Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges

Samuel Schuman

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HONORS PROGRAMS AT SMALLER COLLEGES

by

SAMUEL SCHUMAN

for

The Small College Honors Committee of the National Collegiate Honors Council
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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface to the Second Edition</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mission of Small College Honors Programs</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting Honors Students and Faculty</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities and Activities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrivia</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrative Hypothetical Programs</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of a Fully-Developed Honors Program</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography of Suggested Readings</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOREWORD

The Small College Honors Program Committee is a constituency committee of the National Collegiate Honors Council. As such, it seeks to represent and serve the interests of members of small colleges (fewer than 4,001 undergraduates) and small Honors Programs (fewer than 76 students) by recruiting new members, identifying small college characteristics, providing the means and opportunity for communication among constituents, and involving members in the organization’s operations and programs. Over the years, the Committee has undertaken a number of successful initiatives; this monograph is but one which have increased the participation and visibility of its constituency at the annual NCHC conference and throughout the year. For further information about the Small College Committee, its members, and its activities, please visit our web site at <http://www.saintleo.edu/scnchc>.

The Small College Honors Program Committee is privileged to recommend to Honors educators the second edition of Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges. We are indebted to Dr. Samuel Schuman, Acting Chancellor of the University of Minnesota at Morris, for giving voice to the distinctive angle of vision on honors education that comes from being in a smaller environment. Although Sam has been a member of the Small College constituency for most of his professional life, he has seen this constituency not as a political association or lobby, but rather as a group whose special perspectives could lend valuable insight to the larger enterprise. His contributions to the National Collegiate Honors Council of Beginning in Honors and his several Honors monographs are tributes to his vision, his wisdom, and his generous leadership. He has provided us with a model of advocacy balanced by active commitment to the larger community.

If you have not read any of Sam Schuman’s monographs before, you are in for an enjoyable and profitable experience. His work combines sure knowledge of the small college honors experience with a delightfully conversational style that does indeed invoke, in Sam’s description of ideal education, “Mark Hopkins at one end of a log and a student at the other.”

The novice Honors director will encounter more valuable information here, both practical and philosophical, than he or she can absorb in one setting. The veteran Honors director who wisely revisits this monograph will find new understanding of the rationale
underlying practice and some excellent tips he or she may not have needed or noted before. The monograph is specific without being proscriptive. Sam’s advice is inspired by his experiences of pedagogy and administration, but never defined by them. Strategies are suggested with cautions. I am particularly mindful here of his remarks about the issues of Honors housing and scholarships attached to Program membership.

I wish to express my thanks to Dr. Robert Case of Neumann College and Dr. Donna Menis of St. Francis College, who joined me as a subcommittee to review this monograph; their careful consideration, swift response, and excellent suggestions are much appreciated. The Committee is grateful to Dr. Norman Weiner of SUNY Oswego, chair of the NCHC Publications Board, for his thorough proofing of the text.

With great confidence and satisfaction, the Small College Honors Program Committee invites you to consult with Sam. Read this monograph cover to cover or turn to it on a need-to-know basis. It’s the most elegant, satisfying, and user-friendly manual you will ever read.

Ann R. Raia
Chair, Small College Honors Program Committee
This little pamphlet first appeared in 1988 which, from the perspective of American higher education, is either just yesterday or eons ago. At the end of the ‘80s, in that First Edition, it was still possible to suggest that a fully-equipped Honors office space should have “a computer or typewriter,” a suggestion which today sounds more appropriate for a museum of antique office machinery than an up-to-date operation. On the other hand, some of the same questions about access and elitism which troubled us over a decade ago continue to be contemporary concerns. This revision, like most, seeks to preserve what may continue to be useful, to eliminate the antique, and to add discussions of those issues which have come to the forefront recently.

Those issues include: new student populations in Honors Programs, and new populations of colleges and universities creating Honors Programs; new curricular movements and different pedagogies (often first explored in Honors) used to teach them; the ongoing revolution in learning technologies, and associated issues such as distance learning and for-profit post-secondary opportunities.

Appendix A of the brochure now contains a handful of very brief, sample, small college Honors Programs, based upon real models, but no longer identified with particular institutions. As it happens, I’ve tried to go back to some of the colleges originally profiled in 1988, mostly for my own curiosity. But I am now persuaded that the descriptions of actual models created some problems which a slightly more abstract group of samples can avoid. I have chosen to follow Aristotle’s preference for literature over history. The profiles include two year, four year, and graduate degree granting institutions; public and private colleges; traditionally majority and historically minority schools; ambitious and modest Honors Programs.

Appendix B is a statement by the national Honors organization attempting to describe a cluster of features which tend to characterize “fully developed Honors Programs.” Neither Appendix should be understood to be definitive nor prescriptive, but to supplement the text in suggesting possibilities and multiple models from which to pick and choose, to modify, adopt, or ignore depending upon institutional need and culture and history.
The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC, which I had the happy honor of serving as President between the first and second editions of this pamphlet), and its Small College Honors Programs Committee and Publications Board have been the steady supporters not just of this brochure but of the value of smaller collegiate institutions and their Honors Programs within the rich fabric of American higher education. The Small College Honors Programs Committee has grown increasingly active and helpful over the past decade, sponsoring sessions at national meetings, building a functional network of Honors Directors and faculty with shared interests and concerns, and providing publications such as this one. They deserve my thanks and the gratitude of any who read and find useful the following pages. Many friends and colleagues within the NCHC, past and present, have aided and guided the development of this Handbook, and my thinking about the issues it presents, over the past years. These include the late Elizabeth Isaacs who first introduced me to Honors in small colleges a quarter of a century ago; John Portz who has for me embodied the sprightly consciousness of Honors administration at its most engaging; my colleagues Anne Ponder and Ann Raia with whom I’ve now worked in too many settings and too many projects to count; and Hud Reynolds who collaborated on the first version of this document. To begin to enumerate others who have helped would only lengthen the list of those neglected: to all, my thanks.

Samuel Schuman
Morris, Minnesota, 1998
INTRODUCTION

This Handbook has been created with the encouragement of the Small College Honors Programs Committee of the National Collegiate Honors Council to meet specific needs and to fill particular voids. Its intended audience includes:

- Newly appointed Directors of Honors Programs (or Chairs of Honors Committees, task forces, councils, and the like) at smaller colleges and universities;
- Institutions and individuals contemplating significant alterations in Honors Programs at smaller institutions;
- Smaller schools in the process of creating new Honors Programs, or considering doing so;
- Directors of Honors Programs seeking new ideas or solutions to persistent problems, or reassurance that those problems are not unique;
- Faculty or student members of Honors Councils or Committees;
- Students, faculty, and staff who participate in Honors work;
- Academic administrators with responsibility for oversight of Honors Programs at smaller colleges.

The Small College Honors Programs Committee of the NCHC has traditionally (and wisely) promulgated a loose and rather informal definition of the term "small college." Our goal is to include any individuals or institutions we might serve; to exclude no one with a sensible reason to join us. We have generally assumed that most institutions which would wish to define themselves as "small" have FTE student populations of less than 5000. Some larger institutions, however, which have rather small Honors Programs, have found our meetings and discussions helpful and appropriate. The range of institutions represented is enormous. It includes public and private colleges; institutions with a strong continuing religious heritage, those with only vestiges of sectarian foundations, and wholly secular schools; single-sex and coed colleges; places of high prestige and others of little national reputation; very selective colleges and programs, as well as ones with open admission; two-year, baccalaureate, and graduate level enterprises; and colleges and universities from all regions of the nation.
Given this startling diversity, are there any common features of "Honors Programs in smaller colleges" which justify and give unity to a Handbook such as this? Obviously, I think there are.

We may begin with an important negative definition: Honors Programs at smaller colleges are most definitely NOT small versions of Honors Programs at large universities. Sometimes it is mistakenly assumed by those surveying Honors from the perspective of big schools that such is the case. But, in fact, this is almost never the case. Indeed, many large university Honors Programs have as an important goal — indeed, sometimes virtually a solitary aim — to recreate within the vast mega-university the conditions which prevail at most small colleges: smaller and more discussion-oriented classes, close student-teacher relationships, careful faculty advising, informal social contact among students with strong academic interests, and between those students and their teachers, and the like. Since most of these characteristics define small colleges in general (at least if our Admissions brochures are to be trusted), we do not need to worry about creating them particularly within our Honors Programs. In fact, some small college Honors Programs offer deliberately different models precisely on the premise that students are already thoroughly exposed to the particular intensities of the small-scale learning experience throughout the rest of the non-Honors curriculum. In fact, it is not uncommon to find in small college Honors Programs an emphasis on advanced research, collaborative publication, advanced study in specialized fields, significant exploitation of Internet and other computer related instructional technologies, and similar options usually associated with large research universities and their graduate programs.

Honors Programs at smaller institutions have unique opportunities, special strengths — and particular problems. In the pages which follow, I've tried to locate and address both the opportunities and the problems. The goal throughout is to suggest possibilities, not to offer narrow prescriptions. There is, most certainly, no single model which is appropriate for all small college Honors Programs. Indeed, it is one of the greatest strengths of such programs that they are as diverse as the colleges which house them. In fact, one guiding principle which governs this Handbook is that Honors Programs are in many ways institution-specific; they represent specific reactions to the strengths and needs of the colleges which create and perpetuate them. Such Honors Programs represent a powerful opportunity for our institutions to fill curricular and extracurricular gaps and/or exploit their particular strengths, to move in
new and experimental directions, to enrich themselves, their students and their faculty. Thus, each Honors Program is intimately related to the entire fabric of the institution which houses it, often both reflecting the predominant ethos of that institution and offering simultaneously a kind of educational counterpoise within it. For example, at institutions with rigidly prescriptive curricular requirements, Honors Programs often provide opportunities to move beyond those patterns, to be more flexible within the bounds of overall institutional practices (e.g., to meet several distribution requirements in one interdisciplinary seminar). On the other hand, at schools with a very “wide open” instructional culture, Honors sometimes becomes a home for a rather carefully ordered set of curricular requirements (e.g., a mandatory chronological survey of literature or history). At colleges with a full and rich and popular cultural extracurricular program, Honors Programs tend to avoid special emphasis on such matters; at schools without much cultural programming, or where low attendance is worrisome, Honors offices can, and do, devote much attention to offering a richer panorama of cultural events for students. Honors Programs at small colleges thus provide chances for balance and choice. This is an especially valuable trait, since one of the deficiencies of our institutions (especially the non-urban ones), due to their size, is a certain lack of choice, of variety, at least in comparison to the multiplicity of programs and events at very large institutions.

