Honors in Practice, Volume 1 (complete issue)

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About the cover photo: C. W. Post Honors students, Monica Santiago (left) and Dana Debari (right), work on their “Harbor as Text” assignment during a freshman retreat aboard the historic oyster sloop Christeen. The photographer is Adam D’Antonio, a former student representative to the NCHC Executive Committee. Adam is currently entering his second year of law school.

Dedication photo by Paul A. Laughlin.
EDITORIAL POLICY

*Honors in Practice (HIP)* accommodates the need and desire for articles about nuts-and-bolts issues, innovative practices in individual honors programs, and other honors topics of concern to the membership. *HIP* complements the semi-annual scholarly journal of the NCHC, *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC)*. Both journals employ a double-blind review system. *JNCHC* publishes scholarly essays that stress research in and on honors education. *HIP* publishes practical and descriptive essays: descriptions of successful honors courses, suggestions for out-of-class experiences, administrative issues, and other matters that were formerly published in the *National Honors Report*. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu or 850.927.3776.

DEADLINE

HIP is published annually. The deadline for submissions is January 1.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. We will accept material by e-mail attachment (preferred) or disk. We will not accept material by fax or hard copy.
2. If documentation is used, the documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author’s primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.), but please avoid footnotes. Internal citation to a list of references (bibliography) is preferred; endnotes are acceptable.
3. There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.
4. Accepted essays will be edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for infelicities of style or presentation. Authors will have ample opportunity to review and approve edited manuscripts before publication.
5. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu or, if necessary, 850.927.3776.
DEDICATION

C. GREY AUSTIN, M.B.A., M.DIV., PH.D

With pride and gratitude, we dedicate this inaugural issue of Honors in Practice to one of the central figures in the history of honors education. Dr. C. Grey Austin was a founding member of the National Collegiate Honors Council (1966-93) and is an honorary lifetime member. Having worked for eleven years at the University of Michigan, where he got his Ph.D., he became Assistant Dean and Honors Director in the Colleges of Arts and Sciences at The Ohio State University in 1966, becoming University Honors Director in 1974. He was awarded emeritus status in 1988 and now lives with his wife, Barbara, in a retirement village in Central Ohio, where—no surprise—he is editor of The Villager. He also has a web site for his “Theological Musings” at http:www.otterbein.edu/dept/RELG/greymuse/greymenu.html.

In the NCHC, Grey was Executive Secretary-Treasurer (1973-78), President (1980-81), and Editor of the National Honors Report (1985-93). Honors in Practice (HIP) is a descendant of the National Honors Report (NHR), and Grey Austin is a patriarch in its family tree. Grey brought high standards to the NHR, having previously been editor of the Journal of Higher Education (1966-70). We hope that, as editors of this new grandchild of the former NHR, we can live up to those standards.

We also hope to maintain the tradition of encouragement, generosity, and cooperation that Grey Austin brought to the NCHC and to his position as the editor of NHR. Many of us who are now elders in the NCHC were the beneficiaries of Grey’s advice and support as we experimented with new ideas in our programs and in the national organization. If HIP can provide advice and support to current honors directors and deans with even a small degree of Grey Austin’s success, we will be proud. We are proud now to evoke his name at the launching of this new journal and to dedicate the first issue to him.

2005
Welcome to the inaugural issue of the National Collegiate Honors Council’s new journal, Honors in Practice (HIP). As we begin this new journal, we honor its place in the history of NCHC publications. Up through the winter of 2002, the NCHC had a regular newsletter that came to be called, starting in the 1980s, the National Honors Report. This newsletter was originally edited by John Portz and later, starting in 1988, Grey Austin. Meanwhile, the NCHC also had a scholarly journal called Forum for Honors, which—in the late 80s and early 90s—was edited by Robert Roemer and then Sara Varhus. Forum for Honors was discontinued in 1995 and revived in 2000 as the Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council. The National Honors Report (NHR), with Maggie Brown as its tireless and enthusiastic editor, maintained publication through its last issue in the winter of 2002.

NHR served two primary purposes: as an organizational newsletter reporting on official NCHC matters and as a vehicle for publishing members’ ideas and insights about honors education, most often by sharing what they did in their own honors programs.

Last year, the NCHC Executive Committee and Publications Board decided to split the two former roles of the NHR. A newsletter, still bearing the name National Honors Report, will be revived to report on official organizational matters, and Honors in Practice now publishes essays on issues and ideas relevant to honors programs and colleges.

Honors in Practice reports on “nuts and bolts” issues related to honors education (the journal banner conveys this mission), but essays are carefully selected and edited for high quality of writing and ideas. While Maggie Brown did an outstanding job of maintaining high standards for the former NHR virtually single-handedly, HIP is, like JNCHC, a double-blind, peer-refereed journal with an independent editorial board. Its distinction from JNCHC is that it does not require the scholarly apparatus characteristic of a research journal, and it focuses less on theoretical and conceptual frameworks than on useful, viable ideas that can serve as inspirations or models for honors educators, students, and administrators.

This first issue of Honors in Practice will, we hope, set the standard and precedent for the NCHC’s new journal, providing the membership with advice, ideas, and insights that enhance the value of honors education. This first issue is divided into three sections: “Administrative Matters,” “Curriculum and Instruction,” and “Student Recruitment and Retention.” All three sections—and
EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION

all the essays therein—have the common aim of improving the way we serve students in honors programs and colleges.

We begin with “Keeping Honors Information Current,” an essay by Joan Digby and Tracey Christy, which provides crucial advice for honors administrators—advice that the authors learned the hard way when they tried to hunt down information for the new Peterson’s guide that they edited: Smart Choices: Honors Programs and Colleges, 4th Edition. Few of us ever need to contact ourselves and so have no idea how difficult this task might be. Digby and Christy tried to contact many of us and thus got a very good idea. Their essay may just help you improve your program’s marketing, recruitment, retention, visibility, and survival. Read it!

In “Tenure and Promotion in Honors,” Rosalie Otero, as one of the few directors of an honors program that has its own faculty and that grants tenure and promotion, gives insights into the value of an interdisciplinary faculty that has the legitimacy and self-sufficiency enjoyed in the traditional academic disciplines. She gives rationales for a tenure- and promotion-granting honors program as well as experienced advice about how to make it work. Underlying this practical and focused advice is a much broader perspective on the paradoxes and dilemmas within higher education, especially in large research universities, where excellence in teaching is an ostensible goal but rarely a factor in tenure and promotion decisions. Interdisciplinary studies are similarly touted as an important institutional focus without a commensurate institutional commitment. The University of New Mexico, however, has made such a commitment to interdisciplinary teaching and learning in the University Honors Program, and Otero is a leader in this rare new kind of honors environment. Her essay is important reading for all who hope to follow.

Steffen Pope Wilson and Rose M. Perrine—in “We Know They’re Smart, but Have They Learned Anything?: Strategies for Assessing Learning in Honors”—provide descriptions of and suggestions about outcomes assessment along with how it can be implemented in honors programs. The authors have experience with developing outcomes assessment in the honors program at Eastern Kentucky University. Honors administrators who, by choice or perforce, are implementing outcomes assessment programs may benefit from reading this essay by two enthusiastic proponents.

We end the section on “Administrative Matters” with a brief and useful essay by Geoff Orth entitled “Funding Needs Through Student Government Resources.” Orth suggests that an honors program can improve funding overnight, as his program did at Longwood University, by becoming a student organization officially recognized by its institution’s resource-rich SGA. Honors administrators who have not yet considered this funding source would be wise to pursue it. The pursuit might not succeed or might succeed only partially, but it just might lead to a significant source of financial support.

The section “Curriculum and Instruction” begins with an essay entitled “On the Benefits of Teaching in Honors” by Alexander Werth of Hampden-Sydney
College. Werth offers advice to honors administrators who are trying to recruit excellent faculty members to teach honors classes. He provides a rich array of incentives to teach in honors, and administrators might find the essay an occasion not only for head-nodding but for photocopying and distribution to professors they wish to recruit into honors teaching.

Kambra Bolch's essay "Contracting in Honors" addresses a provocative issue that has long preoccupied honors administrators, who tend to favor or oppose honors contracts with particular vehemence. Bolch describes the history of honors contracts at the Texas Tech University Honors College, a history which revealed the need for contract options as well as the full range of problems in implementing them; she then describes the solutions that gave honors contracts academic value and integrity in addition to a convenient, cost-effective way to provide needed credit hours. Honors administrators who provide honors contracts or who are considering such options will have much to ponder and learn from Bolch’s essay.

In "Reviving an Honors Program with Specialized Sequence Tracks," Sharon Carrish describes the strategies she used at Mansfield University of Pennsylvania to revitalize and increase enrollment in her honors program. Chief among these strategies was the design of "specialized sequence tracks" for honors students in nursing, education, and music. The new curricular sequences eliminate former redundancies between honors and major requirements while also allowing honors students in those majors to complete all their requirements in four years; the changes are, therefore, successful strategies for recruiting and retaining honors students.

Jim Lacey addresses a general and fundamental question about honors education in “Honors Courses: More Difficult or Different?” He offers examples of honors courses at Eastern Connecticut State University that demonstrate a creative curriculum—one that is “different” rather than more difficult. These courses make a case for honors as an opportunity for innovation, team teaching, and interdisciplinary teaching and learning. Lacey’s essay provides ideas for honors courses that may inspire honors administrators and faculty to create new honors courses on their own campuses.

Mark McGinley provides a nice companion piece to Jim Lacey’s essay in “Transferring a Course Developed for Honors Students to Non-Major Biology Students: Lessons Learned.” McGinley describes the design of a “different” science lab he taught at Texas Tech that was consistently successful with honors students and a bomb among non-honors students. The challenges and opportunities of independent and untraditional science projects were exciting to non-major honors students and frustrating to non-major non-honors biology students, who wanted structure, memorization, and predictable pedagogy. McGinley found that the strategies which positively affect the success of an honors class tend to backfire in a non-honors class, and vice versa. We might, therefore, reexamine our organizational notion that honors courses can be successfully replicated in the non-honors curriculum; maybe that is a pipe dream built into “The Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program.”
A complement to McGinley's perspective on honors versus non-honors instruction is James D. Bell’s essay “Expand the Honors Curriculum: Teach Entrepreneurship, Risk-Taking, and Change Across the Curriculum.” Bell describes his modification of a regular business course at Texas State University so that, instead of presenting a business plan, teams of honors students design and implement a project to improve the campus or community. Bell provides a model for other honors business courses for non-business majors.

Ellen Riek, in “Building Community and Fostering Excellence through the Writing Process,” offers an idea for transforming introductory honors courses on writing into a year-long preparation for an annual Honors Symposium. In the Northern Arizona University Honors Program, students write and revise papers during their first semester knowing that, in the second semester, they can choose a paper they wrote and prepare to present it at the formal Honors Symposium, much as they would prepare a conference paper. Students also have the option, rather than presenting a paper, to serve as editors or as informed audience members at the Symposium. Students thus learn to take their writing seriously, to work within the honors community on formal presentation, and to seek excellence beyond the confines of a single course.

Jana L. Pressler, Eric Rosenfeld, and Marianne Alverbo Larsson have pooled the resources of The University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, The Pennsylvania State University, and the Karolinska University Hospital in Stockholm, Sweden to create a study-abroad course sequence. Their essay, “Stockholm Study Abroad: Scientific Breakthroughs and Nobel Laureates,” bears the same title as the course, which includes a 3-semester-hour honors seminar at Penn State followed by a 1-semester-hour study experience in Stockholm. The authors describe the content and logistics of the course sequence.

The next section of this inaugural issue of HIP—“Student Recruitment and Retention”—begins with an excellent idea for introducing students to each other before they get to college. James Swafford, in “Jump-Starting Honors Community with Introductory Biographies,” explains how he elicits biographical information from incoming students, then shaping them into “bio-blurbs” and distributing them during the summer. Swafford explains the multiple uses and benefits of the strategy that he has developed at Ithaca College, and he suggests how it might be adapted to other kinds of programs and universities. Short, entertaining, and useful, this essay is a good read for veteran as well as new honors directors.

The final two essays in this section and issue address the topic of student mentors. The essay by Alvin Wang, Crystal Espinosa, Cassandra Long, and Anik Patel is entitled “Team Leaders and the Honors Freshman-Year Experience.” While mentoring is a formal part of many honors programs, the Team Leaders initiative that these authors describe at the University of Central Florida is an especially well developed mentor program that ties together the curricular and extracurricular components of the Honors College. The authors describe the
components of this program, its value to the Honors College, and its transfor-
mative influence on both freshmen and Team Leaders.

Finally, in “Using Student Mentors in an ‘Introduction to Honors’ Course,”
Betsy Bach, Rachel Kinkie, and Sam Schabaker describe the student-mentor
program at the University of Montana-Missoula, a program that pairs experi-
enced honors students with teachers of the freshman honors course. The essay
describes the history of the program; its benefits to freshmen, mentors, faculty,
and the Honors College; and ways the program might evolve and improve. The
essay includes two sections written by students describing the value that the
student-mentor program had for them.

We hope that the essays in this first issue of Honors in Practice will elicit
from readers not only new ideas for their own honors programs and colleges
but also contributions to future issues of HIP. NCHC conferences have always
been a rich source of information and dialogue about honors. HIP offers the
opportunity to further the dialogue and expand the information in a form that
you can read at your leisure and collect on your bookshelves. Please partici-
pate by reading...and also by writing. Our next deadline is January 1, 2006.
In the process of composing the fourth edition of Peterson’s *Smart Choices: Honors Programs & Colleges*, we spent a great deal of time verifying current information about our member institutions. This turned out to be far more difficult than we had anticipated, and so we would like to share with you some of the problems we encountered that may have practical implications for you when it comes to keeping in touch with NCHC, providing information about your program, and recruiting new students.

The Peterson’s cycle is 3-4 years. We have learned from previous editions that directorships and deanships in honors also have an average turnover of about the same time frame. That means, when we come to write a new edition, mailings frequently are sent to directors or deans no longer with the program. For that reason, it is essential for you to update your affiliation and contact information with NCHC on an annual basis. If you are turning over a program or college to someone else, if you are taking a leave or going on sabbatical, you really should give NCHC the name and contact information of the person who takes over your position—whether temporarily or permanently. Telephone numbers, fax numbers, email addresses, and mailing addresses have very short life spans. When these change, NCHC has serious problems locating the administrator of the program.

When there is a turnover of directors, membership in NCHC frequently lapses. As a result, new directors often lose the advantages of belonging to a national organization that can be helpful in teaching them the ropes and helping them understand the national honors context. Often they could use the assistance of an NCHC consultant but know nothing about the availability of such people. They are unaware of the annual conference and miss the opportunity to take part in “Beginning in Honors” and all the other workshops that could be useful. They also lose the opportunity to meet people both in their region and around the country from whose experience they can profit.

It is easy to understand why directors and deans fired from honors positions might not pass such information along to their replacements. One such person slammed the phone down on me (this is Joan speaking) when I asked for the name of the new director! This is hardly in the spirit of honors collegiality, but it is understandable. It is also not the most common case. Many programs change administration in a regular rotation. Others change because, after a few
years, people prefer to go back to their department or to do research. So, assuming that changes in administration are generally cordial, it would be best to prepare for the next in line by: keeping all your NCHC monographs and journals shelved together as a reference library and by also keeping a current copy of Peterson’s *Honors Programs & Colleges* on the shelf so that the new director will have a model to revise your profile when the time comes.

Now that we have a permanent national office, it is also easy to update your information with our Executive Director, Patricia Speelman, speelman@unlsolve.unl.edu (402-472-9150). Putting the national office in the loop should be a regular arrangement that you make when there is any change in the leadership of your honors program or college. The same is true for your regional affiliations.

Most frequently, mail that is sent to a person who is no longer in charge either gets trashed or returned as undeliverable. The same is true of email. When mail bounced back to us, we sought to locate the current honors administrator by going to the college or university’s website. Amazingly, this is where we encountered the most difficulty. In general, these websites were confusing and very difficult to navigate. More often than not, HONORS IS BURIED and very hard to find. By using a Google search with honors included in the string, we were sometimes able to get there, but what we found was not generally very useful. Most institutions are trying to wean enquirers away from the telephone, so it is really hard to find a phone number for the honors office, or even a main switchboard number for the University, at a website. Usually, the searcher arrives at a button marked “contact us,” which on most sites is the email address for an admissions office. Websites are designed for recruitment, not for providing information. As a result, finding the name of the Honors Director or Dean, or finding a phone number or email address for that person requires CIA training and the patience of a saint.

You can do yourself a great service if you attempt to get your critical contact information on your college or university’s website. By working with the web designer, you might even be able to make honors easily accessible with a few clicks in the right places. The routing that leads to honors on most institution websites is Byzantine. Sadly, it led us to the conclusion that honors is not a priority at many institutions. Making honors more prominent and easier to discover should be a priority for us all.

When we did locate honors, it was frequently in connection with an award ceremony or picnic that took place in the 1990s. Colleges and universities don’t clear out old junk any more than other businesses do, so much of what is available on your websites is as old as directors who have long retired to Sedona! You can imagine that what we found sent us back to our public relations office to update information about our own program. I’m sure your office is as busy as ours, so it’s easy to understand how we all let this problem go. But truthfully it is a problem that needs immediate attention. The best action you can take for yourself is trying to find your program on the Internet. If you can’t, you’re in
Inform people who have contact with prospective students that an honors program or honors college does exist at your University. In some instances when a main switchboard number could be found on the website, we would call and ask to be connected to the Honors Office. A very confused person would direct our calls to Admissions, Financial Aid or other offices, and not to Honors. Once, a switchboard operator just hung up on me (this is Tracey speaking). More often we would go through a long ritual of “twenty-questions,” offering helpful hints such as a previous director’s name or a purpose for the program, and we would eventually be directed to the appropriate area. People answering the telephone need to be made aware that an Honors Program or College does exist, along with the names of the director, dean, and/or administrative assistant. They should receive proper instructions on how to route telephone calls for honors. Prospective students do not have extra information to help a switchboard operator determine where a call should be directed, and, more times than not, they will just become frustrated and not bother to call again.

If there are students out there searching for what we have to offer, then finding information that is out of date, pictures from seminars held ten years ago, and phone numbers for people who don’t run the show can be very discouraging. Probably you will need to provide them with new photos and information in order to make the change. Whenever you take students to conferences, sponsor events, or confer awards, TAKE NEW PHOTOS AND GET THEM ON YOUR WEBSITE. (We are just beginning to do that as a result of everything we discovered). Many of you submitted photos for our Peterson’s guide. Not all of them could be used by the publisher, but they can all be used by you to advertise what is current in your program. Do it. Keep your web page as current as you can.

The good news is that, while many directors change, most honors programs and colleges stay put. Many of them have administrative assistants who survive all these changes and are the greatest source of program information on the planet. It might be a good idea to give their contact information as well as your own to NCHC or post it on your website. Most prospective students have first contact with administrative assistants more frequently than they do with directors. From an operational perspective, administrative assistants should know all about NCHC, including the dues and conference schedules. They are the ones who should probably read the monthly e-letters so they know exactly what is coming up for you, your faculty, and your students.

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2005
The Chronicle of Higher Education Review (2/11/05) published an article on “Collaborative Efforts: Promoting Interdisciplinary Scholars” by Stephanie L. Pfirman, James P. Collins, Susan Lowes, and Anthony F. Michaels. They wrote, “Creative research and teaching increasingly occur at the junction between traditional disciplines. As a result, many colleges and universities have committed themselves to fostering interdisciplinary scholarship. But the scholars who work at that junction are confronted with conventional departmental hiring, review, and tenure procedures that are not suited to interdisciplinary work and can slow or block the progress of their careers.”

The Honors Program at the University of New Mexico has nine full-time faculty members. It is important that full-time faculty dedicated to Honors education should have equal privileges as other faculty on campus in terms of their careers. The best way to accomplish this goal was to establish hiring, review, tenure, and promotion processes for faculty in the Honors Program. The process for UNM’s University Honors Program faculty had to be created so that it would observe criteria for other faculty on campus and, at the same time, include principles for interdisciplinary work. For the most part, the process has worked although some of the expectations are more encompassing than those for faculty in a specific discipline.

The UNM Honors Program (UHP), which has approximately 1400 students, is primarily interdisciplinary. The University also has departmental honors opportunities in various departments, and the UHP will accept those credit hours toward graduation with Honors. This enables students to complete a broad, liberal arts, interdisciplinary honors education as well as an in-depth research project or thesis in their major. It is, however, the interdisciplinary character of the program that has led us to address various issues related to the concerns posed by Pfirman, et al above.

Because of the nature of the program, we have many ongoing endeavors and student activities or programs that require hiring some full-time continuing faculty, especially because one director would not be able to accomplish all of these activities. Full-time faculty in the Honors Program serve as mentors and coordinators for such activities. Dr. Leslie Donovan, for example, serves as the mentor, teacher, and advisor for Scribendi, the literary and arts magazine that publishes original pieces by honors students from the Western Regional Honors
Tenure and Promotion in Honors

Council. Other full-time faculty assist with mentoring students for national and international fellowships and scholarships; coordinate theses or final senior projects; coordinate the student-teachers; direct international UHP programs such as Conexiones in Spain and Mexico and the Honors Biodiversity Program in Australia; and serve as the advisors for the Honors Student Advisory Council and the Honors Residence Hall. These faculty also teach interdisciplinary honors courses and serve as program advisors. Additional courses are taught by faculty from other departments on campus or visiting instructors.

Although often pressured to hire faculty with joint appointments, as director I have resisted primarily because of the substantial amount of work required of full-time faculty in Honors. I have also found that hiring faculty with one or more departmental appointments becomes problematic. The appointment must spell out the research, teaching, service, and other obligations for all departments involved at the time of hire. Having homes in several departments often means that faculty members have two or more full-time jobs. Very often they have limited “face time” in their “home” departments. In some units, they are not at home anywhere, or are at home everywhere, and may have to do extra duty and attend to multiple sets of tasks such as departmental meetings, for instance. In practice, these faculty, although holding a full-time contract, are often treated as part-time faculty in each of the departments. Most often, these faculty “belong” more to one department than another, which may cause friction and a schizophrenic frame of mind for the faculty member. Tenuring a faculty member in a department and “borrowing” him or her to work full-time in honors creates its own set of challenges. The department would have the final say in who is hired, and the faculty member tenured elsewhere would have the option of leaving the Honors Program at any time.

The full-time faculty members in the UNM Honors Program received doctorates in traditional disciplines including anthropology, biology, English, French, American studies, and history, but they have made honors their professional focus. So, the challenge was to determine how these professionals were to advance in this profession. How were they to be rewarded? Specifically, how could they be tenured and promoted?

The University Honors Program has a national reputation for academic innovation, educational research, quality of teaching, and commitment to teaching. It is within this context that criteria to define the competence and excellence required for promotion and tenure have been developed. Competence and excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service are evaluated both on quality and quantity parameters.

One of the major obstacles toward tenure and promotion in honors programs and colleges is that “Honors” is not a discipline. This does not mean, however, that honors education is not a profession. There is sufficient evidence across the country to indicate that there are educators in higher education who choose to work in honors programs or colleges exclusively. Dr. Donovan, mentioned earlier, is a UHP alumnus, and we have several UHP alumni who
come back as adjunct faculty. Several alumni who plan to become professors have said that they want to make honors their professional focus. In addition, many colleges and universities have committed themselves to fostering interdisciplinary scholarship, which is the cornerstone of most honors programs and colleges.

Interdisciplinary scholars frequently face a set of common difficulties in their research, teaching, and administrative roles. Interdisciplinary research often entails special challenges because of the high networking costs: colleagues with different priorities and different field seasons, and disciplinary language barriers. Time and energy are also required to make and maintain connections, including vetting and editing documents with many authors. Interdisciplinary education supports the notion that all subjects are intimately related. In most departments, however, these relationships are often ignored and teachers are encouraged to focus on one area of specialization. The principal barrier to interdisciplinary research has been the pattern of university organization that creates vested interests in traditionally defined departments. Administratively, all educational activity needs to “belong” somewhere in order to be accounted for and supported.

I recently learned of an institution that did not include its honors program in the new marketing and recruitment materials because the program did not grant degrees. Generally, courses must be offered through a department, and students are asked to place themselves in one college or another. The limitations on this kind of structure are recognized in every university by defining new departments, approving new programs, and creating centers in which to house courses, often experimental, that do not fit into the disciplines. At the University of New Mexico, University College was reorganized to accommodate many of the interdisciplinary programs that had been created in recent years. The Honors Program, although founded in 1960 and having shifted from the Provost’s office to that of one or another of the Associate Provosts, was included under the umbrella of University College. Having a “home” under an established college has strengthened the Honors Program’s ability to establish reasonable criteria for tenure and promotion comparable to other units on campus.

Tenure and promotion decisions in Honors, as in other departments on campus, require established excellence in at least two areas and at least some level of competence in the third (teaching, scholarship, service). But what is excellence in an interdisciplinary program such as honors, and what is excellence in teaching in such an interdisciplinary field? Departments find that, for passing judgment on peers, research productivity is a much more manageable criterion than teaching effectiveness. Student evaluations and alumni testimonials have been notoriously weak evidence, and reliable self-evaluation is all but impossible. At this point, promotion and tenure committees still find teaching effectiveness difficult to measure. Publication is at least a perceptible tool; the relative ease of its use has reinforced the reliance on it for tenure
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and promotion decisions. Evaluating good teaching may always be difficult, but effective integration of research and teaching should be observable, as should the development of interdisciplinary approaches to learning.

The typical department in a research university will assert that it places a high value on effective teaching. It will be able to cite faculty members among its ranks who take conspicuous pride in their reputations as successful teachers; it may be able to point to student evaluations that give consistently high ratings to many of its members. At the same time, however, discussions concerning tenure and promotion are likely to focus almost entirely on research or creative productivity. The department head, when making recommendations, may look almost exclusively at research and penalize junior faculty who seem to give disproportionate time and attention to teaching or to experimental or interdisciplinary courses.

Because the mission of the University Honors Program is primarily to provide an interdisciplinary, enhancing education for undergraduates, teaching is a major criterion in assessing UHP faculty. Consequently, in their tenure packets (portfolios), faculty are expected to provide a statement on teaching, including a brief discussion of perceived successes, future goals, and expectations. Of course, teaching evaluations are also part of the portfolio as are sample syllabi, materials developed for classes, special programs such as field-based courses, service-learning components of courses, and other teaching materials.

Co-teaching is often a strong component of honors courses. Students benefit from having two or more teachers, and this arrangement is an excellent way to achieve interdisciplinary perspectives. However, without full-time faculty status in honors, faculty members frequently get credit for only part of the course. Coordinating course development, teaching, and the administration of assignments and grading is significantly more difficult than providing two separate courses. Moreover, departments are usually credited with just one half of the students; often these classes are electives and therefore not considered by departments to be as important as foundational classes. This becomes more problematic in tough budgetary times when departments are scrambling for more dollars and higher FTE's.

In 1895, the first president of the University of Chicago, William Raincy Harper, asked each new faculty member to agree in writing that advancements in rank and salary would be governed chiefly by research productivity. This stipulation, novel in its time, would raise few eyebrows in most research universities a century later. They might claim otherwise, but research universities consider “success” and “research productivity” to be virtually synonymous. It's the old “publish or perish” standard.

Research and study are certainly important to inform one's teaching and to expand a faculty member's individual knowledge. However, scholarship need not be in conventional disciplinary research. Some alternative activities include development of new teaching techniques and programs; and recognition by peers for contributing ideas to and/or advancing honors education. To ensure
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that such activities are given proper consideration, proper documentation of these kinds of scholarship must be included in the portfolio. Most important, such contributions should have some recognition beyond the boundaries of the University of New Mexico.

When publications are evaluated, attention should be paid to the pedagogical quality of the work as well as its contribution to scholarship. We have emphasized that honors is a community of learners. Faculty and students contribute their particular combinations of imagination, experience, and accumulated knowledge. The divisions that have been created between teacher and pupil are often artificial and counter-productive and must be bridged for effective collaborations to occur.

To be considered competent in scholarship/research/creative works, the individual must show activity comparable to others of the same rank within Honors at an average or above average level. This will usually include works published in appropriate venues such as the Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council, the former National Honors Report, or the new Honors in Practice. Faculty may also publish in appropriate journals in fields that complement their work in honors. Younger faculty are often more at ease with technology and more adept at publishing in e-journals. The rapid growth of information and communication technology plays a critical role in restructuring the mechanisms by which specialized academic knowledge is validated, distributed, and made available. The academic reward system is structured to encourage quality scholarship primarily in the form of publications, and the number of e-journals is growing. Review teams must then be conscious of the parameters, process, and quality of publishing in this venue.

