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4-1-2004

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Kelly Younger
Loyola Marymount University, kyounger@lmu.edu

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Younger, Kelly, "Honors, Inc." (2004). *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council --Online Archive.* Paper 140.
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Honors, Inc.

KELLY YOUNGER
LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Academics across the country are having an allergic reaction to the corporate model of operation being adopted by many universities. Terms like *branding*, *collateral materials*, *budget controls, marketing strategies,* and *outcomes* are causing a panic among faculty who believe that a *customer satisfaction* approach to higher education is anti-intellectual and that it leads to grade inflation, teaching toward evaluations, and learning as *product*, not process.

Honors programs in particular, often the standard bearers of undergraduate academic standards, are being asked to market themselves not only to the top prospective students, but also to the university administration at large. Honors is frequently the default *focus group* expected to show the rest of the university programs and departments 'How it is done,' or rather, 'How it is done according to *standard*.' By 'it,' of course, I mean *marketing* our curriculum, *selling* our program, and *branding* our product.

But what is the *product* of an honors education?

Most honors directors answer this question with phrases like *a distinguished interdisciplinary education*, *a life-long love of learning*, or *a well-rounded individual,* and when speaking to a new student or colleague, honors directors easily articulate who they are, what they do, and why they do it. They speak of smaller classes, advanced and interdisciplinary curricula, faculty mentors, research projects, unique housing, prestigious scholarships, and, of course, the rewarding experience of participating in the intellectual life of the campus. Directors run into difficulty, however, when they must translate this narrative into the *eduspeak* required by various media relations departments, assessment directors, or capital campaign fundraisers, who more often than not are non-academics with little or no contact with honors students. Moreover, when these university administrators require that honors programs hawk their wares through highly stylized *mission statements*, *promotional materials*, *outcomes lists*, and even *a look*, honors directors are forced to market their programs toward administrative approval, not toward prospective students.

To complicate matters further, not every honors director is in a position to resist the administrative pressure of conforming to the corporate model. When vital decisions concerning funding and hiring are determined by the university, it is detrimental to bite the hand that feeds the honors budget. And for the untenured honors director, such resistance is impolitic.

As a result, some questions arise: How does an honors program respond to and withstand the university's corporate leanings without putting the program in jeopardy? How do honors directors promote their programs in an authentic way that

attracts students rather than in a commercial way that simply pleases the administration? And are these two questions incompatible?

The following offers possible answers by tracing the development of the corporate university, providing a personal example of one honors program that attempted to resist it, and discussing the unexpected consequences.

THE CORPORATE UNIVERSITY: AN OVERVIEW

"The men who stand for education and scholarship," wrote John Jay Chapman, "have the ideals of business men. They are in truth business men. The men who control [universities] today are very little else than business men" (Aronowitz 17). Most academics have recently heard or muttered similar sentiments around university departments. In fact, many assume that the business-model university came into existence during the height of corporate culture in the 80s and the economic boom of the 90s. What is intriguing about Chapman's seething remark, however, is that he wrote it in 1909. And he was not the only one.

In 1918, sociologist Thorstein Veblen published *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Businessmen* where he writes:

> Men dilate on the high necessity of a businesslike organization and control of the university, its equipment, personnel and routine. What is had in mind in this insistence of an efficient system is that these corporations of learning shall set their affairs in order after the pattern of a well-conducted business concern. In this view the university is conceived as a business house dealing in merchantable knowledge, placed under the governing hand of a captain of erudition, whose office is to turn the means in hand to account in the largest feasible output. . . .
>
> The university is to make good both as a corporation of learning and as a business concern dealing in standardized erudition, and the executive head necessarily assumes the responsibility of making it count wholly and unreservedly in each of these divergent, if not incompatible lines. (Gould 79)

