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Editor's Introduction

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The lead essay in this issue of *Honors in Practice* is one that most readers will want to keep close at hand. At the behest of the NCHC Publications Board, Emily C. Walshe of Long Island University, C. W. Post Campus, has contributed "Conducting Research in Honors," a set of clear, detailed, step-by-step instructions on how to do research in honors. While some readers will be familiar with this material already and others will struggle to keep up, the majority will find in this essay an invaluable tool and resource for doing research in general and honors research in particular. So go ahead and make room among the essential references on your bookshelf for this issue of *HIP*.

While Walshe's essay is targeted primarily at faculty in honors, the next three essays address particular issues related to student research. Nathan Hilberg, the faculty advisor for the *Pittsburgh Undergraduate Review*, answers the question "Is Originality an Appropriate Requirement for Undergraduate Publication?" He argues that, in evaluating undergraduate work and awarding institutional support, we need to distinguish between originality and "independent scholarly accomplishment." This distinction, he writes, goes beyond semantics and influences important decisions about students and the work they do, with originality being an invalid and inappropriate criterion for evaluating undergraduate research.

The other two essays that focus on student research provide suggestions about helping honors students complete their theses successfully. In "Individual Achievement in an Honors Research Community: Teaching Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development," Kaitlin A. Briggs of the University of Southern Maine describes her strategies for developing a research community in her honors thesis workshop. Basing her ideas on the work of Lev Vygotsky, she contends that individual progress is necessarily rooted in the multiple perspectives of communal discourse. She both describes and models a process that prepares students to move forward from a research community to a successful honors thesis.

A related goal with a different strategy is the subject of "Student-Guided Thesis Support Groups" by Jennifer Beard, Ryan D. Shelton, Amanda Stevens, George H. Swindell IV, and Raymond J. Green. The authors of this essay—the dean of the honors college at Texas A&M University-Commerce and four of the honors students there—give an account of a successful program of support groups that students designed and implemented in order to help each other through the process of writing their honors theses. The essay includes a

rationale and description of the program as well as excellent advice from the students about how to make such support groups work effectively.

The next set of essays focuses on curricular matters, starting with "More than a COIN Flip: Improving Honors Education with Real Time Simulations Based on Contemporary Events" by Kurt Hackemer of the University of South Dakota. Hackemer describes an extraordinary simulation-based course he taught on insurgencies and corresponding counterinsurgency (COIN) in Afghanistan. The course included standard texts, breaking news from around the world about events happening in Afghanistan, and a fictional news source called the Omniscient News Network (ONN) maintained by the instructor. The students used all these sources—and each other, through a continuous blog—to simulate tactics, decisions, betrayals, and armed conflicts in Afghanistan. Throughout the essay Hackemer provides suggestions on how teachers can adapt real-time simulations to other topics.

In "To Discuss or Not to Discuss: Integrating Pedagogies for Honors and Mathematics" by William Griffiths, Nancy Reichert, and L.R. Ritter, two math teachers and an honors director (Reichert) describe the inauguration of discussion-based classes in mathematics at Southern Polytechnic State University. Since math is often an especially hard topic to teach in a campus-wide honors program, this essay will be a useful source of ideas and information. While not all problems were resolved or questions answered, the new pedagogies described here increased interest among both faculty and students who, in most instances, were initially skeptical.

Like math, language courses can be hard to incorporate within an honors curriculum, but, in "French à la carte: Maintaining a Language Program on a Shoestring," Sheilagh Margaret Riordan describes a strategy she adopted for teaching French to fourteen students of all ranges and kinds of language background within the Harriet Wilkes Honors College of Florida Atlantic University. While few teachers, even in honors, would be willing to take on as many extra responsibilities for as little money as Riordan has done, she offers several good ideas that other honors educators could adopt, either in sum or in part, for honors courses like advanced languages or mathematics that enroll students of varying skill levels.

Honors contracts are the topic of the next essay, by Alyce DiLauro, Teron Meyers, and Laura Guertin of Penn State Brandywine, called "The Value of Extending the Honors Contract Beyond One Semester: A Case Study with Smithsonian Dinosaurs." Guertin begins the essay by suggesting the value of extending an honors contract project beyond the semester-long course to which it is attached. Two of her students then illustrate this value in their account of an audio-visual project on dinosaur specimens at the Smithsonian Institution that they first undertook in Guertin's course; they extended the project under her guidance for two more semesters, making it a significant achievement in research and digital media. Neither the students nor the instructor received extra credit other than intellectual satisfaction and accomplishment; some more

palpable means of encouraging such projects would be worthwhile to students and their teachers in honors.

Michael Cundall of Northwestern State University, in "Service Learning and Skunkworks in a Senior Honors Colloquium," recounts the experience, familiar to many in honors, of finding himself suddenly committed to pedagogies and projects that are entirely new to him and coming up fast. Fortunately, he rose to the occasion by having his students in a senior colloquium plan and implement a catered, day-long seminar that taught and demonstrated food production in a manner responsible and responsive to the local community of growers and consumers. This sudden-immersion experience introduced Cundall to what Paul Strong called "Honors as Skunkworks."