In the first part of this brochure, I focus upon areas which tend to be of special concern to those working with Honors at smaller colleges and universities: recruitment, facilities, administration, budget, and curriculum. In each area, I’ve tried to make some general suggestions about overall operating principles, to note specific issues which can lead to difficulties, and to suggest proven solutions and strategies. Needless to say, this remains a set of selective suggestions, with no pretensions to encyclopedic comprehension.

In the appended sample program outlines, we move from the theoretical to the concrete. This portion of the Handbook contains brief portraits of several different sorts of Honors Programs at several varied institutions. The programs and institutions are hypothetical, but all are based upon actual places and programs described in *Peterson’s Guide to Honors Programs* (see Bibliography below). They are offered not so much as “models” to be imitated (although some offer features which are imitable), but as demonstrations of the range of possibilities open to Honors at small colleges, the sets of choices which some schools have made, and the
ways in which a few, representative programs have evolved and reacted to the possibilities and problems of their institutional homes.
THE MISSION OF SMALL COLLEGE HONORS PROGRAMS

The logical place to begin is with a consideration of the purposes of Honors Programs in smaller colleges. Especially in the current climate of assessment, some clear mission statement needs to precede any effort to create or recreate or evaluate any Program.

Different Honors Programs at differing schools will seek different goals and objectives. They will be invented and will develop to meet specific institutional needs and, if successful, be responsive to the particularities of institutional mission and character. That said, there remain certain broad visions which seem common to most Honors Programs at smaller colleges.

First and most obviously, Honors Programs seek to cultivate outstanding students, to enrich the instructional and co-curricular careers of students of exceptional promise and motivation. The section of this Handbook which follows seeks to define Honors student, but regardless of definition, it seems apparent that a prime purpose of virtually all Honors Programs is to add luster to the educational careers of the students in them.

Second, and perhaps slightly less obviously, Honors Programs offer faculty members enriched instructional experiences. Honors Programs, by definition, are going to engage students who will be more challenging and rewarding to teach and curricula of greater depth and denser texture than non-Honors work. In this sense, Honors is a kind of faculty development opportunity.

Third, and least obviously, Honors Programs seek to enrich the educational profile of the institution as a whole. In many ways, Honors Programs, especially at smaller institutions, deepen the academic life of everyone at the college, not just Honors students and faculty. Honors Programs often bring or help to bring to campus co-curricular programs of cultural or intellectual note. Honors Programs are often a curricular stalking horse, an opportunity to experiment with pedagogy and/or content. Honors Programs improve the ability of the institution to attract and to keep students of top quality. They can help recruit faculty, too. Honors gives to small colleges important opportunities for positive image-building and public relations, based on genuine academic accomplishments.

This tripartite mission statement — enrichment for students, for faculty, and for the institution — is at the core of successful Honors Programs at smaller colleges.
RECRUITING HONORS STUDENTS
AND FACULTY

If a good small college Honors Program is not exactly Mark
Hopkins at one end of a log and a student at the other, it is still
probably about as close to that ideal of education as it is possible to
come today. More than anything else, Honors education is the
bringing together of outstanding students and outstanding teachers.
Accordingly, the issue of recruitment — finding and attracting those
exemplary pupils and professors, and convincing them to join the
Honors Program — is one of quintessential importance.

I.

Locating and attracting appropriate students for Honors Pro-
grams is a task which can consume as much time as anyone is pre-
pared to give it. But, since most small college Honors Directors do
not have excessive time, any more than they have excess money, ef-
forts to recruit students must be carefully conceived with an eye to
maximum effectiveness and limited expenditures of effort and
hours.

Who are “appropriate students for Honors Programs?” Traditionally,
this has tended to mean students who perform well on
quantifiable admissions markers, such as standardized tests, high
school rank, etc. For several decades, too, many Honors Programs
have sought the student with high creative abilities: the young
composer or poet or sculptor of exceptional promise. More recently,
Honors Programs have become increasingly conscious of the values
of cultivating a more demographically diverse student population.
Non-traditional students, such as returning female students, have
come to constitute a significant segment in Honors Programs.

Honors Programs at traditionally majority colleges and univer-
sities have not, overall, done particularly well at recruiting stud-
ents of color into Honors. Most now recognize the need to do better in
this area. It is ironic and disappointing that one can still occasion-
ally hear mutterings about the difficulty in finding minority stud-
ents of “Honors quality,” yet several of the most successful, dyna-
mic, proportionally large and most thriving Honors Programs exist
in historically black colleges and universities: clearly, there are
lots of African-American and other minority students doing Honors-
level collegiate work, but they are not dispersed very evenly among
American post-secondary institutions.
Often Honors Programs have a direct link to admissions offices, and this is a connection to be cherished and cultivated, but with just a trace of wariness. Admissions offices and Honors Programs are in a similar business, but it is not exactly the same. Some admissions programs are eager to bring to campus more above-average students than Honors Programs really seek to admit, for example, or to define "above-average" slightly differently, perhaps in Garrison Keilloresque fashion. Admissions folk are paid to think about quantity; Honors folk are rightly obsessive about quality. Accepting these different perspectives, though, it remains essential that the Honors Program work in a coordinated fashion with the college admissions office to attract a pool of highly qualified applicants. The degree of this cooperation can range from casual to intimate, but the tone should always be as amiable as possible. Most admissions officers are delighted to discover and exploit the cooperation of the Honors Program in the student recruitment effort. They will usually accept eagerly any Honors materials and/or offers of such aid as speaking with students and families visiting campus, joining the activities on special recruiting days, writing (and sometimes producing) recruitment brochures or portions of admissions materials, and the like. With their small classes and eager students, Honors Programs can be an attractive feature in the increasingly common campus admissions video.

In a few cases, even at small colleges, an Honors Director is asked to travel and do direct recruiting of prospective high quality students. While probably not an especially productive use of time, this activity can be informative and important, and it can bring some additional Honors students to campus. It is useful for Honors staff to know, firsthand, a bit about the life of the admissions recruitment staff. Certainly, Honors Directors (and faculty and students) should be prepared to offer their informed aid to occasional recruiting expeditions such as college nights, area alumni recruiting programs, and the like.

More commonly, the Honors Program will see prospective students when they visit the campus, rather than going out to meet them. On such occasions, either informal or structured, it is important to be well prepared, to know a bit about the students, to analyze carefully the interests and expertise of the audience, and to be prepared to answer and ask questions. Be well prepared to speak clearly and persuasively about why students should join an Honors Program: I usually stress getting the most from the college years,
terms of time and money and learning, as well as enhancing postgraduate educational and vocational position. It helps to have both statistical and anecdotal information about what graduates of the Honors Program have actually done for the past few years. Frequently very strong students wish to visit a class or meet with a teacher during a campus visit, and the Honors Program can offer to help make such arrangements.

Of course, many Honors-quality prospective students will be seen only by a traveling admissions recruiter. Therefore, it is very important for the Honors Program to provide these individuals with full information, including printed materials, and if at all possible, personal briefing, about the program.

Some Honors Programs have an "Honors interview day" or some such occasion when prospective Honors students come to campus as a group and meet with Program personnel, current Honors students, and selected faculty members. Sometimes this event is linked to competition for scholarships, or even entrance into the Honors Program itself. It is obviously essential that such an event be well planned and attractive. Highly qualified high school students are the objects of a frighteningly competitive recruitment process today, and a casual or shoddy Honors interview can quickly turn off a strong prospect. It is important to remember that many of the students who visit small colleges will also be looking over large universities, where they can be wooed with lots of resources, but correspondingly little personal attention. It is wise on these occasions to promote the genuine strengths of small colleges; arrange for the students to attend a lively seminar or expose them to an especially engaging teacher. Present them with reliable and attractive information about the Honors Program: an accurate brochure (see below) and/or low-key talk. Prospective college students have, rightly, become wary consumers, so beware the hard-sell, the overly gaudy or the flamboyantly commercial approaches.

Most Honors Programs have a brochure of some sort, used primarily as a recruitment piece. These need not be spectacular, although some are, but they should not be pedestrian or dull either. An attractively designed piece should spell out clearly what the Honors Program at the college actually is (many students won't really know), who participates in it, what concrete rewards adhere to it (scholarships? graduation honors? jobs? early registration? annotated diploma? etc.). It is perhaps wise to make the point in such a brochure that not all Honors students are budding Shakespeares or Einsteins. Sometimes high school students fear good
Honors Programs because they suspect, wrongly, they will be outclassed by other participants. It is also a good idea to note in a simple manner in an Honors Program brochure what your Honors Program is not: it is not simply an honor society for students with high grades, for example. "Honors" means quite different things at the high school and college levels (and between colleges too, of course), and some quite sophisticated students may have serious misperceptions of what you are offering them.

Meeting with students, and publicity materials, are important recruitment devices. Most small college programs, though, rely primarily upon correspondence as the primary means of reaching and attracting students into Honors. Usually, initial contact with prospective students is by letter. Remember that most students choose small schools because they need and/or want personal attention; such students do not react positively to what is obviously a form letter. Include some sort of genuine, personal, individualized message if humanly possible. Often, most follow-up communication is by mail. Obviously, it is important to write letters which are clear and inviting. Perhaps less obviously, but possibly even more importantly, it is necessary to develop a straightforward and effective schedule and protocol for sending those letters. Which students receive which letters, and when? Here, admissions officers can be particularly helpful, since such strategies are their bread and butter. Once such a protocol is established, document it thoroughly and carefully. Monitor your correspondence with an eye toward two potential problems. First, there may be a need to adjust the initial schedule of mailings and/or to change the content of some letters (e.g., if a group of names derives from a state high school science contest). Second, if some other office (admissions? correspondence center?) is entrusted with the task of physically preparing and sending the mailings, it is necessary to make sure that this task is being done in a timely manner. It is not wise just to assume it is.

III.

Many Honors Programs continue to recruit students beyond the entering semester; a few, in fact, do not begin at all in the first term of the first year. A recruiting program for students already in the midst of their careers at the college (as opposed to transfer students) probably involves two different components: some fairly mechanical scan of student records to spot extraordinary high achievers who are not yet members of the Honors Program, and a solicitation of nominations from faculty members. Sometimes this second
tactic is an excellent means of securing for the Honors Program students who do not conform exactly to the standard quantitative measures of high academic potential, but who may become valued Honors students because of (for example) unusual creativity or exceptional curiosity. Once a listing of such potential Honors students among the currently enrolled students is generated, by whatever means, invitations should be issued. Usually an interview of some sort is arranged by the Director or faculty Honors Committee. Since such students, and transfers, may miss early opportunities for Honors work, many schools have policies involving “prorated” curricular requirements — e.g., allowing transfers and late admits to bypass a Freshman Seminar.