If, as Chapmen and Veblen reveal, the idea of the corporate university already existed by the early the 20th Century, then when exactly did it begin and how did it proliferate? In *The Knowledge Factory: Dismantling the Corporate University and Creating True Higher Learning*, Stanley Aronowitz believes the seed was planted by an 1862 legislative act signed by President Lincoln granting federal land to "states that agreed to establish institutions of research and instruction devoted to the production and transmission of scientific and technical knowledge" (16). Aronowitz then maps the corporatization of the American university through to the 1944 GI Bill that "permanently changed the nature and social makeup of higher education's student

body" (28). He points out that the GI Bill was in fact created to prevent millions of returning soldiers from entering the workforce and causing a dangerous surplus in the labor market. When a million and a half veterans started entering the job market from institutions of higher learning four years later, however, their employers were distressed to find these graduates still needed job training. The demand for work-ready employees quickly collapsed the separation of graduate, undergraduate, and vocational education, especially as the economy and the birth rate continued to boom.

Aronowitz proceeds, claiming that Clark Kerr's 1963 book *The Uses of the University* is responsible for the new "multiversity" where the humanities take a secondary role to technical research and training (32). Kerr grants the general population access to general education, but he argues for a privileged class of researchers dedicated only to "knowledge production." Aronowitz concludes with an overview of the last quarter century identifying the professionalization of the armed forces, economic recessions, corporate mergers, and the collapse of the Soviet Union as powerful agents that shaped the current state of higher education in America.

Since the Chairman and CEO of IBM, Louis Gerstner, Jr., published "Public Schools Need to Go the Way of Business" in *USA Today* (1998, 13A), there has been no shortage of literature concerning the corporate-academic model. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* consistently publishes letters, articles, and whole issues dedicated to the trend. In the past year alone, three major books have been published on the subject. *Steal This University: The Rise of the Corporate University and the Academic Labor Movement* is a call-to-arms collection of what the last twenty years of corporate culture have produced: for-profit education like the University of Phoenix and the sale of internet courses; disproportionate rank and tenure standards; anti-intellectualism; labor union forming and union busting, to name just a few.

In *The University in a Corporate Culture*, Eric Gould details six business styles that appear in the operation of a university: management and productivity development systems; budget controls; marketing strategies; redistribution of labor; development of research and ancillary enterprises; and customer service orientation (80-81). Gould expands on all of these with examples of learning outcomes, merit raises, outsourced staff and adjunct faculty, government-funded research programs, and ever-increasing student life programs. He identifies university marketing strategies borrowed directly from corporate models:

> Growing use of media advertising with the targeting of key audiences; the development of public relations offices entrusted with producing favorable and focused press releases, the use of promotional rhetoric and corporate-styled logos, the development of public identity themes, the hiring of state and federal lobbyists; the growth of a new rhetoric of corporate eduspeak that focuses on the language of excellence. (80).

Finally, no one has defined the term *corporate culture* more pointedly than Henry Giroux in his essay "Vocationalizing Higher Education: Schooling and the Politics of Corporate Culture." He reveals that Universities use the term corporate culture . . .

> . . . to refer to an ensemble of ideological and institutional forces that function politically and pedagogically both to govern organizational life through senior managerial control and to produce compliant workers, depoliticized consumers, and passive citizens. Within the language and images of corporate culture, citizenship is portrayed as an utterly privatized affair whose aim is to produce competitive self-interested individuals vying for their own material and ideological gain. Reformulating social issues as strictly individual or economic, corporate culture functions largely to cancel out the democratic impulses and practices of civil society by either devaluing them or absorbing such impulses within a market logic. No longer a space for political struggle, culture in the corporate model becomes an all-encompassing horizon for producing market identities, values, and practices. (30-31)

These examples and definitions are all too familiar to honors directors who are charged with recruiting the best and brightest students to their university. The issue is not so much the efficacy of the directors' methods, but the difficulty in matching their honors methods to the correct corporate vocabulary. Academics and administrators thus waste time struggling to fit square pegs into round holes, *eduspeak* into education.

