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JNCHC

JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

HONORS CULTURE

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

CALL FOR PAPERS

The next issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: September, 2008**) invites research essays on any topic of interest to the honors community.

The issue will also include a Forum focused on the theme “Honors and Academic Integrity.” We invite essays of roughly a thousand words that consider this theme in the context of your campus and/or a national context. Should honors be honorable? Do honors programs and colleges have a special mandate to ensure honesty and integrity? Do honors programs experience unique problems related to academic integrity? Do honors students labor under exceptional pressures that threaten academic integrity? Should honors programs have honors codes that are distinct from those of the institution? Is plagiarism more widespread now than it was before the Internet? Is the concept of plagiarism becoming archaic in the Internet Age? What are the implications of services like Turnitin.com, which convey an inherent assumption that students are cheaters? What impacts have plagiarism and attempts to detect it had on teaching and learning in honors?

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We accept material by e-mail attachment. We do 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



JOHN GRADY

John Grady is the ideal person to whom we might dedicate an issue of *JNCHC* devoted to the theme “Honors Culture.” He not only exemplifies honors culture but has helped to create it for almost four decades. On the full-time faculty in the economics department at LaSalle College (now University) since 1960, John was appointed Director of the Honors Program in 1969, a position he has held ever since. He attended his first annual NCHC meeting in New Orleans in October of 1969, and its student-centered culture made NCHC a lifetime commitment for him. He has attended all but two national conferences since then, and he hosted the 1983 and 2006 conferences in his beloved Philadelphia. He also was one of the four original organizers of the Northeast Regional Honors Council in 1971 and hosted their annual conference in 1976 and 1996. In addition to serving on virtually every major NCHC committee, leading and presenting conference sessions, and serving as an official and unofficial consultant to countless honors educators, John has initiated many of NCHC’s most significant initiatives. As the first co-chair of the Committee on Assessment and Evaluation and the first chair of the NCHC Personnel Committee, he led the development of the Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program, the criteria for NCHC certification as an on-site consultant/evaluator of honors programs, the biannual workshop on Assessment and Evaluation, and the job description and hiring process for the position of executive director. While many of John’s

DEDICATION

efforts have focused on defining and stabilizing the NCHC, he has always maintained his primary focus on students as the center and purpose of the organization. He has also been a continuous force for unity and respect; while a document defining the basic characteristics of an honors program threatened to be divisive, for instance, John made it an affirmation of common goals and shared community. The welcoming, inclusive, student-centered, and loving culture that people have cherished in the NCHC is in large part the creation of John Grady, and we have all been the beneficiaries of his wise leadership.

ADA LONG

Editor's Introduction

ADA LONG

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

Community of campus leaders; gaggle of nerds; petri dish for future CEOs; IQ incubator; think tank for hippies; snob squad; bunch of pointy-headed intellectuals—all honors administrators have heard the culture of their programs characterized with some such epithet, usually embraced with affection by the students it supposedly describes and often embodying a kernel of truth.

Not just students or individual honors programs but the broader culture of honors will often emerge as a subject of conversation at NCHC conferences, and perspectives on this culture have shifted significantly during the past half-century. Older members of NCHC remark that honors directors used to be people who loved working with smart students and who created communities of scholars based on love of learning. Directors weren't paid very much and often taught a full load of courses in addition to administering the program. Honors programs typically flew under the institutional radar; they were pretty much left alone rather than serving their now common roles as institutional status symbols, recruitment tools, and image boosters. Careers and hierarchies play a more predominant role now: directors are becoming deans, programs are becoming colleges, the NCHC is contemplating transition to an accrediting agency, and students are focusing on prestigious national scholarships and admission to elite graduate programs and jobs. Honors has become professional.

While some components of honors culture have been changing dramatically, others have not. We begin this issue of *JNCHC* with definitions of honors culture that include permanent and transitory, particular and general, valuable and problematic characteristics of honors. We sent out a call to all NCHC members for contributions to our "Forum on Honors Culture," and the call included these remarks:

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

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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>

We asked Charlie Slavin of the University of Maine to write the lead article for the Forum and distributed his essay to the NCHC membership. Slavin's essay, along with the other five essays that were selected for publication, comprise a rich and varied conversation about the culture of honors.