In general, the recruitment of Honors students can be a somewhat tricky business. Some Honors Directors report that they themselves, and faculty members who work in their programs, are not especially pleased by the character of their student population. A not-uncommon complaint is that Honors students are not as responsive in classes as desired, that they tend not to be intellectual risk-takers nor especially zealous discussion participants. It is easy to forget that many, perhaps most Honors Programs choose students on the basis of standardized measurements such as good high school class rank and scores on the ACT or SAT. Yet these instruments tend to measure rather passive learning and well-mannered classroom behaviors. High school rank, in particular, while a good predictor of college success is not a good way to discover creative original intellects and assertive learners. Therefore, the Honors recruiter should be alert for the occasional odd ball, the non-conformist, even the student with a record of academic trouble-making in high school. Students with 1500 cumulative SAT scores and straight “D” grades in their senior year in high school can make interesting Honors students indeed. And, such students are probably better served by small schools, which can enhance their strengths and help them overcome their weaknesses, than by larger institutions where they will more likely be left to sink or swim — as in high school. (Of course, many Honors Programs at large universities do a splendid job of meeting the special needs of such students, too.)

There are a number of “perks” which have been used to heighten the appeal of Honors Programs and aid in the attracting of desired students. Honors scholarships are one of the most obvious, and remain one of the most successful. While some institutions have committed large amounts of money to Honors scholarships, others have used such awards symbolically, in the hopes that students
will be attracted as much by glory as by big bucks. Current consumerist trends in higher education selection suggest that this latter approach will probably fade in effectiveness.

Other enticements can also be alluring. At some schools, Honors students receive special priority treatment in the registration process. This seems to work best when those Honors students get to “earn” that special treatment by turning around and working at regular registration. Sometimes certain graduation requirements are altered or waived. Most schools recognize Honors graduates at commencement through annotations in the graduation program, special garb, etc. Special Honors residential options (discussed later) are in some cases a desirable feature. Many students and parents are attracted by impressive data regarding the success, in graduate and professional school and in careers, of graduates of the Honors Program. As noted above, it is a good idea to collect such data. Hopefully the strongest attraction of a collegiate Honors Program remains its most essential one: the attraction of an unusually rewarding learning experience, with a challenging curriculum, bright and amiable student colleagues, and outstanding professors.

IV.

Often, retention is seen as deeply connected to admission, in Honors Programs and more widely throughout institutions: there seems little point in attracting students if they can’t be kept. Honors Programs have often proven a more effective means of institutional retention than recruitment, although that has rarely been anticipated beforehand. Honors Programs tend to offer opportunities which can keep very good students motivated to stay into their junior and senior years, e.g., independent research, the possibility of presenting at scholarly gatherings, and the like.

Curiously, several Honors Programs have reported that, while the Programs themselves do not have particularly stellar retention records (that is, students who begin the Honors Programs tend to drop out at the first opportunity in about the same number that students in the College in general disappear), the students who begin in the Honors Program have a very high relative retention rate in the institution as a whole. In other words, they may leave the Honors Program, but nonetheless stay at the college! This is a sufficiently common, albeit odd, finding so that it is probably worth checking, if the information is fairly easy to come by.

If the Honors Program proves, as most do, a powerful institutional device for retention, especially for the retention of the col-
lege's most desirable students, this is not a fact that the politic Honors Director will keep well hidden.

V.

Once students have been wooed and won by the promise of those brilliant classes, how are we to recruit the outstanding professors to teach them? Many of the same issues which surface in the area of student recruitment also are relevant in the search for fine Honors faculty.

For example, just as with students, it is not always the most obvious faculty members who make the very best Honors instructors. It pays to be as exact as possible in envisioning the qualities being sought in Honors teaching. Thus, the top-performing lecturer on campus might not do so well with seven aggressive discussants in an Honors Seminar. Sometimes the most articulate speakers are not the best listeners. Conversely, occasionally professors without especially high overall campus reputations can be exceptional Honors instructors. Often, Honors students can overlook or even embrace trivial stylistic quirks, and they usually have a higher tolerance for rigor than their non-Honors counterparts. They have been known to delight in professorial idiosyncrasies which other students find irritating or distracting, for example.

In any event, it is always better for the Honors Program to pick the instructors it seeks to enlist, and actively pursue them, than to be the passive recipients of independent departmental largesse. It is not unheard-of for departments of dubious ethics to "dump" their weakest, least popular teachers into Honors assignments when regular classes fail to attract sufficient students. Needless to say, such impulses must be nipped even before budding.

Again, as was the case with students, there are certain rewards which some small college Honors Programs have been able to offer faculty members. These might include financial incentives such as the professional development enhancements mentioned earlier. They might be improved instructional conditions: easier access to films and guest speakers, perhaps an attractive seminar room in which to hold class, and the like. It is wise to try to cultivate a campus atmosphere in which instruction in the Honors Program is seen as an honor for faculty; faculty personnel committees, tenure review boards, and deans can be notified of the selection of Honors faculty, and reminded of the valuable and good work which they are doing for the program and the college. Public relations offices can note such selection as newsworthy. A "thank you" dinner at the
end of the year can heap gratitude and praise on teachers. It is always important, though, not to give the appearance of developing some sort of elite, closed cadre of Honors instruction. A steady stream of new instructors should be urged to consider joining the program. Rotation rather than permanence should be the staffing rule.

It is important for Honors instructors to be evaluated — as Honors instructors. Some schools use regular institutional class evaluation formats for this purpose, some devise their own for Honors, some do both. Instructors need to be prepared for the fact that Honors students tend to “grade” professors on a slightly more rigorous standard than do non-Honors peers.

Finally, the paramount attraction for Honors faculty is the same as for students: the enriched educational opportunities afforded by Honors. Most professors are hungry for eager and bright students, for smaller classes, for undergraduate research collaborators, and for the opportunity to devise interesting, innovative, and challenging syllabi. The Honors Program should be where this kind of action is to be found and, consequently, attracting teachers to it should not be difficult.
FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

At a growing number of midsized and large universities, Honors Programs are literally and physically "colleges." They may have a suite of offices, their own classroom space, residential, study, and even recreational areas designated wholly for their use. Small colleges are much more likely to make do with a file cabinet and a closet somewhere near the faculty office of the Honors Director. Where space is available, though, there are several attractive ways to utilize it for Honors Programs.

I.

It certainly helps — indeed, is nearly necessary — to have some sort of Honors office, especially if there is any sort of clerical assistance, even part time professional or student secretarial aid. Honors Programs generate records, need to store and duplicate syllabi and lists of prospective students, and the like. Things stack up; telephone calls come in; meetings need to be held. All these functions can, and often do, take place without a specific designated place, but an "official" Honors office makes them easier, more efficient, more comfortable. If it is possible to equip such an office for advising, counseling, and interviewing, that too will be of measurable assistance. Somewhere, there needs to be the machinery which helps make an office work: a computer, file cabinet, desk, copy machine, paperclips, etc. It is best to have a room of one's own; it is good to share a space (and sometimes clerical staff) with some related program; it is worst to have to beg these sorts of things from already besieged academic departments. If it is humanly possible to avoid making the English or Physics Department Office into the Honors Office, because the Honors Director happens to be in Physics or English, do so. It is not a good idea for Honors to become a "burden" on some other area.

It is a real boost for an Honors Program to have some sort of gathering place or lounge adjacent to an office space. This can be a good area for small, informal discussions (e.g., meeting with a prospective student and parents; talking to the officers of an Honors Student Organization, etc.) A bulletin board in such a lounge can be helpful in announcing special events, program deadlines, course offerings for next term, etc. A bookshelf holding Honors Theses can be an impressive addition to such a lounge; even more helpful would be a small collection of major reference tools. Depending upon avail-
able space and program requirements, sometimes an Honors office, suite, or lounge contains a coffee machine or modest kitchen facilities. Or it may include a quiet nook where students can study.

Programs which enroll a significant number of non-traditional, non-residential students, and an increasing number do, will find an Honors lounge especially important in giving these people a campus “home.” Commuter students need a place they feel is their own on campus, to study and eat lunch between classes, to “hang out.”

A number of Honors Programs have their own seminar room, or at least one on which they have first claim. This can be a surprisingly important perk, to students and faculty alike, especially if prime classroom space is fairly rare on campus. It is sometimes surprising how a good seminar room can help create the atmosphere for a good seminar!

More than one Honors Program has found itself comfortably and appropriately housed in the library. If there is office and/or seminar room space available in the library, there is probably no place on campus with a nicer symbolic resonance for housing Honors.

While it is unlikely that most small college Honors Programs will have the luxury of much well-developed space, it is important for there to be some recognizable campus locale for the program. Having a physical location gives an academic program credibility with students and faculty alike.

II.

Honors residence halls arouse strong feelings, both pro and con. (My personal leaning is the latter.) Supporters of Honors residences argue that the experiences of living and learning in an integrated environment, with a group of compatible, serious students, is a valuable educational experience. Certainly it is the case that on many campuses the atmosphere in some residences does little to encourage intellectual work. When Honors students live together, they develop an identity and self-image as Honors students, which aids retention and can give a program a certain momentum and esprit which can be hard to build. When Honors students live together, they are much easier to gather for meetings or special events, and transportation and communication are greatly facilitated.

The contrary argument holds that, especially at small colleges, Honors residences tend to segregate Honors students excessively from the campus at large; that such residences remove from the general pool of residence halls quieting, scholarly, and mature influences; and that they give the Honors Program an unwanted aura
of "elitism". (Indeed, in extreme and very rare cases, almost an aura of eugenic social segregation!)

Some institutions try to have the best of both of these worlds by creating Honors floors in regular dorms, or designating Honors suites, or assigning (or giving the option of picking) Honors roommates for incoming first year students.

What all this suggests is that the issue of Honors residence halls is one to be approached very carefully, with the advantages and disadvantages weighed with a sharp eye towards the particularities of each specific institutional setting. An Honors dorm may be just the thing at one school and a catastrophic mistake at another. Honors residences are perhaps the clearest illustration of the importance of the principle of designing an Honors Program customized to the specific needs and culture of particular institutions.

III.

