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Major Forerunners to Honors Education at the Collegiate Level

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author explores the major forerunners of the modern-day honors program as well as the purposes behind the formation of honors programs in the United States. Although given much attention in the 1920s with the work of Frank Aydelotte and again in the 1950s and 1960s with the work of Joseph Cohen, university honors programs and colleges have grown so rapidly over the past few decades that we sometimes forget our origins. By examining the foundations of honors programs, this history allows researchers and administrators to better understand modern honors programs in light of the past.

INTRODUCTION

A history of honors education at the collegiate level in this country dates back far before the honors programs most educators are now familiar with and did not even originate in the United States. Indeed, many researchers believe collegiate honors programs to have their beginnings in German and English higher education. Around the late nineteenth century, attempts at honors education began in the United States and then experienced rapid periods of growth in the 1920s and again in the 1950s. Collegiate honors education now encompasses all attempts at differentiated instruction for gifted students, and no real standard exists for what constitutes an effective honors program. However, the founders of modern collegiate honors education in the United States did hold strong beliefs about appropriate education for intellectually advanced students.

Knowledge of the forerunners to modern collegiate honors education is important because "the past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present; and we can fully understand the present only in the light of the past" (Carr, 1961, p. 69). Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze the major forerunners to honors education at the collegiate level so

that honors administrators and educators may more fully understand the present state of collegiate honors education in the United States.

PREDECESSORS TO HONORS

Antecedents to major movements in history always provide important insights, and this is certainly true for honors education at the collegiate level. The rich and varied history of the honors program dates to more than two centuries ago and includes such predecessors as the Oxford University tutorial system, the Oxford University pass/honors approach, and the implementation of Rhodes Scholarships for American students at Oxford University. Other predecessors to the honors program include the Socratic dialogue, German universities, and the guild apprenticeship (Austin, 1985). The history of the honors movement also coincides with the history of higher education in general and the history of gifted education at the pre-collegiate level. However, none of these influences are as great as those contributed by Oxford University.

Oxford Tutorial System

The tutorial system at Oxford dates far into the university's history, although many changes have occurred over time. Beginning in the sixteenth century, tutors served a social purpose. They acted as personal guardians to young students, instructing them in good manners and controlling their financial expenses. Throughout the seventeenth century, the tutorial system became a recognized part of the university system in that all students were required to have tutors and the role of the tutor began to take the form of an educational advisor. By the nineteenth century, the tutorial system had assumed a primarily intellectual purpose (Bailey, 1932; Mallet, 1927).

The role of the tutor was thus to support a student in his academic endeavors and to guide him towards the successful acquisition of knowledge needed to pass his comprehensive examinations (Aydelotte, 1917/1967). The tutorial system was highly individualized in that students met about once a week with their tutor, either individually or in groups of two or three. Students prepared essays based on their individual readings and read them aloud to the tutor or to the group, resulting in informal discussion (Bailey, 1932). The tutor's role was never to teach in these discussions but to challenge the student and encourage him in trying new ideas (Moore, 1968).

The majority of instruction at Oxford was given by method of individual tutorials (Aydelotte, 1944; Learned, 1927). Students did not attend classes or obtain credit as they did in American colleges and universities. No courses were ever required, attendance was never taken, and even lectures were not mandatory. Independent work was the basis of the Oxford education, with the Oxford tutorial acting as the foundation (Aydelotte, 1946).

Oxford Pass/Honors Approach

As students at Oxford did not obtain a degree based on hours or credits, the Bachelor of Arts degree was obtained by passing two examinations. The first examination was taken during the first or second year of study for the purpose of demonstrating intellectual competency, and the second examination was taken as a final at the end of study (Learned, 1927). A student could take the examinations in the form of pass or honors.

The development of the pass/honors approach at Oxford began in the early part of the nineteenth century. In 1800, a statute originally designed by Dr. John Eveleigh, the Provost of Oriel College of Oxford from 1781 until 1814, was passed that required all students to take a comprehensive final examination as a means of obtaining their degree. Alongside this examination, "Extraordinary Examinations" were offered as a means for superior students to separate themselves from the rest of their classmates (Mallet, 1927).