Former Harvard President Derek Bok addresses this very struggle in his *Universities in the Marketplace: The Commercialization of Higher Education*. He offers his personal account of the struggle to promote excellence in teaching, learning, and research while resisting quick and easy corporate solutions. The failure to do so, Bok argues, leads universities to "[sacrifice] essential values that are all but impossible to restore" (208).

I firmly agree, but, with all due respect, that's easy for a university president to say. If more university presidents followed suit, we would not be in this predicament. Most honors directors, however, answer to a higher administration that is increasingly demanding those "quick and easy corporate solutions." Be it an Honors Council, a Dean, an Academic Vice President, or an entire University Relations Division, the honors director is thus put into an either/or predicament: resist or accept corporate solutions. Either way, the honors program is potentially at risk.

What follows is a personal example of how the honors program at my university successfully translated who we are, what we do, and why we do it into terms the administrators accepted and the students understood. More importantly, I reveal how we did so without compromising the integrity of our program. After seemingly dancing with the devil, we discovered a way out of the either/or dilemma and avoided the *if you can't beat 'em, join 'em* defeatism. As a result, in the administrators' eyes we produced a program that is a *corporation* of market identities, market values, and market practices. But in our eyes, we created a community where students *in-corporate* academic identities, leadership values, and ethical practices.

THE CASE

Recently, the University Honors Program at LMU was asked to revisit the ways in which it markets itself. Since the program's inception, the Honors Program has offered the brightest students an alternative curriculum based entirely on the university core offerings. Like many programs, the honors core was simply a smaller, more accelerated version of the standard university curriculum. Over the past few years, LMU has increased in size, prestige and, of course, tuition. We were thus informed that, if our honors program were to remain the touchstone of academic excellence, it needed to change the ways in which it promoted itself. In other words, the Department of University Relations wanted the flagship program to get a new flag.

The initial attempt at doing a better job describing who we are, what we do, and why we do it resulted in a narrative about our particular program that emphasized our approach to teaching, the interdisciplinary range of topics we studied, the intellectual and personal community we promoted, and our philosophy of learning for the sake of learning. I will give this narrative in full in order to provide background for the response from University Relations. The original honors document read:

> As a means of creatively challenging the potential of the outstanding student and thereby contributing to the intellectual life of the entire academic community, Loyola Marymount University adopted an honors program in 1958. By constant experimentation and periodic revision, the program attempts to keep true to its original intent of providing the student with intellectual adventure.
>
> The program is interdepartmental and does not involve a separate faculty. It relies on the interest and generosity of the entire university faculty, and on the enthusiasm of the truly exceptional students, to become mutually involved in an intellectual experience. Not being a separate unit apart from the rest of the university community, the honors faculty and students thus share with the rest of the school the stimulation of their special academic experience.
>
> Taking advantage of its freedom from some of the restrictions involved in the structure of regular courses, the University Honors Program attempts to challenge as well as to inform, to ask hard questions as well as to examine tested solutions. Its goal is to provide a carefully integrated and demanding interdisciplinary curriculum for the exceptional student.
>
> The University Honors Program is open to students from all the colleges of Loyola Marymount University. The Honors Director administers the program with the assistance of the Assistant Director and the Honors Advisory Council. Faculty members from all disciplines at Loyola Marymount are invited to participate.

> The honors core curriculum begins with an intensive undergraduate experience combining interdisciplinary courses in the humanities and sciences with an individualized sequence in writing, critical thinking, and cultural studies. A second-year sequence in historiography, theology, and natural philosophy prepares the honors student for the third-year seminars in ethics, interdisciplinary seminars, and thesis preparation. The fourth-year results in the publication of the capstone thesis project: the culmination of independent research under the individual guidance of a professor and the participation in the Senior Thesis Forum.
>
> Honors students enter with a minimum 1250 SAT and 3.6 unweighted high school GPA, maintain a minimum GPA of 3.60 at LMU, and display proficiency in a foreign language. Successful completion of the University Honors Program is announced at the annual commencement ceremonies and noted on the student's permanent transcript. This recognition is of lasting personal, professional, and academic value.