It is good ethics and good public relations to make whatever facilities an Honors Program can create for itself useful to the campus as a whole. If there is an Honors lounge where students can study, consider letting Honors students staff it on a 24-hour a day basis as a study lounge for the final exam period. Let others use an Honors seminar room for special round-table discussions with visiting artists or dignitaries. Consider inviting the Art Department to use the Honors area as a venue for displaying the work of outstanding students. Use the lounge for poetry readings.

Any way to use physical facilities designated for the Honors Program in a manner which will make others on campus appreciate the contributions of Honors to collegiate well-being is worth trying. The use of the space for Honors and Honors students should not be seriously compromised, but short of that, any way to create an "open door" policy is wise. We want our campus colleagues to see the Honors Program as an eager collaborator in community enrichment, not a protected domain of the selected few. Use whatever facilities are available to reinforce this stance.

IV.

Most Honors Programs are, rightly, primarily curricular, instructional ventures: they center on students and teachers, in classrooms and laboratories or doing independent, credit-bearing work. Few Programs, however, are without co-curricular and/or extracurricular activities as well. (For our purposes "co-curricular" here refers to activities which have a rather direct link to instructional
work: for example, an optional trip to see a play or movie which relates to an Honors class syllabus. “Extracurricular” events are ones — like pizza parties or car washes — without an obvious instructional link.)

An Honors student club or organization is an important venue for planning activities, and for providing effective and coherent student participation in Program development and structure. For example, an Honors student organization can help propose new Honors courses, suggest new faculty, offer insightful commentary on current offerings. And, it can plan, or help plan, and execute those trips to movies and plays and concerts, and those social gatherings or fundraisers which add texture to the Honors experience. Since many Honors students are imaginative, hard-working, and conscientious young adults, the Honors student organization is often an effective group. Like all student organizations, Honors student clubs will have periodic vacillations: some years will be particularly good, others will be disappointing. Honors directors should make sure that their student groups continue with some strength and continuity over the long haul. It is probably a good idea for the Honors student organization to have some sort of official structure — a “constitution” or some such, and to be deliberately inclusive of Honors students throughout the range of the program, from neophytes to those completing their degrees and requirements.

Funding for out-of-class Honors student activities can sometimes be problematic — hence the car washes to send students to the Regional Conference, or the bake sales to finance a trip to an undergraduate research symposium. Some activities, though, are remarkably cheap, and remarkably productive. For example, it is often possible to include — gratis — on the schedule of a visiting campus speaker or artist, a discussion seminar with Honors students. Such a session can be a great opportunity for the students to meet significant individuals in the worlds of academe, art, politics, and so on, in an informal, revealing setting.

Social events, travel, planning and executing special events, and the like bond students to each other, to the Honors Program, and to the college itself. Research has demonstrated that building such informal connections is a powerful mechanism for student retention. Honors student organizations and activities enliven and deepen the program. While the core of Honors work should probably remain in the curricular domain of collegiate life, it can also play a role in enriching the students’ entire undergraduate experience.
Honors Programs at small colleges tend to be administered on a shoestring. By contrast, many major university Honors Programs have full-time Directors, full-time Associate Directors, full-time secretaries — and a few graduate student assistants for good measure. The more common pattern in smaller institutions is part-time course relief for one faculty member, possibly with some shared secretarial assistance. Some small college Honors Programs are overseen by an Honors Committee, in which case often the faculty chair of that Committee can be a kind of de facto “Honors Director.” And in other institutions, an administrator (perhaps a dean or associate dean) heads up the program. It is not at all common for small college Honors Programs to be directed by a full-time academic administrator, one with few or no additional major assignments in the classroom or the administration.

A former Honors Director has attempted to describe the characteristics of an archetypical Honors Director. It is a dauntingly impressive model: an Honors Director should be a person of unambiguous academic integrity, whose teaching and scholarship within her or his own field merits the respect of faculty colleagues. Frequently, the Honors Director is the most faculty-like member of the administration, and consequently the most trusted and valued by the faculty. The Director needs to be a skilled diplomat. She or he needs to exhibit lively curiosity and understand the discourse among academic disciplines. This model is most certainly Olympian, but it does offer a kind of ideal to keep in mind while slogging through the forest of daily administrative busy-work.

Many aspects of the “nuts-and-bolts” of managing the smaller Honors Programs have already come up in our discussion, and some will follow this chapter. Here are a few points which seem specifically administrative in nature.

I.

The first of these is implied above. While it is usually unrealistic, perhaps even undesirable, for small colleges to have an entire position dedicated to directing the Honors Program, it is equally unrealistic, and more undesirable, to oversee such a program as an add-on to a full-time teaching load. Unless the Honors Program is of the most rudimentary sort, with no aspirations to become something more, directing an Honors Program will call for a serious
commitment of time and energy. This is especially true if full-time expert clerical support is not going to be available. Students need to be counseled; faculty members will need to be consulted and recruited and evaluated; department chairs have to be seen, often repeatedly; budgets prepared; oral examination committees formed and convened; rooms scheduled; movies ordered; and so on. These small but vital tasks, which make any academic program work well, require reasonable time to be done carefully, thoughtfully, and with focus. Institutions beginning new Honors Programs should weigh carefully the institutional commitment to Honors, and if it is sufficiently serious to launch a program, should simultaneously recognize that that level of seriousness argues for creating some time for the individual directing the Program to organize and administer it thoroughly and well. Usually, this will involve at least a one course reduction in teaching load per term, or as an absolute minimum, one per year. Likewise, individuals considering accepting the assignment of small college Honors Director should recognize that this will be a time-consuming task, and negotiate a realistic accord with their colleges. Obviously standards and possibilities will vary from school to school and individual to individual.

At most small colleges, the clearest route to institutional respect is through teaching. Most small college Honors Directors teach, often in the Honors Program. It is probably wise to do some teaching both in Honors and outside, in a “home” department.

An individual or institution getting started, or revamping, an Honors Program, should note the volume of paper (and electronic communications) generated by a thriving operation of this sort, and pay serious attention to the need for secretarial help. At the very least, some designated part-time aid will make a big difference. If the Honors Director is expected to do much recruiting, then the Honors office will find itself generating scores of letters annually; if there is to be a newsletter, someone will have to draft and distribute it; scheduling large (indeed, small) meetings with busy academics can be a headache, and Honors Programs tend to require lots of such gatherings. These and similar concerns argue strongly for an Honors secretary, or at least a clear agreement about Honors Program use of institutional clerical resources.

Honors Directors, like all collegiate employees, should work under reasonably clear contractual conditions, but often they do not. This lack is perhaps especially acute due to the idiosyncratic nature of the Honors Directorship; it is a post unlike any other within the university or college, and, thus, models for contractual relation-
ships are unlikely to exist. Some important issues to try to resolve: How long is the term of service to be? What is the mechanism of evaluation? How will Honors leadership affect such career developments as promotion, sabbaticals, and salary increases? What is the summer commitment? While there is no single model which leads to answers to all these questions, it is important for each institution to try to grapple with them, in an overt manner, as early as possible.

A major quasi-administrative function of the Honors Program is frequently public relations. We have already noted that an Honors brochure is often developed as part of the recruitment process. Thriving Honors Programs tend to be visible, to their own members and to those outside their bounds (on and off campus). This means that someone, usually the Honors Director, has to generate some sort of internal communications regularly — often a newsletter, but also letters, memos, e-mails, etc. It also implies that the individual should be on the lookout for opportunities to insert the Honors Program into college publications (especially admissions publications) and local media as well. Regional and national Honors newsletters, such as The National Honors Report, should receive regular news of program activities, special accomplishments, unusual features, student awards, etc.

Another important document to which Honors contributes is the college catalog or bulletin. Most institutions with Honors Programs include a descriptive section in the catalog; sometimes there is both a general description (usually towards the beginning of the document) and a listing of Honors courses among those of other departments, divisions and programs in the main body of the catalog. Sometimes the sections on Honors in college bulletins looks like a rather casual afterthought. It should not. Catalogs are important reference documents for students, faculty and staff alike, and are frequently consulted in the recruiting process by prospective students and teachers. Moreover, like dictionaries, they tend to repeat, from edition to edition, both their felicities and their errors. Thus, the section(s) on Honors should be carefully polished piece of writing, designed to be clear, accurate, easily understood by a wide variety of readers — and attractive.

In addition, Honors administrators concerned with public relations might expect to do at least a modest amount of external public speaking. The broadcast media are constantly on the lookout for expert commentators on educational subjects, and Honors Directors can bring an impressive title and credentials to that task; they should
not be modest about offering to do so. Honors persons are also in some demand as speakers at high school Honors awards banquets or assemblies, graduation ceremonies, and similar occasions.

Another important administrative task is orientation. New Honors students and new Honors faculty will probably not understand as well as they could the program’s requirements, its nature, history, expectations, opportunities, and functioning. New students should be gathered as part of the institutional orientation process, or as soon thereafter as feasible, and have these workings of the Program explained to them in an inviting manner. Follow-up meetings are probably a good idea. Also, Honors faculty should be oriented to the program individually; a short, friendly conference with each new faculty member is a good investment of time and energy. Finally, under the rubric of “orientation,” each new collegiate administrator should be briefed early in her or his tenure about the Honors Program. Honors Directors should not be shy about introducing themselves and their programs to new deans, presidents, chancellors, Directors of public relations, admissions personnel, etc.

II.

In these and similar matters it is very important for the Honors Director to establish and maintain a positive and supportive relationship with the upper echelons of the college’s administration. Honors Programs tend to flourish when they are noticed and valued by college presidents, vice presidents, and deans. If, for example, faculty, students, and community frequently hear a president bragging about the achievements of the Honors Program and Honors students, they will more easily recognize the importance of the program to the institution. If, conversely, they never hear an upper-level administrator speak of Honors, they might rightly wonder just how high on the collegiate priority list Honors really is. Since college presidents, vice presidents, provosts, and deans are constantly looking for positive and optimistic grist for their rhetorical mills, the wise Honors Director makes sure that her or his program provides ample material of this sort. Where have graduates gone on to graduate or professional schools (with impressive fellowships)? Into what careers have they been recruited (at astronomical salaries)? What academic awards have they received within and beyond the school? What recognition has the program received (e.g., winning “Newsletter of the Year” prize from the national Honors organization)? Administrators will be glad to receive such information, and they will use it.
For similar political reasons, it is well worth while for the Honors Director to make a point of injecting Honors contributions into the faculty reappointment, promotion, and tenure review mechanism of the small college. The Honors Director can certainly take the initiative to send to the faculty personnel committee or appropriate administrative office timely letters commending Honors teaching. Honors work can become a factor in promotion and tenure deliberations simply through the agency of an alert Honors Director. Labors such as these will be surprisingly appreciated by faculty beneficiaries.

