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Editor's Introduction

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Editor's Introduction

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We begin this volume of *Honors in Practice* with Bonnie D. Irwin's presidential address at the 2011 National Collegiate Honors Council conference in Phoenix, Arizona. Irwin develops a comparison between Scheherazade in *1001 Nights* and the NCHC: like that fictional storyteller, the NCHC needs to assure the survival of honors by carefully shaping its narratives. The countervailing story of higher education is burdened with negative and dangerous reviews in today's culture. By shaping a powerful and positive story of our own, Irwin argues, NCHC can not only energize honors programs and colleges but revitalize and enliven education generally.

The essays included in this volume of *HIP* are the kinds of stories that Irwin encourages honors teachers and administrators to write. The first nine essays are accounts of innovative honors courses that engage students and faculty in new ways of seeing and structuring knowledge. The other seven essays tell stories about programmatic innovations that promise not only to strengthen honors education but, in many cases, to fan out into the institutions in which honors is housed, thus doing the revitalizing work that Irwin has encouraged.

The role of the NCHC in initiating precisely this kind of revitalization is the subject of "Honoring the National Parks: A Local Adaptation of a Partners in the Parks Adventure." Joan Digby and Kathleen Nolan describe an NCHC Partners in the Parks program hosted by LIU Post—"From Fire Island to Ellis Island"—and the spinoff from it of a course called "Honoring the Parks" at St. Francis College. The essay illustrates the way that NCHC-sponsored programs can spread from a single experience into multiple innovations at local and national levels. The authors also reveal the new energy to be gained by partnering with professionals outside of academia, in this case National Park Services rangers.

The next essay gives another account of collaboration between honors faculty and nonacademic professionals and also between freshman honors students and senior-level non-honors majors. In "Turning Challenges into Gold: Cross-Listing Introductory Honors with Advanced Classes in the Visual Arts," Leda Cempellin describes her honors course called "The Museum Experience" at South Dakota State University. Working with the curator of the South Dakota Art Museum, Cempellin found ways to combine the talents and ambitions of honors students with the acquired skills and knowledge of art

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

majors in a semester-long service project designing an exhibition catalogue. This story of cross-listing an introductory honors course with an advanced visual arts course suggests a model for creating similar cross-listings with other disciplines.

Team teaching is another form of collaboration that is common in honors programs and colleges, but nothing is common about an honors course on death team-taught by faculty members in nursing and respiratory therapy at Midwestern State University and described in “Death—Planning for the Inevitable: A Hybrid Honors Course.” The authors—Jennifer Gresham, Betty Carlson Bowles, Marty Gibson, Kim Robinson, Mark Farris, and Juliana Felts—describe a course that combines traditional face-to-face classroom time with an online component via Blackboard. They argue in the essay for the benefits of online education as a means to elicit participation from introspective honors students who may be reluctant to speak up in class and who tend to do better academically when given the time to think out their ideas before expressing them.

“Honors Analytics: Science, An Interdisciplinary Lab-Based Course on Visual Perception” is an account of another team-taught course. Stephen R. Campbell, Robert T. Grammer, Lonnie Yandell, and William H. Hooper describe a junior-level honors course that combines physics, biology, psychology, and computer science. The logistics and content of the course provide a model for successful interdisciplinary honors courses in science even though this one had to be abandoned after ten years because the rapid growth of the honors program at Belmont University made it infeasible.

Another team-taught honors course is the focus of “Women Shaping Their World: An Honors Colloquium” by Julie M. Barst, Julie D. Lane, and Christine Stewart-Nuñez of South Dakota State University. The authors suggest that women’s studies courses are especially beneficial to honors students by combining their academic interests with personal and emotional challenges. Their colloquium combined gender issues with multicultural studies so that students could see connections to lives that were both like and unlike their own. The authors list the intended outcomes of the class and how they achieved these outcomes.

In “On Honors Students Dreaming the Gothic,” Mark Boren of the University of North Carolina Wilmington illustrates that a course need not be team-taught in order to be interdisciplinary. He gives a detailed account of an honors course in which he combined close textual analysis and psychoanalytic theory to the study of the Gothic form from *Dracula* to Lady Gaga. Boren shows that this methodology lured honors students from their typically practical and goal-oriented mode into examining texts, their lives, and their culture in ways that surprised and delighted them. The course provided critical tools useful in all contexts and challenged students both intellectually and personally.

In a different context, some similar goals inspired the redesign of an introductory honors seminar at Mount Ida College. In “Designing a First-Year

Honors Seminar with *A Whole New Mind*,” Ellen J. Goldberger tells her story of reading Daniel Pink’s *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*” and realizing that she needed to change the way she was teaching. Her seminar, which had been a typical college-orientation course, became instead a leap into creative and experiential pedagogy. In her essay, Goldberger describes the innovative details of a course that has become a model for her college, where all first-year seminars now use her approach.