In "Defining Honors Culture," Charlie Slavin considers what traits might, in any time period, distinguish an honors culture from the institution-wide culture in which it resides. He examines some of the characteristics we usually cite in describing our students and faculty: motivation and innovation, for instance. The trait that emerges as a distinctive element of honors culture, he suggests, is intellectual risk-taking, a trait shared by students, faculty, and administrators in honors. He sees intellectual risk-taking as one cornerstone of honors culture and invites his colleagues in honors to name three other corners.

George Mariz of Western Washington University, in "The Culture of Honors," ultimately echoes Charlie Slavin's definition of honors culture as intellectual risk-taking, but first he provides a historical and anthropological introduction to our general understanding of culture. Starting with its Latin roots and continuing through modern distinctions between common-interest, identity-related, and voluntary cultures, Mariz situates honors culture in a historical context and defines it in relation to other cultural groups such as hockey fans or urban dwellers.

Jim Ford of Rogers State University takes up Slavin's challenge to add other cornerstones of honors to intellectual risk-taking, and he offers passion for learning as a second distinctive trait. In "Creating an Honors Culture," he suggests that, while students are the center and focus of honors culture, honors administrators select the students and create the policies that inspire both passion for learning and intellectual risk-taking. Honors culture thus emerges from collaboration between students, faculty, and administrators.

In "Honors Culture Clash: The High Achieving Student Meets the Gifted Professor," Annmarie Guzy of the University of South Alabama complicates the concept of honors culture, pointing out its inherent tensions. She argues that honors programs attract two different and in some ways opposite kinds of students. After describing the contrasts between gifted and high achieving students, she suggests that conflicts may arise not just between these two types of students but also between students and their teachers, who also typically fall into a category of either gifted or high achieving. These conflicts, Guzy implies, may be intrinsic to honors culture.

In a delightful essay entitled "The Prairie Home Companion Honors Program," Paul Strong gives a glimpse of the unique and often hilarious culture of the honors program at Alfred University. Riddles, puns, goofy mottos, and fractured Latin—such as the Great Seal of the Honors Program, named Siggy, short for *sigillum*, Latin for seal—create a joyous parody of pomp and circumstance. Parody can only succeed when there is a common body of knowledge and understanding; the Alfred Honors Program's network of in-jokes bespeaks depth of learning within a strong community that knows how to mix fun and work. It also bespeaks the kind of flexibility and spontaneity that can be hard to maintain in today's institutional culture.

Providing a longitudinal perspective on honors culture, Dail Mullins suggests that the kind of honors experience Paul Strong describes may now be a cultural dinosaur. In "The Times They Are A-Changin'," Mullins offers an old-fogey perspective on his two decades in the University of Alabama at Birmingham Honors Program. He notes the shift from cultural accoutrements such as ashtrays in the classroom, typed or handwritten term papers, and hand-me-down decors to cell phones, iPods, and Wi-Fi. Students used to hang out, and now they multi-task. They used to banter, prank, and procrastinate, and now they network, text-message, and start working on national scholarship applications in their freshman year. Mullins muses on this cultural revolution in honors, suggests some explanations for it, and then cranks up the volume on the Allman Brothers' album *Eat a Peach*.

The research essays in this issue of JNCHC are also connected, directly or indirectly, to the Forum theme of honors culture. In "The New Model Education," Gary Bell of Texas Tech University addresses the theme from a primarily prescriptive rather than descriptive stance. Using the Boyer Report

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as a starting point, Bell outlines the model that he thinks honors programs and colleges should both advocate and exemplify in order to lead higher education in America toward excellence in teaching undergraduates. He describes the qualities to which he thinks honors must aspire in order to achieve this positive position of leadership, qualities that include community, inclusivity, teaching excellence, and innovation. In his detailed advice about how to implement these qualities, Bell provides a set of ideals for honors culture, ideals that are substantially realized already in many honors programs and colleges and that, Bell contends, should fan out to include and inspire all of higher education.