Scholarship/research/creative activities may also be characterized by continuity. Strategies and designs that further honors curricula, teaching, and programmatic activities must be considered. Books, articles (especially in peer-reviewed journals), creative works, grants, and presentations at professional conferences are all suitable materials (resources) for tenure and promotion consideration.

Service activity is often less problematic. At many institutions, junior faculty are simply told not to do any but to concentrate their time and efforts on scholarship. Service, however, is important. Think of all of the committee work that would not be done without the volunteer services of faculty. Special contributions, such as acting as chair of a professional meeting session or serving on an honors committee, not only bring visibility, acknowledgment, and standing in the community, but they keep the world going round! Committee work also contributes to the dialogue of the professional community. Faculty who engage in activities within their local (university and community) and broader professional communities (NCHC, regional honors councils, and discipline-specific organizations) maintain a vitality that not only enhances their careers but benefits others as well.
Because the full-time faculty in honors cannot be pigeon-holed into one discipline or field, the guidelines for promotion and tenure have to be flexible. Thus, for example, at UNM we form Tenure and Promotion Committees individual to each faculty member on tenure-track. Dr. Ursula Shepherd, for example, received a Ph.D. in biology. Her committee consisted of two biology professors; an associate provost, who, although a music professor, was interdisciplinary in her scholarship, teaching, and projects; an American studies professor, whose focus has been on environmental issues (American studies itself being an interdisciplinary field); and an associate professor from the Centennial Library (science and engineering branch). External reviewers for Dr. Shepherd included honors individuals across the country as well as biology professors. Dr. Shepherd’s scholarship included work in biology, honors, nature writing, and field-based programs. The majority of her work is interdisciplinary.

Dr. Troy Lovata, whose Ph.D. is in anthropology, is currently in his third year of a tenure-track appointment. His committee consists of three faculty from the Anthropology Department and three tenured faculty in the Honors Program. There may come a time when all of the full-time faculty in the Honors Program are tenured, but even then I think it would be beneficial to include one or two faculty from fields related to the tenure-track faculty member’s discipline. It is also advantageous to include professors on campus who have clout and are well respected. We try whenever possible to include faculty who have either taught in the Honors Program or have served on the Honors Council.

The tenure and promotion process for honors faculty continues to evolve at the University of New Mexico. Thus far, we have four tenured faculty members. As the members of the National Collegiate Honors Council become more professionally committed to honors endeavors, and as more honors programs and colleges institute tenure and promotion in honors, it will become less problematic to constitute acceptable and equitable guidelines for tenure and promotion in honors.

REFERENCE


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We Know They are Smart, but Have They Learned Anything?: Strategies for Assessing Learning in Honors

We Know They are Smart, but Have They Learned Anything?: Strategies for Assessing Learning in Honors

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Abstract

The independent assessment of student learning, or outcomes assessment, is a topic of national interest and one that is currently being addressed by many institutions of higher education. Honors programs, like all academic units, are being asked to create outcomes assessment programs. We provide here a brief history of outcomes assessment and an overview of the basic steps required for creating an outcomes assessment program. We then discuss suggestions for implementing outcomes assessment in honors.

Introduction

The focus on assessment in higher education began in the 1980s when several national commissions or committees called for improvements in American undergraduate education. Because of concerns that higher education was not meeting the needs of American society, the assessment of student learning, or outcomes assessment, was deemed necessary for the development of “excellence” in undergraduate education. This national focus on assessment resulted in changes in the federal accreditation policy implemented by accrediting agencies. The tenor of those changes is that institutions must specify educational objectives that are consistent with their missions and must demonstrate and document educational achievements in verifiable and consistent ways (Nichols, 1991). That is, there must be a focus on the ends or the results of learning more than the means or the process and resources that can promote student learning, and the ends should be related to the institution’s mission (Nichols, 1995).

At this point, it is difficult to know if the current changes in the policies of regional accrediting agencies regarding student learning will fulfill the need for more quality assurance in education or if the state and/or federal governments will institute additional regulations regarding the assessment of student learning. One thing is certain: the assessment of student learning will remain a topic
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of not only institutional concern but also regional and national concern for some time to come (Nichols, 1995). Because of this current emphasis on student learning, you are likely being asked to conduct outcomes assessment in order to fulfill the requirements of your institution’s regional accrediting body (Maki, 1999). You might also be required to write learning outcomes to meet the requirements for your institution’s general education program, as many honors program courses fulfill general education requirements. Outcomes assessment should also be included as a part of an external evaluation of your program. Additionally, it is a useful tool for constituents of programs who are simply interested in self-reflection and improvement.

The components of an outcomes assessment plan are (1) a clear institutional and unit mission; (2) identification of intended educational goals; (3) assessment of the extent to which intended outcomes are accomplished; and (4) adjustment of the unit’s proposed outcomes based on the assessment findings. The goal of outcomes assessment is continuous improvement. That is, outcomes assessment is a tool for identifying and remediating weaknesses in an academic program. In each assessment cycle, new weaknesses should be identified for remediation so that the program is constantly striving towards greater levels of student learning (Maki, 2004; Nichols, 1995).

In this article, we will first describe and provide general suggestions for developing an outcomes assessment program, along the way providing advice related to honors education. Following the general description, we will provide suggestions specific to conducting outcomes assessment in honors.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR CREATING AN OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

The creation of a successful outcomes assessment programs includes the following steps:

APPOINT AN OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT COORDINATOR

A survey in 1990 (Nichols & Wolff; as cited by Nichols, 1995) found that the most often cited factor facilitating successful implementation of outcomes assessment is the appointment of a single individual to coordinate the process. Thus, the designation of an outcomes assessment coordinator will greatly facilitate the successful completion of the assessment process. More detail is given below regarding the selection of this individual in an honors program.

CREATE OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

Once the outcomes assessment coordinator is selected, he or she should assemble a committee to assist in the current assessment cycle (Maki, 2002). This should be a committee of both students and faculty affiliated with the honors program as outcomes assessment should be a collaborative process that is built upon the consensus of its constituents (Maki, 2002; 2004). Additional
constituents such as alumni and the honors director, if this person is not the outcomes assessment coordinator, can also serve on the committee if desired.

**CREATE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Once the outcomes assessment committee has been formed, its first job is to create learning outcomes. *Learning outcomes* are statements reflecting what students should be able to demonstrate, represent, or produce as a result of what they have learned in the program (Maki, 2004). In other words, what will students know and be able to do after completing the program or portions of the program. Learning outcomes should also reflect, or be “linked” to, the mission, purpose statement, outcomes and/or goals of the institution, and any administrative units directly overseeing the honors program (Maki, 2002; Nichols, 1995).

Learning outcomes can fall into one of three domains: the cognitive domain, which includes both knowledge base and the processes of knowing; the psychomotor domain, which includes the development of physical movement, coordination, or a set of skills; and the affective domain, which includes the development of values, attitudes, and commitments (Maki, 2004).

Sample learning outcomes statements:

- Students will demonstrate critically reflective thinking. (cognitive domain)
- Students will make an effective oral presentation. (psychomotor domain)
- Students will demonstrate an appreciation for learning outside the classroom. (affective domain)

**CREATE ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Once learning outcomes have been identified by committee, then methods for assessing the outcomes need to be created. Methods for assessing learning outcomes are the most specific of outcome statements, and these statements should be:

- **Relevant**: These statements are actual assessments of the learning outcomes. It is easier than you think to write an assessment that does not actually measure the learning outcome!
- **Accessible**: The data outlined in these assessments can be collected.
- **Operationally defined**: The behavior to be measured is defined in clear and understandable behavioral terms such that different people collecting and interpreting the data can do so consistently and without confusion. For example, in the learning outcomes outlined above, the terms “critically reflective thinking,” “effective oral presentation,” and “appreciation for learning outside of the classroom” must be defined in concrete and behavioral terms.
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• **Quantified:** A quantifiable amount is given to indicate acceptable performance.

If an assessment of a learning outcome has these four characteristics, then it can result in corrective action (Maki, 2004), which is the ultimate goal of outcomes assessment.

As examples that have all four of these characteristics, an assessment of the aforementioned outcome “Students will demonstrate critically reflective thinking” might be:

• 90% of Senior Thesis students will score a B or greater on the critical thinking portion of their Senior Thesis project.

• 80% of students will score a B or greater on the critical thinking portion of their end-of-semester paper in BOTH Honors Humanities II (HON 306) and Honors Civilization II (HON 311).

Please see the appendix for more sample learning outcomes and methods of assessment.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

**Do Not Rely on Course Grades for Assessment**

Learning outcomes are most useful if they are *formative* instead of *summative* assessments of learning. *Formative* assessments seek evidence of progression along students’ learning while *summative* assessments seek evidence of progression towards the end of students’ learning. Summative assessments provide evidence that students ultimately learn things but do not provide clear information about what students are not learning and how/where the curriculum needs adjustments in order to remediate problem areas. Formative assessments, because they are assessments of progression along students’ learning, can stimulate immediate changes in teaching, choice of curriculum, and student support services (Maki, 2004). For example, a nationally standardized exit-exam might be used as a summative assessment of students’ learning throughout their academic career. However, if the exit-exam data suggest poor learning, then it is too late to adjust the curriculum for those students, and often it is unclear how/where the curriculum should be adjusted. On the other hand, a grade on a paper in a course that requires a comparison and analysis of two competing theories might be used as a formative assessment of students’ critical thinking skills. If the data suggest that students’ critical thinking skills are not at the level expected of them at that point in their academic career, then adjustments to that specific course or a subsequent course can be made. Because of the summative nature of course grades, many accrediting bodies are requiring that they not be used as indicators of student learning within an outcomes assessment program (Maki, 1999).
Another issue related to using course grades as assessments of learning is that a single course grade is a composite of many individual bits of learning. Even if overall course grades are sufficient to indicate learning, some portions of the course may not have been learned at an acceptable level, and this weakness in the course will be obscured by the overall grade. Evaluating the individual bits of learning as a result of creating learning outcomes will provide a more detailed assessment of learning than course grades alone. Remediations for portions of the course can be implemented even if course grades are acceptable.

Use Direct Assessments When Possible

Direct assessments measure what students have learned (e.g., score on a writing assignment). Indirect assessments measure students’ perceptions of their learning (e.g., how well students believe that they write). Direct assessments of learning are always more powerful indicators of student learning than indirect assessments. However, indirect assessments can be good complements to direct assessments of learning (Maki, 2004).

Use Multiple Assessments of Each Learning Outcome

At least two assessments of each learning outcome should be made as multiple assessments allow one to have a more complete understanding of student learning (Maki, 2002). These assessments should come from different components of the curriculum, if possible.

Use Samples of Student Work

In large honors programs, taking a direct assessment of each student’s work may be unnecessarily time consuming. In such cases, taking a random sample of students’ work can significantly decrease the amount of time required for data collection. Additionally, the performance of some subsets of students such as minority or non-traditional students may be of special interest when assessing learning (Maki, 2002; 2004).

Create Scoring Rubrics

If direct assessments are to be made across course sections, instructors, or events, then agreement about the dimensions of learning to be assessed is essential. A solution to this problem is to create a scoring rubric to standardize the grading process among all who will be collecting the data for the assessment. The creation of scoring rubrics is also a mechanism by which abstract constructs such as critical thinking and writing quality can be operationally defined (Maki, 2002; 2004).

Strategically Select Goal Quantity

The choice of the goal quantity attached to each specific outcome is completely up to the assessment committee and coordinator. One should select an
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amount that is reasonably attainable but a bit of a stretch for the program. For example, if 80 percent of the students in the honors program regularly score a B or higher on the critical thinking portion of the senior thesis project, then set a goal that is five to ten percent higher at 85 or 90 percent. When current levels of performance are not known, then an educated guess is in order with the understanding that an adjustment in the quantity may be needed after the next round of data collection. Also, appropriate amounts will vary from program to program. For example, 60 percent of the students in another honors program may score a B or higher on the critical thinking portion of the senior thesis project. In this program setting the goal at 65 or 70 percent would be appropriate.

COMPLETE THE ASSESSMENT “LOOP”

Once the data have been collected, the assessment process is not complete until “problem areas” within the program have been targeted and remediations have been put into place. Even the most successful programs will have areas that need focus for the upcoming assessment cycle. Identifying and remediating problems has been termed “closing the loop” or “completing an assessment cycle” (Maki, 2004; Nichols, 1995). It is important to keep in mind that the purpose of outcomes assessment is critical reflection upon the programming and the consequent student learning that results from it. The “problem areas” revealed in an assessment cycle may be minor within a well-functioning honors program, but even minor problems should be resolved. Additionally, it is not necessary to assess all areas of learning focus in each assessment cycle. Different areas of learning can be targeted in successive assessment cycles.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CONDUCTING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT IN HONORS

Now that we have discussed some general guidelines for assessing learning, here are some suggestions specific to assessing learning in Honors.

IN VOLVE FACULTY KNOWLEDGEABLE IN ASSESSMENT

The ability to conduct assessments of learning is connected to some disciplines more than others. In addition, some individuals have more experience conducting assessment than others. Honors programs are unique in that they are often multi-disciplinary and include individuals from the more assessment-oriented disciplines or individuals who have experience with conducting assessment. Honors directors who do not themselves possess these skills can save time and energy by involving honors-affiliated individuals with such skills in the Honors assessment process.

The honors assessment coordinator must have skills in assessment. It is also helpful if the faculty members who serve on the committee used to create learning outcomes also have some skills in assessment. If possible, compensation for assessment work in honors, which can come in many forms, will be
greatly appreciated by both the honors assessment coordinator and committee members.

**CREATE A FACULTY-DRIVEN ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

Faculty teaching in honors are often a volunteer army; they are choosing to teach in Honors. In this situation, honors directors must keep their faculty happy in order to maintain an excellent and well-functioning program. Creating an outcomes assessment program, even if it is mandated by the institution, can seem counter to this goal as it will likely increase faculty workload. Faculty are also often sensitive that learning outcomes data might reflect poorly on their individual courses, and this can lead to resistance to the process. For example, faculty could “forget” to collect assessment data or “selectively” collect data, e.g., from those students who will “make them look good.” Faculty involvement in the selection of the learning outcomes and methods of assessment is one step toward ameliorating faculty fears.

Creating a *faculty-driven* assessment program with plenty of administrative support gives faculty control but does not overly burden the already overworked faculty member. As was described earlier, a faculty-driven assessment program begins with the appointment of an honors assessment coordinator and a committee to determine the learning outcomes.

Once created, the learning outcomes should be shared with the entire honors faculty. Responsibility for creating assessments to be conducted in Honors courses, along with the creation of any rubrics or other necessary assessment tools, can then belong to the individual faculty or groups of faculty members. Thus, faculty “in the trenches” can maintain control over the types of assessments that will be made in their classrooms or activities. Friendly instruction and/or feedback on creating assessments of learning can be provided by the assessment coordinator prior to data collection in order to ensure that assessments are sufficient. Faculty should then collect data when it is most convenient for them. To decrease faculty workload and maintain faculty morale, the assessment coordinator should offer to analyze assessment data. Faculty should then be given the power to determine the specific remediations that are necessary to improve programming.

If assessments are more global in nature, then the measurement tools and information needed can be created, administered, and analyzed directly by the assessment coordinator. Necessary remediations for such global assessments should be suggested by the outcomes assessment committee.

The assessment coordinator should be responsible for keeping records of all assessments, results, and remediations as well as reporting required data at the university level. In this manner, the assessment coordinator supports the faculty efforts to assess and remediate student learning while ensuring that the learning outcomes for the honors program are met.

Additionally, the assessment coordinator (and other honors administrators) must assure faculty that data will be treated confidentially, will be used for the
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The purpose of improving student learning, and will not be used to evaluate individual instructors. Ultimately, the faculty’s cooperation in assessment activities will depend on their perceptions of how assessment data have been used in the past and will be used in the future.

GIVE GENERAL SKILLS CONTEXT

Academic majors focus on specific content and the development of skills such as writing in a discipline-specific format (e.g., APA-style paper). Honors courses, however, often fulfill general education requirements where there is less focus on content and more focus on skills. These skills are often not discipline-specific, and it can be difficult if not impossible to assess such skills in the abstract. Putting the general skills that are the focus of your honors program in some context can facilitate the assessment of these components of your learning program. For example, you might assess oral presentation skills in an upper division honors course that includes a significant speaking component, or you might assess writing skills in the senior thesis project.

CREATE LEARNING OUTCOMES THAT ARE UNIQUE TO YOUR HONORS PROGRAM

When we think of outcomes assessment in honors, we generally think of assessing classroom skills such as reading, writing, and making oral presentations. However, the educational experience in most honors programs goes far beyond the classroom and the development of such skills. For example, do you strive to become a community of learners? Is it a goal to provide a majority of your students with cultural enrichment through study abroad? Would you like to help a significant number of your students win prestigious national and international scholarships? Would you like to develop life-long learners who enjoy learning outside of the classroom? Do you strive to develop students who will become active members of their communities following graduation?

Do not be afraid to identify your more broad-based and unique goals such as those listed above and include these in your outcomes assessment program. The creation of assessments for such outcomes can be a bit more challenging, but identifying and assessing the unique learning goals of your honors program will solidify your program’s individual identity and provide you with information about your success at achieving all your program-specific learning goals. Such information can also be useful when presenting your program to both internal and external funding sources in order to demonstrate that your program is successful at broadly educating students.

USE EXISTING LEARNING OUTCOMES

One way to decrease the amount of time required for conducting outcomes assessment is to borrow learning outcomes from related units. If your honors courses fulfill general education requirements, you can use the
general education learning outcomes outlined by your institution for the categories fulfilled by honors courses. Similarly, honors programs that reside within academic majors can borrow learning outcomes from the major. You should then create assessments of these outcomes that are relevant to your programming. In addition to decreasing workload, this will ensure that the honors courses align with the mission of your institution and related units and that your program is fulfilling institutional requirements.

**TEASE OUT SOURCES OF STUDENT EXCELLENCE**

Because students enrolled in honors are demonstrated good learners prior to entering the program, they will often outperform non-honors students in learning assessments. This can pose a problem when attempting to assess learning in honors. Are the students excelling because they are excellent students or because they are receiving excellent instruction?

There are several techniques that can be used to tease apart the role of the student and the role of instruction in honors learning. One technique is to use pre-test/post-test assessments of learning. Ask students to provide a writing sample or answer a pop-quiz on the first day of class, and then re-administer the assessment at the end of the semester. The change in performance across the course is the learning that occurred via course instruction. Change can be examined at the individual, sub-group (all seniors, juniors, etc), or entire-class level.

A second suggestion is to include a control group of non-honors students in an assessment of learning and conduct an analysis of covariance using SAT/ACT scores as a covariate. For example, if your college or university is conducting an assessment of general education using a nationally standardized test, you can identify the honors students who completed the assessment (this may need to be done prior to test administration, so planning can be helpful) as well as a control group that contains an equal number of non-honors students. Conduct an ANCOVA to determine if the honors students are excelling at the assessment independent of SAT/ACT score. A related alternative is to use a matched control group in which students who are not in honors are matched with students in honors based upon SAT/ACT score. This controls for student quality, and any differences in performance on the general education assessment are therefore due to differences in curriculum and instruction.

A third suggestion is to collect information on variables other than membership in honors that could affect performance on a standardized assessment of general education (e.g., SAT/ACT score, major, specific courses completed, high school, etc) and enter these variables into a regression analysis. This will allow you to determine the amount of variance in performance that is related to these alternative explanations of student excellence. For more information regarding these statistical techniques, you may consult knowledgeable faculty or staff or Green, Salkind, and Akey (2004).
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CONCLUSIONS

We hope that the suggestions in this article provide you with helpful information regarding your outcomes assessment program. Please keep in mind that each institution must adapt assessment guidelines to meet its unique needs and structure. It is also inevitable that we will have learning goals that are difficult to assess but are important components of our honors programs. Such learning goals should retain their prominence in our programs as we attempt to discover appropriate methods of assessment. Learning outcomes assessment seems to be here to stay (Nichols, 1995). Embracing the process and looking forward to the improvements that an outcomes assessment program can bring to your program are the best ways to approach the assessment of student learning.

REFERENCES


ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


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APPENDIX

SAMPLE LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENTS

Note: Assessment method in parentheses.

1. Students will demonstrate critically reflective thinking.
   A. 100% of Senior Thesis students will score a B or greater on the critical thinking portion of their Senior Thesis project. (Grading Rubric)
   B. 80% of students will score a B or greater on the critical thinking portion of their end of semester paper in BOTH Honors Humanities II (HON 306) and Honors Civilization II (HON 311). (Grading Rubric)

2. Students will make an effective oral presentation.
   A. 100% of Senior Thesis students will score a B or greater on the oral presentation portion of their Senior Thesis project. (Grading Rubric)
   B. 90% of students will show at least a letter grade of improvement in their oral presentation of their senior thesis over their final course presentation in Honors Rhetoric (HON 102). (Comparison of Videotaped Records of Presentations using Grading Rubric)
   C. At least 60% of the students presenting a Senior Thesis will have participated in at least one state, regional, or national panel presentation. (Count)

3. Students will demonstrate an appreciation for learning outside of the classroom.
   A. 80% of students will indicate on the Activities Survey that they attended 5 or more out-of-class enrichment activities during the academic year. (Internal Survey)
   B. 80% of graduating seniors will indicate on the Senior Survey that they plan to attend an educational or cultural event within six months after graduation. (Internal Survey)

4. Students and faculty in the Honors Program will become a community of learners.
   A. Students living in the Honors Dorm will indicate on the Residence survey that living together enhances their educational experience. (Internal Survey)
   B. 80% of students will indicate on the Activities Survey that they participated in 5 or more Honors sponsored academic and/or social activities. (Internal Survey)
   C. Students completing, and faculty teaching Honors courses will indicate on the Team Teaching survey that team taught courses enhance their educational or teaching experience. (Internal Surveys)
In recent years, issues of funding have been largely absent from Honors literature. This is a curious omission because the availability of funding is the single most likely factor to further or hinder a program’s development. Many of our programs are well endowed, especially in scholarships, but it’s rare to find an honors program with generous resources in operating funds, despite the inclusion of an item relating to an “adequate budget” in the NCHC’s well-known “Basic Characteristics of a Fully-Developed Honors Program.”

The reasons for this dearth of operating funds are easy to identify. First, reductions in state support have forced many public institutions to cut program budgets. Second, private funding is rarely able to fill the gap between program needs and available resources. Most donors, alumni included, are more inclined to contribute to scholarships than to support ongoing operational needs such as travel, faculty development, and research costs simply because it’s easier for them to grasp how a deserving student might need scholarship assistance than to understand how that same deserving student would benefit from, say, having the resources to present original research at a conference. Sadly, neither state legislatures nor generous donors are likely to see the light and increase our operating budgets any time soon.

Small wonder, then, that budget-starved honors directors are frustrated to see co-curricular groups receiving ample student-fee supported funding to cover everything from the annual Greek leadership conference at the beach to the rugby club’s trip to New Orleans for the Mardi Gras tournament. But how many honors programs have actually applied for such funding? Probably very few, since most of us would assume that such funding is only available for student groups and organizations rather than for academic programs, which are normally funded through academic channels.

That equation, however, can be turned on its ear by rethinking how honors works. If a voluntary student organization such as an ecology club can solicit funds from the Student Government Association, what is to prevent an organization of honors students from doing the same? At my institution, the students in the honors program met, elected their officers, formulated a mission and a set of goals, and wrote a constitution for what became the Honors Student Association. Once the elections were held and the constitution was published...
FUNDING NEEDS THROUGH STUDENT GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

in the SGA-prescribed format, the HSA became, literally overnight, the largest student organization on campus.

What remained to be done? Our institution’s SGA allocates resources on a semester basis, and SGA-recognized student organizations may apply for funding for their activities at the beginning of each term. After the SGA had formally recognized the Honors Student Association, our organization was given approval for funding activities as diverse as the freshman honors orientation retreat and the annual fall retreat (open to the general membership); student travel to conferences, including costs for registration, meals, lodging, and transportation; and various social events to promote organizational recognition, such as the senior honors dinner.

Clearly, such a model might not work on all campuses. For one thing, the student government may require that recognized organizations be open to all students. In our case, we argued successfully that our student organization was open to all eligible students who chose to take honors courses whether they were formally admitted into the program or not. But even a demand for more open membership may not compromise a program’s principles inasmuch as the honors program and its student organization are clearly not identical entities.

The benefits of such an arrangement, if successfully effected, are manifold. By supporting activities previously covered by the honors program’s limited operating budget, student-fee-supported funding can not only directly meet academic goals, such as student participation in national conferences, but also free up the funding necessary to cover ongoing costs of honors faculty development and mentorship, just for starters. Those of us not yet taking advantage of such funding opportunities should consider investigating them. The benefits are too numerous to overlook.

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Curriculum and Instruction
Honors colleges and programs vary widely by institution, naturally, but the main feature they share is involvement by top students of superior ability and motivation. Typically honors courses also involve top teachers—those who are most skilled, conscientious, and passionate about teaching. This applies whether honors teachers are self-selected, nominated by peers, or chosen by an honors director or coordinator.

Without a doubt the most satisfying experiences of my career have come through my work as a college honors instructor, leading classes of extraordinarily enthusiastic and gifted students. Without a doubt the most frustrating experiences have come through my work as an honors program director, cajoling my colleagues to consider teaching an honors course. Both situations—teaching varied honors courses to freshmen and upperclassmen, as well as recruiting honors faculty—have helped me to answer the ubiquitous question raised by my colleagues: “Why should I teach honors? What’s in it for me?”

How can you persuade faculty colleagues to design and implement an ongoing or one-time honors course? How can you convince a department or program chair, a dean, or a vice president that certain professors should be asked or allowed to participate, perhaps by being freed from other teaching duties and obligations? It may help to polish your sales (and begging) skills, but the purpose of this brief piece, aimed especially at novice honors administrators, is to report, in practical terms, several of the most likely and most obvious principal benefits of teaching honors.

The benefits of teaching honors are numerous and indisputable. They fall into three general categories. This essay will focus primarily on benefits to the instructor, but presuming that the instructor is desirable, there are obvious corollary benefits to honors students and to the institution as well, many of which relate to the benefits outlined in the comprehensive but far from exhaustive list presented here. It should be emphasized that these gains are mostly mutual: what benefits honors students and institutions also benefits honors instructors.

What are the advantages of teaching honors in terms of benefits to the teacher? First and foremost, teaching an honors course affords one the opportunity to teach and work with consistently strong students: those who are not invariably but generally the brightest and most able, the hardest-working and
most highly motivated. Honors students tend to be remarkably proactive and conscientious. Teaching an honors course gives an instructor the chance to work with students who will, to a far greater degree than their non-honors peers, seriously and attentively read and prepare for class and complete all assignments. Teaching honors offers a professor an opportunity to spend quality time with students who sincerely desire to be in the classroom or laboratory—students who enjoy reading and learning not merely for a grade or a requirement, but for intellectual stimulation and growth.

Not only does teaching an honors course allow professors an opportunity to interact with a different and typically stronger student cohort, but it also affords professors a chance (indeed, a need) to hone their teaching skills, knowing that they will be challenged and must keep on their toes. This might seem like a dicey benefit since it carries a burden of increased work on the teacher’s part, yet the profits outweigh the costs. Whereas questions posed by an instructor to a non-honors college class may go unanswered, this is seldom the case in an honors classroom. Statements and observations offered by faculty and students alike almost invariably provoke remarks and stimulate further discussion in an honors classroom. It is true that faculty may need to work a bit harder in preparing for and teaching honors courses, but with a receptive audience all that effort proves worthwhile.

In this regard, honors courses give teachers opportunities to explore new pedagogical strategies and settings. They give professors the chance to step out of their comfort zones and experiment. On the one hand, they offer an opportunity to experiment or tinker with an existing course and receive thoughtful, reliable feedback. On the other hand, an honors course can provide faculty the ideal opportunity to teach a new “dream course,” either within or outside the instructor’s specific area of expertise. Such courses often allow faculty the motive, method, and opportunity to teach an unusual special topic class, perhaps on a one-time basis, if so desired or needed. Thus honors courses give professors valuable teaching experience, both in terms of subject matter and teaching methods, since either the topics or techniques may be wholly new or tried from a new angle or approach.