In 1807, a class system was introduced whereby the scores from the extraordinary examinations were divided into two classes. The First Class consisted of those students "worthy of some eminent commendation" and the Second Class of those students who showed "laudable progress." A third category existed for those students not worthy of special mention but who had satisfied the examiners (Mallet, 1927, p. 169). In 1809, a Third Class was created, and by 1830 a Fourth Class. Oxford thus awarded the degrees of First Class, Second Class, Third Class, Fourth Class, and pass. The honors examination was thereby separated from the examination for the pass degree, resulting in the first notion of modern honors education (Guzy, 1999).

Rhodes Scholarship

Cecil Rhodes established the Rhodes Scholarship in 1899, with the first selection of Rhodes Scholars entering Oxford University in 1904. Rhodes established scholarships enabling students from the British Dominions, the United States, and Germany to study at Oxford (Wylie, 1932). Men were awarded scholarships on the basis of scholastic ability and achievement, solid character, leadership abilities, and a proficiency in sports. Rhodes Scholars could work toward a Bachelor of Arts degree (B.A.) in one of the Honor Schools or could enter for a research degree, which was an advanced degree such as the Bachelor of Letters (B. Litt). Since applicants had to have completed at least two years of college or university in their home country and since most applicants had already attained a B.A. in their home country, many Rhodes Scholars went on for a research degree (Aydelotte, 1944).

Rhodes' motive for these scholarships was explained in 1901 when he said, "A good understanding between England, Germany, and the United

States of America will secure the peace of the World, and educational relations form the strongest tie" (as cited in Wylie, 1932, p. 291). While world peace may not have been secured as a result of the Rhodes Scholarships, they opened the eyes of many American men to the importance of the Oxford method of instruction (Aydelotte, 1944). Between the years 1904 and 1914, more than one third of all Rhodes Scholars chose academia as a profession (Aydelotte, 1922). Among other important ideas, these Rhodes Scholars have served to heavily implement the tutorial method, the comprehensive examinations, and the distinction between the pass and honors degrees.

EARLY ATTEMPTS AT HONORS IN THE UNITED STATES

At the turn of the twentieth century, many scholars were returning to the United States from study in German and English universities. With them, they brought methods of instruction largely unknown to most American colleges and universities. Many of these American scholars were beginning to recognize a need for differentiation of instruction, resulting in several early attempts at honors in the United States. Most noteworthy were attempts at four universities, namely Harvard University, the University of Michigan, Princeton University, and Columbia University.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

According to the Harvard University catalogue in 1873, comprehensive final examinations were required for honors candidates, and as early as 1882 Harvard allowed advanced students to enter college as sophomores (Rudolph, 1962/1990), which is similar to what we now call early entrance to college. In 1909, it was proposed that all students be required to take comprehensive final examinations, or general examinations as they were called at Harvard. The proposal was passed, and examinations began for all students in 1917 (Hanford, 1931).

By 1931, general examinations consisted of two or three written tests lasting approximately three hours each. Honors candidates also had to take an oral examination. Because general examinations might be difficult for the average student, the tutorial system was implemented. At the beginning of the sophomore year, students were assigned a tutor in their field who became an academic advisor. A tutor met with his students once a week, either individually or in small groups, for about an hour, much like the Oxford tutorial (Hanford, 1931).

The general examinations were adopted for all students because it was believed that by changing "the entire mass and rais[ing] the intellectual level of the college all along the line, it [was] desirable that all students and not

merely a selected few should be put through an *honors curriculum*, although of course only a certain proportion [would] finally achieve honors" (Hanford, 1931, p. 57). In 1925, President Lowell of Harvard described that university as peculiar in that it applied an honors curriculum to all students, resulting in all students having to partake in independent work with the guidance of a tutor. However, honors were only awarded to those that passed the general examination with distinction (as cited in Aydelotte, 1925). Working toward a degree "with distinction" was comparable elsewhere to honors (Learned, 1927). However, a general honors program never existed, and honors were confined to departments. Taking a degree with honors was popular, though, and by 1930 one-third of all Harvard graduates had graduated with honors (Cohen, 1966).

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The "University system" was adopted in 1882 at the University of Michigan, which challenged the previous credit-hour system and excused its more talented students from regular requirements (Aydelotte, 1944). After two years of regular undergraduate coursework, a student could choose to participate in the University system, whereby he would not be held accountable to complete a fixed number of courses and could instead enter an individualized program that consisted of three fields of study of his choosing. At the end of two or three years of this individualized study, the student took comprehensive examinations for honors. Upon satisfactory performance, the student received a bachelor's degree (Hinsdale, 1906).