The authors of "The Role of Advanced Placement Credit in Honors Education" suggest that AP credit may conflict with honors culture. Maureen E. Kelleher, Lauren C. Pouchak, and Melissa A. Lulay argue that the reasons high school students seek and value AP credit may be the same reasons that honors programs might be wary of them. While enabling students to narrow in on their majors, hurry through college, avoid subjects unfamiliar to them, and/or pursue more than one major, AP credits create challenges for honors programs in advising, curriculum development, and educational integrity. Based on a survey of the incoming students in the Northeastern University Honors Program and on consultation with their colleagues in NCHC via the listserv, the authors recommend deeper and more extensive consideration of the assets and liabilities of AP credit within the NCHC.

Finally, in "Towards Reliable Assessment," Gregory W. Lanier addresses issues that may well be central to the contemporary culture of honors. Lanier argues for the urgency of setting up reliable methods of data-based assessment and student learning outcomes. Probably few current honors administrators would disagree with his argument for good assessment practices although attempts to standardize such practices have stirred considerable controversy. In this essay, Lanier provides useful explanations and rationales for the practices he has established at the University of West Florida, with numerous examples of domains, outcomes, assessment matrices, rubrics, and data collection methods. While not all readers will share Lanier's enthusiasm for assessment or his notion that NCHC should develop a common set of assessment methods, surely all will appreciate the dedication and thoroughness of his advocacy.

About the Authors

Gary Bell is currently the founding (foundling?) dean of the Honors College at Texas Tech University, where he is a reluctant administrator and an enthusiastic teacher. He considers the high point of his career to have been designated “Teacher of the Year” at a previous institution, Sam Houston State University, where he also founded the honors program. His research is in World War II and Tudor-Stuart diplomatic history, with his Ph.D. from UCLA. He has served on the Executive Board of the NCHC, was president of the Great Plains Honors Council, and is currently co-chair of the Finance Committee in NCHC.

Jim Ford is in his fourth year as Founding Director of the Honors Program at Rogers State University. He is Associate Professor of Humanities, Philosophy, and Religious Studies. He earned his B.A. from the University of Tulsa and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Princeton University.

Annamarie Guzy is an associate professor of English at the University of South Alabama. She earned her Ph.D. in rhetoric and professional communication from New Mexico State University, and she teaches courses in honors composition, technical writing, and horror literature and film. She currently serves on the NCHC Board of Directors, the Publications Board, and the Research Committee.

Maureen E. Kelleher is Director of the Honors Program and Associate Professor of Sociology at Northeastern University. She is a member of the teaching team with upper-class mentors for a first-year honors course called Enhancing Honors 101, and she also teaches an upper-level honors seminar. Her research interests include risk-taking behavior on college campuses.

Gregory W. Lanier is Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences and Director of the University Honors Program and Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of West Florida. He holds joint appointments in the Department of Theatre and the Department of English and Foreign Languages due to his interest in the dynamics of Shakespeare in performance. Dr. Lanier currently serves as a member of the NCHC Board of Directors, a co-chair of both the Finance and the Assessment and Evaluation Committees, and an NCHC-Recommended Site Visitor.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Melissa A. Lulay is a graduate assistant for the Northeastern University Honors Program. She has a master's degree in counseling and applied psychology with a concentration in college student development and counseling from Northeastern University. Before attending Northeastern, Melissa received a bachelor of arts from Ithaca College.

George Mariz is Professor of History and Director of the Honors Program at Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA. His research interests are in the history of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European religion and European cultural and intellectual history. He is at work on a book on the social and cultural ideas of ministers and their sons in nineteenth-century Europe.

Dail Mullins is the former associate director of the University of Alabama at Birmingham Honors Program, a former chair of the NCHC Science & Mathematics Committee, and currently a co-editor of *JNCHC* and *HIP*.

Lauren C. Pouchak is Associate Director of the Honors Program at Northeastern University. She has an M.P.A. from Northeastern University in political science and a M.Ed. from Lynchburg College. She coordinates the Honors Welcome Week Program and a variety of other programmatic initiatives that include editing *The Honors Perspective*, a 2006 winner of the NCHC newsletter competition.

Charlie Slavin is Dean of the Honors College at the University of Maine. In a previous life he was on the mathematics faculty, having earned degrees at Princeton and Wisconsin. He continues to explore his long-term interests in the history and philosophy of science, the writings of John McPhee, and detective mysteries, all of which are riskier than studying singular integrals.

Paul Strong is Kenyon Distinguished Professor of English at Alfred University. He's been Honors Director since 1985 and will retire—from both honors administration and teaching—in the spring of 2008.