Teaching an honors course therefore offers an occasion to broaden one’s perspectives, both professionally and personally. As scholars we tend to be narrow specialists, and honors courses (and students) generally enable faculty to extend their focus outside these limited bounds. Teaching an honors course affords professors the valuable prospect of intellectual stimulation—a chance to learn. They give the teacher a chance to add to his or her “continuing education.” Honors courses in general focus less on content coverage and more on thinking. This emphasis should hold genuine appeal not only for honors students but particularly for instructors who are tired of teaching required general education courses that stipulate consistent coverage. Still, because of honors students’ generally superior preparation and performance, even honors courses bound by content coverage offer a chance for faculty to investigate topics in greater depth, breadth, or intensity than regular courses allow.
In some cases an honors course offers professors the occasion to team teach, and even when many professors would normally be unwilling to teach with another instructor, they often find, to their surprise, that team-teaching itself brings clear rewards. Such benefits include, in addition to a good dose of the intellectual stimulation and expansion already mentioned, the opportunity to learn and practice new pedagogical methods. Often, instructors’ strengths and weaknesses are magnified when another instructor is observing or participating, providing the impetus for a renewed focus on pedagogy. Also, team teaching shows students how different scholars, particularly scholars from different fields of study, approach a given topic or question. A particular benefit in team-taught classrooms accrues when students observe fruitful exchanges between multiple instructors, who may not agree upon particular issues but nonetheless work together to find a solution.

Not only do honors students benefit from such exposure to new ideas and information, but honors teachers also reap this reward, especially when they collaborate with colleagues in disciplines outside their own. Honors courses tend to stimulate precisely this sort of interdisciplinary thought. Honors courses may even provide an occasion for professors to connect with faculty (especially honors faculty) at other institutions.

Since honors class sizes are often restricted, they provide a chance to teach smaller groups than normal, often in a seminar or other discussion setting. This is especially beneficial to professors who generally teach large lecture sections for it provides the chance to teach more discussion-oriented courses with a more interactive environment. Likewise, professors who typically teach content-driven courses should appreciate the appeal of honors courses, which nearly always have a more intense emphasis on speaking and writing. In general, honors courses offer an opening to “break outside” the normal classroom, with trips or activities geared especially to students with better background and motivation. More often than non-honors courses, honors courses include research components or other experiential learning. The best honors courses do not offer merely an accelerated or advanced version of a regularly offered course; they offer something different.

In that regard, honors courses allow faculty better integration of faculty research and teaching. They allow professors the chance to meet and work with students who may very well end up doing undergraduate research, perhaps in the professor’s area of specialization. Honors courses generally involve students with diverse interests so that they not only offer professors the prospect of working with students outside their normal disciplines or major departments but also provide an interesting setting for discussion and dialogue, no matter what the course material or topic may be. Thus honors faculty often end up interacting with students outside the classroom, and not only for research. Professors of honors courses can also reap the benefit of advising the best students, whether students choose or are assigned to their faculty advisor.

Not only student research but also faculty research is another beneficiary of honors teaching. Honors courses give professors the opportunity to publish
papers in numerous peer-reviewed journals (in many disciplines) that publish on pedagogy. This benefit may be especially important for—and thus must be heard by—those professors who may resist teaching in honors because they feel it will pull them away from their “comfort zone” of regularly offered courses (in their major department) and research and publication in their content areas.

Honors courses often come with perks (for example, course development stipends in the summer or in the same or an earlier semester) that make such courses more appealing and lucrative. Honors courses allow faculty to obtain special funding or other institutional resources earmarked for honors curricula or events, thus creating an opportunity to make that “dream course” even more special, memorable, popular, and effective.

In addition to these benefits, honors courses provide an opportunity to share leadership responsibility with students. For example, some honors courses offer students the opportunity to serve as “co-teachers” by leading discussions. Consulting students about their learning experience also gives them the freedom (and the responsibility) to help direct the progression of the course and potentially to allow it to develop according to their own interests and backgrounds.

Faculty can teach honors for selfless as well as selfish motives. Seen more broadly, and more altruistically, honors courses allow faculty to elicit the most from their institution’s student population. Honors courses can aid in the recruitment and retention of top students, and they can create an intellectual climate that permeates the campus.

Undoubtedly this essay has overlooked some general benefits, and there will likely be additional particular benefits that apply to your institution or program. If you look closely at your local situation, you are apt to find many items to add to the list presented here. You may also find particular disincentives at your institution that discourage faculty from participating in honors, and a careful study of these drawbacks can reveal ways to enlist new faculty by either alleviating or circumventing these disincentives.

If you are desperate to recruit honors instructors and have not been successful with direct, personal pleas to colleagues, consider offering an afternoon or evening workshop, perhaps with a small stipend from your honors budget for attendees, to describe and explain the details, and myriad benefits, of teaching in honors. Such a workshop session could be led by honors faculty or administrators at your institution or even from another school. The latter possibility, like the offering of even a meager stipend, presumably could attract more participants.

Faculty can be targeted in other ways as well, such as inviting them to attend honors classes or social events (e.g., picnics or meals at an honors house) or asking honors students to approach particular faculty members directly. The latter tactic not only may sway recalcitrant faculty but could also yield outstanding professors who might otherwise escape the gaze of honors directors, just as it can engage honors students and enable them to feel greater involvement and investment in their honors education.
All of the above benefits have occurred in my own personal experience teaching honors courses. I have never taught a course remotely close to my specialized research area, but I have taught, in addition to my routine courses, several successful and immensely gratifying honors courses—both within and outside my discipline of biology—that enriched my mind and spirit. A one-semester honors seminar on “Culture” posed questions that students seldom stop to ponder, such as what exactly culture is, something uniquely human or also found in non-human species. Likewise, a one-semester seminar on the “History and Philosophy of Ecology” discussed varying views of nature, specifically whether humans are a part of or apart from nature. These courses were open to all honors students and particularly popular with non-science students whom I might not otherwise have taught—another decided benefit of honors teaching.

In addition, I have team-taught several year-long honors seminars. One, co-taught with a colleague in classics (whose specialty is ancient philosophy) on “Ways of Knowing,” first explored epistemology generally and later focused on its application to science: What does it mean to say that we know something in science? How exactly do we know that thing, and how well? I co-taught another such year-long honors seminar on two occasions with a colleague in rhetoric and humanities (whose specialty is Victorian literature). In this seminar on “Morality and Human Nature,” the class discussed various explanations for the origin of ethics, biological and otherwise.

In all of these courses the author—who is most frequently found diagramming on the blackboard the pathway of electrons in photosynthesis or a flowchart of hormonal interactions in the human endocrine system—incorporated novels, short stories, and poetry, plus current items from newspapers and popular magazines. In all of these courses the class viewed and discussed popular films and television shows. In all of these courses instructors followed a syllabus but were not held captive by the demon urge to “cover content” at all costs, and the development and tenor of the course depended more than ever on student input. In all of these courses instructors were able to engage students in a dialogue on important and influential ideas. In all of these courses we interacted with students whose intellect matched or exceeded our own. We did not so much teach these students what to think as how to think, and I would not have traded these invaluable experiences for anything. This is not to imply that non-honors courses are a stodgy, boring waste of time for faculty and students, but at the same time experience shows that non-honors courses do not consistently yield the depth and breadth of memorable personal and professional experiences that honors teaching provides.

Thus, finally, do not forget a simple truth that I—and perhaps you as well—have learned: none of my colleagues who have taught an honors course has ever regretted it whereas professors who have never taught honors have much to regret. That statement alone speaks volumes, presuming you can just get the right people to hear it. Even if you do not teach honors yourself, be sure to spread the word. Teaching an honors course affords the opportunity to teach students who
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will appreciate, and take advantage of, all of their professors’ hard work and efforts and who will undoubtedly teach their professors something in return.

Understandably, professors are apt to flee the prospect of additional work, particularly if they cannot see corresponding benefits. Be honest and do not whitewash or sugarcoat the truth when trying to enlist new honors faculty. The general observation that honors students are very responsive and attentive can be both a blessing and a blight in that high-maintenance students can sap professors’ time from other pursuits. However, if you can get potential honors instructors to recognize the many real and robust rewards of teaching honors, and if you can get new faculty recruits to speak with other professors who have taught honors, then you may, if you are lucky, have to contend with a new problem—figuring out how to turn potential honors instructors down, or at least putting them on a “wait list.” A strong honors faculty translates into a stronger honors program and curriculum. When this happens, your former concerns about honors faculty recruitment may become a distant memory indeed.

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KAMBRA BOLCH

Contracting in Honors

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A survey of the second edition of *Peterson’s Honors Programs*\(^1\) reveals that a variety of honors programs and colleges around the country employ the honors contract as one mechanism whereby students may earn honors course credit. Although there is no uniform definition of what a contract entails, one common approach is the completion of a paper, project, or other assignment in addition to a non-honors course’s requirements. Of the 360 listings in the *Peterson’s* guide, at least 43 public, private, two-year, and four-year programs and colleges choose to mention contracting in their listings. Contracting, therefore, appears to provide a prominent and much-needed solution to the ever-present problem of providing sufficient opportunities for students to earn their required honors course credits. In smaller honors programs, for example, contracting may provide one of the primary opportunities for completing honors requirements. In larger programs, contracting may enable participation in honors from students in academic disciplines in which few stand-alone honors courses are offered. Whatever the size or budget of the honors program, it is clear that contracting remains a staple in the honors experience for many students. But the question remains: Does contracting really measure up to the expectations of the honors experience? That question has been debated at Texas Tech University, and, as with any good debate, there are multiple perspectives, each with compelling arguments and evidence in the form of student, faculty, and administrator experiences with contracts. This article outlines the problems with contracting that developed over several years at Texas Tech University, comments on the process by which solutions were identified, and presents the solutions that were created.

**GROWTH IN THE TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY CONTRACTING PROCESS**

Increasing use of the contracting procedure was directly tied to the rapid growth of the TTU Honors Program from approximately 500 students in the late

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1990's to more than 1,000 in 2003. Despite a significant growth in the college's resources and a corresponding increase in its ability to offer stand-alone honors courses, a number of students, particularly in the engineering and science disciplines, still had difficulty completing the required 24 hours of honors coursework to earn an Honors College designation on their diploma. Students in other majors with very structured curricula—architecture and interior design, among others—also struggled to complete the requirements. The difficulties imposed by structured curricula were compounded in many cases by significant numbers of college credits earned through dual-credit (simultaneous high school/college enrollment), CLEP, and AP work; these credits typically fulfilled university general education requirements, thus discouraging students from taking honors courses which fulfilled those requirements. For many of these students, the only feasible way to complete the honors designation was to pursue contracts, typically in their major courses. As the number of these students increased with the college's growing enrollment, the number of contracts increased. In the 1998-1999 academic year, 77 contracts were completed. In the next two academic years, 96 and 95 contracts were completed, respectively. And by 2001-2002, 108 contracts were completed.

In the first years of college status, the increase in the use of the contracting process seemed to yield only minimal growing pains. The primary problem stemmed from lack of communication, with several disagreements between students and faculty members arising at the end of the contracting process as to whether the student had indeed completed the contract terms. Simple modifications of the Honors College contracting form to require more specificity about the proposed projects (e.g., length of papers or other written work, number and types of sources to be used, expectations for presentation) reduced those problems. When contracting forms lacking clarity or specificity were submitted, an Honors College staff member would contact the professor to suggest

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2 The waning TTU program, in existence since 1959 but without sufficient university support, was revitalized in 1993 when the program had only a handful of identifiable Honors Program students. Interested in attracting better students, the university's leadership committed new resources to hire a full-time director and allocated other necessary resources to the program's support. These actions quickly yielded a healthy population of Honors Program students. The University formally authorized college status for the program in 1998, when the newly converted Honors College had more than 500 students. The Honors College continued to grow both in numbers and in offerings. By the beginning of the fall 2003 semester the Honors College saw its highest ever enrollment of 1,015 students (pre-20th-class-day enrollment was 1,015, and post-20th-class-day enrollment was 917).

3 A healthy number of stand-alone Honors courses were offered each year that contracting grew. In 1998-1999, there were 82 stand-alone Honors courses offered in the fall and 78 offered in the spring. In 1999-2000, there were 93 fall courses and 90 spring courses; in 2000-2001, there were 86 fall courses and 91 spring courses; and in 2001-2002, there were 88 fall courses and 82 spring courses.
(tactfully) that clarifying expectations might prove helpful to ensure a positive outcome for both participants. This approach was generally well received by faculty. With the modification of the form and, if necessary, a quick conversation with a faculty member drawing upon lessons learned from contracting disagreements, some contracting wrinkles were smoothed.

But while many contracts were completed, several situations raised concerns about the quality and integrity of the contracting process. The first concern stemmed from the seemingly ubiquitous approach by the vast majority of faculty entering into a contract of assigning an additional paper. Anecdotal but consistent feedback from students indicated that either they perceived these extra papers negatively, as something of a nuisance or hurdle, or neutrally, as identical to writing any other paper. These perceptions seemed at odds with recruiting literature statements that the Honors College experience offered an “enriched” learning experience that was “different” rather than simply “harder.” Another concern developed over an apparent pattern of students and faculty to delay work on pending contracts until the last days of a semester. The negative effects of procrastination were amplified when a paper was the contract requirement since papers generally required little contact between the student and faculty member, a situation that seemed antithetical to the expectations of an honors experience. Concerns also arose on several occasions when faculty from the same discipline and teaching the same course offered vastly different contracting options to their respective students.

Although these issues drew some attention from Honors College administrators, several serious incidents served to raise the level of concern significantly. In one particularly troubling situation, a faculty member certified that the student had completed the contract terms as agreed, but it later became clear—from the student’s own admission—that the student had not completed any of the contract provisions. Although less blatant, a few other questionable instances occurred in which faculty members indicated that students had completed the terms of a contract. In these other cases, it appeared that faculty who felt guilty about falling short in the mentoring role may have been motivated to “help the student” by accepting less than what was originally agreed. After these few incidents, the college began to require that a copy of the tangible work be submitted at the end of the contract. But this new requirement had thorns of its own when, in another disturbing incident, a faculty member approved a student’s contract work but the Honors College...
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administrator finalizing the contract’s completion recognized easily that the student’s work was almost wholly plagiarized. The combination of these incidents caused Honors College staff and administrators to question whether students were profiting fully from the contracting experience, especially since it had been held out as providing an opportunity for a student to develop the kind of close working relationship with a faculty member that would reveal particular insights into the scholarship of a discipline. Ultimately, the issues triggered a dialogue within the Honors College regarding the direction in which contracting should go.

THE OPENING DISCUSSIONS

The first discussions took place in the fall of 2002 among Honors College staff and administration following discovery of the problems outlined above. Eliminating contracting altogether did not seem to be an appropriate option given the difficulties some students had in completing their Honors College requirements and the positive experiences some contracts provided for students and faculty. Both staff and administrators agreed that there were problems with contracting, but it quickly became apparent that the role of faculty autonomy would have to be considered. While the axiom that faculty members are solely responsible for assigning course grades holds true on the Texas Tech campus, the contracting process had been structured from the outset as one in which the Honors organization (first as Program, then as College) certified to the university’s registrar that a successfully contracted course should be designated for “Honors Credit” on a student’s transcript. Thus, while the faculty member assigned the grade for the course based on requirements unrelated to the contract, the Honors College was responsible for placing what amounted to the college’s “seal of approval” on each contract experience through the additional transcript notation once it received the faculty member’s certification that the elements of the contract were completed.

While the fledgling Honors Program of the early and mid-1990’s—with all but nonexistent administrative support and very few contracts—reasonably approached the contracting process as a strictly clerical one (i.e., students

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5 An Honors College administrator met with the student to discuss the contracted work, and the student admitted that the material found on the Internet and the work submitted for the contract were almost identical and that the written work was without proper citation. The class was a communications studies class in which the material also was presented orally, and the student stated that she was unaware that she needed to cite her sources in the written work. In an effort to provide an educational opportunity, the Honors College administrator offered the student the chance to rewrite the written portion of the contract. The student declined and later withdrew from the Honors College.

6 The TTU Honors College requires that a student earn a grade of “A” or “B” to receive honors credit.
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brought in a one-page form indicating that they were contracting and faculty simply reported “yea” or “nay” to the Honors Program at the end of the process), the more fully developed and complex Honors College of the late 1990’s needed to ensure appropriate standards. Whether individual faculty members should be solely responsible for determining if a contract was successfully completed—and thus should earn an Honors College transcript notation—was a non-issue, at least for most cases. But what of the few troubling cases that had arisen, namely academic dishonesty and outright falsification that the terms of a contract had been completed? The almost sacrosanct principle of a faculty member’s complete autonomy within his or her class seemed to clash with the equally inviolable notion that a student’s transcript—the permanent academic record—must embody complete integrity. The contracting issues that had accumulated, especially the conflicting and crucial principles of faculty autonomy and academic integrity, were so important that an ad hoc committee of six faculty and three Honors College staff and administrators was called together in March 2003 to discuss the contracting process.

THE COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The ad hoc committee’s six faculty members represented a range of disciplines from the humanities to engineering to human sciences. Some had been associated with the Honors organization consistently from the 1970’s and 1980’s while others had only recently become involved with the college through contracting and had never taught a stand-alone honors course. Those Honors College personnel who had begun the initial discussion about contracting—the Dean, Associate Dean, and Program Coordinator, the staff member primarily responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the contracting process—also took part in the discussion. The ad hoc committee members were informed of the nature of the problems that had arisen in preparation for the meeting.

The discussion among the members of the ad hoc committee only served to underscore the tension between the principle of faculty autonomy and the problem of inaccurate certification of work on a transcript, with some members’ opinions corresponding to the idea that an experience such as a contract that is attached to a faculty member’s course rests solely within the faculty member’s purview, and other members’ opinions indicating that known cases of fraud or dishonesty should not be certified for Honors College credit even if a faculty member had approved the work. In the end, no one argued that fraud or dishonesty should be accepted for contract credit, but reluctance among several committee members about encroaching on faculty autonomy precluded the possibility of a clear statement or policy about how such situations would be handled. Because the opinions were deeply held and, it appeared from the intensity of the debates, unlikely to change, discussion was steered toward methods of preventing problems before they began.
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AD HOC COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The discussions of the ad hoc committee members yielded a number of excellent recommendations which are outlined in this section. Those that have been implemented are evaluated in the section entitled “Solutions.” Others, while good ideas, were not put into practice for a variety of reasons also outlined in that section.

Perhaps the most central element of the ad hoc committee’s discussion was the idea that more detailed instructions and information for contracting be developed. While a “Faculty Guide to Teaching and Creating Honors Courses” existed, no similar publication had been created for faculty who contracted. Because many of the faculty who contracted were in disciplinary areas in which few stand-alone Honors College courses existed, there was little knowledge about an honors academic experience in those departments. The ad hoc committee members suggested developing a more comprehensive set of guidelines, including the basic expectations of the honors experience and specific expectations for contracting, including that two of the primary purposes of contracting are to enable a student and faculty member to establish a one-to-one, ongoing mentor-mentee relationship throughout the semester and to enable the student to experience the subject matter in more depth.

Because several ad hoc committee members disclosed situations in which they felt that students, especially graduating seniors, who had not performed as well as expected had pressured them to certify the fulfillment of their Honors College requirements, they suggested that faculty be advised clearly on the form that they were free both to decline to contract with a student and to deny honors credit at the end of the process if the terms of the contract were not fulfilled. In addition, while some committee members felt that expectations of complete integrity in the work submitted for contract credit should be obvious, others felt that the lack of awareness on the part of today’s students regarding plagiarism warranted a specific statement on the contracting form—and that such a statement could prompt faculty members to be more mindful of and vigilant about academic integrity.

Several of the ad hoc committee members who had experienced both positive and negative contracting experiences offered to be available to discuss contracting with other faculty members new to the process. This suggestion further evolved into the idea that a list be developed of all faculty members experienced with contracting. The list could be made available to newcomers to the contracting process to foster communication, especially between those in the same discipline. Continued discussion also yielded an offshoot of this idea, to catalog examples of excellent contracting experiences, including the tangible products of those contracts. The committee members thought that making information readily available about the range of possible contracting projects would inspire faculty members to create options more creative—and perhaps more enriching—than the much-relied-upon extra paper.

A more controversial idea for enhancing communication about contracting also emerged during discussions. Some of the ad hoc committee members
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suggested that information about contracting could be better conveyed through a mandatory faculty orientation process. The committee discussed both the possibility that the orientation be required for any faculty member new to contracting and the possibility that the orientation be optional. Some ad hoc committee members suggested that many faculty would be unwilling to participate in a required orientation and perhaps even resentful. Other committee members suggested that anyone running an optional orientation would find that he or she would be “preaching to the choir” and that those faculty who would benefit the most from such a session would not attend an optional one.

The wide-ranging committee discussion offered the Honors College administration important insights into the faculty experience with the contracting process. These insights, coupled with student feedback and administrative realities, helped put in place several useful changes in the contracting process.

SOLUTIONS

The primary way in which the contracting process has changed on the Texas Tech campus is through the dissemination of more detailed instructions for faculty members and students. As the ad hoc committee suggested, the standard contracting form has been modified, and a new information sheet has been created outlining the specific expectations of the contracting process and the responsibilities of the student and the faculty member. The information sheet emphasizes three components of the additional work required for the contract: 1) that the student complete a substantial paper or project (15-20 page research paper or a project of equivalent time/effort); 2) that the student share the knowledge/skills/experiences gained through the paper or project with an audience of some sort; and 3) that the faculty member and student have regular contact outside of class to discuss the student’s progress and answer questions regarding the paper or project. Research papers are accepted when the second and third elements are fulfilled since the student is likely to develop the kind of close working relationship with the mentoring faculty member necessary to provide insight into the discipline. The student is required to state specifically on the contract form how he or she will meet each of the three requirements. At the midpoint of the semester, the faculty member is asked to provide a brief report on the contact he or she has had with the student and to assess the student’s progress to date.7

Although some of the ad hoc committee members suggested that the contracting form specify that a faculty member could decline to contract with a student, the solution adopted to address the concern is to have a single Honors

7 This mid-point evaluation enables the staff member to assist a student who may be lagging behind in requirements. The vast majority of students meet deadlines and expectations, but repeated tardiness or failure to complete requirements can mean the end of a contract. The failure to complete a contract does not carry a penalty, and, while there are pros and cons to this approach, thus far the “no penalty” model appears to be an appropriate match for the College’s needs.
CONTRACTING IN HONORS

College staff member handle contracts and meet with each student interested in contracting before the student makes contact with a prospective faculty mentor. The contract form itself is no longer available outside such a meeting. This new process seems to facilitate communication because a student has more knowledge of what he or she should be asking of a faculty member before any discussions begin—and before any particular commitments are made.

The appointment of one staff member to handle all contracts has addressed other ad hoc committee recommendations as well. Rather than develop a list of faculty who have mentored successful contracts, the staff member handling contracts can brainstorm with students about their interests and refer them to faculty members who are willing and able to serve as mentors. This strategy eliminates the political issues associated with a list of “successful” contract mentors, but it requires that the Honors College staff member become familiar with faculty across campus and seek out new faculty members willing and able to contract. Because the Honors College began requiring a copy of the final work product of each contract as mentioned in the section entitled “The Texas Tech University Contracting Process,” it has been relatively easy to catalog examples of outstanding contracts as the committee recommended.

Some of the ad hoc committee members also suggested that the contracting form contain a statement regarding the expectation of complete integrity in the contracted work. This has not been implemented because it was thought that the main problem underlying academic dishonesty in contracts was related primarily to procrastination; students waiting too long to begin a project might be tempted to take shortcuts such as cutting and pasting from online sources. Although significant amounts of academic dishonesty are not apparent, a fall 2004 example of almost wholesale plagiarism on a contract suggests that more must be done to combat the problem, so a specific statement may be added to the contracting materials.8

The most controversial suggestion, the implementation of a mandatory faculty orientation process, has not been implemented on the TTU campus. Although this remains an option, there is still a concern for some about whether this would be perceived as encroaching on faculty autonomy. There does not seem to be a pressing need for such an orientation, however, as the number of contracts has declined to 62 for the 2004-2005 academic year. Although there have been a few notable exceptions such as the fall 2004 plagiarism incident,

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8 This distressing case actually involved two incidents of plagiarism. The faculty member contracting with the student in fall 2004 realized that the student’s work was almost entirely plagiarized and forwarded the paper and Internet source material to the Honors College. In looking at the student’s file, the Honors administrator preparing to meet with the student about the situation discovered that a previous paper submitted for contract credit was also plagiarized. The student admitted that both papers were plagiarized, and honors credit was removed from the student’s transcript for the previous work. No honors credit was given for the second plagiarized paper, and the student was removed from the Honors College.
problems are now rare. And two options for students to earn (or waive) upper-
division honors credit have been created as well: taking a graduate class (which
almost always requires the kind of close faculty-student contact envisioned for
contracting) and completing a study abroad waiver (which requires completion
during the semester abroad of an individual, reflective project tied to the entire
experience abroad rather than to an individual course). These new options
have lessened students’ dependence on contracting as the way to earn honors
credit in highly structured curricula.

Finally, the problems that began the discussion within the college about
contracting also led to a concerted effort in advising to help students plan early
and specifically how to complete their honors credits. This special effort in
advising has virtually eliminated contracting in the semester of graduation and
has therefore decreased the incidences in which faculty feel pressured to
certify work that does not meet expectations. With these modifications, the
contracting process remains a viable and appropriate option for Texas Tech
Honors College students.

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The Honors Student Handbook states:
Upper-Level Honors Credit Substitutions
If students are unable to earn upper-level Honors credit by taking 3000 or 4000-
level Honors courses, one or two of the following substitution methods may be
used for up to 6 hours of upper-level Honors credit. No more than six hours total
of upper-level Honors credit may be allowed by substitution, whether by con-
tracting, by graduate courses, or by study-abroad waiver. A student interested in
any substitution method should speak to an Honors advisor beforehand.

• Contracting For Honors Credit

• Graduate Courses For Honors Credit
Honors credit is available to undergraduate students enrolled in graduate courses
(5000 & 6000-level). See an Honors advisor for specific details.

• Study Abroad Waiver
A waiver for some required Honors hours may be available to undergraduate stu-
dents who study abroad with a non-Honors related study abroad program. This
process requires formal and prior approval, as well as the completion of addi-
tional written projects and requirements. Through this process, students may earn
a waiver for up to 3 hours of upper-level Honors credit for a full summer (June -
August), fall, or spring semester abroad. Students who study for 2 semesters
abroad (full summer, fall, or spring) may earn a waiver for up to 6 hours of upper-
level Honors credit. Honors seminars may not be waived. For specific details, see
an Honors advisor.
Honors contracting is a means to help Honors College students who have difficulty finding upper-division Honors courses that fit well with their major(s). Contracting allows an Honors student to receive Honors credit for a non-Honors course by completing work above and beyond what is required of students in the course. Honors contracting is one of four ways students may substitute for upper-division Honors credit. The other methods are: study abroad waiver, graduate courses, and graduate-level work in cross-listed courses. **Students may only substitute up to two upper-division Honors courses** using any combination of these four substitution methods. Only 3000 and 4000-level courses that meet face to face are eligible to be contracted. No independent study or research hours may be contracted.

To receive Honors credit for a contracted course, a student must receive a grade of (B-) or better in the course and satisfactorily complete work in addition to what is already required in the course. There are 3 essential components of this additional work. These elements are:

1. a substantial paper or project (15-20 page research paper OR a project of equivalent time/effort)
2. sharing the knowledge/skills/experiences gained through part 1 with some audience
3. regular contact with the faculty member outside of class to discuss the student’s progress and answer questions regarding the paper/project

An important part of Honors contracting is regular contact (outside of class) with the professor. The student should meet regularly with the professor outside of class to ask questions and receive guidance on the paper/project. However, we urge the student not to burden the professor. Examples of this would include: asking the professor to bear the entire responsibility for developing a paper/project idea for the student’s Honors Contract, photocopying things for the student, editing something for the student which the student has not proofread, or asking the professor to mail the Contracting Final Checkout Form to the Honors College at the semester’s end. These tasks are the student’s responsibility. The professor’s role is to: help guide the student as he/she develops a paper/project idea, answer questions and provide feedback on the student’s work, and at the end of the semester, determine whether the student satisfactorily completed each component of the contract.

Attached to these instructions is the contracting application. The student should indicate how he/she will satisfy the three essential elements of contracting (listed above) before submitting the application to the professor for a
final signature. Students must attach a syllabus for the course to the application. The Honors College makes the final determination regarding the contract application’s acceptance. Students should not begin working on their paper/project until the Honors College has approved the contract application. **Contract applications must be submitted to the Honors College within the first 10 school days of the semester to be considered.** Students can expect to hear about the status of their application within 10 days after it has been submitted.