The University system was described in university catalogues until about 1900, but no students graduated under it after 1891 (Aydelotte, 1936). In 1924, John Effinger, then dean of the University of Michigan, wrote in the *Educational Record* that 48 students had graduated under the University system from 1883 until 1891 (as cited in Aydelotte, 1936). There is no clear reason why the University system was abandoned. Aydelotte (1936) offered two hypotheses: 1) Independent instruction required a great amount of time from professors, often interfering with their regular course loads, and no monetary allowances were in the budget to compensate the professors; and 2) the 1890s was a period of rapid growth in colleges and universities, and a system of individualized instruction did not fit into the development of courses, grades, and the credit system.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

In 1904 at Princeton University, the preceptorial system, which was similar to the tutorial method, was announced and then inaugurated in 1905. Woodrow Wilson, the president of Princeton from 1902 until 1910, was

responsible for outlining and implementing this system (Brooks, 1927). It was first outlined in 1894 in an article Wilson published in the *Forum*, and his election as president of Princeton put him in the position to experiment with his ideas and finally implement the preceptorial system (as cited in Ford, 1916).

Wilson first described his preceptorial system as a modification of the Oxford tutorial in that "teaching, to him, was a matter of advice and guidance by those more mature and experienced in fields of human learning for those less so, and was therefore a matter of intellectual companionship and joint participation in the pursuit of learning in its various aspects" (Craig, 1960, p. 7). At the beginning of the junior year, each student was assigned a preceptor to cover all the courses in his or her major field of study. This was the key difference between the preceptorial system and the tutorial method. The preceptor guided his students by treating each course separately while the tutor guided students by treating a subject as a whole (Hanford, 1931).

The preceptorial system was similar to a group tutorial in that students completed assigned readings each week and then met with their preceptor in small groups once a week. A student's grade for the preceptorial was based on participation and performance in these weekly meetings. A noteworthy fact is that students were placed in groups according to abilities and interests, and the more advanced students were sometimes excused from weekly meetings (Leitch, 1978). Wilson had already envisioned a form of differentiated instruction for students based on ability.

In 1923, a plan was announced that all students should have to partake in independent reading outside their regular coursework and then take comprehensive examinations at the end of both their junior and senior years, much similar to what Harvard implemented in 1917. Supervision of independent work would be determined by a student's department, and departmental supervisors eventually took over the role of preceptor (Aydelotte, 1925; Leitch, 1978). The 1924 catalogue of Princeton stated that honors would be awarded only at graduation on the basis of a student's coursework. The awards of Highest, High, and Honors were given (as cited in Aydelotte, 1925). Princeton thus became a sort of honors college in itself since all students engaged in an honors curriculum but honors were only awarded to a select few.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Columbia University inaugurated an early attempt at honors in the form of a three-year program with supplementary reading and yearly final examinations in 1909 (Keppel, 1914). The coursework consisted of three three-year sequences of three-hour courses, and the student had to take yearly final

examinations that covered both the course content and the supplementary readings. Then, at the completion of three years of study, a comprehensive oral examination was given. Degrees were given in the pass/honors approach in that students could receive a pass, honors, high honors, or highest honors (Trilling, 1954). This program did not last more than a few years (Cohen, 1966) but was seen as an attempt to create a place for undergraduates with strong intellectual curiosity and ambition (Keppel, 1914).

F. J. E. Woodbridge, John Erskine, and Cassius Keyser began another program called the Conference Program in 1912. Although not an honors program *per se*, the Conference Program influenced the development of a later honors program. The program was intended for juniors and seniors only and consisted of one three-hour course continued through two years. The students and instructors met once a week in addition to a student's regular coursework. Over the course of these weekly meetings, a student was expected to present an essay on some aspect of the material covered at least twice a year. At the end of two years, a student had to complete a thesis of sorts that showed mastery of its topic (Trilling, 1954).

Erskine eventually turned the Conference program into a course called General Honors, which was a Great Books course. In 1917 he proposed a course wherein, during their junior and senior years, students would read one great book a week and then discuss it in a two- to three-hour weekly meeting (Erskine, 1948), much like the tutorial method of Oxford University and preceptorial system at Princeton University. Largely in response to faculty complaints about students' relative lack of knowledge about the classics, Erskine designed the General Honors course to give students acquaintance with great authors (Trilling, 1954). Although students would only study each great book for a week, Erskine felt that some knowledge of the classics and of the great authors was better than none at all (Brown, 1948).