We were especially proud of the last line, believing naïvely that it satisfied the *edus-peak* requirements. After patting ourselves on the back, we submitted our copy to the University Relations Department and the committee assigned to the Honors Program (comprised of the Assistant Vice President for Communications and Public Affairs, the Director of Creative Services, the Director of Media Relations, the Media Relations Manager, the Director of Corporate Relations, and the Publications Director), who promptly rejected it.

Why?

Too many words. Not enough pictures. The student will stop reading after fifteen seconds. And those students who opt for an accelerated curriculum are more interested in what they are going to get out of it, not what they are going to create with it.

We were, of course, immediately offended. Was it not clear that our curriculum is geared specifically toward those students who choose to read for more than fifteen seconds? Was it misunderstood that the success of our honors program depends on student contribution and creation? Apparently so.

For some reason or another (read: untenured honors director and untenured assistant director), we agreed to give it another go. We gathered Honors students and faculty into *focus groups*, asking them to describe our honors curriculum as they saw it and discuss the ways we could better promote this unique program. We had all the right tools for a corporate meeting: PowerPoint presentations, tape recorders, video cameras, note takers, brainstorming games, the iconic oversized pad on an easel with colorful markers, and questions given to us by the Media Relations Department like "If the Honors Program were a car, what kind of car would it be?"

What were the *outcomes*? We realized we all had a secret passion for playing *Pictionary* and that our honors program was a Volkswagen. To my displeasure, I

found myself in the position of encouraging students to argue the differences *not* between Plato and Aristotle, but between a Jetta and a Touareg. This was definitely not the purpose of our program, or of my position. The real result was that we were even further away from representing our honors program in a way that placated the administration or, more importantly, that satisfied us.

After several more weeks of brainstorming, meetings with Media Relations staff, lists of terms we thought they wanted us to use (e.g., *brand, logo, slogan*), we finally had a breakthrough. While returning to the drawing board once again with a group of equally defeated students, I tried to hide my own frustration by remarking: "Are you ready for the challenge?" One of the hungrier students replied, "Let's just make *that* the slogan and eat." Everyone laughed, except for the assistant honors director and me. Not because we were annoyed but because she was absolutely right. Why not give them an ambiguous slogan-question? Why not be rhetorical? It was, after all, the closest we had come to a phrase we would actually use in an honors classroom.

Thus, we all agreed on a new tactic: the more ambiguous we were in our marketing, the more specific we might actually be in representing ourselves. This approach led us to realize that we need not change our philosophy, our content, or our program against our will. We could pacify the administration and subvert the corporate model by reclaiming our rhetorical control. For example, the non-Honors University core classes at LMU have similar titles to many general education courses at other Universities, particularly private institutions: American Cultures; College Writing; Communications or Critical Thinking; Critical and Creative Arts; History; Literature; Mathematics; Science and Technology; Philosophy; Social Sciences; Theological Studies; and Ethics.

From 1958-1997, the LMU Honors Program simply offered unique sections of these courses, open only to honors students. The courses were different, but the names were the same. For example, all honors first year students would take the same section of HIST 101 or PHIL 160, but the classes were essentially the same in content as the non-honors versions. In 1997, however, the innovative honors director at the time created two courses called *On Human Dignity* and *Society and Its Discontents*. Although they had no counterpart in the university core, they were approved to fulfill the Philosophy and Social Science requirements. Both of these courses introduced the idea of interdisciplinary studies into the program and enabled faculty from different departments to teach in honors for the first time. For several years, they remained the lone course titles that stood out from the generic core categories and, as a result, piqued the interest of a whole new group of students. Moreover, the new courses led to changes in the course content of the remaining honors classes. Rather than merely offering more accelerated versions of the core, they became more interdisciplinary and experimental. Thus, the honors section of HIST 101 began assigning completely different texts and projects than the regular HIST 101.