A creative approach to teaching in honors is also the focus of Allison B. Wallace’s “The Place of Drawing in Place Journaling.” At the University of Central Arkansas, Wallace teaches courses on nature writing and environmental activism in which a significant requirement is getting to know one place outdoors and documenting it throughout the semester in both writing and drawing. She suggests that drawing teaches students how to see and value the natural world and prepares them to become responsible stewards, a strategy and goal that may spark the interest of many honors educators.

Creative thinking and personal development may not be the first traits that come to mind when most of us think about preparing students to write an honors thesis, but Aaron Coey and Carolyn Haynes show us how they incorporated these dynamics in “Honors Pre-Thesis Workshop, 2.0.” They have revised the thesis workshop for honors students at Miami University (Ohio) from the original version, which was probably typical of such workshops around the country, to make it less intimidating and more fun as well as more productive. Coey and Haynes analyze and document the success of the changes they have made, which include self-analysis, creative thinking, and peer interaction. The text of this essay and also the appendices should be useful and inspiring to other honors deans and directors.

As we shift now from curricular to programmatic matters, we stay with the topic of honors theses in the essay “Developing an Electronic Repository for Undergraduate Theses” by Foster Levy, Rebecca Pyles, Celia Szarejko, and Linda Wyatt. The authors present a clear and compelling case that honors programs should collaborate with their institutional librarians to create an electronic repository for honors theses. They describe the implementation of such a repository at East Tennessee State University, explaining the steps they took, the systems they adopted, and the reasons for their decisions. Any honors administrator considering establishment of a digital system for submitting and archiving honors theses will find this essay invaluable.

“An Outcome-Based Honors Program: The Honors Option Points (HOPs) System” describes another programmatic innovation. Bradley E. Wilson of Slippery Rock University gives an account of the honors program’s self-evaluation process that led to a new, outcome-based structure of the honors curriculum. Given what the program sought and valued in its graduates, the honors director, faculty, and students collaborated in designing a system in which students can gain honors credits not only through courses and contracts but also through study abroad, research presentations, publications, and leadership positions. The essay describes the system they developed and advocates

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

an outcome-based self-evaluation as a means to adapt honors requirements to the particular goals of a program and its students.

The next essay—"Doing the Honors: How to Implement a Departmental Honors Program in a Business School" by Julie Urda—is aimed at faculty in business schools who are hoping to start a departmental honors program but who are unfamiliar with honors. Urda outlines a ten-step process, based on the development of the departmental honors program in management and marketing at Rhode Island College, for planning and implementing a departmental honors program within a business school.

The final three essays in this volume of *HIP* describe honors initiatives that have had a significant influence on the institutions in which the honors programs are housed. In "The Institutional Impact of Honors through a Campus-Community Common Read," Timothy J. Nichols uses his honors college and university as a case study for developing an honors-led common reading program that can improve the education of all students, honors and non-honors. Nichols gives an account of the origin and implementation of the common reading program at South Dakota State University as a potential model for the development of such a program within and beyond honors at other institutions.

Kevin W. Dean and Michael B. Jendzurski tell the story of another honors-led initiative that has benefitted the whole campus in "Affirming Quality Teaching: A Valuable Role for Honors." The honors college at the West Chester University of Pennsylvania has initiated a low-cost and student-directed celebration of excellent teachers throughout the university. The authors provide a detailed account of the program they have developed and a description of its multiple benefits to a wide variety of constituents both in and outside of the honors college.

An especially ambitious multidisciplinary collaboration is the topic of our final essay, "The Genesis of an Honors Faculty: Collective Reflections on a Process of Change," by Robert W. Glover, Charlie Slavin, Sarah Harlan-Haughey, Jordan P. LaBouff, Justin D. Martin, Mimi Killinger, and Mark Haggerty. The essay includes seven narratives about the recent establishment at the University of Maine of "preceptorships," joint appointments in honors and academic departments that are teacher/scholar positions for faculty members who conduct research projects with undergraduates. Housed half in the honors college and half in an academic department, each of these new positions is non-tenure-track but offers benefits that attract excellent candidates. The six faculty members who now fill these positions have become an interdisciplinary cohort of honors faculty. Honors administrators who have the resources and potential, in collaboration with academic departments, to develop a cadre of honors faculty will find a wealth of useful details here about designing the job descriptions, negotiating with departments, advertising the positions, and hiring qualified candidates.

Two motifs that run through all the essays in this volume of *HIP* are innovation and collaboration, with both contributing to the revitalizing work that

ADA LONG

Bonnie Irwin advocated in her presidential address. Both within and beyond individual programs and colleges, honors directors, deans, and faculty are finding new ways to engage and excite students and to strengthen higher education. This volume of essays gives us all cause for hope despite the budget cuts and negative press that are currently threatening higher education.