Pathways of administrative reporting are a frequent issue for Honors Programs and Directors. This is a more vexing issue at large universities, where there are sometimes legions of deans, vice presidents, associate provosts, and the like, who might claim the Honors Program. Generally, Honors Programs have been most stable and secure when they were under the direct administrative supervision of the institution's chief academic officer — at most smaller institutions, a "Dean of the College" or Provost or Vice President for Academic Affairs. It is probably better, though, for the Honors Director to report to an understanding and sympathetic lower tier administrator — an Associate Dean, for example — than to an indifferent or even hostile Provost or Vice President. Most Honors Programs wisely wish to see themselves as serving the entire small college, not just a particular school, division, or "College of Liberal Arts" segment of the campus. Thus, it is valuable for the Honors Director to report to an officer with responsibilities which extend across the entire institution.

Periodic assessment of Honors Programs, either individually as free-standing collegiate units, or as part of the larger on-going college-wide enterprise, is another valuable administrative task. Such assessment is increasingly mandated by regional accrediting bodies. It is wise to plan ahead for assessment by collecting relevant data, such as statistical profiles of entering students, graduation rates (both the rate of graduation from the Honors Program and perhaps even more importantly, the rate at which students who come to the college as Honors students subsequently graduate from the institution, whether Honors students or not), acceptance rates into graduate and professional schools, student evaluations of Honors classes, and the like.
III.

An important support mechanism for the small college Honors Program and Director is the Honors committee or council. Most schools will have some such group, usually with a policy advisory function, although sometimes with significant operational duties (e.g., admitting students into the program or approving proposed Honors courses). If there is not such a group, it is worth considering forming one. If it can be arranged, it is probably ideal to have the council appointed by a dean, provost, or vice chancellor (heeding very careful advice from the Honors Director). Often the administrative supervisor of the Honors Director sits on the Honors council, frequently chairing it.

The Honors council or committee can and should include faculty, students, and administrators as full-fledged voting members. Student input is especially important in Honors Programs, and tends to be first rate. Student membership on such a council is an excellent way of soliciting and using such participation. The ideal relationship between an Honors council and an Honors Director seems analogous to that between a college president and a board of trustees. The group should be well-informed, independent, and helpful; the council does not intrude upon the day-to-day decisions and actions of the responsible administrator, and seeks to provide aid for the Program, not sit in judgment on it. Occasionally an individual with a bone to pick with Honors will seek and secure a place on the Honors council. This might become an opportunity to convert such an individual into a supporter of Honors; more often that individual just needs to be honestly heeded, openly tolerated, and outvoted. The most effective Honors councils seem to be large enough to be fairly representative, small enough to be workable — perhaps in the four-to-eight member range.

The Honors committee or group should meet sufficiently often so that its sessions are genuine working meetings, not merely ceremonial occasions, but not so often as to become a burden to members or the Director; perhaps once a month is reasonable. Membership in the council should probably rotate, so that the same cadre of faculty members are not seen as running the Honors Program year after year.

IV.

The small college Honors Program should affiliate itself with appropriate Honors organizations. The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) is an important and useful resource to neophyte and experienced Honors persons alike. The NCHC meets annually
in late October-early November for several days of worthwhile and varied sessions, including programs aimed specifically at new Honors Directors and those beginning new Programs. The Small College Honors Programs Committee of the NCHC is devoted specifically to serving the needs of smaller institutions, and tries to generate several programs within each NCHC meeting for this purpose. Members of the NCHC Small College Honors Programs Committee and others experienced in Honors will be eager to help in the creation or evaluation of a program.

There are also regional Honors associations throughout the country, somewhat less expensive to join, and with meetings (usually in the Spring) closer to home. It is frequently attractive and realistic to take larger groups of students and faculty to the regional Honors meeting, rather than to the larger NCHC conference.

The NCHC publishes periodicals and useful booklets and documents (such as this one) on topics such as the evaluation of Honors Programs, beginning a new Honors Program, and the like. Most of the regional groups also publish a rather informal newsletter. Many of the states (e.g., North Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, Florida) also have statewide Honors groups, although these tend to drift into and out of existence rather rapidly. These are usually very informal, friendly and helpful networks of information and support. Finally, a couple of "special interest" groups, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities and major research schools, have also formed alliances.

V.

The advising of Honors students is a task which often falls to the small college Honors Director, either directly or in some sort of oversight capacity. Here are two models, and some variants, which seem common.

In some small colleges, the Honors Program (especially if it is a relatively fully developed, multidimensional one) provides the primary focus for academic advising for its students. An advisor from the program, usually the Director herself or himself, actually guides course selection each term, approves schedule changes, discusses post-graduate plans and possibilities, and the like. This can be a big job; in the case of a program with twenty or more students, it is a major drain on the Director's resources.

The other type of Honors advising, and probably the more common model, presupposes that each student is receiving "regular" academic advice within the usual advising framework of the insti-
tution — for example, from a faculty member within the major department, or from some sort of professional “advising center” (more common at larger places) — and special guidance concerning the Honors Program from the Honors Director. Thus, the physics major might be helped to select a logical progression of courses to meet that department’s requirements by a member of the physics faculty, and simultaneously be advised by the Honors Program concerning selection and timing of, say, Honors seminars and independent projects. Clearly this approach to Honors advising is less time-consuming than the total advising responsibilities of the first option. It also requires more diplomacy, communication, and coordination: a very common problem in small college Honors work is that of the student receiving incompatible advice from an academic advisor within the major and from the Honors Program. Even with the risk of that incompatibility, though, it is probably usually better to keep the students connected, through the advising process, with the college as a whole.

One compromise solution which has worked very well at some schools is to select a special Honors advisor within each (or most) academic disciplines. Thus, the physics student has a physicist as an academic advisor, the sociology major a sociologist, and so on. With this arrangement, the major responsibility of the Honors Director shifts to making sure that departments do stay on top of the task of bringing the right students and faculty members together, and that those faculty members selected as Honors advisors know, and can communicate effectively, the opportunities and requirements of the Honors Program. This means, of course, carefully briefing the Honors advisors, and keeping in touch with them on a regular basis.

Honors students, as Honors students, usually benefit from sharp and timely advice about graduate and professional school possibilities, fellowships, graduate assistantships and similar counsel about post-graduate educational options. Many are also keenly interested in career opportunities, and the Honors Director should be prepared to respond to questions regarding vocational placement. At the very least, it is necessary to be well informed about the specific referral network within one’s institution, so that students with such questions can be promptly and efficiently sent in the right direction. Some introductory familiarity with internet resources in the realm of vocational choice and strategy will also be helpful to students.
A very important point to keep in mind regarding Honors advising is that Honors students can be expected to have at least as many, and as complicated, problems as any other students. It is sometimes tempting to envision the Honors student as well-rounded, balanced, thoughtful, mature, self-possessed, and self-directed. This is not a particularly accurate or helpful vision, however attractive it may be. Honors students, just like their non-Honors peers, are sometimes going to be plagued with doubts about their academic careers and their futures; they are going to have problems in their amorous relations, fights with roommates, scheduling conflicts, health problems, etc. In fact, because their academic expectations and goals are sometimes higher than those of their non-Honors colleagues, and because they are sometimes younger and/or less experienced in worldly matters, Honors students will sometimes seem to have more academic and personal counseling needs than other students! The Honors Director in a small college setting, which students have often selected because it promises close, personal attention, must, like all good advisors, strive to be sensitive, patient, informed, and helpful.
All Honors Programs need fiscal resources to operate effectively, including the smallest programs at the smallest colleges. No Honors Programs ever have enough money, especially those at smaller institutions. Indeed, the very worst of possibilities, which is far from hypothetical, is that small college Honors Directors might skip this section, since they have no budget whatsoever to manage! Alas, this booklet can propose no surefire cure for financial woes. There follow, though, a few suggestions on how to mitigate chronic program poverty, and how to get better return from whatever meager funds are available.

I.

One important suggestion has to do with the budget-making process. Whether an Honors Program budget runs to five or even six figures, or if it is more like three, it is almost always much better to try to develop an independent annual budget. The much less happy alternative, which is unfortunately common, is to rely upon a source of funds which is, on an annual basis, dependent upon the largesse of some other office. Too often, Honors Programs derive their money from the Dean’s budget, from some general Arts and Sciences fund, from the President’s discretionary purse, or some such. These arrangements, while often generous, sincere, and whole-hearted, almost inevitably lead to problems, frequently serious problems. Senior academic administrators tend to come and go more rapidly than we would like to see. Honors Programs’ budgets flourish then wither. Perhaps more importantly, such discretionary annual funds are always the subject of desperate requests from across the campus, and are usually the first to be cut in moments of real, threatened, or imagined exigency. The Honors Program which depends upon annual renewal of some extra-Honors administrative support is likely to be viewed as frosting on the fiscal cake; the program with a budget of its own has a slice, no matter how small, of the core pastry itself.

Further, it seems a characteristic of contemporary academic culture that having an independent budgetary center confers upon an enterprise a certain legitimacy. This is probably silly, but it is true. (See the appended list of “Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program.)
At most schools, any department or program with a separate budget account or number will be solicited to some degree on an annual basis concerning funding renewal. This will enable the enterprising Honors Director or committee to make a strong case for expanded support when programs and results justify increased dollars. Rather than seeking primary funding from the office of the Dean, make the Dean your advocate in the budgetary councils of the college.

II.

Once an Honors Program establishes an independent budget, it should be administered scrupulously. Money should never be wasted, but, especially in today’s tight academic marketplace, this general ethical maxim becomes a functional imperative. Monitor expenses; keep up with those monthly budget statements and notice where over-budget expenditures are popping up. If, on the other happy hand, funds remain toward the end of the fiscal year, they should probably be expended, but on a conspicuously worthwhile project (taking a sophomore Honors seminar to a Shakespearean performance; publishing the outstanding papers from a freshman Honors section, etc.) or acquisition (a printer for student use; a reference book for the Honors Center library, etc.). Contrary to popular lore, responsible administrators do not look with favor upon frivolous efforts to expend, at the last moment, every single penny of an annual budget, so as to justify continuation or enlargement of that budget in the next fiscal year.