Students’ projects need to relate (in some way) to the material covered in the course itself. One way to do this would be to use the course textbook as a significant source if writing a paper. Any **tangible product(s) created during your contracting experience (e.g., research paper, a Power Point presentation saved to a disk, a journal, poster, reflective paper, artwork, mechanical device, etc.)** will need to be turned into the Honors Office by the last day of classes for the semester in which you contract. Accompanying the tangible products should be a signed **Contracting Final Checkout Form.**

If, during the semester, the student decides he/she is not interested in seeing the contract through to its completion, the student may cancel the contract. This will not affect the student’s status in the Honors College or his/her standing in the course. The student will simply not receive Honors credit for that course.
**CONTRACTING IN HONORS**

**HONORS COLLEGE CONTRACT APPLICATION**

NOTE: This form must be completed and returned to the Honors College within the first ten class days of the semester in which you intend to contract. You must attach a syllabus to this application for the course you are contracting.

Student Name (please print) ___________________________________________

Local Address (city, state, zip) _________________________________________

SS# _____________________________ TTU E-mail __________________________

Phone# _________________________ Course Number and Section __________

Semester in which you are contracting __________________________________

Student’s signature __________________________ Date _________________

Professor’s name (please print) __________________ Dept. ______________

Department Mail Stop _____________ Professor’s E-mail __________________

Professor’s signature ______________ Date ______________________________

On the following sheet, please indicate how you plan to satisfy the three components of contracting. These three components are IN ADDITION to all other coursework required of the students in the class. **Be very detailed and specific** in describing how you plan to accomplish these three components, as this will provide your professor very clear criteria with which to evaluate you at the end of the semester.

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### FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROVED by Honors College Dean (or representative)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date completed:</td>
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<td>Honors credit earned?</td>
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</table>
Component 1 – A substantial paper or project (15-20 page research paper OR a project of equivalent time/effort)

Component 2 – Sharing the knowledge/skills/experiences gained through part 1 with some audience

Component 3 – Regular contact with faculty member outside of class to discuss student’s progress and answer questions regarding the paper/project
When I assumed the position of Honors Program Director along with my other responsibilities, I was handed the Honors Program Review from the previous five years. Nestled among the goals and objectives—alongside of recruiting, marketing and identifying faculty to teach honors courses—was the most pressing problem: serious declining enrollment. Students were being recruited for the honors program by the department of admissions, but only a very small number were continuing into their junior and senior years. With this problem of disappearing numbers came the possibility of a disappearing honors program. Apparently most of these students were dropping out of the honors program during either the second semester of their freshman year or the first semester of their sophomore year. Once they achieved junior status, the attrition rate dropped and the prospect of completing the program became slightly more promising. Still, only a handful of students were leaving the university with “Honors Program Completed” prominently displayed on their transcripts.

The crux of my problem became evident: if I hoped to retain the position of Honors Program Director, the administration “strongly advised” that I find a way to improve the completion rate of students in the program. The methodology was left up to me. I needed to discover more effective strategies to recruit students and keep them motivated enough to remain in the program, but in doing so I was not to cripple the integrity of the program. As Yul Brynner would say, “Ah…a puzzlement!” An honors program must serve the needs of existing students as well as those it attempts to recruit. An effective program must carefully examine such issues as student ability, availability of honors courses, availability of qualified and motivated faculty who are willing to teach honors courses, always-present budget concerns, and, lastly, data on those students who complete the program. The last criterion, the completion rate, is the primary concern here.

As universities go, we are a small institution composed of approximately 3400 undergraduate students. Our honors program, like many programs across the country, suffers from some of the same afflictions that plague similar institutions. Highly regarded by both our university president and provost and acknowledged in the university mission statement’s charge to “…emphasize the
importance of the honors program to advance the academic quality of the university and give increased attention to the promotion of this program,” we still lack the stability of permanent faculty assigned to teach honors courses each year. Hence, our program must cross its academic fingers each semester that it will be able to provide sufficient faculty support to cover the courses listed in our program. Faculty on load cannot often be compensated to teach an honors course on overload. In addition, some majors—often in the most challenging academic programs that would make them ideal as honors program students—were finding it difficult if not impossible to complete both their major and the requirements in the honors program successfully within four years due to either certification or professional stipulations within those majors. The obvious choice for these students was to forego enrollment in the honors program and finish their major regardless of how attractive enrolling in the honors program might have been to them.

An honors program cannot be analogous to an assembly line. The requirements to complete an honors program should not be so restrictive as to allow only an elitist few to finish or so generalized that any student can enroll simply by asking to join. A program director who does not consider the impact of the number of students who actually finish the program is not being realistic when administrative decisions are made about which programs will or will not be budgeted for the following year on the basis of enrollment. At the same time, intellectual and curricular concerns of honors students are paramount in an honors program. Indeed, honors programs that stand the test of time must be academically demanding and creatively challenging while also flexible enough to allow for institutional changes and program growth.

Our honors program survives on our campus like any other program. There are both idealistic and practical concerns, one of which is how many students enter the honors program and how many of those same names appear in the graduation program. University presidents and provosts, regardless of their individual involvement or interest, monitor student retention. Programs that do not result in sufficient numbers, no matter how lofty their academic ideals, do not survive, especially during tough economic times. Administrators are not blind to rising attrition rates; they will question the value (and values) of an ailing program that is not retaining its students.

What follows is a list of steps that I took to lessen the attrition rate in our honors program, increase the number of students recruited by the admissions department, improve both the enrollment and completion rates, keep honors students' morale high, encourage currently enrolled students to work towards the honors capstone course, and lastly, encourage current honors students to recruit other academically motivated students to join our program.

**SEMESTER MEETINGS**

One of the first complaints that I heard repeatedly was that students did not feel “connected” to other honors students or to the honors program itself. Many
students shared with me that they “did not know many other honors students outside their major” and did not communicate with those they did know except during class, the primary time they came into contact with other students in the program. Since I had assumed the duties of director in June, I sent out a letter during the latter half of the summer informing all honors students that there would be two required honors meetings. Those meetings would be held on the first Thursday of both fall and spring semesters. Justifiable reasons for missing either of these meetings would be limited to a serious illness or a university-excused absence. Other reasons would require a call to me. I specifically chose Thursday evenings during the dinner hour when few students elect to have class.

Even though I have a limited honors budget, I was able to provide pizzas from the university dining facilities, punch, and a few other inexpensive student favorites. The combination of the cuisine, the chance to connect with other honors students, and the requirement worked. Including the seven members of Honors Council, the room was packed with close to 100 individuals. Note: The following year, after viewing our initial success, the university president reinstated the “University President’s Private Reception for Honors Students.” This reception, held in his home, had not taken place on our campus in many years.

At the first fall meeting each student was given his or her own honors folder containing all of the newly designed forms they would need in order to complete the entire program plus several informational sheets. The sheets included the following: How to Schedule Honors Courses, How to Work with an Honors Advisor, Most Asked Questions About the Honors Program, Honors Program Policies, Applications for New Honors Scholarships, Information about the Summer Honors Program, forms for the Senior Research Project Presentation, and, finally, a copy of the Honors Progress Report used to track a student’s courses, grades, and accomplishments in the program. The occasion was the first time to my knowledge they had received something like our new packet of information. They now had a hard-copy agenda for success. At the meeting the students were connecting, networking, and quickly forming conversational groups while they munched on pizza and listened to the items I shared with them. We were off and running.

THE HONORS PROGRAM SURVEY

My next objective was to discover what was currently successful about the honors program, what kept students on task, and what drawbacks were either discouraging students from continuing in the program or outright encouraging students to drop out. I could not contact students who had previously left the program as those records were scarce. I chose instead to survey current students who had completed at least one semester of honors courses. There were many questions on the survey to which they were asked to respond. Sample questions included student perceptions about the major strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as attitudes about the caliber and availability of both honors
courses and honors instructors. There were also specific questions for both transfer and non-traditional students whose special concerns were different from those of the typical first semester freshmen.

The results of the survey quickly made it clear that—although students were generally pleased with the expertise of their instruction, were enjoying the honors courses they were taking, and liked many other aspects of the honors program—the biggest problem was the difficulty of completing the honors program while also completing the requirements of certain majors. Even priority scheduling, enrolling on the first day of semester registration, was not helping with the issue. Many students commented about either their own difficulties in attempting to meet requirements or those of friends who had already left the honors program. Furthermore, the difficulties appeared to stem from either certification requirements, professional requirements, or the number of major courses required, making it almost impossible to complete both the major and the honors program. Attempting to do both was requiring a student to remain for at least one or two additional semesters, a commitment that caused students to opt out of the honors program. The three majors that appeared to cause the greatest difficulties for students on our campus were nursing, education, and music. Note: Although these majors were identified as specific concerns to our institution, honors programs at other institutions may be concerned with different majors such as science or math. I have found that surveys, focus groups, and other information-gathering devices effectively identify the concerns a program may face and suggest procedures for addressing them. The reader can easily adapt these procedures to the needs of their home institutions.

MEETINGS WITH DEPARTMENT CHAIRS

Next, I arranged meetings with the three department chairs in nursing, education, and music. Each of these majors had a large number of students. Here was a virtually untapped market for the honors program composed of students with strong GPAs and a strong academic motivation to succeed. Students with whom I had already spoken expressed a strong desire to be honors students but either chose not to join or withdrew soon after enrollment when they realized that finishing both their major and the honors program would pose a dilemma: they could not accomplish both goals without at least one or two extra semesters. Foregoing enrollment in our program was easier.

During my meetings with the department chairs, I carefully outlined each of the required courses in the honors program. Our discussions centered first on the honors program curriculum, including course description, course content, objectives, and student need. In turn, each department chair detailed his or her departmental major for me including required courses, course objectives, which faculty taught which courses, and how often these courses were offered. I learned several things: (1) a student could pursue five different programs as a music major, all with different requirements; (2) an education major could follow three different programs, each with different certification and/or professional requirements,
and, (3) nursing students are on campus for two years, after which they take two more years of courses off site at a teaching hospital. The last revelation about the nursing major made it very evident why nursing students rarely, if ever, seriously considered enrolling in the honors program.

I was given the opportunity to meet with many of the faculty in these departments, discuss the content of their courses, and answer some of the questions they had about the honors program. The final result of all our conversations was to make significant improvements to the honors program and would result in specialized sequence tracks for specified majors. In addition, the changes would lower the attrition rate and significantly increase student interest in the honors program not only in the aforementioned majors but in other majors as well.

THE INTRODUCTION OF SPECIALIZED SEQUENCE TRACKS

By the close of my conversations with the chairs and other faculty members, I became increasingly aware that some of their goals and objectives, criteria, and to some degree even course content were being duplicated in the honors program. The duplication did not seem to be a significant factor in other majors so I concentrated on the three aforementioned majors. For example, many of the goals and objectives of the honors science course were already being met by the large number of science courses that student nurses were required to take, so the honors science course became redundant for them. The overall objectives and goals of the honors field study course were already being met in large measure by the series of practicums that student teachers were required to complete. I discovered similar duplications in some of the music programs.

Our examination of course content and objectives did not imply that the requirements of either an honors course or a departmental course were not stringent in their own right. Instead, our discovery suggested that the amount of redundancy was not serving the student. Students were taking two courses when many of the same goals and objectives could be met by taking a single course. The duplication was discouraging the students from enrolling in the honors program to take “an additional course which they did not have room for in their program anyway” according to several of the students who were contemplating leaving the program.

I arranged a second meeting with each of the department chairs. At this meeting we painstakingly examined each course in their respective majors. We placed a list of their major courses and a list of the honors program required courses side by side. Could a modification such as a specialized sequence track in the honors program for these specific majors make it possible for students to complete the honors program in addition to completing their major? If so, would the honors program be more attractive to students? I was not willing to sacrifice the integrity of the honors program just to secure better numbers, but
perhaps a compromise that would serve both programs was both possible and beneficial.

During the discussion I had with each department chair, we analyzed any overlaps that were occurring. Once overlapping courses and objectives were identified, we put together a specialized sequence track for each specific program in their majors. Students would have a choice: they could continue following the standard honors track as other majors did or they could elect to follow the specialized honors sequence track designed specifically for that department. Just by making adjustments to a few courses, we gave the student a better chance to finish both the major and the honors program. The change made the honors program more attractive to students who were considering enrollment but had not yet made a commitment.

Once approved by both the chair and the faculty of each of the departments, the chairs introduced the new specialized sequence tracks to both their faculty members and their honors students. Even the honors students who were not in the specific majors met the innovation with great enthusiasm as did the majors in music, education, and nursing. Since all honors courses are linked to fulfilling the requirements of the general education program, students not in those majors could continue with the standard track and, hence, were not directly affected by the changes.

AND INTO THE FUTURE

In addition to the aforementioned changes, I have developed tracking sheets for each incoming freshman honors class where I record enrollment and drop-out rates by class and by major in order to document changes within the honors program. I note any specific reason a student lists for choosing to leave the program. No student who has dropped out since the inception of the specialized sequence tracks has listed, “I couldn’t finish both the honors program and my major within four years and I had to make a choice.”

As our program grew, I was able to secure some additional funding for the program from the administration. The additional funds have resulted in honors incentive awards. Students now receive an honors sweater for the completion of their fourth honors class, an honors pin for the completion of their sixth honors class, and an engraved medallion to wear over their graduation robe upon completion of their honors capstone research project presentation. Honors sweaters and pins are presented at the fall and spring meetings and the medallions are presented at the University Honors Banquet where all departments, including the honors program, recognize special academic achievements of their students with certificates and plaques.

Due to the increased enthusiasm about the honors program among not only the students but also the administration, the number of university faculty who desire to teach a cross-listed departmental course for the honors program has increased as have the total number of honors students and the demand for honors electives. In addition, the department of admissions has incorporated
the changes in their recruitment strategies to lure potential incoming freshmen. The Director of Admissions has assured me that our innovations have been instrumental in attracting more academically motivated students to our campus. Everyone loves a winner. The result? The number of students in the honors program continuing into their junior and senior years has nearly doubled as has the number of honors electives offered. Even the president's private reception has outgrown his home and had to be relocated to one of the campus dining halls. This is now a required dress-up event for all honors students and is held during spring semester. Most of the honors elective course submissions still come from the departments of philosophy, English, sociology, communication, psychology, and history. However, many more departments that had not done so in the past have begun to inquire about offering cross-listed honors electives.

The changes made thus far have been met with great enthusiasm by the honors council, the university president, the provost, departmental faculty, and, most importantly, the honors students currently enrolled in the program or contemplating enrolling. Minimum grade point requirements remain at 3.00 in both honors courses and overall GPA. The total number of credits required to complete the honors program has not changed. The specialized sequence tracks are advertised and promoted during freshmen orientation, by the admissions department, and in the newly designed honors brochure. However, our best advertising comes from word of mouth among students: “I know someone in the honors program and I am thinking about applying” is fast becoming a repeated comment around campus.

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APPENDICES

HONORS PROGRAM SURVEY

Directions: In order to improve the quality of the Honors Program, please answer all questions below. Paper is provided for your answers. Make them as detailed as you wish. All surveys are anonymous.

___ Male ___ Class status (F/S/Jr./Sr.)
___ Female ___ Number of courses completed

1. What do you believe are the strongest advantages of being in the program?

2. What do you believe are the biggest disadvantages of being in the program?

3. Please describe your feelings about current honors courses that are offered.

4. Which departments do you believe should be encouraged to offer more honors courses?

5. How satisfied are you with your relationship with the Honors Program Secretary? After making your choice, please describe your reason.
   (a) very satisfied (b) somewhat satisfied (c) neutral (d) somewhat dissatisfied (e) very dissatisfied (f) have never met

6. Please list any honors courses you have found especially helpful.

7. Please list any honors instructors you have found especially helpful.

8. Please list any honors courses you have found not very helpful.

9. Please list any honors instructors you have found not very helpful.

10. What are your overall feelings about working with past Honors Program Directors? After making your choice, please describe your reason.
    (a) very satisfied (b) somewhat satisfied (c) neutral (d) somewhat dissatisfied (e) very dissatisfied

11. Please list any suggestions you have in reference to the Student Honors Association and its activities.

12. Please list any suggestions for better attendance at Student Honors Association events.

13. Beginning with the new Honors Program academic year, do you feel the information explained to you in the Letter of Welcome to the Honors Program was helpful in making your decision to remain in the Program?
    ___ yes ___ no
14. The expectation of the Honors Program is that all courses are included in the General Education requirements and that you do not have to take any extra courses. Do you believe that you be able to complete your individual program without taking any additional courses?  ____ yes  ____ no

15. Thus far in your program, have available Honors courses been offered at convenient times?  ____ yes  ____ no

16. Thus far in your program, have available Honors courses been offered on convenient days?  ____ yes  ____ no

17. Is the current Honors Lounge sufficient for your use?  ____ yes  ____ no

18. Please list any suggestions for improvements to help strengthen the Honors Program.

19. Please describe any other information or questions you have about the Honors Program that will assist in improving it for your needs.

___________________________________________________________________

FOR FIRST SEMESTER HONORS PROGRAM STUDENTS ONLY:

* Would you like to be matched to an upper-level Honors student (Big Brother/Big Sister)?  ____ yes  ____ no

___________________________________________________________________

FOR RETURNING HONORS PROGRAM STUDENTS ONLY:

* Would you be willing to work with a new Honors Program student as a Big Brother/Big Sister?  ____ yes  ____ no

___________________________________________________________________

TRANSFER STUDENTS AND NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS ONLY:

* Do you feel it will be possible for you to complete the Honors Program requirements within the expected time period of your graduation?  ____ yes  ____ no

* What special situations or problems do you see impacting your role as an Honors student?
REVIVING AN HONORS PROGRAM WITH SPECIALIZED SEQUENCE TRACKS

FACULTY HONORS ELECTIVE COURSE INFORMATION SHEET

Your Name__________________________________________________________

Campus Address ________ Campus Phone_________E-mail ________________

Department ___________________SIGNATURE of Dept. Chair ________________

COURSE TITLE ______________________________________________________

Course Prefix and Number ________Number of Sections? __________________

Does this course have any of the following already approved? __W __G __I

Semester you would like to offer an honors course  Fall  Spring  Both  Sum

Credit Hours__ Do you wish to limit Honors seats? __Yes __No How many__

Is this a new course? ____ yes ____no

Please check Methods of Evaluation used:

____ Tests  ____ Quizzes  ____ Midterm Exam  ____ Final Exam

____ Written  ____ Oral presentations  ____ Research Projects

____ Other (please describe)_________________________________________

Please check Methods of Instruction used:

____ Discussion  ____ Lecture  ____ Independent research

____ Collaborative Research

____ Alternative learning experiences such as conferences, field work, etc.

____ Other (please describe)_________________________________________

* ATTACH a CURRENT course SYLLABUS when you return this form

or a DETAILED Course Description if NEW course
HONORS PROGRAM—STANDARD SEQUENCE TRACK (EIGHT 3-CREDIT COURSES)

HON 1111
An introduction to the Humanities by means of an interdisciplinary content drawn from such disciplines as literature, philosophy, theater, music, art and history.

HON 1112
A continuation of interdisciplinary concepts as stated above. Honors students beginning their Program in the spring semester may take HON 1112 (in spring) followed by HON 1111 the following fall. This does not cause a problem in the student’s program.

HON 1107: Macro Physical Science
An introduction to motion and energy, astronomy, thermodynamics and sound. Students will construct laboratory apparatus to make measurements.

HON 1108: MicroPhysical Science
An introduction to the atom, chemistry, electricity, magnetism and light. Students will construct laboratory apparatus to make physical measurements.

Students only need to take ONE lab-based science course: HON 1107 —or— HON 1108. Science majors are exempt from Honors Science.

HON 2200: Researching Contemporary Issues
Course focuses on a series of case studies and class examples drawn from events of local, national and international importance with an emphasis on interdisciplinary research methods.

HON 3301: Field Work in the Natural and Social Sciences
Students work individually and collaboratively on field-based research projects in the natural and/or social sciences. The prerequisites are HON 1111 and HON 1112 or permission of the instructor.

HON 2255 and/or HON 4455: Honors Electives (6 credits)
Special courses drawn from across the curriculum designed as Honors Electives for that semester. These courses are cross-listed with departmental courses. Courses change every semester. A student may elect (2) HON 4455, (2) HON 2255 or one of each.

HON 4497: Independent Study—Senior Research Project Presentation
A research project related to the student’s major that involves the perspective of at least one additional academic discipline. The project must first be approved by the Honors Program Director; it is then supervised by a Faculty Mentor. A formal presentation is scheduled before the campus community at the end of the semester. Honors students must complete observations of two Honors student’s presentations at least one semester prior to completing their own.
reviving an honors program with specialized sequence tracks

nursing track sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Honors Track</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HON 1111</strong></td>
<td><strong>HON 1111</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanities Honors I</td>
<td>Humanities Honors I</td>
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<td>(3 credits)</td>
<td>(3 credits)</td>
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<td><strong>HON 1112</strong></td>
<td><strong>HON 1112</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanities II</td>
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<td>(3 credits)</td>
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</table>
| **HON 1107** (Macro Physical Science) or HON 1108 (Micro Physical Science) | **HON 1107 or HON 1108 (3 credits)**
| (3 credits)          | —OR—          |
| **HON 2200**         | **HON 2200**  |
| Researching Contemporary Issues | (3 credits) |
| (3 credits)          | —OR—          |
| **HON 3301**         | **HON 3301**  |
| Field Work in the Natural and Social Sciences | (3 credits) |
| (3 credits)          | —OR—          |
| **HON 2255 and/or HON 4455 Honors Electives** | **HON 2255 and/or HON 4455 Honors Electives** |
| (6 credits)          | (6 credits)   |
| **HON 4497 Senior Research Project** | **HON 4497 Senior Research Project** |
| (3 credits)          | (3 credits)   |

Note: Nursing students entering Honors Program late may elect PHL 3380 (in place of HON 1111 or HON 1112)

Nursing students may also select NUR 4402, NUR 4454 or NUR 4433.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Honors Program Course</th>
<th>Elementary Education</th>
<th>Special Education</th>
<th>Secondary Education Programs (future sequence)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HON 1111 Humanities I (3 credits)</td>
<td>HON 1111 Humanities I</td>
<td>HON 1111 Humanities I</td>
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<tr>
<td>HON 1112 Humanities II (3 credits)</td>
<td>HON 1112 Humanities II —or— History course recommended if HON 1111 was primarily Philosophy</td>
<td>HON 1112 Humanities II —or— History course recommended if HON 1111 was primarily Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>HON 1107 or 1108 Science Requirement (3 credits)</td>
<td>HON 1107 or 1108 Science Requirement (3 credits)</td>
<td>HON 1107 or 1108 Science Requirement (3 credits)</td>
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<td>HON 2200 Research Course (3 credits)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HON 3301 Field Study (3 credits)</td>
<td>HON 3301 —or— ELE 3301</td>
<td>HON 3301 —or— SPE 4420</td>
<td>HON 3301 —or— SEC 3320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HON 4497 Senior Research Project (3 credits)</td>
<td>HON 4497 Area of research in conjunction with Student Teaching</td>
<td>HON 4497 Area of research in conjunction with Student Teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Students may take either HON 1111 or HON 1112 as the “first” Humanities Course and then take either HON 1112 or a History course (recommended by their dept. advisor) for the “second” Humanities course. Education faculty members recommend that Elementary and Special Education majors consider taking at least one History course to support later teaching.
### Reviving an Honors Program with Specialized Sequence Tracks

#### Honor Tracks for Music Majors by Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Honors Program Course</th>
<th>Music Therapy</th>
<th>Music Education</th>
<th>Music Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **HON 1111**  
*Humanities I (3 credits)* | HON 1111—**FALL**  
(or HON 1112 in the Spring) | HON 1111—**FALL**  
(or HON 1112 in the Spring) | HON 1111—**FALL**  
(or HON 1112 in the Spring) |
| **HON 1112**  
*Humanities II (3 credits)* | HON 1112—**SPRING**  
(or MU 2220)  
(must take one HON) | HON 1112—**SPRING**  
(or MU 2220)  
(must take one HON) | HON 1112—**SPRING**  
(or MU 2220)  
(must take one HON) |
| **HON 1107 or 1108**  
*Science Requirement (3 credits)* | BSC 1121 or BSC 1122 | HON 1107 or HON 1108 | HON 1107 or HON 1108 |
| **HON 2200**  
*Research Course (3 credits)* | HON 2200 or MU 4427 | HON 2200 or MU 4427 | HON 2200 or MU 4427 |
| **HON 3301**  
*Field Study (3 credits)* | HON 3301 or MTH 4475 | HON 3301 or MU 4400 | HON 3301 MU 4479 |
| **HON 2255/4455**  
*Honors Elective (3 credits)* | Any Honors elective denoted by Music Chair available to all Honors Students | Any Honors elective denoted by Music Chair available to all Honors Students | Any Honors elective denoted by Music Chair available to all Honors Students |
| **HON 2255/4455**  
*Honors Elective (3 credits)* | Same as above | Same as above | Same as above |
| **HON 4497**  
*Senior Research Project (3 credits)* | HON 4497 or MU 4497 or MAP 4470 (Recital) | HON 4497 or MU 4497 or MAP 4470 (Recital) | HON 4497 or MU 4497 or MAP 4470 (Recital) |
### SHARON CARRISH

**HONOR TRACKS FOR MUSIC MAJORS**

**BY SEQUENCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Honors Program Course</th>
<th>Music Business</th>
<th>B.A. Music</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HON 1111</strong> Humanities I (3 credits)</td>
<td>HON 1111—FALL (or HON 1112 in the Spring)</td>
<td>HON 1111—FALL (or HON 1112 in the Spring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HON 1112</strong> Humanities II (3 credits)</td>
<td>HON 1112—SPRING (or MU 2220) (must take one HON)</td>
<td>HON 1112—SPRING (or MU 2220) (must take one HON)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HON 1107 or 1108</strong> Science Requirement (3 credits)</td>
<td>HON 1107 or HON 1108</td>
<td>HON 1107 or HON 1108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HON 2200</strong> Research Course (3 credits)</td>
<td>HON 2200 or MU 4427</td>
<td>HON 2200 or MU 4427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HON 3301</strong> Field Study (3 credits)</td>
<td>HON 3301 or MU 4497</td>
<td>HON 3301 or MU 4497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HON 2255/4455</strong> Honors Elective (3 credits)</td>
<td>Any Honors elective denoted by Music Chair available to all Honors Students</td>
<td>Any Honors elective denoted by Music Chair available to all Honors Students</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HON 2255/4455</strong> Honors Elective (3 credits)</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HON 4497</strong> Senior Research Project (3 credits)</td>
<td>HON 4497 or MU 4497 or MAP 4470 (Recital)</td>
<td>HON 4497 or MU 4497 or MAP 4470 (Recital)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At a well-attended “Developing in Honors” (DIH) session at the 2004 NCHC conference in New Orleans, the question of whether honors courses should be more difficult than or different from standard courses turned out to be unusually lively. The panelists insisted that honors courses should be different in a number of ways, all advocating smaller, interactive classes. My position went further in this direction, arguing that honors courses should replace General Education Requirements, courses often crowded with unwilling students, taught by instructors who would rather be doing something else, and dumbed down. Honors courses, I suggested, should not be specialized. When an Honors Council member at a college I visited insisted that all honors courses should require substantial research papers and demanding exams, I had to disagree. Although a substantial research paper, perhaps a two- or three-semester project, might be the ideal capstone experience in honors and a ticket to graduate school, the courses themselves, I believe, should be challenging, different, and fun for instructors and students alike. When possible, they should be team-taught and interdisciplinary; they should involve off-campus activities; and, instead of papers and exams, they should feature projects, preferably in teams. Clearly such courses require flexibility on the part of the administration and a spirit of adventure among faculty, who should be willing to work up a course, often to be given only once and perhaps far afield from their usual offerings.

Some examples of “different” honors courses offered at Eastern Connecticut State University are briefly described below. They were designed for sections of fifteen students, which could be stretched to twenty, when appropriate, with the instructor’s approval.

**SCIENCE VS. PSEUDOSCIENCE (ONE INSTRUCTOR, REGULAR CLASSROOM)**

This course—offered by an outspoken skeptic, a chemistry professor who often challenges psychics or their ilk invited to make presentations on campus—proved to be so successful that it has been offered every three years. Topics include astrology, telepathy, ESP and other psychic phenomena, Tarot cards, palmistry and the like, ghosts, UFOs, abductions by aliens, and similar popular beliefs on the fringe. The course is mostly lecture and discussion, and
the major project is to prepare posters for public presentation at the end of the semester. Surveys given at the beginning and end of the course indicate, interestingly, that believers generally changed their minds about every phenomenon discussed except their belief in ghosts, which many maintained despite the evidence. Hobbyhorses can be turned into great honors courses!