Based on these two inherited name changes, we decided to further differentiate our offerings from the regular core curriculum by changing the names of all our courses without changing the newly developed content. The following new titles emerged:

HNRS 101: *American Persona*
HNRS 115: *On the Sublime*
HNRS 120: *On Human Dignity*
HNRS 130: *Society and Its Discontents*
HNRS 140: *On Motion and Mechanics*
HNRS 215: *Imago Dei*
HNRS 220: *Republic to Prince*
HNRS 230: *Age of Leviathan*
HNRS 240: *On the Nature of Things*
HNRS 330: *Beyond Good and Evil*

As an explanation of the curriculum, we rewrote the course descriptions that, at first, were lengthy and reminiscent of our first narrative attempt for University Relations. We now presented the following brief course descriptions:

> *American Persona*. A writing intensive course based on readings reflecting the political, social, and literary diversity of the cultures in which we live.
>
> *On the Sublime*. A Great Ideas series that establishes the overarching themes of the intellectual tradition commonly called the humanities: literature, philosophy, history, theology, political science, psychology, and economics.
>
> *On Human Dignity*. An examination of what it means to be human as reflected in and fashioned by significant philosophical works, both classical and contemporary.
>
> *Society and Its Discontents*. A discussion of culture and ideology from the perspective of various 19th and 20th century critical thinkers and political theorists.
>
> *On Motion and Mechanics*. An experiential course employing the use of scientific and engineering methods to study the environment around us and solve technical problems.
>
> *Imago Dei*. An exploration of the historical, social, and theological images of creation and the divine.
>
> *Republic to Prince*. A study of history and the construction of civilizations from the ancient to early modern periods.
>
> *Age of Leviathan*. An historical presentation of the major concepts, ideologies, and movements which have dominated the path to contemporary globalization.
>
> *On the Nature of Things*. An examination of the history, philosophy, and nature of scientific discovery, theory, and practice.

> *Beyond Good and Evil*. A critique of moral problems through the study of ethics, considering select issues in social justice, science and technology, business and society, medicine and bioethics, or media and responsibility.

Obviously, many of our new titles come from famous titles by Longinus, Pico della Mirandolla, Freud, Galileo, Genesis, Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Lucretius, and Nietzsche. By renaming the courses, we simply changed the titles, not the contents. Moreover, the new titles were based on intelligent, historically significant, and recognizable titles that reflect what we actually teach in the classroom.

When we presented these new *brand-names* to Media Relations, they finally nodded with approval. In fact, they applauded our efforts to distinguish our curriculum not only from the general core but from other honors programs around the country. In their eyes, we completely reinvented our honors curriculum. In our eyes, we gave new titles to a curriculum we refused to compromise.

With this new strategy, we returned to our first narrative description. The Director of Creative Services reminded us to use terms like *results, learning outcomes, benefits, excellence,* and *product*. Like our shift from the slogan-statement to the slogan-question, however, we decided to keep the focus on the student, not just our program, by using words we actually use when working with students. And like our question that prompted the student to give us an answer (i.e., what Creative Services would call a *product*), we decided to highlight the fact that our honors program knows who our students are, what they are looking for, and what they can get out of our program as well as what they can bring. We came up with the following:

> You're bright. You work hard. You think for yourself and come up with solutions no one has tried. You have an intense intellectual curiosity. You're a natural leader. You're exceptional and proud of it. And you're ready for more.
>
> If that's you, there's a great place for you here at Loyola Marymount University—a place where you can meet the challenges you've set for yourself, where you can grow and thrive.
>
> .....
>
> The University Honors Program is the jewel in the crown of academic programs at Loyola Marymount University. It's for students who value and want to be challenged by an exceptional education, who want to study a variety of subjects intensively. The program creates and supports an academic environment of intellectual adventure and provides a carefully integrated and demanding curriculum.
>
> The Honors Program takes advantage of its freedom from some of the restrictions involved in the structure of core courses. Classes are smaller. Projects are more intensive and demanding. And the rewards are great: High academic achievement. An honors degree for your

> transcript. Public recognition at commencement. And the satisfaction that you faced the challenge. Because you were ready for it.

