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JNCHC

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council

Fall/Winter 2008 Vol. 9, No. 2

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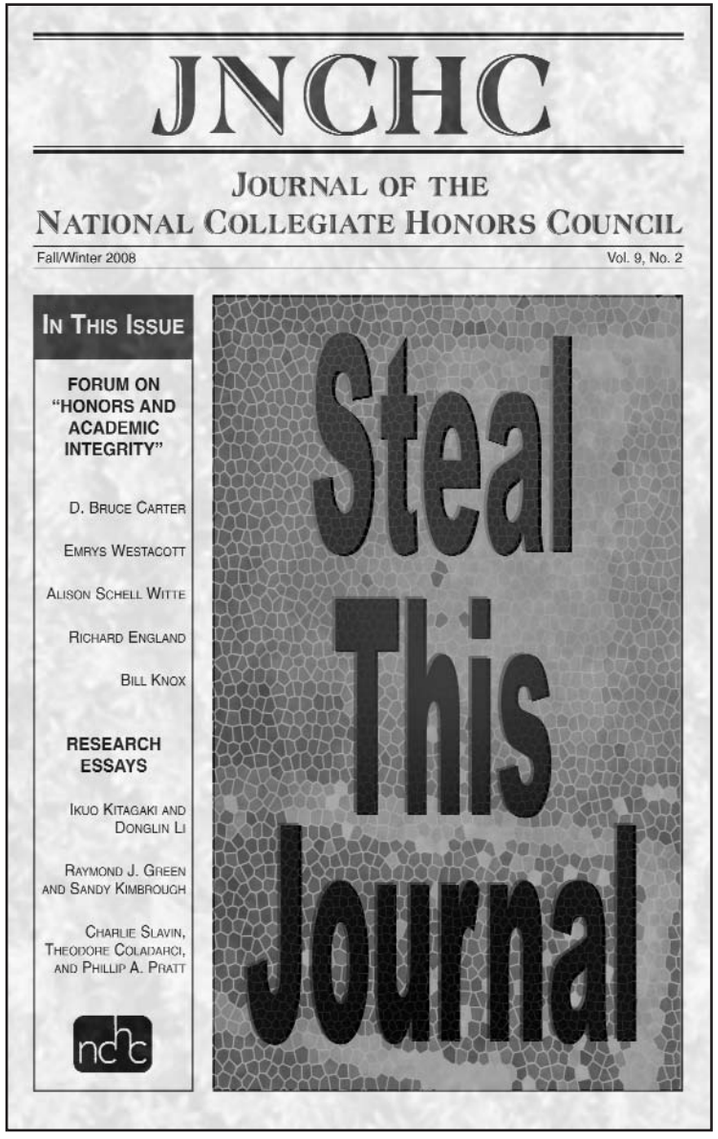

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A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

Honors and Academic Integrity

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 designed by Ada Long and Dail Mullins with help from Wake Up Graphics and with apologies to Abbie Hoffman

Call for Papers

The next issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: March 1, 2009**) invites research essays on any topic of interest to the honors community.

The issue will also include a Forum focused on the theme "Social Class and Honors." We invite essays of roughly a thousand words that consider this theme in the context of your campus and/or a national context.

Questions to consider might include: Do honors programs reflect the diversity in social class of their home institutions? Should they? Do honors programs reflect America's social hierarchy? Should they? Is a focus on issues of social class important in the honors classroom and curriculum? Are honors programs designed to provide upward mobility, and, if so, is that a worthy goal? Is diversity in social class a benefit to honors, and should it be a goal in admissions? Do honors admissions criteria implicitly discriminate against lower- or working-class students? How does the relationship between social class and race affect honors programs? How do differences in social class affect the extracurricular life, residential living, or service components of honors programs? Do scholarship programs in honors exacerbate or ameliorate differences in social class? Do study abroad programs increase discrimination based on social class? How do service learning programs help and/or hinder awareness of class issues?

