Philosophy Statement for the First-Year Experience
Missouri Southern State University is committed to making the first year of college a success for each student. This ideal is translated into action by fostering five integrated components:

- a smooth transition into university life;
- a sense of shared responsibility;
- a challenging and stimulating learner centered academic environment;
- a sense of inclusive community;
- a comprehensive support program of personnel and resources.

The University facilitates the transition to higher education from diverse life experiences and develops lifelong learners for intellectual, cultural and social exchanges. The responsibility for student learning is shared by all members of the campus community. The University’s liberal arts foundation prepares students to become knowledgeable, critical thinkers who can meet the challenges and responsibilities facing global citizens. Missouri Southern fosters a sense of community, campus spirit and support for its first year students by promoting connections with faculty, administrators, support staff and peers. Continuous quality assessment of each of the components is conducted so that necessary changes are implemented to maximize the first year experience.

Missouri Southern’s philosophy for the first-year experience is put into action in numerous ways. The faculty and staff members bring the philosophy to life by their friendly and helpful approach to students. First-year students have opportunities to participate in activities and events designed to introduce them to others and campus life.

First-Year Experience Program
Dr. Susan Craig, Director
Hearnes Hall, 417.625.9731

The First-Year Experience Program has been established to help achieve the goal of beginning student success through several avenues, including offering the UE 100: The University Experience course for all beginning students, the Common Reading Program and the UE 400: Leadership Training I and UE 401: Leadership Training II courses for course assistants.

UE 100: The University Experience is a fundamentals course designed to assist first-year students in successfully defining themselves both as active participants in the MSSU community and as citizens of a twenty-first century global community. The course offers information on university personnel, facilities, services, policies, study skills and MSSU’s international mission and international study opportunities. Student participation in co-curricular activities is required. The course is taught by an instructor with the assistance of a course assistant. The course assistant serves as an example and a resource for the first-year students.

MSSU Common Reading Program
Each year, a book is chosen as a Common Reading for use in all sections of the UE 100: The University Experience course. Students read, discuss and study the book, as well as its author. The book is chosen by committee prior to the start of the academic year. A speaker related to the reading (i.e. author, translator, character) comes to campus to lecture and meet with the first-year students and the campus as a whole.

Course Assistant Program
Course assistants (CAs) are upper level students who share their insights and experiences with entering students in the University Experience class. Their recent experiences and success in the academic environment make them effective models. Upper level students apply for the assistant role and receive training through UE 400/401: Leadership Training I & II.

Honors Program
Dr. Michael Howarth, Director
Webster Hall 118, 417.625.3005

Mission
The Honors Program serves Missouri Southern State University by recruiting academically talented, motivated students and engaging them in enhanced educational opportunities and challenges designed to promote their continuous development as scholars and citizens.

Vision
The Honors Program will be recognized as a leader in academic excellence by both the University and the community and will serve as a model by which students are enabled to exemplify the fulfillment of the University’s mission and values.

Values
Intellectual Curiosity
The Honors Program promotes interest leading to inquiry, the pursuit of diverse knowledge and a respect for varied ways of knowing.

Community
The Honors Program fosters personal, supportive contact between and among its students and faculty while encouraging students to participate in all aspects of campus life.

Student-Centered Learning
The Honors Program provides challenging, active learning opportunities in all areas of the curriculum.

Critical Thinking
The Honors Program provides students with experience in objectively analyzing and interpreting information, opinions and beliefs.

Scholarship
The Honors Program promotes academic excellence in all areas, with an emphasis on scholarly research.

Service Learning
The Honors Program facilitates the maturation of students as citizen leaders through service to the community and individual reflection.

International Experience
The Honors Program prepares its students to be global citizens by emphasizing cross-cultural experiences.

Student Support
The Honors Program provides special support to its students to assist them in reaching their personal and professional goals.
The Honors Program serves Missouri Southern State University by recruiting academically talented and motivated students and engaging them in enhanced educational opportunities and challenges designed to promote their development as scholars and citizens.

Beginning with the first semester of their freshman year, Honors students participate in specially-designated Honors classes. Because admission is selective and competitive, these classes are smaller and often involve more active learning than regular classes, permitting Honors students greater and more intensive interaction with their instructors and other outstanding students.

Honors students also enjoy intensive guidance and personal attention from the Honors directors and from distinguished faculty in their area of study.

Independent studies and the Senior Thesis project provide students and faculty with the flexibility they need to pursue scholarly interests and to design and implement innovative, creative approaches to learning.

Performance expectations are high. Honors students are held to the highest standards of academic performance, but are not in competition with one another. Instead, an atmosphere of openness, cooperation and intellectual adventure enables Honors students to inspire and challenge one another to the highest levels of achievement.

The Curriculum
While students will take courses offered in Southern’s regular curriculum, these five features are specifically designed for Honors students:

Honors Forum
This course is an open forum to provide an in-depth discussion of a specific topic, text or other matter of interest. Students engage in critical thinking as they participate in and lead classroom discussions and presentations.

Honors Courses
Special sections of required courses such as English composition are designated as Honors sections. There are a number of such courses offered each semester and Honors students select several from these, particularly during their freshman and sophomore years.

Senior Honors Thesis
Honors Scholars enhance a course in their major for Honors credit during the senior year. Working under the guidance of professors in their major field, they design and carry out independent projects investigating a topic in depth and utilizing original research methods. Each student makes a presentation of his or her research to an Honors Colloquium open to a campus-wide audience. The presentation is required of each student for completion of the Honors Program.

Honors Recognition
Missouri Southern is affiliated with the National Collegiate Honors Council, The Great Plains Regional Honors Council and the national honor societies Phi Eta Sigma and Alpha Chi. Most Honors students have the opportunity to participate in the activities of these organizations.

Every Honors course completed with a final grade of ‘A’ or ‘B’ is identified as an Honors course on the student’s transcript. Students who maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.3, complete the required 26 hours of Honors courses and who maintain acceptable progress in Honors will receive special recognition at commencement.

Honors and Evans Scholarships
All Honors Scholars must be eligible for an academic scholarship at Missouri Southern. In addition to competing for admission to the Honors Program, candidates are also competing for additional scholarships. The Honors and Walter and Fredrica Evans Scholarships will be awarded in varying amounts to the most highly qualified applicants as funds allow. The Evans is a four-year renewable scholarship applicable to both tuition and room and board, while the Honors Scholarship applies to tuition only. These scholarships are Southern’s most valuable institutional academic awards and are applicable to fall and spring semesters only.

Eligibility
All students who wish to participate in the Honors Program must first be admitted to Southern. Incoming freshmen with at least a composite score on the ACT of 28 or with at least a GPA of 3.5 (on a 4.0 scale) in high school course work are invited to apply for admission to the program. To complete the application process the student must submit an application form, a transcript and two letters of recommendation mentioning the student’s strengths as a scholar. An essay may also be required. Outstanding candidates will be invited to an on-campus interview.

Students who have already completed one to four semesters of course work with a GPA of 3.5 at Southern or any other accredited college or university are also invited to apply for admission into the program, though they may not be eligible for the Honors or Evans Scholarships. Since a majority of the required 26 Honors credits must be earned in courses meeting the General Education Requirements, applicants who have previously earned more than 30 college credits will need to present a plan for completing these requirements in order to be considered for admission.

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