Again, Media Relations approved. We were on a roll, but they still wanted the *benefits*. When it came to preparing the list of benefits from being in the Honors Program, we looked to Susanna Finnell's "The National Collegiate Honors Council: Living Up to National Ideals." Rather than use Media Relations questions (e.g., *If this honors program were a car, what kind of car would you be?*), we turned to her list:

> Where do graduates of your program go next?
>
> How is an honors class different from a regular class?
>
> What are the opportunities for independent learning and undergraduate research?
>
> How are honors students recognized on campus? at graduation? on transcripts?
>
> What input do honors students have into the running of the honors program?
>
> What is this honors program's particular strength?
>
> Are there scholarships available for honors students? Does the program offer preparation for national scholarship competitions? (7)

We then provided the following answers, keeping our student audience in mind:

> Since the entire Honors Program is only 120 students total (that's 30 students per year), we are able to assist you with this great challenge every step of the way.
>
> - Your Honors Program courses are smaller than regular core courses (15 or fewer in each class).
> - You'll have dedicated Honors Program advisors and counselors.
> - We help place you with faculty mentors and directors in order for you to research, present at national conferences, and publish your work.
> - We help you pursue and capture scholarships, graduate school placement, internships, awards, grants and study abroad opportunities.

- Unique housing options and Honors Program facilities include guaranteed en-suite housing with Honors roommates, a dedicated study room with computers, a conference room, a designated classroom and an available outdoor courtyard for social gatherings.
- Honors students receive priority registration every semester.
- Honors Program students often receive Trustee or Presidential Scholarships in addition to regular financial aid.
- Because of the intensity of the Honors Program, you'll build relationships with students, professors and advisors that most likely are stronger than you would build without the benefit of the program.
- We also host frequent events, socials, dinners with professors, guest speakers, and graduate school information sessions.
- Being an Honors student builds bridges to leadership opportunities within the university and the Los Angeles community.

Obviously, the tone and style of the above differ dramatically from our first narrative. There are contractions, sentence fragments, and fast-paced sound bites of information. We did this not to appear 'hip and happening' (and grammatically lax), but to promote ourselves before the correct audience: the smart, academically adventurous, highly motivated, socially aware, interesting high school student who actually is ready for the challenge. In other words, we convinced Media Relations and Creative Services that what they called *product* we called *challenge*.

Our strategy worked. Whereas before they wanted us to use fewer words and more pictures, we now had their authorization to be even more challenging. We revised our honors application, for example, by making it longer and more detailed. We still ask students to provide us with all of their academic qualifications, but we now require more details concerning scholarship goals, personal interests, family traditions and background, travel experience, and expectations of college. We ask for a non-traditional letter of recommendation (i.e., not a high school teacher or family member) from someone who can comment on their uniqueness. Rather than asking them to submit a basic writing sample (which more often than not resulted in AP English essays on *Hamlet*), we now provide them with prompts from LMU Faculty publications. Not only can they read faculty works, but if they come to LMU and join the University Honors Program, they can study with these particular professors as well. Thus we arrived at our ultimate marketing strategy: our faculty and students. We now include an option on our web page where prospective students can request a faculty member to contact them for a conversation about honors, and they can request a current honors student to contact them to answer questions, join them for classes, and even arrange a weekend campus visit.

This is what we wanted all along, and the way we got there was through playing the Media Relations game on our own terms, literally with our own terms.

THE CONSEQUENCES

Since Media Relations officially launched the new University Honors Program marketing campaign, we have noted several significant results pertaining to the students, the curriculum, the faculty, the program profile, and the university administration.