**MATHEMATICS AND SOCIETY**
*(TEAM-TAUGHT, REGULAR CLASSROOM)*

This course began with a dialogue between the instructors, an arch conservative political scientist and a very liberal mathematician, on Greek mathematics, society, and culture. Students were at first bewildered by the scope and method of the instructors, who were comfortable allowing the subject to advance spontaneously in unplanned directions, say, from the Greek method of calculating the area of a circle to Aristotle's justification of slavery to the idea of justice in the *Oresteia*. As the course moved through the Hellenistic age, the Medieval period, the Renaissance, and, ultimately, the Enlightenment, students increasingly participated in the discussion. When one instructor appeared in a flowery dress as Mother Nature, complaining that Kepler had revealed her long-kept secret about planetary motion, and the other instructor came as Giordano Bruno dressed as a wizard, the students loosened up. For their team projects, they did skits involving historical figures, interviews with Newton and Leibnitz, a debate between Samuel Johnson and Voltaire on religion, and the like. While enjoying themselves, the students did a lot of work and learned a good deal about the history of ideas.

**SCIENCE FICTION AND THE STARS**
*(TEAM-TAUGHT, SPECIAL FACILITY ON CAMPUS)*

There were three instructors and three projects for students in this course. The English instructor, who had published some science fiction, put together a selection of classic stories portraying encounters with aliens and asked students in teams of three to come up with a variation on one of the stories, using the same or similar characters, write a script, and act it out. After discussing the characteristics of life forms and describing exotic fauna and flora that survive in extreme conditions on earth, the biologist asked teams to create a possible extra-terrestrial environment and life forms suitable to it. The astronomer taught the students how to use our planetarium’s Zeiss star projector and asked the teams to create a plausible program with the machine and special effects. Most of the teams did much more work than was required, using the same setting for each of their projects and developing detailed, exotic worlds, making models of life forms, drawing landscapes, and creating images using computer programs. As a spin-off of this course, another biologist and astronomer offered a course on astrobiology the following year.
THE MUSEUM AND SOCIETY
(TEAM-TAUGHT, MOSTLY OFF-CAMPUS)

An English professor got together with the curator of the university’s art
gallery to bring students to a dozen museums in the area. Introductory discus-
sions spelled out what students were to look for at the various museums,
including what the entrance vista, the arrangement of materials, and the tone
of the labels suggested, what audience(s) the museum was addressed to, what
programs it sponsored, and how it was funded. Beginning at our own gallery,
the Textile Museum in town, and the Benton Art Museum and the Connecticut
Natural History Museum at the University of Connecticut down the road, the
class moved further afield to the Lyman Allen Museum in New London, the
Wadsworth Atheneum and the Museum of Science in Hartford, Mystic Seaport,
Sturbridge Village, and the Museum of British Art at Yale. The semester project
required each student to visit a museum not covered in the course and to give
a presentation including color slides or powerpoint on that museum.

NEW ENGLAND AND THE SEA
(TEAM-TAUGHT, MOSTLY OFF CAMPUS)

Taught by a marine biologist and an English instructor, this was among the
more elaborate honors colloquia offered at Eastern. It involved day trips to the
Coast Guard Academy in New London, Mystic Seaport, including participation
in the Yachting History Symposium, and the University of Rhode Island School
of Oceanography, where graduate students made presentations on their
research. It also featured a working session on the Thames River and Fishers
Island Sound aboard Project Oceanology’s research vessel, Envirolab II, a
Saturday at the marine ecology station on Outer Island near Branford, CT, an
afternoon sail in rough weather on a schooner, and a visit to a lobster coopera-
tive. Student projects included descriptions of the domestic architecture of
Noank, CT, building a sharpie at Mystic Seaport, projects at the Sound School
in New Haven, the haunting of New London Ledge Light, and a shakedown
cruise aboard the Eagle, the Coast Guard’s tall ship.

OTHER COURSES

Here are brief descriptions of a few other “different” honors courses: Ethnicity in Canada and the United States, given by an anthropologist and an
English instructor, featured a week at a youth hostel in a francophone district of
Montreal; Worship in Willimantic, also given by the anthropologist and English
instructor, included visits to about a dozen houses of worship and discussions
with ministers, priests, and rabbis; Rocks, Time, and Landscape and The
Ecology of Local Ponds and Wetlands each had weekly field trips, the first
taught solo by a geologist, the second by a team of two biologists; The Culture
of the African Diaspora, offered by English and Fine Arts faculty, included

2005
dance, music, mask-making, and food preparation for a banquet; and *Modern American Troubadours*, presented by an English instructor who had written and recorded his own songs, featured performances, open to the entire campus, by half a dozen song writers. To be successful, however, an honors course need not be exotic or expensive. *Freud and His Critics* and *Sports and Society*, both offered solo, and team-taught *Crime Fiction/Crime Fact* and *Political Culture and Mass Media* were all well received.

At the DIH session and via email I was asked a number of nuts-and-bolts questions regarding this pedagogy. Of course, much depends on the number of students in the program, the culture of the campus, administrative flexibility, and resources. Eastern, with about 4500 students, has an honors program of about a hundred students, all of them on tuition scholarships, and a modest operating budget of about $4,500 a year. Some questions and their answers:

**WHEN COURSES ARE TEAM-TAUGHT, HOW ARE FACULTY COMPENSATED?**

In our halcyon days we had a dean who would schedule two courses under a different designation in the same room, thus awarding 3 Faculty Load Credits (FLC) to each instructor. When this dean moved on, it was agreed, after negotiation, that instructors in team-taught honors colloquia could share 4 FLC any way they chose, usually 2 and 2, but often 3 and 1. This works at Eastern because faculty accrue partial credit for internships and tutorials, and some departments offer 1-credit courses. All courses designated “Honors” now replace appropriate General Education Requirements.

**HOW ARE FACULTY RECRUITED?**

I asked students to recommend lively and imaginative instructors and then waylaid them in their offices. From time to time, I sent an email to the entire faculty, spelling out what is involved and soliciting responses. Sometimes interested faculty came to me, and I also sought out recently hired faculty I had heard good things about. Frequently two instructors from different disciplines showed up with a proposal, and at times I would suggest and try to recruit a suitable partner if the proposer was willing to team-teach the course. It helps if the director is an old hand and knows everyone on the campus.

**HOW ARE ARRANGEMENTS MADE FOR OFF-CAMPUS EXPERIENCES?**

Usually arrangements have to be made a semester in advance to be sure a state van will be available. When students would ask if they could drive to a site in their own vehicles, I said no because there are problems with liability at public institutions in Connecticut during travel for academic purposes. I also pointed out that travel in the van was part of the course. After discussing
JIM LACEY

the latest scandal in the dorms, students often would talk about their courses, their interests, and even their projects. These trips contributed to socialization, friendships, and at least one marriage! Arrangements for tickets, entrance fees, reservations, special programs, and the like can, however, be complicated and time-consuming.

**HOW ARE THESE COURSES EVALUATED?**

At the conclusion of every colloquium, each student evaluates the experience, and the professors evaluate each student. Of course, when a colloquium has problems, students come to the director’s office with their concerns. In most cases the problem can be remedied by reviewing the guidelines with the instructors. Four of every five courses get enthusiastic evaluations; one of every twenty has been considered a disaster. One disaster was a course on health care reform offered during the Clinton effort by an economist, an anthropologist, and a political scientist, two of them recipients of distinguished teaching awards. The problem was that the instructor in charge assigned separate sessions to each instructor and never made clear what was required, leaving the students and the other two instructors unsure about their responsibilities. Team-taught courses are best when each professor comes to every class.

**WHY DIFFERENT IS BETTER THAN TOUGHER**

When the daughter of a colleague of mine did well on a statewide secondary-school exam, she was singled out for “enhancement” in mathematics. Enhancement, it turned out, meant that, when everyone else was assigned five problems for homework, she was told to do ten. Only a masochist, I suspect, would welcome this sort of enhancement. Fortunately, the school was flexible, and she was able to take a calculus course the following term at Eastern. Similar negative experiences in high school, such as doing twice as much work for a lower grade in an honors section, may explain why some academically talented students choose not to apply to our honors programs. It might therefore be a good idea for honors programs committed to the idea of different rather than just tougher courses to make this clear on their web sites and in letters inviting prospective students to apply.

The author may be contacted at
Lacey@easternct.edu

2005
Transferring a Course Developed for Honors Students to Non-Major Biology Students: Lessons Learned

MARK A. McGINLEY
TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

The honors program, in distinguishing itself from the rest of the institution, serves as a kind of laboratory within which faculty can try things they have always wanted to try but for which they could find no suitable outlet. When such efforts are demonstrated to be successful, they may well become institutionalized, thereby raising the general level of education within the college or university for all students. In this connection, the honors curriculum should serve as a prototype for educational practices that can work campus-wide in the future.

—Basic Characteristics of a Fully-Developed Honors Program

ABSTRACT

Honors colleges offer the opportunity for faculty to teach small classes to motivated, academically gifted students. One possible benefit offered by teaching honors courses is the opportunity to experiment with new teaching approaches. Thus, one goal of honors colleges is to act as a “lab” for developing novel educational approaches that can be applied across the university. Here I report on the lessons learned from my experience transferring a course developed for honors students to the general student population.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND

Teaching science to non-science majors involves a special set of problems. For example, many students are not interested in science (the most depressing definition of science I have ever received from a non-major biology student was that “science is the study of things that are boring to me”) or are fearful of science. It is important to motivate non-science majors if we expect them to learn about science. We want to motivate them positively by interesting them in the subject, challenging them at the appropriate level, and showing them how learning about science can be useful to their everyday lives. Similarly, we want to avoid negatively motivating students, i.e., we want to avoid boring, frustrating, or
TRANSFERRING A COURSE DEVELOPED FOR HONORS STUDENTS

hopelessly confusing these students. Thus, I try to cover material that is both interesting and relevant to them. Luckily for me I teach biology, so it is easy to include “sexy”, interesting, and relevant topics.

In my opinion, the lab component is a major weakness of many science courses for non-majors. A significant problem with many introductory science labs is the use of “canned labs,” where the students simply follow a recipe that will lead them to the desired result. Any scientist would tell you that this is not how we really do science. So what are these types of labs really teaching the students?

There are three main uses for a lab course that is associated with a lecture course for non-science majors. First, the lab can reinforce information covered in lecture. Second, the lab can provide students with hands-on experiences that are not possible in the lecture. Third, the lab can introduce students to the process of science through investigative activities. Although these are each valid uses of a lab course, I have chosen instead to develop a lab that focuses on exposing the students to the process of science. First, I believe that an understanding of the process of science will be more useful to students in their future life than being able to name all of the parts of a flower, to illustrate the process of meiosis using play dough, or to know whether food first passes through the large or small intestine. Second, I hope that exposing students to the excitement of discovery will increase their appreciation of and interest in science.

In the “Process of Science” lab, I cover: (1) what is science? (2) the scientific method, (3) sampling and experimental design, and (4) hypothesis testing and statistical analysis (including t-test, linear regression, and chi-square test). The ultimate goal of the course is to prepare students to design, conduct, analyze, and report on their own independent research projects. Because these are non-science majors, typically they lack the background necessary to ask sophisticated questions about biology. Thus, it is unrealistic to expect that these students will be able to ask good questions independently about botany, zoology, or ecology. However, because college students have been alive on this planet for at least eighteen years, they have had significant experience interacting with human beings and observing human behavior. Because my original research training is in behavioral ecology, I recognize animal behavior as a valid and extremely interesting field of study. Additionally, I believe that humans exhibit some of the most interesting behaviors. Thus, in my opinion human behavior is an ideal subject for study by non-science students. First, all students should be interested in some aspect of human behavior. Second, all students should have experience thinking about and observing human behavior. Thus, all students should be able to think about human behavior in a “sophisticated manner.” In my lab course, I have encouraged students to conduct their research projects on any aspect of human behavior that they find interesting.

I conceived of this lab while teaching “Honors Integrated Science,” a two-semester sequence for non-science majors in the Honors College at Texas Tech.
University that is team-taught by a biologist, a chemist, a physicist, and an earth scientist. When I initially tried this lab in the honors class, I was pleased with the results, and so I have continued to use this approach in the honors class for a number of years. In general, student responses have been positive, and I think that the honors students have enjoyed and benefited from the class.

My experience teaching this course to honors students suggested that this was an effective alternative to more traditional approaches to teaching labs. Thus, I volunteered to develop and coordinate labs for the non-majors science classes in my home department (the Department of Biological Sciences). In the fall semester 2001, I offered the “Process of Science” Lab for first time to all non-major students in our department (> 800 students with over 30 sections). To my complete surprise and dismay, I soon learned that approaches and activities that appeared to be successful when working with honors students were much less successful when applied to the non-majors biology course. The students quickly became frustrated and hostile! I was at a loss to understand how activities that honors students found to be fun and valuable had suddenly become “totally stupid” and “a complete waste of time” according to non-major biology students (I wish that they would tell me what they really thought!). The students were in a near mutiny by mid-semester, and only a superhuman effort by the teaching assistants allowed us to survive the semester. The result was not a positive experience for students, the teaching assistants, or me.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Clearly, I made mistakes when designing and implementing the lab for non-major biology students. But how could an approach that had proven effective with honors students be so unsuccessful with non-major biology students? The answer may depend on differences between honors students and non-majors biology students. My hypothesis to explain my failure is that efforts I used to motivate the students backfired, i.e., approaches that positively motivated honors students negatively motivated non-major biology students.

The “ideal” honors student (a) is bright, inquisitive, and enjoys learning, (b) is academically focused, and (c) has a strong academic background. At the other extreme, the “nightmare” non-major biology student (a) is not motivated to learn, (b) may consider a fraternity/sorority, going to the gym, working, or partying to be more important than school, and (c) is taking a science lab only because it’s required. Moreover, non-major biology students may have poor math and science backgrounds from high school (in Texas we call this the “coach effect”).

When I initially conceived my approach to teaching science labs, I focused my efforts on attempting to interest and excite students. In my mind the best strategy was to distance my approach from the traditional labs that my previous research had shown were unpopular with students. Thus, I intentionally introduced the course with an unusual activity. For example, we have
examine whether students are able to find water using a dousing rod, whether
any students in the class have ESP, or whether they could tell if someone was
staring at the back of their neck. My hope was to show students from the very
first day that this lab was going to be different from any science experience
they had had before.

I followed the introductory lab activity with a lecture about mating behav-
ior and sexual selection, a topic that I have always found to be of interest to stu-
dents. I wanted to discuss a topic that students found inherently interesting and
where science could be extrapolated to everyday life (what is more on the mind
of the typical college student than attracting a mate?). Finally, I wanted to intro-
duce a potential topic for students to study in their independent lab activities.
This lecture was followed up by a series of non-traditional lab activities
designed to excite students’ interest in science by allowing them their own way
of doing things (i.e., no cookbook labs). During the meat of the course, we
spent several weeks discussing hypothesis testing and statistics (including t-test,
linear regression, and chi-square test). The lab finished with students designing
and conducting their own projects.

When I taught this lab to students in “Honors Integrated Science,” it
appeared that the honors students understood that I was trying something “dif-
fferent” and they quickly got in the spirit of things. Thus, honors students
appeared to be positively motivated by the less-traditional approach. First, they
were interested in the material. Second, it appeared that their interest was
enhanced by the freedom that was associated with this approach. Third, they
appreciated and accepted the challenge of learning new and difficult material
(i.e., hypothesis testing and statistics). Finally, most honors students enjoyed
designing and conducting their own projects. Because they found the course to
be interesting, challenging, and fun the motivation level of these students was
very high. Thus, it appears that positive motivation was synergistic. That is, pro-
viding the students with a course that was rewarding in a number of new ways
resulted in a motivation that was more positive than the sum of its parts.

In contrast, non-major biology students were not positively motivated by
the less traditional approach. Rather than accepting the challenge of this
approach, the non-major biology students quickly became frustrated. First, they
were frustrated by the apparent lack of structure. In science labs in high schools
they always had a recipe to follow whereas now they had to come up with their
own research project! Second, they were frustrated by the “strangeness” of the
subject matter because it was so unlike anything they had ever done before
(“when are we going to cover real biology?!”). Third, because they were expect-
ning the lab to be “hands-on,” any amount of time spent lecturing in lab was
clearly unexpected and thus unacceptable to them. Fourth, they were frustrat-
ed by the difficulty of the subject matter (“statistics is math!”; “it’s too hard!”).
Finally, and most surprising to me, they became frustrated because they didn’t
understand why they needed to learn any of this (“When am I ever going to use
any of this?”). It appeared that frustrating students in so many ways simultane-
ously resulted in a disastrous negative synergism!

HONORS IN PRACTICE
Moreover, there appeared to be a threshold level of negative motivation that, when crossed, caused students to become bitter, negative, and irrational (for many students the fact that we were not allowing them to memorize all of the different types of fruits or to dissect an annelid worm was cheating them out of the most relevant and interesting educational experience of their college careers!). Once the threshold level of negativity was crossed, it proved to be difficult to turn the lab around to a positive experience.

**IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED, TRY AGAIN**

Thus, it appears that there are differences in the ways that Honors students and non-major biology students were motivated by the activities that I tried. If my hypothesis is true, then I should be able to predict what I need to change to improve the course for the non-major biology students. First, if the frustration level of the students is multiplicative, then I need to avoid frustrating the students in more than one way at a time. Thus, I predict that overall negative motivation will be decreased if I (1) initially increase lab structure to avoid being too “bizarre” early in the semester, (2) decrease the amount of lecture time in class, (3) provide more time for traditional hands-on activity, (4) make sure that students understand the application of the statistics prior to showing them the math behind the stats, and (5) show them how this relates to their life.

I made these changes before using this approach for the second time in the spring semester of 2002. First, to increase the amount of structure in the course and to minimize the amount of lecture time during the lab period, I rewrote my lab manual in a format that required students to read the chapter and answer a series of review questions before coming to lab (McGinley, 2003). We started each lab period by reviewing the material covered in the review questions prior to each student’s taking a quiz. Students are required to pass every quiz, so if they fail a quiz they need to retake it at an out-of-lab time. Thus, the amount of lecture time required in class was greatly reduced. Moreover, students came to the lab knowing what they are confused about so that their time in class served to reduce rather than increase their anxiety level.

Second, I tried to avoid being too “bizarre” too early in the semester. Rather than talking about animal mating behavior and how that might relate to human behavior early in the semester, I waited until students were more comfortable with the purpose and the flow of the lab. I also chose to leave out some of my favorite activities because the non-major biology students found them to be too strange and unstructured.

Third, I added more hands-on activities in class. For example, I made sure that they had to measure various things as we learned about sampling and the various statistical tests rather than simply providing them with the necessary data. I myself think of this as being busy work, but it was clearly more satisfying to the non-major biology students.

Fourth, I tried to introduce hypothesis testing and statistics in bite-sized packages. I tried to make sure that they made sure that they understood why we need statistics and how we use statistics prior to showing them the math behind
TRANSFERRING A COURSE DEVELOPED FOR HONORS STUDENTS

the stats. Where possible I tried to show how we could use statistics to help us answer questions in everyday life.

These changes improved the lab experience of the students greatly. Students “enjoyed” the lab more (I actually heard students laughing rather than complaining during the lab periods). Although I don’t have the necessary data to quantify this, it appeared that students understood the application of statistics much better than the previous semester. Concepts, such as the null hypothesis, which seemed too difficult for many students to grasp during the first semester, were grasped fairly quickly by students in the second semester. In addition, students were able to conceive, design, conduct, and analyze their own investigations more effectively. Not only did they enjoy these activities more, but I observed an increased level of sophistication in their investigations. Thus, the improvements that occurred in the second semester provided support to my hypothesis that non-major students are motivated differently than honors students.

LESSONS LEARNED

The purpose of this paper is not to convince you that my approach to teaching lab courses is the best or that I have been effective at designing a lab course that meets my objectives. Instead, I would like to discuss some of the lessons that I learned attempting to follow the urgings of the National Collegiate Honors Council to use honors courses as a laboratory to experiment with new ways of teaching courses that, if successful, can serve as models across the curriculum.

1. Take care when extrapolating directly from honors classes to other classes across the university. If an honors college admission staff is doing its job, then most students in honors classes should be capable, interested, and motivated. As I have discussed above, techniques that work for motivated, academically gifted students may not be as effective for less motivated, less well-prepared, or less academically gifted students. Thus, we need to be aware background and interest level of students so that we can design each course most appropriately.

2. Similarly, we should take care when attempting to apply courses that we have developed with the traditional student body to honors students. Honors students may be stimulated by levels of challenge and innovation that make regular students uncomfortable. Thus, teaching courses that are effective for non-honors students may fail to challenge and motivate honors students, and causing them to learn much less than they could. We may be able to go at a faster pace, in more detail, and with less structure. Teaching “traditional” courses to honors students may be limiting the educational opportunities that we could offer them.

3. Classroom dynamics may be different in honors courses than in traditional classes. Because the proportion of inherently motivated students should be
higher in honors classes than in traditional classes, I have found that a few unhappy students in a group of generally happy students have little effect on the overall attitude in an honors class. Because the failure to motivate all students in a class does not bring the entire course down, instructors can design the course to motivate students at the top end.

However, the presence of a few unhappy students in a group of neutral or negatively motivated traditional students may have a strong negative effect on the overall attitude of the class. Our experience suggests that a few vocal unhappy students can quickly incite the neutral students to move to the dark side (as we observed in the great “WE MUST DISSECT FETAL PIGS!!” riot of fall 2001). Thus, when teaching a course for non-science majors the instructor might want to pay more attention to the lower end of the distribution in an attempt to reduce the proportion of unhappy students who can have a large effect on the overall experience of their classmates.

**CONCLUSION**

I consider myself to be a good teacher, but I was caught totally off guard by the response of non-major biology students to the lab I had taught successfully in the Honors College. I was disappointed, disillusioned, and depressed throughout the semester. Fortunately, the past success that I had had with the honors students kept me thinking that there was something to this new lab approach, so I kept on trying. Thus, my experience in the Honors College motivated me to continue when I otherwise might have given up.

We need to be willing to experiment. Unfortunately, if we are going to experiment, then we have to be willing to fail (and from experience I can assure you that failure is no fun). What we learn from our failures will allow us to develop better courses. However, don’t forget that sometimes your experiments might succeed and allow you to improve the education of all students across the university!

**REFERENCE**


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Expand the Honors Curriculum: Teach Entrepreneurship, Risk-Taking, and Change Across the Curriculum

ABSTRACT

Having students apply what they study and learn is a principal goal of all educators. This article describes a course, “Entrepreneurship, Leadership, and Team Building: Identifying and Applying Best Practices,” that was developed and taught in each of the last two years for a University Honors Program. Students not only learned but applied this learning as they effected minor and major change on campus. In addition, this article provides background information relevant to professors interested in offering a similar course and shares projects, outcomes, and a full-course structure.

“So What?’ Issue”

Honors Programs and Honors Colleges at the over 700 colleges and universities that are institutional members of the National Collegiate Honors Council attract top academic students.

At our university, over 600 students are enrolled in the Honors Program, and ninety-five percent represent majors “other than” business. More than ninety percent of these bright students will never enroll in a business class, nor will they take any course in entrepreneurship or small business. I believe this experience is typical of what occurs on most college campuses where majors, concentrations, and minors in entrepreneurship are offered but not taken by the majority of students attending and graduating from these universities.

I also believe that many minors and majors in leadership focus more on thinking than on doing, and, by examining and practicing how entrepreneurs aggressively enact change, we can include a valuable learning component in the curriculum.

The goal of this article is to encourage and guide administrators and professors as they expand entrepreneurship and leadership course offerings to students across the university.
INTRODUCTION

Is entrepreneurship more than starting and running businesses? Do entrepreneurs exist in private and public arenas? Are students on all campuses and in all majors inherently focused on being successful, making a difference, and developing skills in entrepreneurship and leadership? Assuming the answers are “yes,” this article provides guidance, strategy, and detail on how courses in entrepreneurship may be modified to target such non-business majors on any campus.

Specifically, a successful “Studies in Entrepreneurship” course (Mgmt. 4350), housed in the College of Business Administration, was modified by changing the course project from writing a business plan to effecting and instituting change on campus. Further, a university honors program offered and promoted the course, which was targeted to non-business freshmen and sophomores. The course was first taught in spring 2003 and again repeated in fall 2004.

Here is a brief description of the modified course.

“STUDIES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP”
COURSE BACKGROUND

Management 4350, “Studies in Entrepreneurship,” was first offered on our campus in 1999 and has been taught to more than 800 students—99% being business majors. The course provides presentations by entrepreneurs on Tuesdays and, on Thursdays, work on business plans of the students’ choosing. For more information on the course, refer to this web link: http://www.business.txstate.edu/users/jb15/MGT4350/default.htm

Since 1999, more than 100 successful entrepreneurs—representing the public and private sectors, big and small enterprises, young and old, men and women, minority and non-minority—have spoken at Texas State University. Just a few of the “tutors for enterprise success” have been:

- Sam Barshop, founder of La Quinta (Inns) and President of Barshop-Oles Development;
- Herb Kelleher, founder and former President, Southwest Airlines;
- Peter Holt, President, Holt Enterprises, Caterpillar, and the San Antonio Spurs;
- Stacy Bishkin, President, BBH Exhibits, Inc.;
- Tom Meredith, former CFO, Dell Computer;
- Red McCombs, CEO, McCombs Enterprises (includes Clear Channel Communications and the recently sold Minnesota Vikings);
- Mike Levy, Founder and Publisher, Texas Monthly;
- Admiral Bobby Inman, former Director of the (US) NSA and founder of MCC.
The names of many of the speakers are household words. Others are success stories known only in their industry. They represent big business, small business, non-profits, and captive entrepreneurship (i.e. entrepreneurial activity within a business structure).

CABLE TV AND A TEXTBOOK

Tapes have been made of all presentations, and each has been edited to fit a 55-minute time frame. Since fall 2002, more than seventy selected videotapes have been shown on local cable television. Further, because of the class, twenty-nine “entrepreneurial stories” appear in a recently published book and CD entitled Profiles in Entrepreneurship: Leaving More Than Footprints (Thompson / Southwestern Publishers, 2004; available on Amazon).

In addition, although only one day each week is devoted to writing and presenting business plans, students enrolled in the “Studies in Entrepreneurship” class have placed second in 2002 and again in 2003, winning $7,000 for two different business plans, at the Ernst Young/Nasdaq New Enterprise Creation Competition sponsored by Ball State University.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Although “Studies in Entrepreneurship” could be labeled successful, 99% of students that enrolled were majoring in business, and I was interested in teaching entrepreneurship to students other than business majors. In fall 2002, working with the Director of the University Honors Program, I created an honors course entitled “Entrepreneurship, Leadership, and Team Building: Identifying and Applying Best Practices.” Although the course was modeled after the “Studies in Entrepreneurship” course, the honors version was different in that it targeted non-business students who were freshman- and sophomore-level honors students. In addition, creating change on campus was the course focus rather than creating business plans.

This honors course was designed to spark genuine interest in creating and identifying opportunities for change on campus and especially for turning ideas into substance and into tangibles. Finally, instead of having invited guest speakers, the course used selected stories, videotapes, and a CD all taken from the book Profiles in Entrepreneurship: Leaving More Than Footprints, which highlights key concepts such as opportunity recognition, leadership, risk assessment/taking, decision making, compensating for limited resources, guidance and mentoring, and more, delivered by entrepreneurs who previously spoke on campus.

HONORS 3393

This modified course required students to work in groups/teams and create campus-based projects that identified a process, program, or system that was not being implemented or that could be done better; the teams then worked to develop a plan and strategy to turn their proposed change(s) into reality.
EXPAND THE HONORS CURRICULUM

Student teams pilot-tested their plans and prepared written reports identifying what they did and explaining why, where, when, with whom, and how they did it. They identified what worked and what didn’t as well as what they would do differently in the future to improve the strategy and plan. Student teams presented the contents of these reports to the class as oral presentations.

The course enrolled students from pre-med, psychology, advertising, government, mass communication, nursing, and biology majors among others.