One of the very best ways to stretch an Honors Program’s tight budget is to share expenses with other campus organizations. Often a program with very limited resources for, say, outside speakers, can join with two or three other, similarly strapped, departments to come up with a significant amount for a special event or two. To co-sponsor such doings with, say, an academic department, or several, an administrator’s discretionary funds, or perhaps another general program (Women’s studies? Interdisciplinary studies? The Dean of Students’ office? International programs?) is more than an opportunity to pool money; it is a chance to build important links on campus, and to increase Honors Program visibility at what is often a surprisingly low cost. Moreover, such joint ventures clarify and solidify the very important role of Honors as a valuable all-campus resource, making academic enrichment opportunities available for a wide and open collegiate audience.
III.

One interesting budgetary issue facing small college Honors administrators is the matter of “paying” Honors faculty. In most cases, faculty members teaching Honors courses at small colleges do so as part of their normal teaching load (a load which can vary from fewer than five to more than eight courses per year!). In many cases, there is no particular material benefit and no penalty for this arrangement. Very occasionally, faculty members actually teach in Honors courses (especially team-taught courses) as an unpaid overload. This, obviously, is a situation to be avoided vigorously; many high caliber faculty members will refuse (probably rightly) to undertake demanding additional work for no additional compensation beyond the sheer joy of teaching one more stimulating course. Even more pernicious, if faculty members are asked to undertake Honors instruction as an “extra,” they may treat the assignment as one of secondary importance — exactly the opposite of the attitude we seek to cultivate.

In some colleges (but more commonly in larger institutions), the Honors Program budget is responsible for actually paying the fraction of the faculty member’s salary corresponding to the portion of that individual’s load devoted to Honors instruction. This is, obviously, the most expensive option for an Honors instructional budget. It is also, though, the route of greatest discretionary freedom for the Honors Director or program when it comes to selecting and recruiting instructors. In effect (and occasionally in fact) the Honors Program is granted sufficient funds to “hire” its own faculty, and then is free to negotiate relatively independently to do so.

In other cases, and more commonly, Honors Program budgets include funds to compensate departments for professors’ time given over to Honors instruction, usually through funding sufficient to hire replacement part-time instructors. This system requires a smaller Honors Program budget. It has the drawback of asking academic departments to replace excellent, usually full-time, tenure-track professors with part-time teachers. At a time when there is a rather large general movement towards temporary and part-time professorial hiring, Honors Programs need to ask carefully if they want to contribute to this trend. Certainly, if the Honors Program budget is used to secure part-time replacements for full-time teachers, every effort should be made to keep the level of funding at a sufficiently high rate to attract top quality replacements. Sometimes, departments can be attracted by the idea of hiring special individuals to teach special courses, not otherwise available.
with regular staffing (e.g., a course on the history of photography in the Art Department, in exchange for a more conventional Art Historian for the Honors Program). Since most part-time teachers usually work for near-starvation wages anyway, the difference between affording a handsome part-time salary, and a niggardly one is usually embarrassingly minuscule.

One very attractive option (and an inexpensive one as well) is to utilize some portion of the Honors Program budget as a kind of “bonus” for Honors instructors. If faculty members teach in Honors as part of their normal class load, and are paid for doing so as part of their regular salary, it is possible and valuable for the Honors Program to recognize and reward the special challenges and preparation required. Especially for first time teaching, a pure salary bonus, or some attractive supplemental faculty development funds are a great idea. This can take such forms as an enhancement of the annual travel allocation; supplemental book purchase funding; money to be applied to research or equipment needs; or even special resources for enhancing the class work itself (field trips, refreshments, guest speakers, etc.). This system has the attraction of making Honors teaching a bit more materially rewarding than normal instructional duties, thus, making the recruiting task a bit easier.

IV.

The issue of Honors scholarships will be discussed in the next section on student recruiting. Here it is sufficient to note that most small colleges do have some institutional money available, in some form or another, for academically gifted students. Sometimes this money is dispensed, wholly or in part, through the Honors Program. This has advantages and disadvantages. Perhaps the chief advantage is that it reinforces the position of the Honors Program as an important institutional resource for attracting outstanding students. It clarifies the centrality of the role of Honors in the recruitment and retention of such students, and it gives to the program an important voice in the mechanisms of attraction and selection of such students. One of the disadvantages of linking academic scholarships to the Honors Program is that sometimes such a system can result in students taking Honors classes not because they are attracted to them, but because they must in order to retain their scholarships. Such a feeling runs counter to thriving learning communities. Too, the whole area of financial aid is one which has seen enormous cost increases recently, and this threatens to continue as bidding for exceptional students becomes more overt and more competitive. This
can lead to the awarding of Honors scholarships as a disproportionate expenditure of limited funds. If scholarships are to keep pace with tuition increases, this budget line must increase dramatically each year. Thus, the Honors Program which plays a major role in the awarding and dispensation of merit scholarships, out of its own budget, should expect to be playing in the financial big leagues of the institution. Some Directors and/or committees have chosen not to burden themselves with this additional responsibility; others have found that the benefits outweigh the costs. In either case, a close and productive relationship with the Office(s) of Admissions and Financial Aid is vital.

V.

In addition to instruction and scholarship expenses, Honors Program budgets can be used to pay for a host of smaller activities and items. Indeed, probably most Honors budgets at most smaller institutions consist wholly of these sorts of expenditures. Although not especially dramatic fiscally, such budgetary items can often make a major difference in student and faculty perceptions of the Honors Program; they should not be taken lightly. Even a few hundred dollars spent judiciously can win important recognition and appreciation for Honors at the smaller institution. A dinner to which Honors students bring their favorite professors; a trip to a major cultural event in a nearby city; a modest research grant to enable a struggling Honors student to complete a project; or the opportunity for a teacher of an Honors class to recruit a special guest lecturer, rent an extra movie, or take the class out for pizza a few times during the term: none of these cost an inordinate amount of money or require excessive time or energy to organize.

One important budget category, especially in smaller institutions, is “travel.” It can be extremely valuable for the Honors Director, members of an Honors committee, students, and faculty, to attend some national, regional, and state meetings of Honors organizations (and related organizations, such as the National Council for Undergraduate Research). While nearby meetings at the state and local level are usually not expensive, most national conferences of the NCHC will cost each attendee several hundred dollars. It is money well spent, in either situation. Often students and faculty will return from, say, a regional meeting, full of new ideas to improve their Honors work, and full of appreciation for how good their program actually is. For the Honors administrator, these meetings and especially the national NCHC meeting provide a
rare, and needed, opportunity to converse with a group of colleagues who deal on a daily basis with similar challenges.

Having an Honors Program budget, and spending it on such activities can be the difference between having a thriving program — well known on campus and well regarded by students, faculty and administration — and one which merely hangs on from year to year. We academics are not conspicuously clever with money, and skill with budgetary manipulation is rarely a top qualification when it is time to pick an Honors Director. But budgetary issues turn out to be unavoidable for small college Honors Programs. Careful and successful budget-making, and wise, well-thought-out spending, may be among the top priorities in organizing and operating a small college Honors Program.
CURRICULUM

We have saved, surely, the best for last, because the curriculum, the structure of what happens between learners and teachers in the classroom, lab, and office, is at the core of a collegiate experience. The curricular arrangements possible in small college Honors Programs are nearly limitless. That infinite variety, however, turns out in most cases to be some combination or choice of four basic course types:

1. Honors sections of regular courses. This option is especially popular in institutions with fairly prescribed general education curricula, and hence several multi-sectioned courses (e.g., first year writing courses, introductory biology sections, beginning calculus). For obvious reasons, this is a more common option at larger schools than at small colleges. Honors sections usually cover most of the same material as the courses for which they substitute, but they may involve different and/or extra reading or writing assignments, more difficult material, higher or different expectations (e.g., lively class discussions led by students) smaller sections, etc. This sort of course is very attractive in situations in which very bright or exceptionally well-prepared students find themselves undertaking coursework which threatens to be repetitious or unchallenging to them.

2. Enriched options within regular courses. This curricular model differs from “Honors sections” in that Honors students and non-Honors students find themselves enrolled in the same sections of the same classes. Honors students, however, are expected to complete some extra project or assignment. Often this involves doing an additional, or a more ambitious, paper. Sometimes it involves separate discussion sections of very large classes. Needless to say, this path is one of the easiest to follow, since it tends to involve absolutely no instructional costs whatsoever; usually the instructors of such sections are expected to undertake the slight burden of assigning and reacting to the additional work gratis. A compensating liability, however, is that it is probable that Honors options within regular classes are often the least rewarding curricular option for Honors students. This is an arrangement which can be made to work well, though, and sometimes it seems to be the only realistic opportunity.
3. Special Honors courses. Perhaps the most popular curricular option in small college Honors Programs is the "Honors course." Such courses are often interdisciplinary, although certainly not always so. Sometimes they are team-taught, sometimes by teams of more than a pair of instructors. Frequently "Honors courses" of this sort are conducted on the graduate seminar model, or some variant thereof, in which the goal is much high-level, well-prepared give-and-take among students and between students and professor. This sort of course is in some ways the most inviting curricular choice for small college Honors Programs, but it is also the most expensive and by far the most time-consuming for the Honors Director. This is especially the case when the course is perpetually reinvented, with different options each term or year, and the staffing perpetually re-brokered. An Honors Director at a small college attempting to generate one new team-taught interdisciplinary course per term, or even per year, will quickly discover that as soon as one course is arranged, it is way past time to begin work on the next. Particularly at the smallest schools, with the smallest instructional staffs, the amount of negotiation necessary to put such a course together can be intimidating. For the part-time Honors Director especially, special Honors courses can be a high-risk, high-gain venture.

4. Honors Projects. Some sort of final project or thesis is one of the more pervasive characteristics of Honors curricula. Usually, this is work done on a more-or-less independent, tutorial basis. Increasingly, it is linked to some sort of institutional program of "Undergraduate Research," sometimes in a fashion which invites students to participate in extra-institutional programs such as annual conferences of the Council for Undergraduate Research (CUR). The majority of Honors projects are undertaken in the final year of undergraduate study, although some institutions (wisely) permit or encourage students to get started in the later part of the junior year. In many cases, some sort of quasi-doctoral final exercise (an oral exam, outside readers, public presentation, or some combination thereof) concludes the Honors project. Sometimes the project is seen as part of the student's major; sometimes it is not. In some cases, in fact, cross-disciplinary projects are encouraged. Formal requirements of Honors projects also vary widely: some are quite flexible and informal, permitting creative or even experimental work, while others are rather strictly modeled on graduate thesis production.
Obviously, combinations and variations of these four curricular types exist. Some institutions have “directed study” options which do NOT lead to a project or thesis; some have special Honors classes with a very few students — three or four, for example — per instructor; some have student-initiated or even student-led seminars.

