome

Enter Outcome

Students will demonstrate strong written communication skills by developing support for a claim or idea in clear and effective prose.

Timeframe for this Outcome

Academic Year 2024-25

Performance Target for "Met"

The average portfolio score for written communication is 2.75 or higher.

Performance Target for "Partially Met"

The average portfolio score for written communication is 2.5 to 2.74.

Performance Target for "Not Met"

The average portfolio score for written communication is below 2.5.

Assessment Measure Used

The "written communication" portfolio score is based on the narrative essay submitted in HONS 489 and the research abstracts submitted in HONS 499.

Frequency of Assessment

Annually

Data Collected for this Timeframe (Results)

The average written communication portfolio score was 2.85.

Score (Met=3, Partially Met=2, Not Met=1)

3

Comments/Narrative

This score dipped slightly but remains much higher than our "met" threshold for the fourth year in a row. Honors courses typically require substantial amounts of reading and writing; students completing the Honors College curriculum should gain confidence in written communication. We find that they do. The HONS introductory and capstone courses are taught by English professors, which ensures that students receive ample writing practice and feedback at both the beginning and end of their Honors experience. We consider this one of the strengths of the program. One challenge for both writing instruction and assessment of writing is the increasing student use of GenAI within writing. We believe the portfolio documents collected (a personal narrative and an abstract for a novel research project) require more human input than many other academic writing samples. However, we will need to monitor students' use of GenAI and make decisions in the future about whether to adapt our assessment process in response.

Resources Needed to Meet/Sustain Results

Explanation of How Resources Will Be Used

Outcome 3

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Most goals have at least two outcomes measured.

What type of Outcome would you like to add?

Student Learning Outcome

Enter Outcome

Students demonstrate an understanding of the values and practices used to conduct research in their disciplines.

Timeframe for this Outcome

Academic Year 2024-25

Performance Target for "Met"

The average portfolio score for Understanding of Research is 2.75 or higher.

Performance Target for "Partially Met"

The average portfolio score for Understanding of Research is 2.5 to 2.74 or higher.

Performance Target for "Not Met"

The average portfolio score for Understanding of Research is below 2.5.

Assessment Measure Used

The "Understanding of Research" score is based on the students' research abstract and dress rehearsal conference presentation submitted in HONS 499.

Frequency of Assessment

Annually

Data Collected for this Timeframe (Results)

The average understanding of research portfolio score was 2.9. 30 of 35 of students in the Spring 25 HONS 499 course met this benchmark.

Score (Met=3, Partially Met=2, Not Met=1)

3

Comments/Narrative

This outcome remains a strength. Our score in this metric improved slightly this year and has once again met our goal by a wide margin. Honors courses typically highlight the discipline's processes of

inquiry through the application of published research or design of original student research, so we believe that students completing the Honors College curriculum should be able to communicate an understanding of how research functions within their disciplines. We continue to find that the majority of our students are confident researchers. This success reflects the good work of their major departments, rather than of Honors College alone. As the structure of the Honors College curriculum incentivizes students to seek out opportunities for research, though, we feel it is important to monitor this outcome. We do find that students in certain majors have more exposure to and experience with research writing than others. Students in business, education, and other professionally-focused fields may require more coaching on the research project. While that has long been true, this year's data offers a reminder that early outreach and planning is essential for such interventions. We have not been successful in scheduling business or education professors to teach HONS courses but will continue to seek opportunities in the hopes of attracting students from those majors into rigorous explorations of research.

Resources Needed to Meet/Sustain Results

Explanation of How Resources Will Be Used

Goal Summary

Goal Summary/Comments

We are pleased with our students' continued high performance in measurements of this goal. The data affirms instructors' perception of our students' strengths. Since students in the Honors College take 14 or more credit hours of HONS coursework, we believe their success reflects both the challenges and skill reinforcement within those classes, but also attests to the strengths of Lander's curriculum and student body in a wide range of academic programs. The emphasis that Lander University has placed on undergraduate research in recent years seems reflected within our ongoing success in showcasing Honors College researchers.

Changes Made/Proposed Related to Goal

Since we have consistently met our benchmarks for this goal since we began tracking it four years ago, we may need to consider whether our approach to gathering data might be changed to provide more useful insights, or whether our rubric might be enhanced to add rigor. If those scores remain consistent in this coming year's assessment (year 5), we will reassess our process to ensure it is meaningful. We continue to seek additional HONS course opportunities that will appeal to business majors, who tended to demonstrate less confidence with research skills than some other majors, and who also had a lower Honors program completion rate than other majors. This has been difficult because of staffing limitations in College of Business. After noting a similar trend for education majors in last year's data, we offered an education-themed seminar in Spring 2025 that drew a good mix of future teachers and students in other fields. Both as part of that class and as part of the HONS 499 capstone, education majors presented outstanding research projects that suggest growth. To build upon that momentum, we will seek an education-themed HONS class for the 26-27 academic year and will continue to emphasize research in general education coursework.

Upload Rubrics/Other Files

Dean's Email Address

jcolbert@lander.edu

Approved by Dean?

Yes

Signature of Dean

James E. Colbert

Comments from Dean's Review

Thank you for reviewing and approving this report. The approval and a copy of the report will be emailed to you and the Assessment Coordinator.