In "Beyond the Great Books: Increasing the Flexibility, Scope, and Appeal of an Honors Curriculum," Matthew C. Altman compares the new theme-based interdisciplinary honors curriculum at Central Washington University to the honors program's previous Great Books approach. The transition provides an interesting contrast of the two models that honors administrators may find useful in considering programmatic options. For CWU, the transition away from the Great Books created important benefits with few drawbacks.

The next two essays—both by multiple authors from different institutions—suggest ways to enhance programmatic effectiveness. Three former student representatives on the NCHC Board of Directors describe honors ambassadors programs at their undergraduate institutions. After explaining the benefits of ambassadors programs, they give a detailed account of these programs at West Virginia University, Hillsborough Community College, and Northern Arizona University. Despite differences in size, duties, and compensation, all three ambassadors programs benefit the ambassadors, the other students, the honors program or college, and the larger institution.

"Ad Tracking, Brand Equity Research, and . . . *Your Honors Program*?"—by William A. Ashton and Erzulie Mars of York College, CUNY; Barbara Ashton of Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY; and Renny Eapen of Chestnut Hill College—describes a method used at York College to determine what and how much the student population knew about the honors program. Based on the survey they conducted, the authors had the data they needed to change not just the way they promoted the program but also the program itself; they provide a model that honors directors, if they are trying to attract more students from their own institution, might find helpful.

The following three essays go beyond curricular and programmatic matters to encompass larger contexts for honors. In "From the White House to Our House: the Story of an Honors College Vegetable Garden," Michael Lund and Geoffrey Orth describe an exciting new project initiated by the Cormier Honors College for Citizen Scholars at Longwood University: a vegetable garden created and maintained by honors students and faculty. The garden is roughly the same dimensions as—and is modeled on—Michelle Obama's White House garden. The Longwood garden provides an opportunity to investigate local

history, politics, agriculture, civil rights, and economics, all the while providing focus and creating community in the honors college. Although new, this project provides a model that other honors administrators might well consider for their own programs.

Another series of initiatives that include community outreach are the subject of "Studies in Cyberspace: Honors, Professional Teacher Development, Curricular Development, and Systemic Change in Louisiana" by Brian C. Etheridge, Galen Turner, Heath Tims, and Christian A. Duncan. These initiatives involve study of the scientific, technical, political, economic, and ethical issues related to cyberspace. Cooperating with and supported by local and regional, public and private entities, honors faculty created a professional development workshop for high school teachers, a one-week residential camp for high school students, and a semester-long course for honors students. Among the many benefits of these initiatives, the authors point to the opportunity honors educators have to take their innovations beyond their program and institution into their local and regional cultures.

The next essay both describes and is a collaboration between Mimi Killinger, a faculty member, and Aya Mares, an honors student, at the University of Maine. "Fertile Ground: Reflections on Collaborative Student-Faculty Research in the Arts" describes the project the authors undertook together on art therapy, art activism, and art collectives. The essay demonstrates in both form and content the richly productive work that honors inspires at its best—outside the classroom, not for credit, and for the joy and excitement of learning together. Like the essays by Laura Guertin and Sheilagh Margaret Riordan, this one shows the magic that can happen when teachers and students move beyond requirements, credits, and academic structures to celebrate their love of learning for its own sake.

The final four essays in this issue of *HIP* are themselves focused on finality; they are backward looks at experiences in honors and also visions of the future. We print here a revised version of Lydia Lyons's presidential speech delivered at the NCHC annual conference in Washington, D.C. Although ending her presidency, Lyons, honors director at Hillsborough Community College, focused on the future in her speech. She used two sports metaphors—white-water rafting and bicycling—to explain her vision of where the NCHC should be heading. Adapting to change, expanding our partnerships, achieving a voice in higher education, and keeping focused on our students are just some of the features of this vision.

"When It Comes Time Not to 'Jump the Shark': Stepping Down as Director" is Nick Flynn's look back at his experience of coming to the end of his honors experience. While Samuel Schuman published the probably definitive statement on "Ending in Honors" in last year's *HIP*, Flynn, the founding director at Angelo State University, provides an interesting perspective from someone who has been in honors a much shorter time. Those who are still in their first decade as honors directors or deans will find useful advice here on when and how to resign.

Catherine Irwin—in "Celebrating Twenty Years of Honors through Oral History: Making an Honors Program Video Documentary"—describes her experience making a twenty-minute video documentary of and for the University of La Verne Honors Program. She provides a model for using oral history to produce a video, which can serve a variety of purposes from documenting the program's history to enhancing the tenure and promotion files of honors faculty. Readers who are persuaded to attempt such a documentary of their own will find here an abundance of useful advice.

We conclude this issue of *Honors in Practice* with a piece by one of my favorite writers in the NCHC and beyond. In a moving contemplation of his long and distinguished career in honors at the University of Houston, Ted L. Estess tells a story about the pattern of his life, of all our lives—a story both existential and metaphysical about a future that seems (or is) both risky and random but that produces a past both coherent and meaningful. At any stage of our careers in honors, we can find wisdom in this story that mirrors the confusion and clarity of all our lives.