First, our applications from high school seniors doubled, and the applications from current LMU students increased by half. Since our program is limited to approximately 30 students per entering class (for a program total of 120), these increases in applications have created a more competitive candidate pool. Last year, the average high school GPA was 3.84 with an average SAT of 1364. This year, the applicant pool GPA is 3.87 with an SAT of 1422. Our waiting list has also increased by 20%.

While these measurable outcomes are pleasing to the administration, there are also the immeasurable results that we witness personally. Student pride in the program, for example, has visibly increased and is evident in honors student enthusiasm. This year saw more student-initiated social events, guest speaker lunches, and off-campus activities than in previous years. Their attitude toward their honors core curriculum has also changed. Many college students consider core classes something to "get out of the way" while pursuing their major requirements. Because our curriculum is now distinct in its course titles, they take more delight in their curriculum. "I'm off to History" has become "I'm off to the Age of Leviathan." It's often followed by, "That sounds cool, what class is that?" Thus, the honors students are marketing without even meaning to, and their non-honors friends are actively inquiring into the program.

Second, our honors curriculum has benefited greatly from our changes. It now has a perceptible continuum. When core classes are simply History, Literature, Science and Technology, etc., the student seldom makes the connections we expect them to make across the disciplines. Now that the honors professors know the course titles, the foundational texts usually taught within the classes, and the priority we place on interdisciplinary studies, they assign papers and lead discussions that incorporate authors and texts encountered in previous courses. Knowing all of your students have read the *Republic* and *The Prince* in their sophomore year makes teaching *Beyond Good and Evil* in their junior year all the more fruitful.

Third, the changes in course titles opened up our honors faculty pool significantly. Before, only an English professor could teach the Literature core, a Philosophy professor the Philosophy core, a History professor the History core and so on. And the dependence of most university core curricula on liberal arts faculty limited the involvement of the other colleges and schools at LMU. Now the broad titles of our interdisciplinary courses allow us to recruit faculty into honors from departments that have not ever been involved in honors. For example, an Art Historian can teach HNRS 215 *Imago Dei*, a Biologist HNRS 240 *On the Nature of Things*, a Film professor HNRS 101 *American Persona*, a Business professor HNRS 130 *Society and Its Discontents*. More professors have thus created more new courses with new texts and new projects. Likewise, the focus is more on depth than

breadth, abandoning the 'survey' structure of most university core classes. Moreover, faculty requests to teach in honors are up so much that we were able to petition the deans for more sections of particular courses, thus lowering the student-teacher ratio to 10:1 in some classes.

Fourth, the awareness and profile of the University Honors Program increased dramatically, both locally and nationally. Many LMU faculty members (especially those not in the College of Liberal Arts) had little knowledge of the University Honors Program. Since we have begun promoting our program, we have increased our on-campus recognition, which has enabled us to create an Honors Advisory Council comprised of faculty representatives from each of the colleges and schools. The Council members, in turn, are now able to promote the program to their own colleagues and explain how they can become involved with honors as well. Consequently, we are frequently barraged with requests to co-sponsor campus events and to advertise on our website.

Nationally, our profile has increased as well. Approximately 77% of LMU students come from California; beyond that the majority still hails from western states (mostly Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, and Hawaii). Since the initiation of the new marketing campaign last year, we have received applications and accepted students from several different states (Colorado, Idaho, Wisconsin, Florida, Texas, Minnesota, Kansas, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York) and countries (Canada, England, Australia, Mexico, and the Philippines). The Office of Undergraduate Admissions is especially pleased with this information and uses the details quite often in their presentations.

Internal relations with other departments have grown in energy and efficiency. Since the executive administration was eager to launch our new web site, we had top priority with the Information Technology division. There were university-wide announcements about the new site and thus requests to create links with several major programs, departments, and offices. The Office of Media Relations is so pleased with the University Honors Program that it is writing the cover story on us for an upcoming LMU Alumni magazine (on our condition, of course, that we write the article). The administration also granted official committee status to the Honors Advisory Council, thus making it easier to find faculty members who agree to participate. Their committee work on the Council now officially counts toward their university service.