The results from 2003 and 2004 were impressive. The students became “intrapreneurs” and actually changed processes and policies as well as creating new programs at the university. Samples of changes included:

- adding a student crises and suicide hotline on campus;
- linking all computer labs on campus to “allow” only duplex (two-sided) printing and saving an estimated $9,000 in printing costs each semester (this change was supported and legislation was passed by the Student Senate at the University);
- creating a tutoring program sponsored by the Honors College;
- creating employment assistance for Honors College students;
- modifying the campus recreation center’s policy for outdoor exercise;
- working to create themed honors housing in the dorms;
- sponsoring an all-campus beautification program where students from campus organizations worked together to clean and spiff-up the campus each semester;
- creating an Honors Coffee House to be operated by an outside vendor with a percentage of sales going to support the Honors Program;
- improving the university’s campus tours as well as a campus trolley system; and
- instituting an on-line suggestion improvement box for the campus community.

Three students from the course had their paper accepted by the National Collegiate Honors Council Conference, and they presented their findings and “change/creations” in Chicago in fall 2003. In Chicago they shared their entrepreneurial experiences and distributed copies of the class syllabus.

As noted previously, rather than create a new course on entrepreneurship, I modified “Studies in Entrepreneurship” and taught it to students enrolled in our University Honors Program. This “modified course” theme is being repeated to forestall objections from faculty members who may say they don’t have time to create a new course.

The next segment describes the modified entrepreneurship course; details the changes/modifications made; includes a syllabus for Honors 3393S; and provides outcomes, student reflections, recommendations, and conclusions.
HONORS COURSE STRUCTURE

This course sought to identify characteristics needed to become an entrepreneur or intrapreneur (someone who works within a large enterprise). The course also examined how to build a team, how to build and sustain a guiding coalition and how to effect change; it also explored leadership principles necessary for team initiated and directed projects to succeed and prosper. Through selected videotapes and entrepreneurial stories, students learned how creativity and idea generating is necessary for change, growth, and improvement.

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This writing intensive seminar examines the “life stories” of selected entrepreneurs, identifies leadership qualities that may have contributed to success, and explores research-based principles necessary for groups to become teams and for teams to become high performing. The course output/tangible is for students to work in teams, identify potential needed/necessary “changes” that might be implemented, and work to effect and initiate these changes.

COURSE OUTCOMES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

After completing the course, students will have:

• identified idea generating strategies and opportunities available in the university, local, and regional communities;
• identified and categorized leadership qualities needed to attract followers and to build a guiding coalition;
• identified how individual leadership qualities possessed by class/seminar participants compares with leadership qualities possessed by successful entrepreneurs and leaders;
• created an individual and team-based action plan designed to improve and build upon leadership qualities already possessed;
• worked in groups and created campus-based projects which required the group to become a team and to have moved through specific stages necessary for the team to become high performing;
• completed an action-based, tangible change project.

SEMESTER COURSE OUTLINE

Weeks 1-2

View select video portions of the entrepreneur speaker CD and read select transcripts of successful entrepreneurs to identify sources of ideas as well as idea-generating techniques necessary to stay current.
EXPAND THE HONORS CURRICULUM

Assignment
Students form groups/teams, and the teams individually and collectively begin to list strategies for identifying opportunities and/or for improving self-selected campus/community-based existing practices. Teams select preliminary projects related to campus-based innovation or improvement of existing practice.

Weeks 2-6
Review research-based techniques and principles designed to help a group become a team and progress through team stages. Introduce leadership and team member skills and activities required in high performing teams.

Assignment
Students work individually and collectively to create listings of team or group necessities and problems as well as to identify leadership characteristics necessary for success. Students evaluate their past performance and contributions as team members and then identify task or maintenance functions where improvements are sought and needed. In addition, student groups create vision and mission statements, identify their project target, develop specific goals, break goals into tasks and delegate the work to individual team members as well as create project time-lines and milestones.

Weeks 6-9
Continue to introduce leadership and team-based research intended to educate and challenge team members to develop and further refine skills possessed. Students initiate and continue working on their team-based projects.

Assignment
Teams submit their preliminary project related to a campus-based innovation or improvement of existing practice.

Weeks 9-12
Students discuss project successes and impediments and receive constructive feedback from all class teams.

Weeks 12-15
Students submit a team-prepared written report documenting their campus/community project and focusing on the six helpers—who, what, when, where, how, and why—as well as describe outcomes. Students also orally present the results of their project, receive feedback from the other teams, and prepare a “what was learned” analysis of the experience.

TEXTBOOK AND/OR LEARNING RESOURCES
James D. Bell

Packet of materials developed by the instructor and available for purchase at the University Bookstore. (Materials have previously been used to deliver in-house education and professional development for for-profit and not-for-profit businesses and organizations.) Expected cost not to exceed $20.

Assessment of Student Learning

1. Attendance and informed participation at seminar sessions (10%)
2. Preliminary Written Group Project Report (due week 8) (15%)
3. Individual assessment of the quantity and quality of contributions, commitment, and attitude of team members. (10%: 5% week 8; 5% week 14)
4. Written Group Project Report (due week 14) (50%)
5. Team Oral Presentation (weeks 13 and 14) (15%)

Course Grading

90+=A; 80 to 89=B; 70 to 79=C; 60 to 69=D; <60=F

Course Bibliography


Student Reflections

Here are selected student comments and reflections about the course and the experience.

— "The dictionary defines an entrepreneur as: A person who organizes, operates, and assumes the risk for a business venture. This overall definition by no means truly characterizes an entrepreneur. For one thing, no one entrepreneur is the same. They may sometimes share characteristics, but rarely do we find two entrepreneurs with the same drive, focus, and attributes. The definition also leaves out the idea and thought process before the organization even begins."

— "When I first learned that I had to think of an idea to change the campus or community, I was honestly petrified. I had only lived here for
two weeks and didn’t even know how to drive to Wal Mart; yet I had
to come up with this really great idea for Texas State. Fortunately,
after I calmed down and became accustomed to my surroundings, I
started to see things to change everywhere. Sometimes it takes me a
while to situate myself in a new environment, but when I do, I can
easily strive....”

― “When I was told in this class we were to find problems on our cam-
pus and work to solve them, I was shocked. I was so accustomed to
complaining about certain things on our campus, but I never thought
of actually doing something about them!

In order to be a successful entrepreneur, there are certain character-
istics one must possess. I think that I share some of these qualities,
such as enthusiasm, passion, and dedication. I am excited with the
idea of facing a new challenge or problem which I must work
through to overcome. I am very passionate about the work I do and
the activities I commit to. I am extremely dedicated and don’t give up
easily.”

― “I am similar to every entrepreneur we have studied in that I am opti-
mistic, and I march to the beat of my own drum. Also, I feel my focus
and initiative are strong entrepreneurial qualities that will benefit me
in the future.”

― “The class has opened a new door in my life. I am now aware of
what it takes to become a successful entrepreneur. Even though I do
not possess all of the characteristics of an entrepreneur, I know what
I have to do to get there. I have learned that an entrepreneur is not a
job or a career; it is a lifestyle.”

― “What does it take to be the best? This question is just as subjective
as ‘what came first, the chicken or the egg?’ There are textbook defi-
nitions of what characteristics an entrepreneur needs to succeed, and
many entrepreneurs are the textbook entrepreneur character profile.
The combination of networking, research, self-motivation, and goal
orientation is what I believe to be the most important.”

― “The ability to find resources occurs either by networking or
research. Many people would not consider networking a resource,
but I believe that anything that is used to gain knowledge is a
resource. After considering what we have done in this class, net-
working works in a spider-web form. It starts with a couple of people
that an entrepreneur communicates with, and then the cycle keeps
going until and beyond the knowledge acquired. Networking is
essential in creating a guiding coalition, which is the best way to gain
influence over the decision makers. The guiding coalition is what is
JAMES D. BELL

needed to convince people that you network with to go along with your idea.”

— “I learned a lot, and the interesting part was...most of it was about me! I have never had a class that taught me about developing myself. Most of them are about learning new facts, or methods, or ideas. I can honestly say that what I learned in this class will be with me and help me for the rest of my life.”

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

As the student reflections indicate, application and growth—true learning—resulted. Across campuses, modules of this course may exist, but the focus is typically on writing business plans. By modifying a business plan course, by using real-life role models and research based principles, and especially by requiring initiative and change, this honors course examined and combined entrepreneurial principles and techniques, and it worked with a “non-business audience” early-on in the university experience with the goal of giving the student his or her junior and senior years to further apply and refine skills.

Expanding the reach of entrepreneurship/leadership throughout the university provides benefits to students and can have an important impact on an entire campus community. Honors program administrators are challenged to identify professors who teach or might want to teach entrepreneurship on campuses. And professors are encouraged to modify and share entrepreneurship across the university curriculum.

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2005
The purpose of this article is to share a successful model for incorporating community building and academic achievement into an honors program by creating a public forum for honors students to display their work. According to what Roger McCain has described as a fundamental humanistic view of a university honors education, each student possesses a hierarchy of needs, which includes the need for individual value to be “recognized and confirmed, so that the individual [student] develops a sense of his or her own unique identity” (2). I suggest that honors writing courses, in particular, can foster what McCain contends is the “central objective” of an honors program: “the academic challenge needed by students of excellent academic ability and motivation, and concurrently the recognition of their success in meeting that challenge” (McCain, my emphasis). Creating an academically challenging curriculum to meet the needs of university honors students is the charge of honors programs, but beyond good grades assigned to student work and the honors designation conferred upon graduation, how do we acknowledge student success in those programs? The following briefly outlines the symposia that our Honors Writing Program, which includes a core faculty of seven and a student population of approximately 150 first-year students, developed to recognize just such student success beyond the classroom. These symposia serve not only to expand our concept of the “writing process” but simultaneously redefine our Honors Program community and meet the specific humanistic needs of our honors students.

Writing is a process, not a product. This is the mantra of college writing instructors whose intent is to cultivate a sense of both intent and capability on the part of the writing student. After all, we contend, a successful academic writer has developed skills that allow her to approach any writing assignment, evaluate its requirements, and compose and revise (and revise and revise) a paper that attends to and reflects those requirements. We spend precious course time discussing the various forms of writing—summary, expository, analytical—and the research methods within these differing genres. We offer rhetorical strategies for identifying key points of argumentation, which concurrently provide a historical trajectory of the writing process. We delineate the basic structure of composition, isolating thesis statements, transitional
phrases, and introductory and concluding paragraphs, allowing students to see their work as moveable, alterable elements. We further provide tools for recognizing various writing forms and styles, and, most often, we measure the students’ acquisition of such skills in, yes, their own writing products.

In the honors writing classroom we are particularly challenged by students who have, many times, come to us as already successful writers; indeed, many are in our programs because they have met or exceeded our written requirements for entry. Teaching writing to the writer who has already experienced success can be difficult, but when we rely on our adage of “process, not product” we are able to take the already capable writer and show her how to refine her work through critical inquiry and revision to become even more capable and successful. Frequently what the successful high school writer has yet to experience is the intrinsic motivation to write. One of the goals of our writing program is to shift the student’s motivation from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation. It was our belief that the ‘academic challenge’ McCain suggests as central to the honors experience will establish the foundation for intrinsic motivation because students will inherently desire to rise to the challenge presented by our core writing classes.

Indeed, when our Honors Writing Program faculty began meeting to discuss tools for program assessment, we also began to look at student papers from our classes that reflected both mastery of process and lack thereof. We were easily able to determine which papers, and therefore which students, needed more attention, in turn allowing us to design our Writing Program curriculum around a specific aspect of the writing process, be it structure, analysis, mechanics, development, or style. However, we also noted a number of students who had indeed produced fine examples of academic writing. Although many of us had individually recognized the strength of some of our writers, collectively we realized that we had some fine writing on our hands that warranted more than a final grade to acknowledge its excellence. We discussed a possible forum for presentation of this work and decided to implement an Honors Symposium. In order to reinforce the process of writing, we decided that all of our first-year students should have the opportunity to present their work at the Symposium, not just the students who had already produced fine work. The emphasis on process allowed us to frame the Symposium in the context of revision and delivery; all students would benefit from the revision process and from adapting their written papers for oral presentation. In this way, we created an inclusive model of writing excellence which was available to everyone, not just a select few.

Our goals were multi-fold: 1) we wanted students first and foremost to be able to showcase their work in a supportive environment; 2) we wanted to stress the community aspect of our program by involving as many students in the process as possible, inviting all our students to be involved in some capacity, either as peer editors, as audience members, as moderators, or as presenters; 3) we wanted to reinforce the process of writing so that, whether students
received a high grade on their papers or not, the paper would benefit from revision for presentation; and 4) we wanted our first-year students, many of whom were already thinking about graduate school, to have a conference-like experience to help prepare them for such presentations in the future.

In the spring of 2003, in the second semester of a two-semester first-year writing course program requirement, we asked our students to look at their final papers from the first semester and decide whether they wanted to revise the work for presentation at the Symposium. We could not anticipate the response. Could we expect our students to participate in the mandatory Saturday revising workshops, do the revisions, practice their presentations, and then overcome nerves and actually present their papers at the Symposium? As usual, our honors students impressed us with their dedication and hard work, committing themselves to an event that had no significant tangible reward beyond a sense of confidence and accomplishment. They were already reinforcing our overarching programmatic goal of creating a shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation.

Approximately twenty-three first-year students chose to present their work at the Symposium, and over eight additional first-year students, more than half of the first-year students as a whole, participated as peer reviewers, mock-audience members, session moderators, and actual audience members. The honors faculty collected papers and coordinated appropriate thematic sessions for the Symposium. We scheduled six sessions and each student was given twenty minutes for presentation with a fifteen-minute discussion period at the end of each session. Students read their papers, worked from note cards, or, in several cases, created power-point presentations to accompany their work.

We coordinated that first Symposium with our annual Honors Week and invited parents, faculty, and administrators to attend. Many did. Several Honors faculty held additional office hours to review papers and make suggestions for revision. We held a mandatory workshop, facilitated by the Honors Program’s Associate Director and an Honors Writing Program faculty member, during which we discussed key points for revision and particularly for oral presentation, trained students in constructive feedback, and then teamed students into groups of three to four peers to read papers and make revision suggestions. Once revisions were made, students practiced their presentations in front of peers or instructors, working on eye contact, breathing, internal quotations, and rate of speech. We instructed students in appropriate conference dress and held the Symposium in several of our university’s premier conference rooms, with snacks and drinks, to reaffirm the significance of the event. We printed programs for the event and gave presenters a printed certificate acknowledging their participation. Following the Symposium, we published the papers in a bound volume, which each presenter received.

As we analyzed the success of that first Symposium, we realized that we had in fact achieved our stated goals for the event. A supportive environment was created because most of our students, depending on the degree of their
BUILDING COMMUNITY AND FOSTERING EXCELLENCE

involvement, had a vested interest in the Symposium. For example, peer editors became part of the successful presentation of the paper they reviewed, and audience members had been exposed to the same curriculum that inspired most of the papers and so were able to engage with the content and ask thoughtful questions. Further, this supportive environment helped to create and foster the Honors first-year community. With an eye toward recruitment and retention for our Honors Program, and understanding that “sense of community” is a significant reason that honors students stay in our program, we applied for, and received, a grant through our university’s recruitment and retention office to offer a suite of symposia, one in the fall and one in the spring.

Trusting that the community we established in that first Symposium would generate interest in a second, we held another Symposium in the fall of 2003, this time for returning honors students (sophomores, juniors, seniors) to present work from previous courses across disciplines, and we had our then first-year students serve as peer reviewers, pre-audience members, audience members, and session moderators. Again, approximately twenty-five students revised and presented papers, this time with an interdisciplinary focus. The first-year students worked in conjunction with returning honors students in the fall; in the spring we held a Freshmen Honors Symposium with the roles reversed: those who had presented in the fall served as reviewers and mentors for the first-year presenters.

As our honors faculty received abstracts for paper presentations, we further realized that our students’ scholarship represented the diversity and breadth of our Honors Program curricula. Session titles included Ecology, Eco-criticism, and the Environment; Monsters and Masters in Literature; Leadership, Heroism, and the Art of Decision-Making; Historical Perspectives on War, Music, and Science; and Reconstructing Identities through Narrative Voice. In one session, creative writers read their poetry and short stories while in another session presenters discussed First Amendment rights and racism in public policy. As we watched our students adeptly field questions from parents, students, and faculty on their particular topics, we knew we had not only extended the writing process but had expanded the teaching process as well.

Turnout for the symposia has dramatically increased as the events have become annual. Our last Symposium, in the fall of 2004, had over thirty returning honors student participants, and again over half of our first-year student population participated in supportive roles. Encouragement from faculty in the first-year writing courses continued to increase participation at all levels, and we were able to separate our revision workshop into two Saturdays, one focused on revision of the written paper for oral presentation and the second on practicing the presentation in front of faculty and peer reviewers.

Moreover, although we cannot isolate the symposia as the sole reason for higher student retention figures, we feel confident that students who participate in the symposia experience a greater sense of community and satisfaction within the Honors Program.
However, the greatest benefit of the now annual and co-convened Honors Symposium, at least for those of us teaching writing in the Honors Program, is the reinforcement of the process of writing. We are able, through the Symposium, to carry honors students’ final papers beyond the final grade and the end of the semester to further revision. We also add another step to the process: presentation. The students who choose to present their papers see their work as scholarship; they are intimately familiar with their topics and answer critical questions about their work and ideas confidently. In addition, the humanistic needs that McCain discusses are met through engagement in the Honors Symposium: the students who participate at any level test their skills as writers, editors, and public speakers, and ultimately they are rewarded with a sense of satisfaction that far exceeds any tangible incentive. In other words, their motivation becomes intrinsic. Further, the students who participate as reviewers and audience members are part of a community of honors students who challenge themselves personally and intellectually. As McCain asserts, “community-building is the first order of importance [in honors programs]” (1).

The Honors Program community is not only reconfirmed through the symposia but also, like the writing process, expanded beyond the classroom to include parents, faculty, and administrators. Parents, some of whom have been honors students themselves, are able within the symposia sessions to engage in an intellectual conversation put forth by their children. Faculty and administrators witness the pedagogical possibility inherent in interdisciplinary educational methods. Hence, the Honors Program community begins to reflect a larger community of support and interest that is manifested through participation, at whatever level, in the Symposium.

Although the size of our university Honors Program provides for intimacy among faculty and students, the Symposium model is easily adaptable across community-college and university programs of various sizes. The key to the success of the Symposium model is not the size of the student population but the sense of community created among the students. Students who participated in the Symposium did so because their peers—as fellow presenters, editors, and audience members—supported them, and that support enabled students to move beyond the extrinsic motivation of class grades to the intrinsic motivation, outside of the classroom experience, of academic excellence through hard work. Smaller honors programs might be able to pool resources with larger programs and create regional or statewide symposia. Alternatively, these symposia could be linked to a capstone honors experience that emphasizes the students’ majors. Again, however, the benefit of the Symposium for our Honors Program has been the success each student involved in the process has experienced.

Meeting the academic and intellectual needs of honors students is the mission of university honors programs. However, once we meet these needs, we are further challenged to meet the more humanistic needs of our students by creating opportunities for students to achieve self-confidence and self-fulfillment. Further, we hope to build a sense of community that encourages students
BUILDING COMMUNITY AND FOSTERING EXCELLENCE

both to embrace their own uniqueness and to come together collectively in support of one another in an educational community. The symposia discussed here expand the parameters of the writing process, reconstruct the model of an honors community, and allow our students to rise to a new level of scholarship and personal success.

REFERENCE


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Stockholm Study Abroad: Scientific Breakthroughs and Nobel Laureates

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ABSTRACT

Undergraduate study abroad experiences and immersive international programs serve as rich learning opportunities and substantive creative endeavors. This is particularly true for honors students. This paper describes an honors course that was developed around the idea of the scientific method, targeted at exploring scientific breakthroughs and Nobel laureates, and conducted at the site where the majority of Nobel Prizes are awarded: the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden. For the “Stockholm Study Abroad” course at The Pennsylvania State University, honors students were asked to examine elements of the scientific method as the underlying framework of research studies, discuss traditional and nontraditional research techniques used in science, elaborate and/or clarify selected scientific breakthroughs, pinpoint where creativity exists within scientists’ accomplishments of selected breakthroughs, develop questions for Karolinska Institute scientists who are searching for breakthroughs, and explore The Nobel Museum for details of previous Nobel Prize recipients’ careers in science. In addition to the rich academic experiences in which the students participated, this article discusses some of the practical elements involved in the planning of this course, including assistance with arranging lecturers and lecture halls, field trips, lodging, and partial university funding for student expenses. Also discussed are selected logistical topics such as the importance of obtaining agreements from guest lecturers at least six to nine months in advance and facilitating student discussion with international peers and equivalent-level students.
STOCKHOLM STUDY ABROAD

STOCKHOLM STUDY ABROAD: SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGHS & NOBEL LAUREATES

What does it mean to be an undergraduate honors scholar? What is the nature of honors scholarship? Evidence for answering these questions can be readily found in undergraduates’ international honors experiences and honors studies abroad.

The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) values diversity in all of its forms. International study represents an educational environment enriched by the diversity of individuals, groups, and cultures that come together in a spirit of learning. To build an appreciation of the importance of understanding, respecting, and expanding diversity, Penn State is committed to providing access to—and fostering students’ participation in—international programs, including those designed specifically for honors students.

International study offers multiple opportunities for students to expand their thinking. In so doing, international study forces students to think differently and at a higher level of synthesis. International study inspires students to think above and beyond traditional course boundaries of learning. The nature of international honors experiences serves as a clear reflection of honors scholarship.

This paper describes the development of a course that focused on exploring scientific breakthroughs and Nobel laureates in Stockholm, Sweden. In conjunction with the notion of honors study, a conceptual model that incorporates the scientific method formed the foundation for this and the preceding semester-long course.

WHAT ACTUALLY IS MEANT BY HONORS STUDY?

At the undergraduate level, honors study consists of academic pursuits that are more penetrating and research-oriented than traditional undergraduate coursework. Pursuing honors study involves more than simply studying a subject in greater depth and/or breadth; it involves greater abstraction, a higher level of complexity and organization (Werner, 1957), and guidance by a mentor or series of mentors in the form of honors advisors or instructors.

Discovery, integration, application, and teaching are four functional areas included in the Boyer (1997) model of scholarship. All four areas interact dynamically and, in so doing, form an interdependent whole. Because much of the substantive content contained in these two courses on scientific breakthroughs was new to them, many honors students focused more heavily on the discovery and integration types of scholarship rather than the application and teaching types. Nonetheless, the experience afforded students a competitive edge in their research techniques, which prepared them for future endeavors such as completing their honors theses and conducting possible graduate-level research.
Discovery is investigative and refers to a search for new information. At the core of scholarship, discovery is what “contributes not only to the stock of human knowledge but also to the intellectual climate of a college or university” (Boyer, 1997, pp. 17-18). Integration is what happens when scholars assimilate isolated facts into perspective, “making connections across the disciplines, placing the specialties into a larger context, illuminating data in a revealing way”—work that attempts to “interpret, draw together, and bring new insights to bear on original research” (pp. 18-19). Integration draws connections and examines contexts often in an interdisciplinary and interpretive way. Boyer sees integration and cross-faculty scholarship as a growing trend in universities, a scenario in which disciplines are converging and the boundaries between fields overlap and become blurred. The scholarship of application involves both applying relevant information and contributing to human knowledge development. Finally, the scholarship of teaching is conceptualized not only as an endeavor that involves transmitting knowledge but also one that transforms and extends it.

In the first course, conducted at Penn State, students were involved collectively in the application of scholarship as a class when trying to figure out a cure for a specific type of cancer. Students worked as a group and gave an hour-long class presentation to other faculty and an oncologist about the most promising avenues of research in finding a cure. In that same course, students were involved in the application of teaching through a regular weekly sharing of insights they had uncovered in their readings. A different student collected insights from each class member every week and distributed them the following week so that every student had a copy of the entire set. The majority of the students found both of these activities worthwhile and helpful to their own individual projects because of the shared learning and discovery.

In directing honors students toward ways of incorporating interdisciplinary and international courses into their plans of study, The Schreyer Honors College at Penn State frequently emphasizes and employs the integration functional area discussed in the Boyer model of scholarship. The Schreyer Honors College is a university-wide honors college for academically superior students, typically reserved for the top five percent of academic achievers. The Honors College promotes academic excellence within a broad realm—in education, practice, leadership, and international study—as well as within social and civic responsibilities. It is designed to challenge, enrich, and broaden general education as well as to enhance preparation for graduate or professional study by fostering scholarship and research-intensive experiences. At Penn State, special opportunities are offered to explore areas of interest within numerous international environments. Accordingly, Penn State’s honors program gives students opportunities to be directly involved in discovery and integration in global contexts.
A list of underlying teaching and learning assumptions was assembled as a first step in developing the two courses on “Scientific Breakthroughs and Nobel Laureates” (see Appendix). These assumptions aided the faculty member designing the courses in developing the course objectives, readings, and learning experiences for honors students. That faculty member spent nearly a year conducting a comprehensive literature review on scientific breakthroughs and Nobel laureates to be studied subsequently during the trip to the Karolinska Institute and the Nobel Forum in Stockholm. Keywords used in her literature search included: searching and truth; scientific method; scientific reasoning; paradigms; paradigm shifts; Janusian thinking; convergent thinking; divergent thinking; failures, successes, risks, and risk-taking in science; intelligence quotients and scientists; savants; geniuses; creativity; landmark scientific breakthroughs; scientists and resistance to scientific discoveries; semiotics; components of scientific breakthroughs; and Nobel awards and science. This search identified essential elements and commonalities that consistently appeared in the process of discovering a breakthrough and winning a Nobel Prize. A successful pattern of discovery consistently emerged when the scientific method was combined with personal qualities of creativity and insight. Journal articles and book chapters discussing the scientific method were used to elaborate and clarify the breakthrough process and identify specific functions common to this process.

An excellent edited book on insights, *The Nature of Insight* (Sternberg & Davidson, 1995), proved to be a very useful text for the first course. *The Nature of Insight* contains five divisions. The introduction reviews the history and methods of science while the second section explores how challenging puzzles, answers to which cannot be obtained through ordinary means, must have been solved. The third section examines ways in which people develop new inventions, and the fourth section discusses the thinking processes of several historically insightful people. The final section considers evolution and investment as metaphors for understanding insight.

A second book on creativity, *Creativity and the Mind: Discovering the Genius Within* (Ward, Smith, & Finke, 1999), was coupled with *The Nobel Prize: A History of Genius, Controversy and Prestige* (Feldman, 2000) to enrich the textbook content provided during the on-campus course before the students embarked on the Stockholm-based second course. A number of required and supplementary journal articles completed the list of course readings. Students were expected to synthesize the readings into a coherent explanation of scientific breakthroughs. The course faculty member thus encouraged students to develop a more holistic understanding of the fundamental components of a scientific breakthrough and the processes required to achieve one through advanced study of creativity and insights.
USING THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD AS A FOUNDATION FOR COURSE DEVELOPMENT

The different components and goals of the scientific method served as the foundation for integrating content into both the first on-campus course and the Stockholm-based course. Both courses examined thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving in relation to major and persistent questions in various sciences. In trying to determine why the findings from certain studies were deemed “breakthroughs” in science, students explored the nature and correlates of creativity and genius within the context of a scientific breakthrough. Both the semester-long course on campus and the subsequent international-study course in Sweden included discussions of Nobel Prize-winning investigations in chemistry, physics, and physiology/medicine; well-recognized examples of scientific breakthroughs and their Nobel Prize-winning recipients; and well-recognized examples of highly creative and successful scientists. At the Karolinska Institute and the Nobel Forum in Stockholm, scientists from a variety of fields conversed with students, describing their personal thoughts about what would constitute major breakthroughs in their fields of study. Although the international course in Stockholm would have been effective on its own, students were primed to obtain more meaning and impact by participating in the preceding semester-long course administered on campus. Likewise, the first campus course would have been useful by itself, but higher academic returns were realized through the symbiotic interaction of the two courses.

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF COURSE PLANNING

The course faculty began preparing for the two-course sequence twenty-four months in advance. Twelve months were required to obtain formal course approvals from Penn State. Six months following the final course approvals, Part I was offered on campus, followed by Part II in Sweden.

While course approvals were being obtained, the course faculty, with the assistance of a colleague who had an adjunct faculty appointment at Karolinska Institute, and a Swedish nursing student who had worked alongside and knew many of the desired lecturers, initiated contacts with potential guest lecturers at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. Agreements with guest lecturers were not finalized until four months prior to the international course, which immediately followed the semester-long course at Penn State. Had the course faculty not had the critical assistance of the adjunct faculty from the Institute and the Swedish student, it is unlikely that sufficient and appropriate lecturers would have been obtained in time for the summer course in Sweden.