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

RICHARD JAMES CUMMINGS

For an issue of *JNCHC* focused on "Honors and Academic Integrity," Dick Cummings is an obvious choice for our dedication. He has been a stalwart and important leader in honors at his home institution—the University of Utah—as well as in the National Collegiate Honors Council for most of the past five decades. After serving as the honors advisor in his home department—Languages and Literature—for two years and later serving for one year as Associate Director of the university-wide program, Dick became Director of the Honors Program at the University of Utah for twenty-five years (1970-1995). During that time, he was a long-time member of many key NCHC committees, including the Executive, Conference Planning, Portz Grant, and Finance Committees. He planned the annual conference in Salt Lake City in 1986, was President of the NCHC in 1987, chaired the Nominating Committee in 1988, and, starting in 1993, co-chaired with John Grady the *ad hoc* and later standing Committee on Assessment and Evaluation, which produced the Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program. Dick has written numerous articles for honors publications, made regular presentations at honors conferences, and served frequently as a professional consultant. The courses he has taught in honors include Humanities: The Intellectual Tradition of the West, Existentialism, Theories of Art, and Theories of Decadence. Dick's association with art has remained a constant in his life; as Professor Emeritus, he devoted much of his time to painting as well as to reading and travel. However, no one who knows Dick—at least in the NCHC—would associate Dick Cummings with decadence! He has been ever a steady, reliable, courteous, professional, and genial colleague as well as leader, a man who represents the ideal of academic integrity, and we dedicate this issue of JNCHC to him with gratitude for his decades of service to the National Collegiate Honors Council.

Editor's Introduction

Ada Long
University of Alabama at Birmingham

While cheating and plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty have perhaps always been topics of concern in education, the discourse on such subjects has taken on new urgency and sometimes shrillness in the past two or three decades. Text messaging, googling, Wikipedia, and sundry other technological capabilities have changed the academic arena for both students and faculty. At the same time, pressures to get into a graduate or professional school, win a national fellowship, maintain an undergraduate scholarship, or meet the retention requirements of an honors program are keener than ever for students, and faculty face similarly increased pressures to publish research, earn tenure, get promoted, or secure a grant. The combination of enhanced technologies and increased competition has produced a cultural context where issues of academic integrity are generating a new kind and level of worry.

In response to this worry, *JNCHC* is featuring in this issue a "Forum on Honors and Academic Integrity." The following Call for Papers was sent out to the NCHC membership:

> We invite essays of roughly a thousand words that consider issues of academic integrity 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?

Included with the Call for Papers was a lead essay by D. Bruce Carter of Syracuse University, and the Forum begins with his essay.

Carter's essay—entitled "Honors, Honors Codes, and Academic Integrity: Where Do They Converge and Diverge?"—argues that academic integrity is the cornerstone of education and that, without it, the entire enterprise of teaching and learning loses its credibility and value. Carter discusses the perceived rise in plagiarism and other forms of cheating by students and also by faculty, with falsification of data being an especially vexing problem. Academic excellence cannot be equated with moral excellence, Carter contends, so we cannot expect honors students to be less vulnerable to temptation than other students. They may even be more vulnerable given the pressures to achieve in an honors environment. Honors administrators may thus need to exert exceptional efforts to promote academic integrity.

At the same time the Call for Papers was sent out on the NCHC listserv, an article appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (16 May 2008) entitled "The Future of Plagiarism." The editors contacted the author—Emrys Westacott of Alfred University—through Paul Strong, then honors director at Alfred and contributor to the most recent issue of *JNCHC*, and invited Westacott to contribute to the *JNCHC* Forum. His invited essay—"Academic Dishonesty and the Culture of Assessment"—is a provocative and compelling argument that academic dishonesty is a symptom and consequence of an educational culture that values "assessment over enjoyment, outcomes over experience, appearances over reality." Westacott contends that students, faculty, and administrators at all levels of education have put tests, grades, and outcomes assessment at the center of education, displacing wisdom, love of learning, or appreciation of truth and beauty. Given this displacement, we should not be surprised that shortcut strategies like Kaplan courses and CliffsNotes become a viable option for our students and can easily slide into other shortcuts like plagiarism or falsified lab results. Westacott sees honors programs as an antidote to this cultural trend, but we may need to reflect on how well we are living up to his high opinion of us. We would be wise to use his essay to help shape our future discourse on assessment, academic integrity, and the culture of honors.