Finally, in the context of of resisting the corporate model while having to work within it, our most important results pertain to the university administration at large. Once the Media Relations department *green-lighted* the new honors *brand*, including the *slogan, collateral materials, tag lines*, etc., someone needed to pay for it. The new letterhead, color postcards and brochures, web design software and computer hardware all cost money, and our budget, like that of most small honors programs, could not cover the expense. If we had downright refused to work with Media Relations, chances are that the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions would have increased pressure as well. Our agreement to work with them, however, in the ways I have described, literally paid off in the end. We turned every receipt, invoice, and requisition over to the appropriate Vice President or Director. If administrators

wanted the University Honors Program to be the flagship for academic excellence, we were happy to redesign the flag according to our standards and convictions, but we would not pay for the material.

They agreed.

In fact, they were so pleased with the results that they asked us to order significantly larger numbers of materials so they could distribute program information themselves to students, faculty, Regents, Trustees, potential donors, and even administrators at other universities. The Media Relations staff thus reverted to the role they were originally intended to play: the distributors, not the creators, of our honors identity.

THE CHALLENGE

The most surprising result of this difficult journey is that after Media Relations (et al.) checked the University Honors Program off their to-do list, they left us alone. Once they confirmed that we had a *slogan*, a *logo*, a *brand*, an *outcomes list*, a *look*, and a *marketing campaign* that was consistent with the university's, they moved on to other programs and departments. In fact, it turns out they had very little interest in who we really were and what we really did. The core of our program ultimately mattered less to them than the way we *sold* our core curriculum. Thus, we realized our time spent trying to educate the University Relations administration on the honors program was time wasted. Since they were operating solely under the corporate model, they were only interested in completing a series of tasks (the University Honors Program being merely one of them).

This idea of completion is the difference between the corporate model and the university model. For them, once a task is completed, it is crossed off a list and discarded. They move on to the next item on their agenda. For us, however, their idea of completion is inherently anti-intellectual because we understand that an honors education is never complete. We create academic challenge, foster a love of learning, develop leaders, and encourage the realization of a student's potential, but these are not checklist items. If we sold our students on the notion that these ideals could be completed in four years, we would truly be hawking a faulty product. An education—especially an honors education—is a life-long process, and that is perhaps the most important lesson we can ever teach our students. The product of an honors education, therefore, is knowing that there is no product.

The honors directorship, therefore, is a bilingual position. We must speak one language to the corporate administration and another language to the university honors students. If we confuse the two by speaking to the administrators with the language of honors, or speaking to honors students with the *eduspeak* of administration, then we create frustration and cynicism. If, however, we speak the right language to each, then we keep administration more at bay and draw more students toward honors.

Since the corporate model seems unfortunately to be here to stay, we would be naïve to pretend that we could exist outside of it. On the one hand, actively denying the corporate model puts our programs, our students, and our careers at risk. If the

corporation has taught us anything, it is that everyone is replaceable. On the other hand, passively accepting the corporate model turns us into customer service providers who *sell* a product.

From this difficult position, an honors director must make decisions that are in the best interest of academic merit and integrity. The honors director, then, may well be the best defense against the complete corporatization of the university. To use a metaphor that Media Relations will understand, the honors director is the last shareholder who, by refusing to sell, prevents the hostile takeover. Karl Jaspers reminds us that Socrates insisted knowledge "is not a commodity that can be passed from hand to hand, but can only be awakened" (8). Our challenge as honors directors is not only to awaken knowledge in our students, but also to awaken the university—and its ideals—from the corporate stupor.

For honors directors who must promote and protect their programs within the confines of the corporate model, the key to success—and survival—is maintaining rhetorical control. By doing so, directors will understand a fundamental marketing principle that Media Relations departments have completely misunderstood. They think marketing creates quality; we know that it merely reflects it.

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The author can be contacted at:
kyounger@lmu.edu