Dr. Richard Stoller, Coordinator of Selection and International Programs at the Schreyer Honors College, provided expert guidance in obtaining approval for the two honors electives within the Schreyer Honors College. He also paved the way for securing approval for “Stockholm Study Abroad” through Penn
State’s international committee and for ensuring that the honors students’ airfares and lodging were subsidized through a Penn State travel grant.

**PUBLICIZING THE COURSE TO RECRUIT STUDENTS**

Descriptions of the two scientific breakthrough courses were presented at an open house sponsored by the Schreyer Honors College. Faculty members offering new honors courses, or honors courses that tend to have low enrollments, met and spoke with students during this evening session two months prior to the start of spring term. Faculty members created their own color brochures for marketing their courses. The courses were also listed and described on the Schreyer Honors College web page and in the monthly Honors Newsletter sent out to all honors students. Because the Schreyer Honors College works hard to offer several international study courses each year, a special section was devoted to international honors courses. That section helped focus students’ attention on course opportunities offered in specific countries, each with a particular academic focus. In addition, a one-page flyer announcing the Stockholm course was posted on bulletin boards in some of the student dormitories. The name, email address, and office phone number of the faculty member coordinating the Stockholm course was listed for students desiring more information. All of the publicity helped generate student interest and facilitate course registration.

**PROGRAMMATIC TEMPLATE**

To facilitate the approval of “Stockholm Study Abroad,” two honors electives on “Scientific Breakthroughs and Nobel Laureates” were developed as a programmatic template. Part I was three credit hours and conducted on Penn State’s University Park campus during the spring semester. Part II carried one credit hour and was held during the summer session in Stockholm, Sweden.

The foci of these sequential course electives were as follows:

1. searching for truths—techniques and approaches (including the scientific method),
2. different types of thinking,
3. intelligence and creative quests,
4. scientific breakthroughs, and
5. Nobel Prizes in the sciences.

The first three foci were emphasized most heavily in the first course. In searching for truths, the scientific approach—logical, associative, and causal reasoning—and paradigm shifts were discussed. Convergent, divergent, and Janusian thinking were examined as different paradigms of thinking. In exploring intelligence and creative quests, students read and talked about intelligence quotients, savants, geniuses, and the generation of hypotheses.
The latter two foci were emphasized primarily in the “Stockholm Study Abroad” course held in Sweden. In studying scientific breakthroughs, students explored selected landmark breakthroughs in science; components shared by the majority of scientific breakthroughs; and uncertainty, perseverance, and the search toward greater certainty. Criteria for Nobel Prize awards, well-known Nobel laureates in the sciences, and scientific Nobel laureates’ contributions to the development of science were addressed as part of the fifth focus of Nobel Prizes in the sciences.

**OBJECTIVES FOR THE STOCKHOLM COURSE**

The global objectives of the Stockholm course were to communicate and understand the following topics: creative thinking in science, promising research in science, examples of scientific breakthroughs, and scientific accomplishments of Nobel Laureates. The students’ specific learning objectives included the following:

1. Examine pivotal details of various scientific breakthroughs in science;
2. Discuss where creativity can be identified in scientists’ accomplishments of selected scientific breakthroughs;
3. Develop questions concerning opportunities for scientific breakthroughs with scientific investigators working at the Karolinska Institute;
4. Explore details of previous Nobel Prize recipients’ careers in the sciences and their best-known studies provided at The Nobel Museum.

Readings for the Stockholm Study Abroad course included the book previously discussed on the Nobel Prize (Feldman), *Nobel Prize Women in Science* (McGrayne, 2001), and selected journal articles that had been placed on electronic reserve at Penn State’s Paterno Library. Specific assignments consisted of participation in seminars and field experiences, a written critique of all field trips, a written paper on one scientific breakthrough and one Nobel laureate, or a thought experiment on a topic relevant to the student’s honors thesis research. An example of a biology major’s scientific breakthrough and Nobel laureate paper involved Barbara McClintock’s work with maize genetics and the action of transposable genetic elements. A chemistry student’s paper on a thought experiment discussed scientific speculations about the best approaches for producing meaningful scientific research.

**ARRANGING LECTURERS AND LECTURE HALLS**

Teaching strategies included guest lectures, seminar discussions, readings, field trips, and other observational experiences at the Karolinska Institute. Lectures were conducted on the Karolinska campus, primarily in the Medical History Museum. For this international course, eleven lecturers represented physiology, neurophysiology, anesthesiology, genetics, endocrinology,
neurology, molecular biology, and library science. Had two additional weeks been possible, scholars from most, if not all, of the students’ other major fields might have been included (economics, accounting, finance, animal science, electrical engineering, history, and international relations).

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips were taken in Stockholm and Uppsala. Some of the sites included Gamla Stan (“Old Town”); the centrally situated runestone at the junction of Käkbrinken and Prästgatan in Gamla Stan; Vasterlanggatan (street famous for cafés, shopping, and tourism); Marten Trotzigs Grand (the narrowest and longest cobblestone street in Stockholm); the Medical History Museum; the Karolinska Hospital; The Nobel Museum; The Nobel Forum; Vasa Museeet (home of the famous warship from 1628 now located on the island of Djurgården); the Swedish Museum of Natural History; Norrmalm’s Café Opera restaurant; Linnaeus’ Botanical Gardens in Uppsala; Birka, Björkö archeological Vikings excavated site on Lake Mälaren; the Stadhuset (Stockholm’s City Hall); the Stockholm Archipelago and famous waterfall sculpture; the Museum of National Antiquities; and the Royal Palace.

ITINERARY

The weekday itinerary included breakfast on the ship in Stockholm harbor (where students were lodged) from 6:30 to 7:15 AM; travel to the lectures from 7:15 to 7:50 AM; lectures from 8 until 12:30 or 1 PM; and field trips or sightseeing thereafter. Students were able to use the afternoons and evenings to pursue additional study and sightseeing in their specific areas of interest.

LODGING

For lodging, students stayed at two international hostels. These hostels were both aboard boats, one being the Gustaf af Klint and the other the af Chapman sailing ship moored in the central Stockholm harbor. Travel to and from all locations was accomplished via subway, buses, trains, and walking. Of the two hostels, the af Chapman provided the better quality of lodging whereas the Gustaf af Klint provided the most convenient location for access to the Karolinska campus and the Nobel Forum. Reservations for hostel lodging for groups should be made at least six months prior to arrival to guarantee adequate space.

OVERALL COSTS

The approximate cost of the trip for each student was $1420. Of that amount, airfare ($745) and lodging ($322) were covered by a travel grant through the Schreyer Honors College. Penn State Schreyer Honors Scholars are encouraged to pursue international coursework and are eligible for an exciting array of special programs. Approximately 100 Schreyer Ambassador Travel
Grants are awarded each year in support of international study, service learning, and research abroad.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE COURSE OFFERINGS**

Honors students tend to be confident in pursuing graduate-level scholarship, connected to the concept of life-long learning, and motivated to set an example for improving practices in science and other disciplines. In both the on-campus and Stockholm Study tour course, students developed a deep understanding of the principles of science, including the confirmation, communality, competition, collegiality, and continuity of scientific work.

Every student who participated in the Stockholm Study Abroad course reported that the course was extremely valuable to his or her scholarly development in terms of major-specific development, cross-faculty exposure, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Should this or a similar series of courses be offered again, it would be useful to secure lecturers at least six to nine months in advance and allow students more opportunities for engaging in discussions with Swedish graduate students. Direct peer-to-peer contact might also entice more American honors students to think seriously about pursuing graduate study abroad. If undergraduate foreign coursework is not an option, a course such as the Penn State on-campus component is still desirable as a first step toward international research. Instilling interest in international learning and encouraging cross-faculty exposure at the undergraduate level can produce better-prepared graduate students and a more diverse, integrated network of global scholarship.

**AUTHOR’S NOTES**

1 “Janusian” thinking involves the simultaneous mental resolution of two diametrically opposing ideas or views.

2 Copies of the required and supplemental reading lists used in these courses are available by contacting the first author.

**REFERENCES**


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APPENDIX

UNDERLYING TEACHING AND LEARNING ASSUMPTIONS FOR THE SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGHS AND NOBEL LAUREATES COURSES

1. Much of the content contained in these courses will be relatively new to many of the students.
2. Content about the components of scientific breakthroughs will be useful to anyone interested in a career in one of the sciences as well as other disciplines.
3. The content in these two courses often approximates a graduate level of reading and interpretation more than an undergraduate level.
4. Many of the honors students are not adequately challenged in other electives. If more thinking and integration were expected in other electives, they would generate more important work.
5. Students are not likely to have been previously exposed to much of the content in these courses because other courses in the sciences focus nearly all of their time on scientific findings (content) within a particular domain rather than on the thought processes that went into developing those findings (process).
6. All of the class members are highly intelligent “A” students and leaders.
7. Class members represent a sampling of the sciences and other fields of study at Penn State.
8. Because class members are so intelligent, they catch on quickly. They also become bored more quickly than students who do not catch on and need information repeated.
9. Even though all of the students are intelligent thinkers, good speakers, and excellent writers, not all of them will necessarily enjoy sharing their thoughts openly with others in a community context.
10. Active participation is the best way for students to learn about developing insights and working toward a breakthrough.
11. “Local analogies” arise naturally when a diverse group of outstanding students from diverse backgrounds share their thoughts openly in a seminar-style format.
12. In discussions of science, the appearance of local analogies is probably the best way to stimulate scientific breakthroughs.
13. Students would learn more about breakthroughs if guest lecturers from a variety of fields of study attended class and shared their thoughts with the students.
14. It is never wise to underestimate the capabilities of a group of students who have been challenged with a supposedly “impossible” task; they may progress much further than originally deemed possible, and this outcome may be more desirable than that achieved by setting more “realistic,” yet lower, standards.
15. Students will get more out of a course if they selectively focus on readings of interest to them personally than if the course faculty member gives them too much guidance and pigeonholes reading topics within his or her personal area of scholarship.
Student Recruitment and Retention
Last June, as they descended from the peak experience of high school graduation, the forty newly selected members of the Humanities and Sciences (H&S) Honors Program at Ithaca College received a summer-reading book from me, the Honors Director, with a request for information in exchange: enclosed in the packet was a brief questionnaire about their experiences, their likes and dislikes, their hopes for the future. The questionnaires took only a few minutes to complete, but once the replies were translated into a set of introductory biographical sketches and sent back to the students in August, the information provided a great boost, even before the new students arrived on campus for the fall term, to the effort to foster a sense of honors-program community both in and out of the classroom.

Most of the questions had been devised by the Student Advisory Board members as they considered what students typically want to know about each other upon early acquaintance:

What do you consider your “home town”? Have you lived in any other exciting places?
Have you done much traveling? What is one of the most memorable places you have ever visited?
What is your all-time favorite film? Favorite book or writer?
What kind(s) of music do you like?
What academic subjects (such as biology, art, history) do you find especially interesting?
What was the best part of high school?
Do you hope to play any varsity sports at Ithaca? Any intramural sports?
At Ithaca College, in what extra-curricular activities do you think you’ll get involved?
JUMP-STARTING HONORS COMMUNITY

Do you hope to study abroad during your undergraduate years?
Where?

Below, write a few sentences to tell your colleagues in the honors program something about yourself not covered by the previous questions.
What makes you unique?

I also sent an e-version of the questionnaire, and most students did answer by e-mail, some with very brief comments, some with novellas. Though a few were slow to reply, the threat of publishing highly fictionalized and embarrassing biographies of the slackers eventually shook information loose from everyone.

Each student’s information ended up in a paragraph-long sketch, which, in all cases but one, for consistency in style and not altogether serious tone, I wrote myself. Here is a typical entry:

Because John H—(Environmental Studies major) can’t remember his earliest years in Philadelphia, he calls Doylestown, Pennsylvania, his home town. One place that Jack does remember, with awe, is Big Sur in California. His favorite film is The Royal Tenenbaums, his favorite book is Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things, and his favorite music tends to fall into the categories of folk and soul. He is fascinated by history as an academic area, Africa as a geographical one. In the next few years, he would like to join with others in the college community in some activist causes. Fellow honors students should be aware that Jack is subject to one strange compulsion: when he sees what he deems a “good tree,” he must climb it, whatever the circumstances, whatever the location.

Often I quoted a phrase or two directly from the student’s submission, but when I encountered Toni’s truly eccentric voice—“Rebel grrl. Messiah girl. Riot grrl. A weapon of mass distraction.”—I retired into a brief, bracketed introduction and let Toni have the biographical sketch to herself, figuring that the other first-years should have fair warning of some of the challenges to come.

Last year was the first run of this experiment with what have come to be known as the “bio-blurbs.” Without exception, the students enjoyed them; having been introduced on paper during the summer, students were eager to meet the persons behind the sketches. After all, if Kelly, the English education major from Wisconsin, collects pencils and owns a tarantula, she must be worth knowing. How exciting that fellow students will be coming from such exotic places as Turkey, Albania, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Indiana! Well before the late-August barbecue that was the first official honors event of the academic year, the new honors community had begun to form. Katrina was already famous as our token Nebraskan, Sara-Maria as the former model for Abercrombie & Fitch, Max as the composer of experimental music. Within the first month of the fall term, the several young women whose blurbs had revealed them as aficionadas of badminton were investigating the possibility of organizing a college club devoted to the sport.
Besides serving as introductions and indicators of affinities (or extreme differences) of taste and experience, the biographical sketches have some side benefits. Without being blatant about it, they encourage new students to ponder study-abroad options and to consider a wider range of extra-curricular activities. It had not occurred to me that many of the parents would read the blurbs too, until several told me at the college’s fall open house that they were delighted to have a glimpse of the community into which their sons and daughters were moving; as the introductions made the new arrivals feel more at home at college, they also—even Toni’s—seemed to reassure the family whom the students had left behind.

One does pay a price for such benefits. Writing forty bio-blurbs certainly required an investment of my summer time although, once I found an overall tone that seemed right, the composition generally went smoothly. The information in my sketches could usually follow the order of the questions, which provided a logical “arc” to the presentation, and the students themselves almost always gave me a surprising piece of information or a pithy comment that could serve as a climax to the entry. Directors of larger honors programs, however, interested in experimenting with a project like this, might well be daunted at the prospect of writing hundreds of such paragraphs, even though the blurbs are probably even more useful in programs where sheer numbers can make it difficult for a student to find a kindred or a fascinatingly different spirit. Of course, a director could save a great deal of time and effort by providing a model paragraph, posing the crucial questions, and asking the students to write blurbs—with a strict word limit—about themselves, the director reserving the right to edit all submissions. The individual styles of the student-authored paragraphs would do much to introduce the uniqueness of each student. Another time-saving approach might be to leave the information in a sort of question-and-answer format like this:

Suzanne M— (Math Teaching major)
Home: Damariscotta, ME
Travel: camping in Norway; one year as an au pair in Germany
Favorite academic subjects: math and English
Favorite writers: Isabel Allende, Peter Shaffer
Favorite film: Monsters Inc.
Music: plays the flute
College plans: joining the crew team

This approach, at least as I have used it here, falls sadly short on charm, but it does provide some interesting details and is much better than nothing. As noted earlier, I sent hard copies of the bio-blurbs to the students’ homes during the summer; because I assumed that most of these paper documents
would be lost in the relocation, I also e-mailed copies to the new honors students once they arrived on campus for the fall term. Especially after discovering that parents enjoyed reading the introductions, I intend to rely on the postal service again for year two. The published blurbs, in fact, are the last in a series of summer mailings in which I inform the students about the honors housing option, the fall honors seminars, the summer-reading book, my availability during summer orientation sessions, and the late-August honors orientation and barbecue. As an old-fashioned person, I feel more in touch with the new students when I send mail with a stamp affixed, and some students have told me that they took the communications more seriously when they arrived in that form. E-mail distribution, however, could certainly save time and money, savings that in a larger program could be considerable. Online publication is another reasonable option, although I am reluctant to post on our honors website any personal information at all about our students since those pages are open to viewing by any casual surfer anywhere; but programs that restrict access to certain sections of their websites could make bio-blurbs available online and worry-free to the rest of the honors community (potentially an excellent community-builder on a much grander scale than we have tried as yet) and could include photographs as well.

One student has suggested that, in the coming year, we begin to exploit the blurbs at another level: we could unofficially match each first-year with an upperclass student as much as possible in terms of common interests and have the older student serve as a mentor or resource if the younger is interested. “Nothing forced and nothing very formal,” said Toni the Riot Grrrl whose idea this was and who will be a student co-director of the program next year, “and don’t call anybody a Big Sister, whatever you do; but if these people have some common interests, the freshmen might feel more inclined to initiate a relationship or even just ask a question.”

Toni’s idea illustrates why an honors program needs student directors and/or a student advisory board—members of the program who can not only help to plan and organize social events but also brainstorm and critique a range of ideas and procedures from the student point of view. Although I am proud of developing the blurbs to jump-start community feeling among the first-year students, I confess that in their first trial year I did not use the sketches for all they were worth. Many possible follow-ups come to mind, besides Toni’s suggestion. An obvious and easy one: at the honors orientation session for new students just before classes begin, we should introduce each person with a juicy slice of information from his or her bio-blurb, to reinforce the value of the written introductions and to associate faces with paragraphs. This year, I will also compose biographical sketches for the few students who begin the program as internal-transfer sophomores or as transfers from other institutions. Both of these groups feel rather out of place in their early honors courses, having missed the first-year-seminar experience where students most readily make friends with others in their class cohort. E-mail distribution of their
bio-blurbs to the rest of the honors community, as well as delivery to the transfers of the biographical sketches that we already have on file, could help the transfer students feel more immediately at home.

I suspect that the introductory biographies could have a useful developmental function as well. In the coming year, I intend to have all of the first-years read their blurbs again as their first college semester draws to its close. At the final session of the first-year seminar (I teach one English section, along with a colleague who teaches one in Writing), we can discuss as a group who the students were when they submitted answers to the summer questionnaire as compared to who they are now. The discussion will be primed by a followup questionnaire: Do you feel that the blurb still describes you? How have you changed after a semester at college? Are you participating in the extra-curricular activities that you planned, or have your interests developed in other directions? Would you now list new favorite films or writers or academic subjects? Do you have any different notions of what makes you unique? Before the students leave the first-year seminars and disperse through the various intermediate honors courses, perhaps a profounder sense of community can come from their sharing these self-reflections and thinking about how they have grown together over the past four or five months. The bio-blurbs have made a good beginning in the H&S Honors Program at Ithaca College and are already an established tradition after just one year, but thanks to suggestions from students, faculty, and administrators, and to probing questions from reviewers of this article in its earlier stages, the tradition continues rapidly to evolve.

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In this article, we report on an effective means to enhance the honors freshman-year experience and thereby reduce the high rates of attrition commonly associated with the first year in college. Research by Tinto (1975; 1987) has shown that academic as well as social integration contributes to student persistence and success in college. Consequently, the successful transition from high school to college requires that freshmen make adjustments both academically and socially. The lack of integration in either of these domains will reduce student persistence and increase the likelihood that students will be college dropouts. The effects of academic and social integration are particularly acute during the first year of college, as borne out by statistics indicating that student attrition is greatest during the freshman year. For instance, Levitz and Noel (1989) report that there is a 50% decrease in student attrition rates per year in college. Moreover, among all freshman drop-outs, half occur during the first six weeks of the first semester (Myers, 1981). Fostering a successful freshman year is the most significant intervention that can increase student persistence (Levitz and Noel, 1989).

At many large campuses, some students, particularly freshmen, will develop a sense of isolation and social alienation. The consequence is that these students will be less engaged in their studies and campus activities. Results from the National Survey of Student Engagement (Kuh, 2003) suggest that, while there is a great deal of variability, smaller schools generally engage students more effectively than larger schools. Because of our large campus, we wanted to minimize possible feelings of isolation and social alienation in our Honors freshmen. Therefore, the Team Leader program that we describe here was designed to increase the academic and social integration of these students. In developing this program, we considered the following goals for the freshman-year experience as outlined by Upcraft and Gardner (1989):

- Developing Academic and Intellectual Competence
- Establishing Social Relationships

Portions of this paper were presented at the 2004 annual meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council, New Orleans, LA.
TEAM LEADERS AND THE HONORS FRESHMAN-YEAR EXPERIENCE

• Developing an Identity
• Maintaining Personal Health and Wellness
• Developing an Integrated Philosophy of Life

We will describe how our Team Leader Program assists Honors freshmen make the adjustment to university life with regard to each of these factors. However, before describing our Team Leader Program, it will be helpful to first provide the context for this program and its development. Therefore, we describe our university and Honors College before discussing the Team Leaders Program with regard to Upcraft and Gardner’s (1989) framework for shaping the freshman-year experience.

THE UNIVERSITY

Our Honors College is located on the campus of a large metropolitan research university whose total enrollment is 43,000 students. Last year, the incoming class of 4,075 freshmen (technically defined as “First Time in College” students) had an average high-school GPA of 3.80 and an average SAT score of 1186. The overall first-year retention rate for the freshman class was 86%.

THE HONORS COLLEGE

Our Honors College has a total enrollment of 1,550 students. Last year we enrolled a freshman class of 505 Honors students. The incoming class had an average high-school GPA of 4.24 and an average SAT score of 1335. The first-year retention rate for this freshman class remaining in the Honors College (82%) was somewhat lower than that of the university. However, it should be noted that the overall GPA needed to remain in Honors (GPA ≥ 3.20) is considerably higher than the overall GPA needed to remain a student in good-standing at our University (GPA ≥ 2.00).

Our Honors College has met each of the criteria established by the National Collegiate Honors Council’s (1995) “Basic Characteristics of a Fully-Developed Honors Program.” We offer our students a four-year honors experience starting with a liberal arts background and ending with advanced courses and interdisciplinary seminars. As one requirement for graduating with Honors, all incoming students must enroll in “Honors Freshman Symposium” during the fall semester of their freshman year.

Honors Freshman Symposium is the cornerstone course for our honors experience. One purpose of the Honors Freshman Symposium is to expose our students to the diversity of scholarship, creativity, and passion for learning that exists among our university’s finest faculty. In this sense, it is a speaker series in which each week a renowned scholar gives a presentation on his/her research area. But Symposium is more than a series of presentations. It is also the place where we instill the Honors Code of Conduct and build an Honors learning
community. We encourage belongingness and Honors identity by placing freshman “symposiasts” in teams of 19-20 students headed by a Team Leader. Last fall semester, our symposiasts were randomly assigned to one of twenty-six teams. An important function of these teams is to have breakout discussions on the topic presented earlier that afternoon in Symposium. These breakout discussions are held at various pre-determined locations around campus immediately following Symposium. Team Leaders are responsible for facilitating these thirty- to forty-minute discussions.

TEAM LEADERS PROGRAM

Our Team Leaders are advanced Honors students who serve as peer mentors, guides, positive role models, and resources for their team of incoming students. Selection of Team Leaders is highly competitive and is based on academic performance, a personal statement, and a group interview. First-time applicants must also submit a letter of recommendation from the Team Leader they had during their freshman year. We typically receive twice as many applications as there are positions to fill.

In many ways, familiarity with Honors Symposium and the Team Leader Program begins in the freshman year. However, formal training beings with a two-day Team Leader Retreat that occurs the week before the fall semester begins. In order to instill a sense of community, this retreat is attended by all Team Leaders as well as the Honors staff and is facilitated by the Associate Dean of the College. This past year, twenty-six Team Leaders and twelve staff members attended the retreat and all of its sessions. One guest speaker led a workshop on leadership development, and a psychologist offered a presentation on “identifying the at-risk student.” Several “best practices” sessions of the retreat were led by returning Team Leaders. One such session involved having “rookie” Team Leaders role-play some of the difficult situations that they might encounter with their team members. Ensuing discussions allowed rookies to process the underlying issues and appropriate actions associated with each of these situations. Examples of situations that were role-played included how to deal with a disruptive student in breakout discussions and assisting a student who is homesick.

We also had all Team Leaders participate in a “ropes course” to build communication and camaraderie among Team Leaders. In addition, several sessions focused on the various roles and professional responsibilities expected from the Team Leaders. In this regard, it should be noted that Team Leaders are paid hourly wages for all activities related to Honors Symposium and their team activities.

However, the retreat is not just about work. Several sessions are entertaining ice-breakers involving Team Leaders and Honors staff, and high levels of enthusiasm and conviviality pervade all retreat activities. The fact that all retreat participants dined together for group meals also reinforces the sense of community among Team Leaders and staff. We believe that the retreat’s milieu of
sociability and inclusiveness is critical to the success of our Team Leaders Program because the creation and core of our Honors community begins with the staff and its Team Leaders.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEAM LEADERS

In addition to facilitating breakout discussions, Team Leaders are also responsible for maintaining the Symposium attendance records and call-logs for their team members. Call logs are weekly records of telephone calls and meetings between Team Leaders and each of their symposiasts.

Team Leaders are expected to meet or call all team members at least once per week outside of Symposium. On average, Team Leaders spend about 10 hours per week on team activities. This time is spent organizing social activities, meeting with individual team members, and going to educational and cultural events (e.g., theatre performances, campus observatory) with their team members. In addition, Team Leaders are responsible for arranging a field trip whose destination is determined after reaching a consensus among all team members (not always an easy task). A mandatory symposium requirement is that all team members must participate in this field trip.

TEAM LEADERS AND THE FRESHMAN-YEAR EXPERIENCE

Having described the Team Leader Program within the context of our university and Honors College, we now turn to how this program addresses each goal of the freshman-year experience described by Upcraft and Gardner.

DEVELOPING ACADEMIC AND INTELLECTUAL COMPETENCE.

Honors Freshman Symposium builds active listening skills and fosters an appreciation for diverse research topics and interdisciplinary thinking. We also stress civility in the classroom. These competencies are further developed in subsequent breakouts when Team Leaders facilitate discussions that heighten the relevance of symposium topics to students’ lives. During any given evening, a symposium topic will elicit diverse viewpoints from students who agree or disagree with the opinions of the presenter. For instance, one presenter discussed his research on genetic engineering. Subsequent breakout discussions revealed that many students held views either supporting or opposing the speaker’s opinions. The ensuing debate required that team members critically evaluate all arguments and defend their own views in a cogent and persuasive manner. Symposiasts appreciate this opportunity for debate because it occurs in the low-threat environment of a breakout group. That is, they can hone their communication skills without the reticence they might experience if a faculty member were present and a course grade were in the balance.

Finally, the small group setting creates opportunity for symposiasts to form study groups during midterms and finals. This opportunity serves as
another means whereby freshman are academically integrated into the university setting.

**Establishing Social Relationships.**

Freshman team members discover that their Team Leader and team members form a support network that can assist in the establishment of new social relationships. Many beginning freshmen are hesitant to ask questions about campus life for fear of being perceived as naive or stupid. In breakout discussions they realize that many others share this fear and may even have the same questions such as “where do I get scantrons?” or “what does SARC stand for?” (it stands for Student Academic Resource Center). In sharing these experiences, team members start to develop the trust and communication that can be the basis for new-found relationships.

Team Leaders attend retreat sessions on ice-breakers and team building. Consequently, many of the activities organized toward the beginning of the semester are highly popular pizza and ice-cream socials that promote familiarity and peer-bonding among team members. Educational and cultural events, including the mandatory field trip, tend to be scheduled later in the semester. The most popular field trips have included visits to local museums, theatre performances, and community service projects such as Habitat for Humanity, Ronald McDonald House, and a beach clean-up day.

Team Leaders are also resources for helping their symposiasts locate student clubs and organizations. On a large university campus, there is an assortment of student interest groups that many freshmen would find bewildering. For instance, there are student clubs catering to chocolate enthusiasts, medievalists, or devotees of the novelist Ayn Rand. Encouraging Honors freshmen to locate and join campus organizations is another important means whereby Team Leaders help their students socially integrate into the university setting.

We mentioned earlier that we reinforce the sense of community and Honors identity during the Team Leader retreat. As Team Leaders interact with their symposiasts throughout the fall semester, the friendship, sociability, and conviviality established in the Team Leader retreat now extends to the newest members of the Honors community.

**Developing an “Honors” Identity.**

As freshman become socialized within the Honors community, they start to develop a concept of what it means to be an Honors student. This begins during the first Symposium meeting in which we welcome our freshmen and explain our college mission statement and the Honors Code of Conduct. It is important to note that our Honors Code is not simply a prescriptive list of do’s and don’ts. Rather, it describes the values that are cherished by members of the Honors community (e.g., “To strive for the highest levels of performance in all scholarly endeavors and to do so with the enthusiasm that stems from a true love of learning and a devotion to academic excellence”). Team Leaders are
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expected to uphold and exemplify these values to their freshmen in all of their academic, co-curricular, and social activities.