In an argument that nicely complements Westacott's, Alison Schell Witte of Glenville State College contextualizes and humanizes the issue of cheating by comparing it to speeding. In "Speeding is Okay and Cheating is Cool," Witte posits seven rationalizations that most of us use to convince ourselves that speeding is okay, and for each she provides an analogous excuse that students might use for cheating. Her object is not to defend cheating but to understand it and also to demonstrate that rationalizing bad acts is a trait common to students, faculty, and people in general. We thus might be a bit less inclined to see students as unlike us in the behaviors we criticize.

The final two essays in the Forum address the issue of how faculty should deal with the problem of academic dishonesty. In "Plato among the Plagiarists: The Plagiarist as Perpetrator and Victim," Richard England of Salisbury University provides a background for the concept of plagiarism, distinguishes between types of unintentional and intentional plagiarism, and argues that expulsion of intentional plagiarists is a benefit not so much to the academic community as to the offending students, who might then learn to seek "an honest relationship with learning."

In an essay that focuses primarily on prevention rather than punishment, Bill Knox of Western Illinois University argues that teachers should provide classroom environments where academic dishonesty is not a temptation. In "Authenticity in Marco Polo's Story and in Honors Student Research: An Aside from the Early Renaissance," Knox provides some historical background on the difficulties of authenticating sources of written texts, and he then offers seven specific suggestions of ways faculty can avoid having to question the authenticity of student papers. Given a technological and cultural climate that can promote inauthenticity, Knox contends that strategies to deter it make more sense than punishing it.

In addition to the "Forum on Honors and Academic Integrity," this issue of *JNCHC* includes three significant new contributions to research in and on honors.

Ikuo Kitagaki and Donglin Li of The Research Institute for Higher Education at Hiroshima University, motivated in part by a move toward starting honors programs in Japan, have done a comparative study of honors education in the two countries where it has been most prolific. "On Training Excellent Students in China and the United States" is a response to the increasing global competition in advanced research and thus the accelerating need for high levels of student training; Kitagaki and Li see the international growth of honors programs as an important means to meet this need and are interested in finding the best strategy for national development of honors programs. They compare the evolution, focus, curriculum, requirements, and student services of honors programs in China and the United States. Among their findings, they point out the more broad-based curricula and greater emphasis on service and leadership in the U.S. and the stricter retention standards and foreign language requirements in China. The authors will use their comparative study to help design honors education in Japan, and their work—along with previous *JNCHC* articles on the development of honors in Chile and the Netherlands—will help readers in the U.S. and elsewhere design and reflect upon their own honors programs.

One difference between China and the United States that Kitagaki and Li describe is the uniform admissions requirement in China based on a standardized national test whereas admissions requirements in the U.S. often

employ multiple and/or different criteria. In "Honors Admissions Criteria: How Important Are Standardized Tests?" Raymond J. Green and Sandy Kimbrough consider this vexed question of how best to predict college success and thus what criteria to use in establishing admissions requirements for an honors college. In a statistical study of incoming freshmen in the Texas A&M University-Commerce Honors College, they have found no significant correlation between the first-year GPA and either the SAT or ACT, but they have found a strong correlation between the high school and college GPA. Their study seems to affirm that, at least in the United States, not relying exclusively on standardized national test scores makes good sense.

Another crucial question for all honors administrators is how we can prove that honors programs are successful in educating their students. Charlie Slavin, Theodore Coladarci, and Phillip A. Pratt—in "Is Student Participation in an Honors Program Related to Retention and Graduation Rates?"—have made an important contribution to the limited amount of quantitative research available on key goals of honors programs. They have done a five-year statistical analysis that compares honors students with cohorts of nonhonors students who have equivalent SAT scores and high school GPAs at the University of Maine. Their findings suggest a relationship between honors participation and one-year retention but not (so far) four-year graduation. We hope that these authors will do further longitudinal studies and that other honors administrators will pursue studies similar to those reported in all three research essays in this issue of *JNCHC*.