A very few ambitious small college Honors Programs offer all four types of Honors courses. Many offer only one. Probably the majority combine two or three elements: special Honors courses, say, and a thesis. Obviously, which sorts of Honors work, and how much, should depend upon a hard-headed assessment of institutional ability to populate courses, both with teachers and with students. An institution with relatively few teachers, large classes, high teaching loads, and little fiscal flexibility will find it exceptionally difficult to create an extra Honors course every term, especially a team-taught seminar. An institution with a college-wide senior thesis might not want to reinvent an Honors variant of that requirement. The point, again, is that there is no curricular standard which fits the individual needs and possibilities of each institution.

II.

We should note the distinction between “general” and “departmental” Honors, although this is a difference more essential to larger institutions than to smaller ones. Even in small colleges, though, there are often programs wherein a student can earn “Honors” in the major department, exclusive of any college-wide requirements or program, for example, by having a high graduating grade point average and/or writing a senior thesis. Obviously, a “general” Honors Program is one with college-wide (or at least extra-departmental) features, open to students from a variety of disciplines and under an institutional (or collegiate) rather than departmental aegis.

In some small colleges, both types of “Honors Programs” exist. A student can receive general Honors or departmental Honors or both. In more small colleges, one or the other model prevails. There are also small colleges in which some departments have independent Honors Programs, either in combination with an institutional program, or as the only Honors option.

Just to confuse the issue a bit more, there are also institutions which award “grade point honors,” usually the Latinate “cum laude” designations to students achieving a certain G.P.A. There
are probably some colleges in which all three types of graduation "Honors" are at play. It is probably worthwhile to try to keep these things straight, for everyone concerned, especially at commencement time, by some distinction in nomenclature. It is also probably a futile endeavor.

III.

So far, we have been discussing the form of Honors courses more than their content. The subject matter of Honors curricula seems an especially "institutional specific" area. In some cases, Honors courses tend to focus upon rigorously classical, "masterpiece" reading lists; there are many small colleges where an Honors course is the only place a student, especially a Chemistry or Computer Science or Studio Art or Economics major, might encounter Homer or Sophocles. In other collegiate settings, Honors courses tend to be at the cutting edge of curricular experimentation. It is certainly not uncommon to encounter Honors seminars on topics which engage very timely academic movements and trends: "A Gender Studies Approach to Greek Drama" or "Post-Colonial Readings of Native American Poetry" or "The Chemical Basis of Alternative Medical Practices" or whatever. Many institutions have moved in Honors courses to experiential modes of learning, including importantly, "service learning." ("Service learning" seems especially engaging for Honors Programs and students from a crass political perspective, as well as a more altruistic instructional one: it is a splendid antidote to grumblings about Honors as "elitist" or "segregated" or "smug.")

Both the experimental and the conservative curricular approaches seem valid, depending upon institutional context. Probably most small colleges will lean one way or the other, although many use some experimental pedagogy to teach an essentially classical curriculum, or some traditional materials within a radical instructional system. Certainly the question of appropriate subject matter for Honors courses should be one for serious and thoughtful explicit consideration, and there is no more justification for a calcified curriculum in Honors than anywhere else. Students, faculty, and administration should share an understanding and a sympathy for whatever curricular stance is adopted. It can be disruptive for an institution to choose to pursue an experimental and perhaps "trendy" Honors curriculum, only to have a vociferous faculty member or group of faculty members demand to know why Honors courses are reading anything other than the very greatest works of the
Western cultural tradition. It can be equally unsettling to find Honors courses condemned as hopelessly old fashioned, if not racist or sexist. At least a partial preventative measure to head off both sorts of criticism is to encourage full and thoughtful campus-wide discussion of the curricular direction of the Honors Program, and then to define a clear, well-understood, and carefully articulated Honors curricular philosophy.

Just as Honors Programs have become increasingly concerned about multiculturalism and diversity in their student (and faculty) populations, they have also turned their attention to incorporating global issues and historically under-represented intellectual fields, such as Black Studies, Women’s Studies, Gay and Lesbian Studies, into the curriculum. While relatively few Honors Programs have a significant number of complete courses in these areas (Women’s Studies perhaps being the exception), many have worked diligently and with success to incorporate previously unheard voices and neglected perspectives into Honors courses.

IV.

One very attractive set of Honors courses available to all small college Honors students may be found within the NCHC’s Honors Semesters program. Offered generally on a one-per-year basis, these programs have ranged in locale from major urban sites to wilderness areas, and have been co-sponsored by the NCHC and a specific institution. Each Honors Semester offers a full package of Honors-level courses, which usually have been easily accepted by students’ home institutions. They are open to students from around the country and are, in effect, off-campus seminars for Honors students. These programs seem particularly inviting to small colleges, since they often provide an experience which contrasts productively with the potential insularity that upper-division students sometimes worry about at smaller institutions. A semester in New York City or Washington, DC, can be a heady experience to an Honors Student from Morris, Minnesota. Conversely, several weeks in Appalachia will be an eye-opener for the urban or suburban Honors undergraduate from California or Connecticut.

NCHC Honors Semesters have focused upon topics such as the United Nations, national elections during a presidential selection year, the human and natural ecology of the Maine coast, and so on. Honors Directors should investigate these exciting offerings and consider actively promoting them to the students in their programs.
V.

It is important to clarify the manner in which Honors courses, of whatever form or content, fit into the college curriculum as a whole. Do Honors courses meet core graduation requirements? Can they substitute for other required courses? Can they count towards a major? How will such coursework be designated on the term schedule, on transcripts, on diplomas? These are usually not particularly difficult questions, but they need to be answered, and the best time to do so is before problems arise. It is particularly important to be absolutely clear about the issue of whether or not Honors work adds credit requirements to students' schedules. Will meeting the requirements of the Honors Program, in addition to all-College requirements and those of a major mean, that Honors students have fewer electives and a more prescribed curricular experience than others? Such an arrangement is probably not a very good idea, but if it is in fact the case, it needs to be explained clearly—and with a convincing rationale.

Many small colleges feel themselves to be curricularly "pinched." Pressures to increase cost efficiency, to boost faculty "productivity," and to respond to student interests in vocational relevance tend to create an atmosphere which has not been conducive to curricular boldness and initiative. Honors Programs in small colleges have an especially important role to play in restoring room for movement and contemplation in such an environment. Honors courses can open curricular doors otherwise barred; they can suggest directions which might otherwise be ruled out as too costly or too risky. This is an opportunity we are lucky, indeed, "honored," to have before us.
APPENDIX A:
ILLUSTRATIVE HYPOTHETICAL PROGRAMS

It cannot be reiterated too often that the program descriptions which follow are intended to be illustrative, not prescriptive. Each of the samples has, perhaps, strengths and weaknesses as well. Although these six descriptions are based on actual programs, none is an exact copy of a real one, past or present. For concrete, factual descriptions of existing Honors Programs, a wonderfully helpful guide is Peterson’s Honors Programs. This guide is a rich and helpful set of descriptions of scores of Honors Programs, including small ones. It is a valuable and reliable reference tool for current or prospective Honors Directors:

Peterson's Honors Programs
Dr. Joan Digby (Long Island University), editor
Peterson's
Princeton, New Jersey, 1997
[Second ed., 9/99]

The following fictive samples include four baccalaureate-level colleges and two two-year schools; three private institutions and three public ones; three religious and three secular colleges; an historically Black institution; a public liberal arts college; and so on. While not every possible type of small college is depicted, most institutions will find a reasonable analog.
Hypothetical Example 1

St. Anne's College of New Mexico
A private, Roman Catholic liberal arts college

Size: 2500 undergraduates; co-ed
Affiliation: Roman Catholic
Degrees: BA, some MA programs; a law school
Founded: 1850, by Marianist brothers and priests
Students: Highly diverse student population; 26% “Anglo” and over 60% Hispanic
Location: Southwest, urban
Tuition: $11,500 per year

The Program: The Honors curriculum consists of an eight-course sequence, most of which meet various college general education requirements, and which culminates in a Senior Honors project. The courses are cross-disciplinary with a thematic emphasis (e.g., “Writings on Nature and the Supernatural”), but not team-taught. The first two courses in the sequence include an “information literacy” component, involving basic computing skills, and an introduction to library research and resources. The Honors Thesis is done within the student’s major. There are a number of optional co-curricular (mostly cultural) activities, such as attending performances, service projects, etc. Most Honors students are recruited directly from high school, but with a high GPA, students can join after one or two semesters on campus. Most graduate in the top 5% of their high school classes, and the current student body in the Honors Program averages 28 ACT and 1280 SAT. The Program currently enrolls about 90 students and admission is selective: about one in three who apply are accepted. There are no Honors Scholarships per se, but the college does award merit scholarships. The current Honors Director serves on a rotating half-time appointment, and has part-time, professional clerical support. The program estimates that half its graduates ultimately earn doctorates.

Comment: The program at St. Anne’s seems structurally simple, even elegant. With seven Honors classes plus a senior thesis, it would not be so simple to maintain and manage. Faculty recruitment would be a fairly constant concern of the Director. On the other hand, the relatively small size makes the direction of the program less daunting.
Hypothetical Example 2
Mesa Nevada Community College
A public community college

Size: 4000 FTE students (head count = 7500)
Affiliation: Public
Degrees: AA and vocational certification; degrees in liberal arts areas and pre-professional areas
Founded: 1967, by state legislature
Students: 75% Caucasian, about 55% women; many continue to baccalaureate level studies after graduation
Location: West, medium sized city
Tuition: none for in-state students; no scholarships

The Program: All Honors courses meet general education requirements at the College, and fit into the state’s mandated program of general education transfer equivalencies. The curriculum consists of six interdisciplinary, team-taught seminars, with enrollment limited to 20 or less. The first four courses involve readings in major works in Western culture. The fifth course is a lab science, focusing upon works of seminal scientists such as Darwin. The final course at Mesa Nevada focuses upon the contributions of twentieth-century people of color and women. Courses are offered both during the daytime and in the evening. To graduate with Honors, students must complete the science course and at least four others. All Honors seminars have a strong writing component. Students can be admitted any time, and most often join the program after one semester of college-level work. An essay, recommendation, and letter are required for admission. Students must maintain a 3.30 GPA, with all Honors work at the “B” or higher level to remain in the program. The Honors Program is coordinated by a faculty member in History, with a negotiated course reduction; there is a part-time secretary.

