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# Editor's Introduction

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# Editor's Introduction

**Ada Long**
University of Alabama at Birmingham

John Zubizarreta of Columbia College leads off this volume of *Honors in Practice* with a revised version of his presidential address at the 2010 annual NCHC conference in Kansas City, Missouri. His speech, entitled "A Penny's Worth of Reflections on Honors Education," was, in a characteristic honors mode, interactive. He asked the audience to participate with him in enacting the "challenge, risk, creativity, collaboration, reflection, inquiry, [and] community" of honors education. Zubizarreta, both in his speech and in this essay, describes and illustrates honors education, the NCHC, and its conferences as embodying the "rough magic" of Shakespeare's Prospero.

Kateryna A. R. Schray provides a fine example of rough magic in her essay "Into the Afterlife and Back with Honors Students," which is the first of three essays in this volume that describe collaborative student projects in honors courses. Schray describes a team-taught honors seminar—Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory in Literature and Culture—at Marshall University. The primary focus of the essay is a series of collaborative projects in which, for instance, students designed stage sets for hell in a nursing home, prison, and big box store. Readers seeking new ideas for class projects in the arts and humanities will find imaginative ones here.

Another unusual idea is the focus of "The Last Class: Critical Thinking, Reflection, Course Effectiveness, and Student Engagement" by Elizabeth Bleicher of Ithaca College. Bleicher describes the content and context of a final class session in her first-year honors seminar, which is designed to acclimate new students to college life. In her honors version of the course, students anticipate and then, in the last class, accomplish both individual and collaborative evaluations of the course, knowing that their analyses, criticism, and recommendations will shape the course the next time it is taught. These students then stay connected to the class after it is over, helping the next batch of first-year students go through the same process.

Another essay that describes a strategy for student collaboration in an honors context is "Designing a Collaborative Blog about Student Success" by Melissa L. Johnson, Alexander S. Plattner, and Lauren Hundley of the University of Florida. The authors describe an ongoing blog and video blog set up by students in their third semester of a four-course sequence called Honors Professional Development. The students in this course design and maintain blogs that facilitate first-year students' successful involvement in campus and community life. Readers can easily adapt many ideas here for application and implementation on their home campuses.

Starting off the next set of four essays about curricular matters, Annmarie Guzy of the University of South Alabama makes an important and compelling argument—in "Why Honors Students Still Need First-Year Composition"—that Advanced Placement courses and exams are no substitute for college-level writing classes. In the format of a letter from a composition teacher to incoming honors students, Guzy writes that honors students especially need to develop writing skills and sophistication that far exceed what can be tested at the high-school level. Guzy's well-researched and well-reasoned analysis of AP credit on educational grounds serves as a valuable rebuttal to the various constituencies who are pushing AP courses for financial reasons.

Adam D. Frank, in "Rethinking Asian Studies in the Interdisciplinary Honors Setting," describes three interdisciplinary honors courses in Asian studies at the University of Central Arkansas. This essay will be useful to readers who have a personal or pedagogical interest in Asian history, art, and culture; who are considering new ways to adapt service learning components to their honors classes; and who are thinking of ways that honors courses can influence campus culture. At UCA, the honors Asian studies curriculum has been one way to start exposing stereotypes of "Orientalism" and educating the university population about Asian cultures.

Another subject about which stereotypes flourish is addiction. In "Understanding and Defining Addiction in an Honors Context," Sarah W. Feldstein Ewing and Bevin Ehn describe an honors class on addiction at the University of New Mexico. Feldstein Ewing, the teacher, and Ehn, a student in the class, provide a detailed account of the purpose, content, and intended outcomes of the course, focusing both on the strategies for defining addiction and the pedagogical approaches to academic and personal development adopted in the class.

In "Team Teaching on a Shoestring Budget," Jim Ford and Laura Gray of Rogers State University provide five alternatives to full-fledged team teaching. While the authors are hoping and trying to incorporate team teaching in their honors program, the necessary funding is not available. The five alternative options they describe might well be useful to other honors administrators and teachers facing financial cutbacks or chronic constraints.

The next three essays describe different kinds of mentor programs in honors. In "Beyond Formulas: A Collaboration between Liberal Arts Honors Underclassmen and Senior Math Majors," Alissa S. Crans and Robert J. Rovetti of Loyola Maymount University present an original and useful idea for a collaborative project in which senior math majors work with lower-level liberal-arts honors students, guiding them in a practical, hands-on study of the math necessary to solve questions about perspective, photography, and architecture. Any honors teacher or administrator who has struggled to make math accessible and interesting to non-majors will find inspiration in this essay.

An essay that describes mentoring not across but within disciplines is "Peer Review Across Disciplines: Improving Student Performance in the Honors Humanities Classroom" by Julie M. Barst, April Brooks, Leda Cempellin, and

Barb Kleinjan. The authors suggest strategies that have been successful at South Dakota State University for incorporating peer mentoring within honors courses on composition, history, art, and communication studies/theater. Teachers in these disciplines will find pointers here for specific courses, and most of the ideas are adaptable to any discipline.

In "An Honors Alumni Mentor Program at Butler University," Jaclyn Dowd, Lisa Markus, Julie Schrader, and Anne M. Wilson describe a recently inaugurated, grant-funded program that pairs current honors student with honors alumni in similar fields. Readers who do not already have such a program will find here some useful information about the benefits and pitfalls of developing student-alumni partnerships.

The next two essays present original forms of honors outreach beyond college campuses. In "The Neptune Academy: Honors Students Give Back," Douglas Corbitt, Allison Wallace, Corey Womack, and Patrick Russell—two teachers and two honors student in the University of Central Arkansas Honors College—describe a week-long summer academy for rising eighth-graders who are at risk for dropping out of high school or not continuing on to college. The detailed analysis of the recruitment of both honors students and eighth-graders, the preparatory training course, and the academy itself is accompanied by a discussion of obstacles as well as successes, where it becomes clear that the obstacles were often the keys to the successes. The Neptune Academy is an excellent model for honors educators seeking ways for their programs and students to contribute significant service to their communities.

A different kind of honors outreach on another continent is the subject of "Self as Text: Adaptations of Honors Practice" by Michaela Ruppert Smith. She describes an adaptation of City as Text™ methodology to an orientation activity at the Collège du Léman in Geneva, Switzerland. To prepare a class of International Baccalaureate students for a course called Theory of Knowledge, the teachers designed a field trip to two museum exhibits and one very unusual restaurant in Zürich. The experience they designed was based on NCHC practices and can, in turn, serve as a model for college-level honors in the United States.

The last two essays in this volume present master plans, one for an honors college and the other for a multidisciplinary honors program. In "Preparing a Master Plan for an Honors College," John R. Vile of Middle Tennessee State University describes the benefits that he and his colleagues derived from developing a master plan. He recounts the process of contextualizing the honors college institutionally and nationally; surveying the various constituencies; and projecting short-, intermediate-, and long-term goals for the college. New honors administrators will find this essay especially helpful.

Finally, in "Some Multidisciplinary Practices," Kathleen Black describes the admissions process, course requirements, symposia, colloquia, and field trips that combine to meet the multidisciplinary objectives of the honors program at Northwestern College of St. Paul, Minnesota. Honors administrators who are designing new programs or redesigning old ones will find good ideas here.