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JNCHC

**JOURNAL OF THE
NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL**

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

MANAGING GROWTH IN HONORS

JOURNAL EDITORS

ADA LONG

DAIL MULLINS

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

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EDITORIAL POLICY

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council is a refereed periodical publishing scholarly articles on honors education. The journal uses a double-blind peer review process. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu.

DEADLINES

March 1 (for spring/summer issue); September 1 (for fall/winter issue)

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CONTENTS

Call for Papers.....	5
Submission Guidelines.....	5
Dedication to Larry R. Andrews.....	7
<i>Editor's Introduction</i>	
Ada Long.....	9

FORUM ON “MANAGING GROWTH IN HONORS”

<i>Nothing Fails Like Success: Managing Growth in a Highly Developed Honors Program</i>	
Peter C. Sederberg.....	17
<i>Robert Burns, Peter Sederberg, and Higher Education Administration</i>	
Ira Cohen.....	27
<i>Important Issues for Growing an Honors Program</i>	
Nick Flynn.....	29
<i>Growth = Bucks(?)</i>	
Gregory W. Lanier.....	33
<i>The (Un)familiar Library: Managing the Transition for a Growing Number of Honors College Students</i>	
Jean E. McLaughlin	43
<i>Balancing Low Growth with High Success</i>	
Robert H. Hogner.....	47
<i>Nothing Succeeds Like Failure: Managing Loss in a Renascent Honors Program</i>	
Mike Davis.....	53

Getting More for Less: When Downsizing in Honors Yields Growth
Janet C. Myers and Mary Jo Festle.....57

RESEARCH ESSAYS

Honors Growth and Honors Advising
Robert Spurrier.....69

The Irrelevance of SAT in Honors?
Sriram Khé79

What is an Honors Student? A Noel-Levitz Survey
Donald P. Kaczvinsky87

*Transformational Experience through Liberation Pedagogy:
A Critical Look at Honors Education*
John Mihelich, Debbie Storrs, and Patrick Pellett.....97

About the Authors117

NCHC Publication Order Forms.....126

Cover image by Alex Mayfield, honors student at Oral Roberts University

CALL FOR PAPERS

The next issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: March 1, 2008**) is a general-interest issue that invites research essays on any topic of interest to the honors community.

The issue will also include a Forum focused on the theme “Honors Culture.” During the past decade, numerous essays have appeared in the national media* trying to define the current undergraduate culture in contrast to that of previous generations. Is there a particular honors culture? What are its characteristics? Does it differ from non-honors culture and/or from the honors culture of former periods? To what extent, if any, do honors administrators control this culture? Does the culture generally coincide with the stated goals of a particular honors program or contradict them? What are the particular roles of students, teachers, and staff within the honors culture, and which is culturally dominant? We invite essays of roughly a thousand words that consider the specific traits, if any, of honors culture in the context of your campus and/or a national context.

*Some relevant articles:

David Brooks, “The Organization Kid,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 2001):
<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200104/brooks>

Rick Perlstein, “What’s the Matter With College,” *NY Times* (Sept. 30, 2007):
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/30/magazine/30wwln-essay-perlstein-t.html>

Nicholas Handler, “The Posteverything Generation,” *NY Times* (Sept. 30, 2007):
<http://essay.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/09/27/the-college-pastiche/>

Thomas Friedman, “Generation Q,” *NY Times* (Oct. 10, 2007): <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/10/opinion/10friedman.html?em&ex=1192248000&en=b68385a36eade5ac&ei=5087%0A>

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We will accept material by e-mail attachment (preferred) or disk. We will not accept material by fax or hard copy.

The documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author’s primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.), but please avoid footnotes. Internal citation to a list of references (bibliography) is preferred; endnotes are acceptable.

There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.

Accepted essays will be edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for infelicities of style or presentation. Authors will have ample opportunity to review and approve edited manuscripts before publication.

Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu or, if necessary, 850.927.3776.

DEDICATION



Photograph © Elisif Andrews Brandon

LARRY R. ANDREWS

Larry Andrews has recently achieved the enviable titles of Professor Emeritus of English and Dean Emeritus of the Honors College at Kent State University, having “retired” on July 1, 2007. Larry arrived at Kent State in 1969 after achieving a B.A. in English at Ohio State, a Ph.D in Comparative Literature from Rutgers, and three years of teaching experience at the University of South Carolina. During his almost forty years at Kent State, he also did teaching stints at the University of Warsaw, Poland, and Volgograd State University in the USSR. His research has ranged from Fyodor Dostoevsky and Victor Hugo to Ann Petry and Gloria Naylor. His languages are equally wide ranging; French, German, and Russian are his primary languages (after English), and his secondary languages include Polish, Italian, Spanish, Greek, and Latin. The diversity of his interests and abilities has been a significant asset not only to Kent State and its Honors College but to the NCHC and to honors throughout the country. Larry has served as President of the Mid-East Honors Association and as a member of the NCHC Executive Committee, Publications Board, and *Honors in Practice* Editorial Board. He has several publications in honors journals, including the lead essay in the spring/summer 2007 issue’s Forum on “Grades, Scores, and Honors.” Another of his essays is titled “At Play in the Fields of Honor(s),” an appropriate title given his antic as well as serious disposition. He will not be retiring from the NCHC any time soon, and we look forward to future essays, conversations, and presentations from our highly esteemed colleague.