Team Leaders also serve as a personal bridge between the Honors staff and their freshmen. For instance, our Honors College is the campus representative for all prestigious scholarships such as the Rhodes and Marshall. These scholarships require qualifications that exceed the information found in students' transcripts. In this regard, Team Leaders serve a vital role in that they are responsible for introducing outstanding members of their team to the Honors staff. Such students include those who have demonstrated high levels of maturity, leadership skills, or unusual proficiencies in a musical instrument or second language.

Our Honors College offers many opportunities for freshmen to establish a sense of belonging and identity. One such opportunity is our Honors Educational Reach Out (HERO) Program that provides community service opportunities for our students to serve two inner-city elementary schools. About eighty students volunteer for this program each semester. We sponsor many other student-oriented events including an Honors luncheon series in which a notable public figure has lunch with a small group of students. Past luncheons have included the noted science fiction writer Ben Bova, astronaut John Young, and the editor of the New York Times Book Review. Team Leaders are instrumental in promoting these events to their team members.

Team Leaders also encourage freshman involvement in Honors Congress activities. Honors Congress is the official student organization of our Honors College and sponsors many social activities such as the float build for our university's homecoming festivities. This past fall, about seventy Honors students participated in building a homecoming parade float that won first prize in a juried competition.

It is important to note that, in promoting a sense of Honors identity and community, we try never to lapse into elitism. Our Honors College does not exist as an elitist institution isolated in its own ivory tower. Rather, we work very hard at being central to the mission and to the academic community of our university. This interconnectedness is reflected in our students who are active in all aspects of the university including student government, Greek organizations, research labs, and community partnership projects. Thus, rather than being elitist, the Honors College and our students are very much a part of the everyday life and community of our university.

MAINTAINING PERSONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS.

Team Leaders are in a position to monitor the personal well-being of each of their symposiasts. After the Team Leader retreat they are equipped to handle virtually all of the issues or concerns raised by their freshmen. During the retreat, an important lesson is that they should not function as therapists or counselors. Thus, if one of their freshmen is experiencing acute distress or exhibiting maladaptive behaviors (e.g. eating disorder, substance abuse, or
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depression), they are to notify the Honors staff as soon as possible. Moreover, depending upon the circumstances, Team Leaders will accompany their student either to the university counseling center or health center. While these circumstances are exceedingly rare, the retreat prepares Team Leaders for the possibility that they might need to act in emergency situations.

On a more positive note, Team Leaders are role models for how successful Honors students should conduct themselves both in and out of the classroom. Through modeling and prompting, Team Leaders help their freshmen hone adaptive skills such as studying for college-level tests, prioritizing, time management, and establishing healthy relationships. At the same time, Team Leaders help their freshmen recognize the perils of excessive lifestyles such as all-night partying or video gaming. Thus, as freshmen are making the transition from high-school to university life, Team Leaders assist them adopt a new, healthy lifestyle that strikes a balance between work and fun. Team Leaders are effective in this role because they don’t act like mom or dad. Instead, they are peer mentors and role models who, as successful Honors students, can lead by example.

**DEVELOP AN INTEGRATED PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE.**

From a developmental perspective, freshmen enter college as adolescents and should graduate as mature young adults. This greater maturity should be marked by a deeper awareness of one’s abilities and interests and a heightened understanding of how these abilities and interests relate to one’s goals in life. Moreover, with growing maturity one should have a greater sensitivity and appreciation for the diversity that exists across people and places. These are also the qualities that we seek to develop when we speak of nurturing well-roundedness in our students.

Just how do Team Leaders promote well-roundedness in their freshmen? One means is through facilitation of the breakout discussions following each Freshman Symposium. It is through our symposium presentation and the ensuing discussion that Honors freshmen are exposed to diverse perspectives and ways of knowing. While disagreements arise during discussions, the Team Leader’s responsibility is to ensure that all student viewpoints are treated with respect and thoughtfulness. Many of our freshmen come from high school and family backgrounds that are fairly homogeneous with respect to diversity. Having the opportunity to engage in discourse with others who do not share their perspective is a benefit of Team Leader-facilitated breakout discussions. Another means whereby Team Leaders promote well-roundedness is by virtue of positive role modeling and prompting. Because Team Leaders are advanced and highly successful Honors students, they are very convincing examples for showing incoming freshman “how to lead the good life.”

This past fall, we initiated a Service Team program in partnership with the national organization Junior Achievement. Honors freshmen volunteered to be members of service teams led by Team Leaders. Each Service Team worked with
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children in elementary and middle schools who were identified as “high risk” for student drop-out and failure. Fully one-half (250 students) of our incoming freshman class volunteered, and by the end of the semester they contributed a total of 1,500 hours of community service to these schools. We believe that this community service activity serves two important purposes. First, it promotes the values embodied in our Honors Code of Conduct (e.g., “To demonstrate self-discipline, commitment, and responsibility in fulfilling my obligations as a member of the academic community”). Second, it develops qualities of well-roundedness (e.g., sensitivity, empathy, and civic engagement) in our students.

FRESHMAN PERCEPTIONS OF TEAM LEADERS

At the end of the Symposium, freshmen anonymously complete an evaluation of their Team Leaders. This survey asks freshmen to identify their Team Leader’s strengths and weaknesses as well as to provide a numerical rating of their Team Leader’s performance (from “1 = Poor” to “5 = Excellent”). Overall, the numerical ratings were strongly positive (M = 4.73), and this was reflected in the comments of freshmen. When commenting on their Team Leader’s strengths, typical observations were “[I appreciated] her sincerity and interest in the well being of each and every student” and “she really reached out to all of us and made us feel that she cared...I never had to worry about things because of her.”

Very few comments were elicited when freshmen were asked about their Team Leader’s weaknesses (most students left this question blank). When students did respond, the most frequent comment was that the breakout discussions could have been better organized and facilitated by their Team Leader (“There was no structure to our meetings”). This type of comment only occurred for first-time Team Leaders and was absent for returning Team Leaders.

THE TEAM LEADER EXPERIENCE

We thought that a fitting end to this article would be a section that describes the experience of Team Leaders. Their overall experience is positive as evidenced by the fact that, in any given year, almost half of the applicants are returning Team Leaders (graduation and conflicting class schedules prevent others from re-applying). Rewards of both an extrinsic as well as intrinsic nature contribute to this positive experience. While an hourly wage certainly counts as an extrinsic reward, this seems to be only a minor factor in why students apply to be Team Leaders. A more important factor is that students look upon the role of Team Leader as having prestige and high visibility among the Honors community. This role is particularly attractive to students who have had prior leadership experience in high school or in student organizations at our university. For many students, being a Team Leader also serves as a passport for other leadership and service activities on campus.

However, the most important rewards for being a Team Leader are intrinsic in nature. When students were asked “What is the best thing about being a
Team Leader?” the overwhelming response was the opportunity to help freshmen make the transition to college life. A typical Team Leader response to this question was “There is nothing like seeing a student grow from a high-school senior to a college freshman and to know that you had a role in that transition.” Another Team Leader appreciated “having the opportunity to help students not only academically, but also with social issues.” It should also be noted that all of our Team Leaders indicated that they would recommend this experience to other students thinking of applying for the position.

Another intrinsic reward is that the Team Leader experience helps develop leadership skills to a level that is quite uncommon for student leadership positions. After all, how many other positions carry the responsibility of overseeing the adjustment and personal well-being of college freshmen? Team Leaders also find that their experience allows them to develop mentoring and listening skills to a high degree. These skills serve them well not only in breakout discussions but also in interactions with students on a personal level. In developing their leadership and communication skills, Team Leaders noted increases in their self-confidence, particularly in situations that require public speaking, team building, and consensus building. One final source of intrinsic reward comes from the pride and personal fulfillment felt by Team Leaders as they assist members of their team. In so doing, our Team Leaders exemplify and substantiate another set of values represented by our Honors Code of Conduct: “To show thoughtfulness, understanding, and empathy toward my peers, and to offer encouragement as they pursue their intellectual goals.”

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TEAM LEADERS AND THE HONORS FRESHMAN-YEAR EXPERIENCE


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BETSY BACH, RACHEL KINKIE, AND SAM SCHABACKER

Using Students Mentors in an “Introduction to Honors” Course

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ABSTRACT

The Davidson Honors College at the University of Montana requires “Introduction to Honors” of all matriculating students. The course is offered for one credit and is designed to develop a sense of organizational identification among the first-year students enrolled in each of the ten sections that we teach every fall semester. Specifically, the goals of the course for students are to a) develop community, b) learn the essentials of a liberal arts education, and c) participate in activities they might not typically experience (e.g., community service or cultural events). Faculty members teaching each section volunteer their time and are provided $250 to spend with their class.

To facilitate our goal of developing community, each “Introduction to Honors” course is staffed with a student mentor. Honors students apply to be mentors, are selected by the Dean, and work closely with the course instructors to plan and implement the course. Student mentors also volunteer their time and energy to facilitating the course.

To provide readers with a more detailed idea of the course and the role of student mentors, we provide a history and overview of our “Introduction to Honors” course, discuss the recruitment and role of our student mentors, and offer comments from two student mentors about their experiences.

“INTRODUCTION TO HONORS”

COURSE HISTORY

Our one-credit “Introduction to Honors” course was first offered in the mid 1980’s under the rubric “Freshman Seminar” and was available only to Honors students selected for our top academic award—the Presidential Leadership Scholarship (PLS). The course, offered in the fall semester, was designed to build community among the fifteen PLS awardees and to ease the transition from high school to college. After several years in hiatus, the course (still called “Freshman Seminar”) was resurrected and made available to all new students matriculating in the Honors College. Because of the number of “Freshman Seminar” courses taught across campus, along with the one-credit Seminars offered as a required part of our campus learning communities (called
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Freshman Interest Groups, or FIGs, not all Honors students enrolled for the Honors Freshman Seminar because the common name, “FIG/Freshman Seminar” did not distinguish the different content offered in these courses.¹

To reduce confusion and ensure that all Honors students had a proper introduction to the Honors College, the Honors course was renamed “Introduction to Honors” in 2003 and required of all new Honors students. For the fall 2005 semester we have ten sections scheduled, with 20 students in each section. Honors students enrolling in FIG classes are required to take “Introduction to Honors,” in addition to the discussion section offered as part of the FIG experience. Through collaboration with the FIG Director, the “FIG Seminar” has evolved as a discussion section with the goal of linking together the content provided in the FIG courses. A fall 2003 survey of students enrolled in both “Introduction to Honors” and a FIG Seminar revealed that students saw these two one-credit courses as substantially different. While Honors students may enroll in the 2-credit campus-wide Freshman Seminar, they are discouraged from doing so since the course goals overlap with those of “Introduction to Honors.”

COURSE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

With the three stated course goals in mind (i.e., to develop community, learn the essentials of a liberal arts education, and engage in a unique activity), instructors develop widely varied classes. All instructors spend time covering the book selected for the campus-wide first-year reading experience,² yet each course is designed around the instructor’s area of expertise and interest. All instructors are strongly encouraged to offer readings representative of a liberal

¹ Our university offers four programs targeted to incoming freshmen, two of which are mentioned in this article. The largest program is comprised of our Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs), where a cohort of students registers for the same block of four or five courses. Approximately 25 FIGs are offered each fall semester, and each is arranged around a different theme and enrolls a maximum of 25 students. One of the courses in every FIG is a one-credit FIG Seminar led by a UM senior or professor. Our Freshman Seminars are two-credit interactive courses focused on a particular topic, with the goal of fostering bonds between students, helping them with the transition to university life, and developing critical thinking skills. The two programs not mentioned here include University Transition, a one-credit week-long course focused on research and writing, and Learning Strategies for Higher Education, offered as part of our TRIO programming.

² Since 1999, the Honors College has had a freshman reading experience, followed by a fall Honors convocation featuring the authors of the assigned reading. In the fall of 2004, UM-M adopted a campus-wide first-year reading experience, using Azar Nafisi’s Reading Lolita in Tehran. The 2005 all-campus book is Sherman Alexie’s The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven. Beginning fall semester 2005 we will return to our Honors tradition. In addition to Alexie, Honors students have been assigned Debra Earling’s Perma Red, with the author as our Honors convocation speaker.
arts education, and many choose opinion pieces, academic articles, and literary readings to supplement their courses. Instructors have chosen readings such as former Missoula mayor Dan Kemmis’ book, *Community and the Politics of Place*, while others choose opinion pieces from magazines like *Harper’s*, the *New Yorker*, or the *New Republic*. Still others choose readings from Wallace Stegner, various local or Western authors, and academic articles related to their training and expertise.3

With the common bonds of the required reading for first-year students, discussing the essentials of a liberal arts education, and building community, each course has a unique character. For example, a Health and Human Performance instructor socializes his students into the Honors program by having students read articles and discuss issues related to wellness, and he gets them out exercising weekly. His class used their $250 to build resting benches along our river walk, a popular exercise trail. A Forensic Anthropology professor and chocolatier entitles his popular section “Death and Chocolate.” He provides chocolates for each class, takes them to the county crime lab, and asks them to write their obituaries. They end their seminar with a dinner at a local sushi bar. A Philosophy professor uses films and discussions to create community among her first-year students, while an environmental rhetorician asks his students to read local articles on environmental conflicts and takes them to work in a local organic garden.

Another professor uses qualitative methodology to emphasize “Missoula as Place” for her seminar, using the NCHC’s City as Text© model as a guide. Students are required to act as participant observers on campus and around Missoula, submitting field notes about their observations. They work in teams and are required to spend at least two hours a week observing in their groups. They visit places such as the Farmers’ Market, the monthly First Friday Artwalk, and the annual Hemp Festival to get a flavor of the Missoula community. The course is highlighted by visits from Missoula and western Montana luminaries—our former congressman, our mayor, and others—and field trips are taken to, for instance, the UM Carillon and the local carousel so that students get a sense of their new “place.” Students are required to turn in a final paper in which they reflect on their field notes and discuss changes that have occurred in their personal, physical, and psychological “place” over their first semester.

**STUDENT MENTORS**

**Recruitment**

Each spring, a call for student mentors solicits students for the upcoming fall semester. Honors students write a letter of application to the Dean in which they are asked to articulate their reasons for applying to be a mentor, identify

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3 Sample syllabi and course readings can be obtained by contacting the first author at betsy.bach@umontana.edu.
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their particular qualifications for the task, discuss their leadership ability, and list names of two “Introduction to Honors” faculty members with whom they would like to work. They also must include a current résumé with their application. The Dean selects student mentors based on their application letter, GPA, leadership ability, and community service. As the mentor program grows in popularity, a selection committee comprised of faculty teaching “Introduction to Honors” will likely be appointed to assist with mentor selection. In 2003, the program’s trial year, one mentor was recruited for 9 courses offered; in 2004, nine mentors were selected for 10 courses; in 2005, fourteen mentors applied for 10 sections.

Once selected, mentors attend a meeting with the course instructors and the Dean. The three course goals are discussed, the book for the first-year reading experience is distributed, and a general discussion about the course occurs. During this meeting the Dean circulates a draft list pairing student mentors with faculty members. Faculty members discuss their plans for the course, and then returning student mentors discuss the role and scope of their duties. Student/faculty pairings are then announced, and student mentors and faculty are given time to get acquainted and plan for the upcoming fall. To date, every student has been able to work with his/her first or second choice of faculty member.

ROLE OF MENTOR

The roles assumed by the student mentors are as varied as the instructors teaching the course. However, all mentors assist with leading discussions of course readings, help organize in- and out-of-class activities, and serve as guides to assist new students with their “sensemaking” of academic life in general and Honors education in particular.

By all accounts, faculty, student mentors, and students enrolled in the course benefit from the experience. Faculty members benefit because the student mentors know the campus culture and understand the difficulties inherent in the transition from high school to college. As the student mentors are easily accessible (both physically and psychologically) to students enrolled in the class, they are excellent socialization “agents” for first-year students. Faculty members are delighted to have student assistance in the course and often develop close relationships with their student mentors during the semester. Several faculty members have worked with their student mentors in subsequent “Introduction to Honors” courses while others have themselves become mentors to the students with whom they worked, serving as chairs of their Senior Honors Research Projects or advisors in undergraduate research activities.

The benefits both of being a student mentor and of having a student mentor are varied. The benefits of being a mentor are described by the second author of this article, a senior student majoring in forestry. During the fall of 2005 she will be serving in her third year as student mentor. Benefits to the
mentee are articulated by a junior majoring in economics, our third author. He is a mentee-turned-mentor.

**BENEFITS OF BEING A MENTOR**

Attending an honors college is a beneficial experience in many ways. One part of this rewarding experience is the new relationships that are constantly being formed, both among students and between students and faculty. The relationships that form between student mentors and the freshmen enrolled in the “Introduction to Honors” course go beyond those of a typical classroom experience because both leave the class at the end of the semester feeling that they have received something of value from each other.

“Introduction to Honors” is one of the first classes a new Davidson Honors College freshman attends at the University of Montana. As students in transition, freshmen are trying to find their niche, make friends, and simply survive. A small and intimate class like “Introduction to Honors” eases the transition as does the presence of a student mentor. Student mentors are valuable in that they have been through the transition themselves, are relatively comfortable with the college context, and can serve as a bridge between freshmen and professors.

While mentors are crucial in the atmosphere of that first classroom foray, their worth continues to grow throughout the semester. The second role that mentors play is as socializing agents between freshmen and the rest of campus. Having a mentor who ‘knows the ropes’ can be of significant value for several reasons: mentors have a practical grasp on general university information; they are usually familiar with opportunities for student involvement in campus activities; and they can act as advocates for campus organizations that are recruiting members, having socials, or doing service projects. Mentors, therefore, can encourage the freshmen to become involved, to take an active hand in getting to know their university. Student mentors can also organize their own social events such as hiking, picnics, or Frisbee, nice ways to strengthen ties within the classroom and to help students feel comfortable with their classmates.

While the student mentor is a role model to new freshman, the value of the program is not limited to freshmen. Mentors themselves come away from the experience feeling that they have gained several benefits, the first being simple acquaintance with new students. Whatever an individual’s status in college, it is always nice to meet new people and get to know them and their backgrounds. Student mentors already have strong connections to their honors college, and they appreciate seeing a future generation of students who are getting the chance to participate in their education. Similarly, the student mentors enjoy keeping their contact with the honors college setting. Many students complete their required honors courses within their freshmen and sophomore years and then disappear into their respective departments. The student mentor program contributes to the unity of the honors college.

Another major benefit to student mentors is the opportunity to express and practice their leadership skills. They can give back to the honors college by
USING STUDENT MENTORS

contributing what they have learned since their arrival at the university. Whether this knowledge is practical—such as where a particular department is housed on campus—or something more personal, the bottom line is that student mentors enjoy the chance to help these new students because they were also freshmen at one point. Sometimes it only takes one role model’s attitude or actions to make a difference, and, with a little more work, this program has the potential to leave lasting impressions on the future classes of honors college freshman.

BENEFITS TO THE MENTEE

Upon entering the University of Montana as a freshman in the fall of 2003, I enrolled in “Introduction to Honors.” In our section of the class, we were to concentrate on both the physical and intangible aspects of our immediate surroundings, including the Montana environment, UM campus, and the overall Missoula community. While initially reluctant to attend this class—the concept of place was somewhat interesting, albeit seemingly abstract to me—I eventually began to view it as beneficial to my overall education and to my life.

The classroom discussions, the weekly jaunts into the community to do something uniquely “Missoula,” and the readings ranging from participant observation to literary work written by the myriad of talented writers who habituate Missoula—all provided a formal setting in which students experienced and analyzed the transition from high school to college. The class was both a way to meet peers—socialization—but also an informal way to assess what was happening in our lives. Its structure achieved two important, albeit paradoxical goals: interaction and introspection. “Introduction to Honors” provided the opportunity to form new relationships with people and the community and, at the same time, encouraged an examination of these new changes. It allowed everyone to engage in a genuine examination of place, and it also eased the transition process. The student mentor in the group provided support yet at the same time allowed enough space for the introspection process. She also served a fundamental purpose by acting as an intermediary between the students and the professor, and in this way she was able to offer both friendship and help with the transition.

The role of student mentor is beneficial for not only the students but also the mentor. When I assumed the role of student mentor in my second year, I desired to serve both as a friend and advisor to the students in the class. I offered to go mountain biking and hiking with the students, and I actively sought to maintain an informal attitude in order to establish friendship and encourage interaction. For the most part, I was able to ease the transition to college for the students—to relay information back and forth between the professor and the students; to provide my experience on a subject; and to acquaint students with the processes by which the University of Montana operates. For me, the second year was especially beneficial because it continued the introspection process but also allowed a forum for increased personal, communal,
and intellectual discovery. Quite simply, the student mentor position provided me with perspective. Being a mentor functioned as a way to better understand myself: what I valued in the environment around me, in my friends, and in life. Mentors are able to use the analytical and social skills they developed in their first year of study and apply them more thoroughly in their second.

I now better understand my community, and I have found my niche at Missoula—these are lessons I learned from both my roles in the student mentor program. And while not every student may have the opportunity to experience the surroundings in a forum such as this one, the basic idea is beneficial and necessary. It encourages community interaction, and it fosters pride in the campus and the environment as a whole. Quite simply, it leads to a friendlier, more inviting place.

**RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Although this program is only in its third year, we have two recommendations for change. First, we believe that the mentor selection process could be more formalized. As noted earlier, a committee of faculty teaching “Introduction to Honors” courses could select and interview the student mentor applicants. This would both allow for discussion among the faculty about the necessary qualifications and responsibilities of student mentors and help faculty articulate and clarify what they perceive to be the role of the mentor. Similarly, interview questions could push potential student mentors to offer their vision of the mentor role, examine their qualifications for the position, and think about their potential contributions prior to class.

Second, more training could be provided to mentor/faculty teams. While some brief discussion is offered during the spring meeting of faculty and mentors, one or two additional meetings in the fall could be added. In these meetings, mentors and faculty could brainstorm ideas for the student mentor’s role and how the mentors might be drawn more fully into the teaching of “Introduction to Honors.” Former student mentors could attend to share their ideas and suggestions.

Student mentors serve a valuable role in the assimilation and socialization of new Honors students. Their assistance as guides and mentors allows them to assist first-year students in learning the ropes of an Honors education. They provide much needed informal communication on how new students learn their place as contributing citizens of our Honors program. If allowed to play an active role in the teaching of “Introduction to Honors”, student mentors have both the ability and capacity to provide valuable insight to new students and to serve as model socializing agents.

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Betsy Wackernagel Bach, a past president of the Western Regional Honors Council, is Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Montana and served as Interim Dean of the Davidson Honors College for two years. Her research interests include the mentoring, socialization, and retention of organizational newcomers. She was selected as University of Montana’s Distinguished Teacher in 1991, and in 1996 she received the university’s award for Administrative Excellence. Prior to her academic employment, Betsy worked as a police officer in Holland, Michigan.

James D. Bell is Professor of Management and Entrepreneurship in the McCoy College of Business Administration at Texas State University, San Marcos. Dr. Bell is also Director of Professional Development and Education for the College. He has received every major teaching award the university bestows and in 2004 was chosen by the M. Stevens Piper Foundation as one of the Top Ten Professors in Texas.

Kambra Bolch is Associate Dean of the Texas Tech University Honors College in Lubbock, Texas. She is in the second year of an elected term on the executive committee for NCHC and also serves on the Constitution and Bylaws Committee. Holding a J.D. degree, Kambra teaches political science and law-related seminars for the Honors College. She also directs the College’s summer international study program in London and Paris.

Sharon Carrish directs the University Honors Program and teaches communication courses at Mansfield University in Pennsylvania. Her areas of specialization include Business and Professional Communication, Public Speaking, and Interpersonal and Intercultural Communication. She earned her Ph.D. at Boston College. Her latest articles include “Bridging the protocol chasm: What you are not teaching?” (2003) and “I just want to be like everyone else: Teaching public speaking to an exceptional student” (2004). Dr. Carrish is a multiple nominee in “Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers” and a past director of the university forensics program.

Tracey Christy is Administrative Assistant of the Honors Program at the Long Island University C.W. Post Campus. She earned a Bachelor’s degree in accounting from Slippery Rock State University and worked as an accountant in various financial institutions in Manhattan before opting for a career change. In 1997 she joined the academic world by accepting a position with the Honors Program.

Joan Digby is a former president of NCHC and is Honors Program Director at the C. W. Post Campus of Long Island University. A professor of English, she has published several books, including her own poetry as well as literary anthologies. With her husband, collagist John Digby, she has written on
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

contemporary collage and started a small private press, The Feral Press. She is also editor of Peterson’s *Honors Programs & Colleges*, now going into its fourth edition.

**Crystal Espinosa** is an honors senior majoring in Journalism and Legal Studies at the University of Central Florida. Formerly president of the Honors Congress, she currently serves as a student ambassador to the university as a member of the President’s Leadership Council. Crystal has served as a Team Leader for three consecutive years.

**Rachel Kinkie** is a senior at the University of Montana and majors in Forestry with an emphasis in Range Resources Management and a minor in Nature and Democracy. She hopes to pursue environmental law and policy after graduation. She volunteers as an Honors Student Mentor, sits on the Honors Student Advisory Council, and participates in the Honors Student Association.

**Jim Lacey**, Professor Emeritus of English, was Director of the University Honors Program at Eastern Connecticut State University for ten years. He is a frequent contributor to DIH panels and honors publications and is a past president of the NE-NCHC and an NCHC-recommended site visitor.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Geoffrey Orth has directed the Honors Program and Cormier Center for Citizen Scholars at Longwood University for five years. He teaches German and world literature, and his publications focus on the interrelations between continental and American literature. His recent activities include a year’s service as Interim Secretary-Treasurer for the Delta Phi Alpha national German honor society.

Anik Patel is an honors junior majoring in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Central Florida. Last year, he served as both a Team Leader and Vice-President of Honors Congress. He is one of the founding members of UCF’s Theta Chi Fraternity, which promotes service activities in the community.

Rose Perrine is a professor in the Department of Psychology at Eastern Kentucky University, where she teaches program evaluation and research methodology courses. Rose earned a Ph.D. in social psychology from the University of California. Her research interests include factors that influence college students’ success and human-pet interactions.

Jana L. Pressler is Professor and Assistant Dean of Research at the University of Oklahoma College of Nursing. She holds a Ph.D. in Nursing from Case Western Reserve University. She was awarded a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Rochester to study special observational research measures and methods for use with newborns. Dr. Pressler’s scholarly interests include honors education, doctoral education, and research development. Her own research involves establishing a taxonomic structure for birth injuries and improving the assessment and care of high risk infants. She teaches honors students in Nursing.

Ellen Riek teaches composition and literature in the Honors Program at Northern Arizona University. She is currently completing her doctorate in educational anthropology, focusing on learner stories as an instrument for curriculum construction. Her scholarly interests include learner-centered instruction, narrative analysis, feminist pedagogy, and aesthetic education.

Eric Rosenfeld is currently a law student at the University of Pittsburgh. He earned his bachelor’s degree with Honors from The Schreyer Honors College of The Pennsylvania State University in 2004, majoring in history with a minor in international studies. He completed his honors thesis in visual arts and photography. His participation in foreign study programs in Peru, Sweden, New Zealand, and Singapore continues to influence his academic interests.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sam Schabacker is a junior majoring in Economics at the University of Montana. He hails from Colorado and divides his time between his studies, volunteering in Missoula, and climbing mountains. His two major short-term goals are to go to graduate school or law school and to continue climbing mountains around the world. Sam has served as an Honors Student Mentor.

James Swafford is Associate Professor of English and Director of the Humanities and Sciences Honors Program at Ithaca College. Though his main scholarly interest is late-Victorian poetry, most of his energy recently has gone into teaching a first-year honors seminar on the theme of wilderness and wilderness.

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Alexander Werth is Elliott Professor of Biology and Director of the Honors Program at Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia. A functional morphologist, he studies the evolution of marine mammals and also conducts research on the teaching of evolution and the nature of science. He has taught numerous honors courses involving sociobiology, anthropology, and the history and philosophy of science. He earned his Ph.D. in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology from Harvard University.

Steffen Wilson is Associate Director of the Honors Program and Associate Professor of Psychology at Eastern Kentucky University. She earned a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of Georgia. A significant proportion of her honors work is outcomes assessment and strategic planning. Her research interests include the development of attention and factors that support student learning.
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