Because World War I interrupted his efforts, Erskine finally received faculty authorization in the fall of 1919, and the Great Books course was inaugurated in 1920 (Erskine, 1948). In addition to the General Honors course, honors students had to take Special Honors, in which they wrote a thesis on an independent study topic of their choice under the direction of a supervisor (Trilling, 1954). The honors program at Columbia thus became an attempt to combine common reading with individualized study (Buchler, 1954).

The inauguration of the General Honors course in 1920 divided the junior class of honors students into sections of between fifteen and thirty with two instructors of different disciplines allotted per section. Each Wednesday evening, the students and instructors met for two hours to discuss a different book each week, although groups usually ended up meeting for longer than two hours. Like the tutorial method and the preceptorial

system, the instructors were not supposed to instruct. Rather, they were supposed to guide and shape the conversations. Erskine believed that in "exchanging ideas for two hours, they [the students] will probably teach each other more about the rich aspects of Shakespeare's genius than any one of them is likely to think out for himself, or than any lecture is likely to convey" (Erskine, 1948, p.169). A version for the students' senior year was added in 1921.

The General Honors course was abandoned in 1929, largely due to its exclusion of non-honors students. It was revived in 1932, though, as the Colloquium on Important Books (Trilling, 1954), which was divided into four terms with the material covered in four successive time periods. The format for instruction was the same as the General Honors course (Buchler, 1954). Erskine's inauguration of a great books course at Columbia was significant in that many honors programs across the country adopted the idea, and similar courses are now typical at modern honors programs and colleges.

FRANK AYDELOTTE AND SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

Frank Aydelotte was "in every way the originator of the honors strategy" (Cohen, 1966, p. 12). Although attempts at honors programs had previously been made in the United States, it was Aydelotte's program at Swarthmore College that started a trend in honors among American colleges and universities. The first honors program was implemented at Swarthmore in 1922 as a direct result of Aydelotte's vision for improving higher education for advanced students, and it was based largely on his experiences as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University.

AYDELOTTE'S BACKGROUND

Frank Aydelotte was born October 16, 1880, in Sullivan, Indiana. He was academically a strong student, entering college at Indiana University at the age of fifteen. He graduated four years later in 1900 with a bachelor's degree in English. He later went on to receive a master's degree in English from Harvard University (Blanshard, 1970). In 1904, Aydelotte was accepted as a Rhodes Scholar, allowing him to attend Oxford in 1905-1907. Here he became familiar with the Oxford methods of instruction, including the tutorial method and the pass/honors approach (Brooks, 1927).

Aydelotte returned to his alma mater in 1908 as an Acting Associate Professor in the Indiana University Department of English, and in 1915 he accepted a position teaching English at Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT; Blanshard, 1970). In both positions, Aydelotte revolutionized the teaching of English to undergraduates. He found English to be taught

as separate courses in composition and literature, a process he believed inefficient and ineffective. By instead combining the study of composition and literature and by writing about the literature, a student would both develop the capacity to think about what he or she read and gain knowledge in the areas of composition and literature (Aydelotte, 1917/1967). Aydelotte wrote two pioneering textbooks as a result of these courses, namely *College English: A Manual for the Study of English Literature and Composition* (1913) and *English and Engineering* (1917). Aydelotte's rationale for these English courses and these textbooks centered on his definition of education as "the development of one's power to think" (Aydelotte, 1917/1967, p. 104), which also affected the later design of his honors program at Swarthmore College.

In 1921, Aydelotte accepted the position of president at Swarthmore College with the intent of eventually inaugurating an honors program there. Due to faculty interest and enthusiasm, though, plans for honors were initiated immediately upon Aydelotte's arrival at the college (The Swarthmore College Faculty, 1941).

HONORS AT SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

Aydelotte's rationale for honors was based on his experiences both as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford and as a teacher at Indiana University and MIT. He was also greatly influenced by what he called the academic lockstep. At the end of World War I, American higher education experienced a tremendous increase in enrollment, providing educators with direct evidence of individual intellectual differences that had never before been so extreme. The great numbers of students set an average intellectual pace, forcing educators to wonder how best to meet the needs of the brightest students on campus (Coss, 1931). The influx in enrollment had practically forced educators to focus only on the average student in order to serve as many students as possible. By making the same requirements of all students, the brightest students were being held back and limited in their intellectual potential. "The academic system as ordinarily administered is for these better and more ambitious students a kind of lock step; it holds them back, wastes their time, and blunts their interest by subjecting them to a slow-moving routine which they do not need" (Aydelotte, 1944, p. 14).