ADA LONG

Editor's Introduction

ADA LONG

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A recurrent motif throughout the history of *JNCHC* has been the growth of honors across the country: more colleges and programs, more students, more administrative demands, more work, and—sometimes—more resources. The implications of all these increases have resonated throughout the honors community, raising questions about how to manage the accelerating growth without diminishing the quality of an honors education.

And so we asked members of the NCHC to contribute to a Forum on the topic “Managing Growth in Honors”; we issued the following Call for Papers both in the last issue of *JNCHC* and on the NCHC listserv:

We invite essays that discuss growth in size and/or complexity of individual honors programs and colleges or the growth in numbers and kinds of programs/colleges nationally. We invite essays that analyze the consequences of growth for students, faculty, honors administrators, or institutions. Essays might focus on numbers of students, size of budgets, allotment of space, class size, ambition of extracurricular activities, or any other kind of growth within a program or college. Other essays might focus on the increased size of national honors conferences, intra- or inter-institutional competition, national visibility, or any other developments and consequences of the rapid growth of honors during the past three decades. An underlying question might be, “Is less more, or is more better?”

Len Zane addressed the final question in reviewing one of the essays for this issue of *JNCHC*: “The article got me thinking about how you measure the impact of honors on campus. Is a program that gives x students a really good experience better than a program that gives $2x$ students a lesser experience?” This question goes to the heart of the matter and underlies most of the essays published in the Forum.

We asked Peter C. Sederberg, Dean Emeritus of the South Carolina Honors College, to write the lead essay for the Forum; others could respond to his essay and/or address the topic from other perspectives. In “Nothing Fails Like Success: Managing Growth in a Highly Developed Honors Program,” Sederberg provides an in-depth analysis of the pressures to keep

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

increasing the number of students in a highly successful honors college at a large flagship university. These pressures range from enhancing the university's image to accommodating a broader range of students; they may take place as a mandate from upper administration or as an initiative shared by all of an honors program's constituencies; and the pressures may or may not be accompanied by the promise of adequate resources. Yielding to these pressures may result in the improvement or collapse of a viable program. Sederberg has laid out the spectrum of problems—and some potential solutions—that ensue from a mandate to grow an honors program; his essay is an invaluable aid to every honors director or dean who is under such a mandate and needs to foresee the potential hazards.

The first response to Sederberg comes from Ira Cohen, also a long-time and now emeritus honors director at a large research university. Based on his experience at Illinois State, Cohen—in “Robert Burns, Peter Sederberg, and Higher Education Administration”—finds resonance in Sederberg's perception of the contradictory expectations of honors directors and central administrators. While higher administrators know what they want from an honors program, they cannot see the contexts and complexities of mandated growth, often with troubling consequences for honors programs and their administrators. In such cases, honors directors would do well to “see ourselves as others see us”—or at least to know they are seeing us from a perspective quite unlike our own.

In “Important Issues for Growing an Honors Program,” Nick Flynn from Angelo State University provides advice about specific considerations essential to managing growth in honors. In an essay that will be especially helpful to new honors directors, Flynn focuses on strategies for making budget requests, ensuring scholarship support, providing adequate advising, and maintaining a sense of community when a program is planning substantial growth.

In what turns into an argument that NCHC should become an accrediting agency, Greg Lanier's essay “Growth = Bucks(?)” outlines the funding dilemmas of honors programs and colleges. Using the particular context of legislative policies in Florida, he describes the Catch-22 status of funding strategies at institutions such as the University of West Florida, where he directs the honors program: funding is based on enrollment growth of the past, but enrollment growth depends on funding in the future. He also describes the phenomenon of quantum jump (QJ) funding, its benefits and its dangers. The best solution, he concludes, is getting regular jumps in funding, and accreditation visits are, he argues, the best catalysts for QJs.

