In 1978, the President of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Dr. William P. Hytche and the Chancellor of the University System of Maryland, Dr. John S. Toll envisioned a unique honors program designed to significantly impact the campuses of the University of Maryland professional schools in Baltimore (then referenced as UMAB) and the UMES campus.

The program had two primary objectives: (1) to increase diversity in the enrollment at the professional schools and (2) to attract in greater numbers undergraduate students at UMES who had demonstrated an ability to perform at high academic levels. The program would be developed jointly and implemented by the two campuses -- the University of Maryland at Baltimore and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. It would be known as the UMES-UMAB Honors Program.

With recommendations from the president of the professional schools at UMAB and the Vice President at UMES, Chancellor Toll and President Hytche appointed the Honors Program Committee. Comprised of the deans or their designees of the professional schools and selected department chairs and faculty from UMES, the Honors Program Committee was charged with the responsibility for designing all aspects of the program. This charge included the development of the curriculum for each of six areas of concentration UMES students could pursue in preparation for entry to one of the six professional schools at
UMAB. Not only were courses designated, the content of each course was also dictated by the respective committee representatives for each area of concentration. The Committee also was responsible for developing the admissions guidelines for entry into the program and for participating in the admissions processes which included an on-campus interview for each applicant under consideration. Meeting monthly and sometimes more often, course and program development took a full year to complete. The Committee concluded its deliberations with a written account of the design, purposes, and expectations of the program in an extensive and detailed manuscript known as *The Parent Document*.

The six University of Maryland professional schools represented on the UMES-UMAB Honors Program were: Dentistry, Law, Nursing, Medicine, Physical Therapy, and Social Work. UMES academic department representation included English and Modern Languages, Fine Arts, Human Ecology, Mathematics and Computer Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences.

The UMES-UMAB Honors Program was unique. UMES students who successfully completed the designated undergraduate honors phase of the program would be admitted to the corresponding UMAB professional school without competition. Successful completion of the program required a student to maintain a minimum semester, cumulative, and honors courses grade point average.

The first UMES-UMAB Honors Program class entered in fall 1979. There were 30 students accepted and 30 students enrolled. With a four-year $50,000/year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson
Foundation, all students received full room, board, and tuition scholarships. Providing they remained in good academic standing, the awards were renewable for three years. In subsequent years, major funding for scholarships was state supported and exceeded $1 million annually. Over the years, the amount of state and foundation scholarship funding increased to nearly $2 million per year.

The founding director of the UMES-UMAB Honors Program was the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Wade Ellis. His successor as Vice President was Dr. Jodellano Statom who also served as the director. During the tenure of Dr. Statom, a counselor was hired for the program, Dr. Brenda Anderson. In July 1983, Dr. Anderson was named director of the program and reported to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Statom. Dr. Anderson became the founding dean for the School of the Arts and Professions in 1995, and simultaneously retained the honors program directorship. In fall 2006, the first full-time director, Dr. Hellena Terrell, was appointed director by UMES President, Dr. Thelma Thompson.
During this period, several individuals served as program directors while continuing their administrative appointments in other campus divisions; among them were Dr. Rita Lamb, Dr. Charles Williams and Dr. Jacqueline Brice-Finch. Subsequently, in the fall of 2011, Ms. Denise Meade, was named director. Her tenure was for one year. In July 2012, Dr. Ray Davis, Dean, School of the Arts and Professions, also assumed the role of interim director for the program. In September 2013, the current director, Dr. Michael Lane, was named to the position and Mrs. Aundra’ Roberts, whose service to honors as Program Associate dates to 2005, was promoted to Assistant Director. Administrative Assistant Ms. Whitney Turner completes the program’s current staff.

In fall 1983, the Honors Program expanded to include an affiliation with the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. Faculty in the UMES Department of Agriculture and their counterparts at Virginia Tech developed the curriculum for students pursuing this area of study. Similar to the agreement with the professional schools of the University System of Maryland, students who successfully completed the honors pre-veterinary medicine track in animal science at UMES would be granted admission to the veterinary school at Virginia Tech without competition.
In time, it became apparent that larger numbers of high performing students were in fact enrolling at UMES – one of the original goals of The Honors Program. However, many of them wished to eventually pursue a graduate school rather than professional school degree. As a result, The Honors Program was expanded again to include admission into General Honors of high achieving UMES students who desired to attend graduate school following completion of their studies at UMES.

There was one honors program at UMES with three components: UMES-UMAB Honors for students seeking admission of professional schools; UMES-VA/MD Regional College of Veterinary Medicine Honors; and General Honors designed for students seeking admission to graduate rather than professional school. Hundreds of students have graduated as members of The Honors Program and many of them have gone on to successfully complete professional and graduate school study. Although initially, students were directed towards professional schools within the University System of Maryland or the veterinary school at Virginia Tech, early on students sought and gained admission to professional and graduate schools throughout the country. UMES Honors Program students successfully completed professional and graduate school study at the University of Pittsburgh, Harvard College, Yale University, Stanford University, Georgia Tech, University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University, New York University at Stony Brook, Rutgers University, Reisler University, University of Virginia, Brown University, Boston College, and Georgetown University, to name a few.

In May 1994, The Honors Program celebrated its 15th anniversary with a gala dinner dance.
More than 200 people were in attendance including program graduates, their parents, UMES faculty and administrators, and community dignitaries.

Graduating seniors and their parents enjoyed an evening of good food, good company, and celebration.

In addition to celebrating the Program’s 15th anniversary, the occasion also included the annual Strawberries and Champagne Reception honoring 1994 Program graduating seniors.

Desert was fabulous and delicious! President Hytche toasts one of the 1994 graduates.

This year, 2013, marks the 35th anniversary for The Honors Program. There is every reason to believe that the Program’s future is full of promise and will be brighter than ever!