In his inaugural address at Swarthmore College (1921), Aydelotte outlined his ideas for honors education and his hope to break the academic lockstep. As previously mentioned, planning was immediately undertaken, and the first honors program was inaugurated in the fall of 1922 after one year of planning. Only two programs were ready for implementation the inaugural year, namely English Literature and Social Sciences. In 1923, French, German, Mathematics, and Physics were added; in 1924, Electrical

Engineering; in 1925, Greek and Latin; and in 1926, Education and Chemistry. By 1940, all departments at Swarthmore offered honors work (The Swarthmore College Faculty, 1941).

From its conception, the honors program at Swarthmore was only open to juniors and seniors. The first two years of college would be spent taking regular courses and gaining a broad base of knowledge, and then at the end of their sophomore year students would be allowed to apply for honors. Acceptance was based on both intellectual achievement in the department in which the student wished to major (Aydelotte, 1931; Brewster, 1930) and individual personality characteristics, including independence and self-regulation (Aydelotte, 1936). Aydelotte did not wish for honors students to major in only one subject, though, because he believed the interrelation between courses to be a valuable asset. A "major" generally consisted of three core departments, all of which were related (Brooks, 1927). For example, a student studying English Literature might focus on English, which was the major subject, and history and philosophy, which were the minor subjects.

Also, from its conception, Aydelotte had carefully planned for the structure and implementation of the honors program at Swarthmore. Although he did not directly transplant the Oxford methods of instruction, Aydelotte adapted the methods with which he was familiar to fit American higher education (Aydelotte, 1931; Brooks, 1927). The honors program at Swarthmore was initially based on the philosophies of active learning, the tutorial system, which Aydelotte called the seminar method, and the pass/honors approach of Oxford.

Aydelotte believed that the best education should be an active process, not passive. By merely attending a class and sitting through a lecture, a bright student would not learn to his or her best ability. According to Aydelotte, "the best and only education is self-education" (The Swarthmore College Faculty, 1941, p. 6). Thus he removed the lecture method for honors students, making attendance at all classes and lectures entirely voluntary. Aydelotte called his approach "reading for honors," as students would be required to learn on their own almost entirely through reading, much like the individualized learning at Oxford. Students were given an outline of the material they were expected to master during their final two years at the beginning of their junior year (Aydelotte, 1931). The readings rarely included textbooks, instead relying almost entirely on original documents and classics (Brooks, 1927). Learning was largely individual from that point on. Aydelotte's reasoning for this individualized method was also related to the degree of responsibility placed on the student. He believed honors students were capable of taking on the responsibility necessary for individualized learning, thereby cultivating their knowledge at a much deeper level than the average student (Aydelotte, 1927).

Instead of using the highly individualized tutorial method of Oxford, Aydelotte adapted this method to what he called a seminar. The seminar was "a system of informal instruction by the professor to a small group of students" (Bryce, 1959, p. 472), although Aydelotte's seminar involved little instruction and relied mostly on discussion. Aydelotte chose this method for several reasons. First, he believed American professors were more likely to lead a seminar well than a tutorial, which was usually reserved for only the best and most experienced professors at Oxford. Also, Aydelotte believed that discussion of ideas in small groups of students and one or two professors could be intellectually stimulating to all involved (Aydelotte, 1931; 1944).

The course and credit system was completely eliminated for honors students at Swarthmore. Instead, a method was adopted much like the pass/honors approach at Oxford. An honors degree was based solely on passing a final examination given at the end of the senior year. The honors student was given a syllabus of material he or she was expected to master, as previously mentioned, and then the same syllabus was given to an examiner who was unaffiliated with the college and who designed the final examination (Aydelotte, 1944). After two years of regular coursework and two years of independent study, the honors student took between seven and ten three-hour written examinations and an oral examination, all conducted by external examiners (Aydelotte, 1936; Learned, 1927). Each student had three examiners, one from the major subject and two from the minor subjects of his or her honors work. Upon completion of the written and oral examinations, the three examiners decided on the award of Highest Honors, High Honors, Honors, or, in rare cases, a pass degree (Aydelotte, 1931).