Comment: This seems an appropriate program design for the character of the institution. It is certainly above the norm in terms of ambition, with students required to take Honors work almost every term, and with a fairly high standard for continuation within Honors. Because all Honors courses meet general education requirements, students do not feel they are “losing time” in Honors.
Hypothetical Example 3
Arnold College
A historically black institution

Size: 2100 students (150 full-time faculty)
Affiliation: AME Church
Degrees: BA in 21 majors in liberal arts, pre-professional areas
Founded: 1907 to serve African-American students
Students: Predominately Black; about 85% receive some financial aid; strong tradition of community service
Location: Mid-South, medium sized city
Tuition: $6400 per year

The Program: To complete the Honors Program successfully, students must maintain a 3.25 G.P.A. and take seven Honors courses during their eight semesters of residence. Additionally, they must complete two community service projects each year, serve as a presenter at one national conference, create a senior Honors project and offer a public oral defense of it, and sit for at least one graduate or professional school entrance examination. Honors students develop an Honors resume during their sophomore year. The program sponsors a lecture series, volunteer service projects, an Academic Honors Convocation, an Honors induction ceremony, and an Honors graduation celebration. A faculty member with a one-half time teaching load reduction directs the program, working with a faculty advisory committee. Students are encouraged to focus upon and develop leadership and communication skills, and have held important offices in regional and national academic honorary and Honors organizations. The Honors Program makes explicit the "high standards of behavior" expected of Honors students at Arnold. The Honors Program was established in the late 1980's and about 85 students participate. The Program has created an extremely strong bond among Honors students, and their esprit is unusually high. A very large contingent of students from Arnold are present at national and regional meetings.

Comment: This program is notable for its emphasis on an unusually wide variety of curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities. Clearly, Arnold defines "Honors" in ways which include, but also go well beyond, the traditional academic characteristics. It also goes well beyond the typical program in the level of recognition afforded to students.
Hypothetical Example 4
The University of Utana at Humbert
A public liberal arts college

Size: 1900 students, 120 faculty
Affiliation: public liberal arts, linked to large land-grant research university
Degrees: BA in traditional liberal arts
Founded: 1932 as an agricultural high school; 1964 as a college
Students: Mostly Midwestern, rural; ACT composite of 25; 15% minorities mostly American Indian; selective admissions
Location: rural great plains; 160 miles from nearest large metropolitan area
Tuition: $4400 per year

The Program: The Honors Program consists of a series of special Honors courses, open to students in the Program and to others by permission of the instructor, on a space-available basis. To graduate with Honors, students must take at least one Honors course per year. Additionally, a selected cluster within the all-campus series of cultural and instructional events each year are designated as "Honors events," and successful completion of the Program requires attendance and a response to at least four events per year. Students must also complete a senior Honors project (which counts as one of the four required Honors courses), usually in the field of the major. The final requirement for graduation is that students must earn a grade of "A" in at least half their courses at UUH. The Program is administered by a faculty member, with a 1/6th time (one course) reduction in teaching load. Its budget, for miscellaneous clerical expenses, is about $500 per year. One secretary serves the Honors Program and several other enterprises (International Studies, General Education, etc.). The Director works with a student/faculty Honors Advisory Committee.

Comment: This program seems rather ambitious for the level of support it receives. Not surprisingly, this program has a certain amount of difficulty just tending to its regular business: getting new Honors courses created and scheduled, communicating with students and faculty, and the like. The emphasis on co-curricular events is high, and the "half 'A's' requirement is very unusual. In a sense, this seems an Honors Program within an Honors college of a state system.
Hypothetical Example 5
Charles College
A private liberal arts college

Size: 1100 students and 80 faculty members
Affiliation: Quaker
Degrees: BA in liberal arts and pre-professional areas; emphasis on international studies
Students: Selective; about 8% minority; average SAT = 1050; mostly full-time
Location: New England, suburban
Tuition: $16,500 per year

The Program: Charles offers substantial Honors scholarships, which are entirely merit (not need) based. Nearly 2/3 of the students in the Program receive Honors scholarships, totaling about $400,000 per year. Most students enter the Program when they enter the College, and about 15-20% of the entering class is invited to join. The college hosts an Honors Interview Day to which prospective students are invited on the basis of standardized test scores, high school performance, a writing sample, and recommendations. This event is seen as an important recruiting device for the College as a whole. About 10% of the student body is in the Honors Program. Honors students take a minimum of six Honors courses, which are small, discussion seminars. Many, but not all, are team-taught and co-disciplinary. Under faculty supervision, each Honors student undertakes a senior project or thesis. The Program also offers a wide variety of social, cultural, and educational events. All Honors students are required to complete one community service project each year. Directing the Honors Program is considered a half-time administrative post, and the Director shares a full-time secretary with another academic program of comparable size on campus. There is no Honors Center or residential option. There is an Honors Student Advisory Committee which arranges co-curricular events and consults with the Director on curricular matters.

Comment: A particularly noteworthy feature of this program is the very heavy commitment to Honors scholarships, which constitute the bulk of the institution's merit scholarship program. Moreover, the Honors Program at Charles is relatively large. Thus, the College is using the Honors Program, and its substantial scholarship funding, as a major component in shaping its student profile.
Hypothetical Example 6

Hubert H. Humphrey Vocational-Technical College
A public vocational institution

Size: 3500 FTE; less than 50% of faculty are full-time
Affiliation: Public
Degrees: AA in vocational-technical areas and business management
Founded: 1972 in reorganization of State technical college system
Students: 90% immediately employed immediately upon graduation
Location: suburb of large Midwestern city
Tuition: $1,230 per year; no merit scholarships

The Program: To receive Honors at HHH-VTC a student must receive a grade of "B" or above in Honors Freshman English (two sections are offered each year), maintain an overall G.P.A. of at least 3.5, and participate in a 2-credit hour Honors Seminar during the last semester prior to graduation. The seminar, which is team-taught by a faculty member in Humanities and one from a vocational program, is entitled "Ethical Issues in the Workplace," and focuses upon a case-study approach. The course goal is to increase students' understanding of the moral issues involved in daily work activities (e.g., "In a seriously strapped company, your boss orders you to use inferior parts in the product line you supervise, in order to save money..."). The seminar culminates in each student making an oral presentation. Students who complete the Honors Program are entitled to wear a distinctive ribbon during the graduation ceremonies, and are noted on the official graduation program. There are no scholarships. The program oversight is provided by the Academic Dean of the College, who works with a small informal committee of approximately four faculty, half from "academic," half from "vocational" disciplines.

Comment: This is a program which has clearly decided to focus on the students who enter the work force upon graduation, not upon the small minority who continue on with further higher education. It is rather low in profile, modest in its dimensions, relatively simple to manage. This program would probably not leave students with strong vocational motivations feeling that they had been delayed in their post-collegiate, career plans.
APPENDIX B: CHARACTERISTICS OF A FULLY-DEVELOPED HONORS PROGRAM

The following set of characteristics — designed to be helpful and illustrative, not prescriptive — was created by the “Evaluation Committee” of the National Collegiate Honors Council and accepted, in 1994, by the NCHC’s Executive Committee.

1. No one model of an Honors Program can be superimposed on all types of institutions. However, there are characteristics which are common to successful, fully-developed Honors Programs. Listed below are those characteristics, although not all characteristics are necessary for an Honors Program to be considered a successful and/or fully-developed Honors Program.

2. A fully-developed Honors Program should be carefully set up to accommodate the special needs and abilities of the undergraduate students it is designed to serve. This entails identifying the targeted student population by some clearly articulated set of criteria (e.g., GPA, SAT score, a written essay). A program with open admission needs to spell out expectations for retention in the program and for satisfactory completion of program requirements.

3. The program should have a clear mandate from the institutional administration ideally in the form of a mission statement clearly stating the objectives and responsibilities of the program and defining its place in both the administrative and academic structure of the institution. This mandate or mission statement should be such as to assure the permanence and stability of the program by guaranteeing an adequate budget and by avoiding any tendency to force the program to depend on temporary or spasmodic dedication of particular faculty members of administrators. In other words, the program should be fully institutionalized so as to build thereby a genuine tradition of excellence.

4. The Honors Director should report to the chief academic officer of the institution.
5. There should be an Honors curriculum featuring special courses, seminars, colloquia and independent study established in harmony with the mission statement and in response to the needs of the program.

6. The program requirements themselves should include a substantial portion of the participants' undergraduate work, usually in the vicinity of 20% or 25% of their total course work and certainly no less than 15%. Students who successfully complete Honors Programs requirements should receive suitable institutional recognition. This can be accomplished by such measures as an appropriate notation on the student's academic transcript, separate listing of Honors Graduates in commencement programs, and the granting of an Honors degree.

7. The program should be so formulated that it relates effectively both to all the college work for the degree (e.g., by satisfying general education requirements) and to the area of concentration, departmental specialization, pre-professional or professional training.

8. The program should be both visible and highly reputed throughout the institution so that it is perceived as providing standards and models of excellence for students and faculty across the campus.

9. Faculty participating in the program should be fully identified with the aims of the program. They should be carefully selected on the basis of exceptional teaching skills and the ability to provide intellectual leadership to able students.

10. The program should occupy suitable quarters constituting an Honors library, lounge, reading rooms, personal computers and other appropriate decor.

11. The Director or other administrative officer charged with administering the program should work in close collaboration with a committee or council of faculty members representing the colleges and/or departments served by the program.
12. The program should have in place a committee of Honors students to serve as liaison with the Honors faculty committee or council who must keep the student group fully informed on the program and elicit their cooperation in evaluation and development. This student group should enjoy as much autonomy as possible conducting the business of the committee in representing the needs and concerns of all Honors students to the administration, and it should also be included in governance, serving on the advisory/policy committee as well as constituting the group that governs the student association.

13. There should be provisions for special academic counseling of Honors students by uniquely qualified faculty and/or staff personnel.

14. 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.

15. The fully-developed Honors Program must be open to continuous and critical review and be prepared to change in order to maintain its distinctive position of offering distinguished education to the best students in the institution.

16. A fully-developed program will emphasize the participatory nature of the Honors educational process by adopting such measures as offering opportunities for students to participate in regional and national conferences, Honors semesters, international programs, community service, and other forms of experiential education.

17. Fully-developed two-year and four-year Honors Programs will have articulation agreements by which Honors graduates from two-year colleges are accepted into four-year Honors Programs when they meet previously agreed-upon requirements.
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SUGGESTED READINGS