Sederberg's essay, along with others in this Forum, has laid out the multiple and complex reverberations of rapid growth throughout all components

of an honors program. Jean E. McLaughlin addresses one such component that may escape an honors director's attention but that is crucial to student success. In "The (Un)familiar Library: Managing the Transition for a Growing Number of Honors College Students," McLaughlin describes the false sense of security and then the overwhelming confusion that virtually all new honors students experience in their first attempts to do undergraduate research. Such attempts can lead to panic, and panic leads, alas, to Google. The University at Albany, SUNY, has wisely managed this consequence of growth in honors by creating McLaughlin's position: Honors College Librarian.

The final three essays in the Forum demonstrate that less can be more. In "Balancing Low Growth with High Success," Robert H. Hogner of Florida International University describes the development of a business honors program that, although originally conceptualized as a free-standing unit, evolved into a collaborative project with the Honors College. Hogner analyzes the factors that have led simultaneously to low enrollment and high success, factors that all result from a small community's initiation of ambitious projects such as a national journal, an honors society, and a spring-break program in Thailand. Hogner also explains some strategies that enable the program to compensate for its small size, e.g., offering honors-type experiences to students outside the program.

Mike Davis of Cameron University—in "Nothing Succeeds Like Failure: Managing Loss in a Renascent Honors Program"—demonstrates that Sederberg's advice is valuable not only to deans of large honors colleges but also to directors of small programs. He finds in Sederberg's ideas a set of inverse protocols for how to manage controlled loss. Davis's attempt to institute a more robust admissions procedure is likely to produce a temporary reduction in the number of applicants, with potentially negative consequences for his budget and himself. We hope to hear back from Mike Davis about how his venture turns out.

In the final Forum essay—"Getting More for Less: When Downsizing in Honors Yields Growth"—Janet Myers and Mary Jo Festle provide an example of improving an honors program by shrinking it. Four years ago, Elon University reduced the size of its program by half—from eighty to forty students admitted per year—and experienced just the opposite of the hazards that Sederberg listed in growing a program. The Elon Honors Program experienced a sudden abundance in every kind of resource—faculty, funding, physical facilities, administrative time—and, as a result, could create a more rigorous curriculum, an intensive thesis component, multiple extracurricular opportunities, heightened selectivity, and—most importantly—a greatly enhanced sense of community among the honors students as well as improved performance.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The Elon experience notwithstanding, the insight expressed by Ira Cohen threads it way through most of the Forum: the perspective of central administrators that more is better differs from the perspective of honors directors that less is more. Since growth is almost inevitable under these circumstances, the Forum essays provide useful information and advice about how to manage it.

The first of this issue's research essays also directly addresses a crucial strategy in managing growth: enhancing a program's advising system. In "Honors Growth and Honors Advising," Robert Spurrier describes the development of a cadre of trained professional advisors as part of the Oklahoma State University Honors College staff. He provides a survey of previous research on this topic, and he explains in detail the process he undertook to develop, implement, and evaluate an appropriate advising system. Since advisors are likely to be the key face-to-face liaisons between a large program and its students, Spurrier's strategy for strengthening advising may be especially valuable to honors administrators who are presiding over rapid growth.

In the next research essay, Sriram Khé presents the results of his pilot study on the correlation—or lack thereof—between SAT, GPA, and success in the Honors Program at Western Oregon University. Although the sample size is small and the data include only five cohorts from admission through graduation, Khé's study seems to affirm a growing national skepticism about test scores and high school grades as predictors of success. If a substantial number of honors administrators collected similar data that could be pooled in a much larger study, Khé's article could lead to invaluable insights into honors admission criteria.

Another study that could be replicated by large numbers of honors administrators is described by Donald P. Kaczvinsky in "What is an Honors Student? A Noel-Levitz Survey." Kaczvinsky provides the results of a national survey administered to all freshmen at Louisiana Tech University in 2004-2005, and he has uses these results to compare honors to non-honors students in a variety of categories. Some of these results are predictable (honors students had greater academic confidence); some are interesting (honors students felt more secure financially); and others might be surprising (honors students were less sociable and did not have significantly better study habits). Kaczvinsky also presents some provocative survey-based comparisons of students who did and did not qualify to stay in the honors program.

The final research essay—by John Mihelich, Debbie Storrs, and Patrick Pellett of the University of Idaho—is titled "Transformational Experience through Liberation Pedagogy: A Critical Look at Honors Education." The authors have applied concepts in the tradition of Paulo Freire and Allan G. Johnson not just to honors students but to the study of honors students by

ADA LONG

honors students. Hoping to raise their students' awareness of their privileged status within honors, the authors have used ethnographic research projects and journals to elicit their students' understanding of the role of social class in the admissions process and in the general culture of honors. Numerous quotations from the students' journals reveal the extent to which they accepted or rejected the elitism in their honors program and in themselves.

The essay by Mihelich *et al.*, along with many of the other essays in this issue, leads nicely into the Forum topic for the next issue of JNCHC: "Honors Culture." Please see the Call for Papers for more information about this future Forum.