This type of comprehensive examination did not require that students merely memorize facts and regurgitate the information. Rather, they had to have a firm grasp of the principles, the capacity to interrelate the content areas, and the ability to think about and evaluate all of the material they had covered (Aydelotte, 1936). The exams allowed students to see their field as a whole.

External examiners were used for several reasons. First, students were believed to take the exams more seriously if they were given by someone outside the college. Second, external examiners had no bias toward any one student since they did not know the Swarthmore students and had never worked with them. This system served to create a fair testing environment for all students (Aydelotte, 1931). The students were therefore able to turn their attention to knowing a subject rather than emphasizing a certain professor's intellectual biases or focusing on how a professor administered an exam (Brewster, 1930; Spiller, 1933).

CONTRIBUTIONS

In an attempt to disseminate information about honors in the United States, Aydelotte wrote *Honors Courses in American Colleges and Universities* in 1924. Due to the popularity of the report and the growth in honors across the country, he updated the report only one year later (Aydelotte, 1925). Indeed, the first publication resulted in a doubling of the amount of honors programs in the United States, allowing the second edition to include nearly one hundred programs. *Honors Courses in American Colleges and Universities* served as a major springboard for other honors programs, including Joseph Cohen's program at the University of Colorado.

JOSEPH COHEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Joseph Cohen contributed greatly to the honors movement in the United States in two ways. First, he established an honors program at the University of Colorado that served to spread the honors movement into large, public universities. Second, he established the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student (ICSS), which was the first national attempt at the unification of honors programs in the United States. Cohen took Aydelotte's place as the major advocate for the advancement of collegiate honors education (Guzy, 1999).

In 1928, Cohen and a small committee were to decide on a method of honors that would eliminate the prevailing method of awarding honors on the basis of students' grades. By 1930, an Honors Council was developed which would work out the details of both a general honors program and a departmental honors program, both of which eliminated the award of honors based on grades. General honors and departmental honors were offered to students, and a student could choose to take one or both offerings (Cohen, 1966). The honors program allowed students to go beyond regular course offerings and complete some two hundred hours of independent reading during each academic year. In return, the students benefited from the tutorial supervision provided by faculty members (Allen, Foster, Andrade, Mitterling, & Scamehorn, 1976).

Cohen had a chance to attend Columbia's Colloquium on Important Books in 1947. He left the visit so impressed with what he saw that he immediately implemented the colloquium principle at the University of Colorado. A senior-level colloquium was established in 1947, and the following year a junior-level colloquium was established. Both were very successful (Cohen, 1966).

Immediately following the launch of Sputnik and Aydelotte's death in 1956, the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student (ICSS) was

founded in 1957. The Rockefeller Foundation had awarded a grant to the University of Colorado to aid in the expansion of its honors program and also to allow the director of the honors program (Cohen) to travel to other honors programs across the country. In June of 1957, a national conference on honors was held in Boulder, Colorado, marking the first meeting of the ICSS (Cohen, 1966).

Forty-three people from a total of twenty-seven institutions constituted the first conference. In discussing all aspects of the honors movement, the conferees drafted ideal features of a full honors program, which were further developed into the "Sixteen Major Features of a Full Honors Program" that set the standard for the ICSS (as cited in Cohen, 1966, pg. 46-48; see Appendix A). Several of these features resemble various ideas from both Oxford University and from Aydelotte's honors program at Swarthmore College. For example, the ICSS called for final examinations and the elimination of lecturing and passive note taking, features that are in line with the methodology of Oxford. Parallels to Aydelotte's program include smaller class sizes for honors students and the use of primary sources when available.

The ICSS also had several other important functions. First and foremost, the ICSS was to act as a source of information for new and developing honors programs across the country. The ICSS traveled to hundreds of honors programs, with nearly every member of the ICSS participating in these visits at some point. The visits allowed the ICSS to evaluate and compare programs for the purposes of growth and improvement. In addition to these visits, the ICSS published a newsletter, *The Superior Student*, which was sent to honors faculty and administrators. *The Superior Student* largely communicated the results of the ICSS visits and updated its readers on developments in honors education, but it was published only from 1958 until 1964 (Cohen, 1966). The ICSS was disbanded in 1965 because the leadership believed the honors movement in the United States was no longer in need of guidance (Guzy, 1999).

THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

As was anticipated even by the former director of the ICSS, Joseph Cohen, a new organization was founded to replace the ICSS (Cohen, 1966) and eventually named The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). Educators and honors administrators saw a need for a national organization to continue to guide the honors movement. The major difference between the ICSS and the new organization, though, was that the ICSS was funded by grants while the new organization would be financially self-supporting (O'Brien, 1994). The NCHC represented a growing need for the further development of honors education at the collegiate level and symbolized the

increasing importance of providing the necessary instruction and opportunities for academically talented undergraduates.

The NCHC was founded in 1966, and the first annual conference was held at the University of Kansas October 22-24, 1966. Since then, the NCHC has served to provide educators and honors administrators with an outlet for discussion related to issues in honors education (O'Brien, 1994), and it currently has well over 600 member institutions (Guzy, 1999). The NCHC mission statement has since defined the functions of the NCHC to "serve honors professionals and students, and to advance undergraduate education" (National Collegiate Honors Council, 2004, n.p.).

The NCHC also defined major features of an honors program, in a document similar to that of the ICSS, titled "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program" (NCHC Executive Committee, 1994). Many of these features are similar to those defined by the ICSS, and others are more specific and advanced. For example, both the ICSS and the NCHC called for a visible program that serves as a model for excellence; seminars, colloquia, and independent study; special counseling for honors students; a student liaison; and an honors facility (Cohen, 1966; Long, 1995). The NCHC also called for experiential education in such forms as international programs and community service; a mission statement or mandate; and honors program requirements that constitute approximately 20% or 25% of a student's course work (Long, 1995). In 2005, the NCHC outlined the differences between an honors program and an honors college, endorsing a document entitled "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College" (NCHC Executive Committee, 2005). Both NCHC documents are available on the website: http://www.nchchonors.org/basic.htm.

In order to meet the purposes of the NCHC, the organization provides several types of services for those involved in honors education. First, the NCHC hosts an annual national conference centered on a different theme and located in a different part of the country each year. Administrators, educators, researchers, and undergraduate honors students are invited to attend and participate. Second, the NCHC is host to several regional honors associations that also hold annual conferences. Third, the NCHC has two current national publications and two discontinued publications. Previously, the NCHC published *Forum for Honors*, which was a refereed journal that predominately published research articles. This journal has since been replaced by *The Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council.* In addition, a new journal, *Honors in Practice*, also a refereed journal, publishes articles concerning practices within individual honors programs and nuts-and-bolts type issues. *The National Honors Report* was a newsletter about issues in honors education, but it has been discontinued. Fourth, the NCHC has special projects that connect several institutions and cross several disciplines

each year for honors educators and students. Finally, the NCHC serves as an advocate and source of information for honors education (Guzy, 1999).

THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The modern honors program and/or honors college is as rich and varied as its history and development. Variations in honors programs are housed in two-year programs, four-year programs, junior colleges, early entrance programs, and selective colleges and universities. Debates about honors education at the collegiate level include the acceleration versus enrichment debate, traditional versus experiential education, and departmental versus general honors, among others. One fact remains constant: honors programs and honors colleges have continued to grow and change over the past century.

In 1927, Learned wrote of talented students:

> Our schools [American universities] are scoured for promising candidates, who, when they are safely landed, are turned over to the most remarkable tutorial organization in existence, exemplifying in high degree all the elements enumerated above. Unfortunately, however, this commendable treatment is confined to athletic material. The student of intellectual parts, for whom these same institutions theoretically exist, appears at the gate unsought and unheralded. Neither president, nor dean, nor professor, nor instructor has serious intellectual contact with any one of them individually except in an irregular or accidental way. They wander through their eight semesters undistinguished in the mass, until their names appear in italic letters on the Commencement program as a final tribute from the registrar's comptometer. (p. 85-86)

Although collegiate athletes, who represent a different sort of talent, are sometimes still sought after with greater urgency than academically talented students, the development of the honors movement in the United States has served to provide academically talented students with educational and extracurricular opportunities more closely associated with their needs. Like the athlete who receives the best possible training, the academically talented student is now receiving a stronger educational experience through honors programs and honors colleges than he or she would in a college or university at large.

A few questions remain, though: How strong an educational experience are the most academically talented students receiving in honors programs and honors colleges? Are honors programs at the collegiate level still fulfilling the early rationales of honors educators in this country? Has the gifted student clientele dramatically changed in the past century so as to require a different

sort of education than before, or has the American system of higher education changed in the past century thus forcing change upon honors education?