About the Authors

Ira Cohen is Honors Director Emeritus and Professor of History Emeritus at Illinois State University and is currently Adjunct Professor of History at Hunter College, CUNY. He has served as president of the NCHC and as a member of a large number of committees. He was also president of both the Upper Mid-West and Illinois Honors Councils. He holds a B.A. from C.C.N.Y. and a Ph.D. in history from New York University. With the upcoming bi-centennial of the War of 1812, he is pursuing a twenty-year-old research project on the end of that war and the industrial revolution in the United States. The anticipated completion date is some time before the tri-centennial.

Mike Davis is Director of the Honors Program and Assistant Professor of English at Cameron University. He earned his B.A. from the University of North Texas and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Princeton University. His research focus is American fiction, and he is the author of *Reading the Text That Isn't There: Paranoia in the Nineteenth-Century American Novel*.

Mary Jo Festle is Director of the Honors Program and Professor of History at Elon University. Her teaching and research interests include the United States in the twentieth century, oral history, history of medicine, African American history, and women's sports.

Nick Flynn is in his sixth year as Founding Director of the Angelo State University Honors Program. He is a faculty member of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. Flynn's research involves amino acid metabolism. He has mentored three honors students in research since 2005.

Robert H. Hogner (Ph.D. Pittsburgh, Business and Anthropology) is Director of Development for Undergraduate International Business Programs and a Senior Honors College Fellow at Florida International University. He is Director at DART, Inc., a national community-organizing center, and a consultant for Campus Compact's Service Learning Task Force.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Donald P. Kaczvinsky is Professor of English at Louisiana Tech University, where he holds the Mildred Saunders Adams Endowed Professorship. He has taught in the Honors Program at Louisiana Tech since 1990 and was Director of the Honors Program from 2000 to 2006. In 2007, he was named the Louisiana Tech University Foundation Professor for excellence in teaching, research, and service. He is currently Director of the School of Literature and Language and continues to teach a course on the Foundations of Modern Civilization in the honors core curriculum.

Sriram Khé is Director of the Honors Program and Associate Professor of Geography at Western Oregon University. He earned his Ph.D. in urban and regional planning from the University of Southern California after graduating with an electrical engineering degree in India. Primarily because of his academic background, he refers to himself as a “naturalized” geographer. His current interests are in incorporating autoethnography into academic research and newspaper op-ed pieces; he has information about these at www.wou.edu/~khes.

Gregory W. Lanier is Associate Dean for Honors and Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of West Florida and holds a joint appointment in the Departments of English and Theatre. His research interests are primarily in the relationship between dramatic texts and theatrical performance in the works of Shakespeare and Sam Shepard. He is a member of the NCHC Board of Directors and is Co-Chair of the Assessment and Evaluation Committee and of the Finance Committee. He has made numerous presentations at NCHC and has received more than ten teaching awards over the course of his career.

Jean E. McLaughlin is Honors College Librarian at the University at Albany/SUNY. She earned her M.S. in Library and Information Science from Drexel University and has worked in health sciences and academic libraries. In addition to library positions, she has held positions as electronic publishing manager and analyst in healthcare information systems software development.

John Mihelich is an assistant professor at the University of Idaho where he teaches anthropology, sociology and American studies. He integrates innovative and critical pedagogy in his courses on religion, social inequalities, and popular culture. Dr. Mihelich’s research focuses on American culture and explores questions about the intersections of community, class, and religion.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Janet C. Myers is Associate Director of the Honor Program and Fellowship Advisor at Elon University. She earned her doctorate in literature at Rice University and is currently Associate Professor of English. Her research and teaching interests are centered in Victorian literature and culture, women's studies, and first-year writing.

Patrick Pellett is an honors student, McNair scholar, and senior at the University of Idaho where he is completing his bachelor's degree in sociology. His research interests focus on inequalities, and he is currently contemplating a study on amateur boxing.

Peter C. Sederberg is Distinguished Professor Emeritus in the Department of Political Science of the University of South Carolina and Dean Emeritus of the South Carolina Honors College. He is currently serving as Special Assistant to the Provost for Undergraduate Initiatives at Emory University. He moved west to join his wife, who was appointed Dean of the Candler School of Theology at Emory.

Robert Spurrier is Director of The Honors College at Oklahoma State University and a past president of NCHC. A political science professor (public law) and NCHC-Recommended Site Visitor, he is co-author of *Assessing and Evaluating Honors Programs and Honors Colleges* (2005) and founded NCHC's Developing in Honors workshop.

Debbie Storrs is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Justice Studies at the University of Idaho. She earned her Ph.D. in sociology with an emphasis on racial and gender stratification from the University of Oregon. Her current research interests focus on critical pedagogy, liberation sociology, and health inequalities.