Honors programs were initially designed to provide a better education for students who were more talented and motivated than the average student. Independent study, the tutorial method, and the seminar method have long dominated the honors movement in the United States in an attempt to provide individualized instruction for the academically gifted students in a college or university. The founders of collegiate honors education believed methods that provided close student-teacher relationships would benefit the advanced students because of the active learning that was involved. Yet, with the efficiency provided by modern-day lecture and survey courses, researchers and administrators are left to wonder how much individualized education is being afforded to those gifted students who really need it.

By examining the origins of the honors program in the United States, researchers, educators, and administrators are provided with information on which to base comparisons with present-day honors programs and honors colleges. In some instances, we should perhaps be reminded of our forerunners' rationales for honors in this country so we can revisit some of their original intentions and provide opportunities for restructuring or redesigning honors programs and honors colleges. In other instances, revisiting our history serves to remind us how far we have come.

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APPENDIX A

"The Sixteen Major Features of a Full Honors Program" (developed by the ICSS in 1957 and cited in Cohen, 1966, p.46-48)

1. Identify and select students of higher ability as early as possible. This involves far closer cooperation than has hitherto been the case with high school and preparatory schools. It also involves making full use of the new experience that has accumulated on the proper uses of predictive techniques, past records, entrance tests and interviews, as well as of studies of aptitude, motivation, readiness, and achievement.

2. Start programs for these students immediately upon admission to the college or university, and admit other superior students into these programs whenever they are later identified by their teachers.

3. Make such programs continuous and cumulative through all four years, with honors counseling especially organized and equally continuous.

4. Formulate such programs so that they will relate effectively both to all the college work for the degree and to the area of concentration, departmental specialization, or preprofessional or professional training.

5. Make the programs varied and flexible by establishing special courses, ability sections, honors seminars, colloquia, and independent study, all with course credit. Advanced placement and acceleration will serve in a contributory role.

6. Make the honors program increasingly *visible* throughout the institution so that it will provide standards and models of excellence for all students and faculty, and contribute to the substitution of an "honors outlook" for the "grade outlook". For the latter purpose, gradelessness in some honors offerings—i.e., a "pass-fail" approach—is a frequent advantage.

7. Employ methods and materials appropriate to superior students. Experience has shown that this involves:

   a. Bringing the abler students together in small groups or classes of from five to twenty

   b. Using primary sources and original documents rather than textbooks where possible

   c. Eliminating lecturing and predigesting by the faculty of content to be covered; approaching the subject matter to be covered selectively;

discouraging passive note-taking; encouraging student adventure with ideas in open discussions—the colloquium method with appropriate modification of this method in science and professional schools

d. Supplementing the above with increased independent study, research and summer projects, honors study abroad, and imaginatively conceived summer institutes

e. Providing for continuous counseling in the light of the individual student's development by teaching personnel rather than by full-time non-teaching counselors; but the professional counseling staff should include specialists in honors

f. Differentiating between the needs of men and women in counseling in the light of the steeper erosion of talents after graduation among the latter

g. Embodying in the program the required differentia between the creative and the formally cognitive approach

h. Giving terminal examinations to test the honors results

8. Select faculty qualified to give the best intellectual leadership to able students and fully identified with the aims of the program.

9. Set aside, where possible, any requirements that restrict a good student's progress, thus increasing his freedom among the alternative facets of honors and regular curriculum.

10. Build in devices of evaluation to test both the means used and the ends sought by an honors program.

11. Establish a committee of honors students to serve as liaison with the honors committee or council. Keep them fully informed on the program and elicit their cooperation in evaluation and development.

12. Use good students wherever feasible as apprentices in teaching and as assistants to the best men on the faculty. Even freshman can sometimes serve in this capacity. There is increasing use both of available research institutes and laboratories in the area for a semester or a summer. Foundation funds in support of such undergraduate research and independent study projects are increasingly available.

13. Employ honors students for counseling, orientation, and other appropriate honors purposes within the general student body.

14. Establish, where possible, an honors center with honors library, lounge, reading rooms, and other appropriate décor.
15. Work toward closer liaison between the undergraduate honors program and the graduate school.
16. Ensure that such programs will be permanent features of the curriculum and not dependent on temporary or spasmodic dedication of particular faculty members or administrators—in other words, institutionalize such programs, budget for them, and build thereby a tradition of excellence. (Cohen, 1966, p.46-48)