Forum on
"Honors and Academic Integrity"

Honors, Honor Codes, and Academic Integrity: Where Do They Converge and Diverge?

D. Bruce Carter
Syracuse University

Academic integrity has become a topic of increasing concern to faculty and administrators in colleges and universities across the country (Davis, Seeman, Chapman, & Rotstein, 2008; McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2002). Indeed, the level of concern has led to the development of highly articulated academic integrity procedures at a number of institutions of higher learning. In some instances, schools have felt the need to develop honor pledges and oaths, such as the honor oath recited voluntarily by graduate students entering the Institute of Medical Science at the University of Toronto (Davis et al., 2008).

Concern about academic integrity is not, of course, new. The University of Virginia, where I did my graduate work, has an honor code that dates back to 1840 when, as legend goes, a masked student shot a faculty member. This event led to the establishment of the nation's oldest student-run honor system in which students pledge not to lie, cheat, or steal while attending the University of Virginia. Students, not faculty, are responsible for monitoring and prosecuting their peers who fail to live up to this pledge (University of Virginia, 2008). The University of Virginia honor policy has its benefits, such as the ability to use a university identification card to cash checks (failure to honor one's checks is an honor offense). However, many view the single sanction for an honor offense—expulsion from the university—as an excessive penalty. (N.B. At my orientation we were told that lying to purchase alcohol or to gain sexual favors was not a violation of the honor system. To date I remain uncertain whether this stance reflected original intent or was a liberal interpretation of the policy.) The University of Virginia model is by no means the dominant one in American colleges and universities; responsibility for enforcement and penalties for violations vary widely both across and within academic institutions. Nonetheless, the goal of all such systems appears to be the reduction of instances of student dishonesty.

Increasingly, faculty members at colleges and universities across the country have become concerned about violations of academic integrity, particularly with regard to plagiarism by students. The fact that this concern is fairly widespread may account for the success of resources that allow faculty to check the work of their students for plagiarism. Internet businesses such as Turnitin.com (iParadigms, 2008) have been successful because faculty have been able to persuade their institutions to expend institutional funds to reduce the incidence of student plagiarism and other forms of cheating associated with the online availability of both legitimate intellectual material and illegitimate sources of term papers and other academic work. According to iParadigms' (2008) promotional brochure, Turnitin.com allows faculty to check students' papers against a large database of student papers and Internet sites; the company claims that Turnitin.com is used by over 7,000 institutions in over 90 countries. The success of iParadigms' business model and the widespread adoption of Turnitin.com and other similar services are diagnostic, perhaps, of the concern both faculty and institutions of higher learning have about academic integrity and the enforcement of anti-plagiarism efforts.

Questions have arisen about the source of an apparent increase in student plagiarism. One possibility, frequently asserted with great confidence, is that the availability of online sources of information undermines students' abilities to recognize that they are using the work of others inappropriately. My own anecdotal experience is that students are increasingly unaware of the differences between material appearing online in academic journals and in blogs and or sources like Wikipedia. Nonetheless, I have not seen any convincing empirical research indicating that students' apparent inability to distinguish their own words and thoughts from the words and thoughts of others (which we so casually label as plagiarism) is the result of the availability of online information sources. I would be interested in research—quantitative, qualitative, or anecdotal—that could establish a link between plagiarism and the Internet. It seems entirely possible that the availability of electronic and other tools (such as Turnitin.com) has simply allowed us to identify instances of intellectual dishonesty that we could not have detected in the past.

As increasing numbers of faculty require their students to submit their academic work electronically in order to facilitate checking student work against electronic databases, complaints have begun to arise. As student access to computers has become ubiquitous, students have lost the excuse that they are unable to comply with electronic submission requirements, but some now question whether their rights to copyright their work are violated by its inclusion in databases such as Turnitin.com Other students feel offended because the use of electronic databases seems to assume that students are guilty of plagiarism. One of my students recently voiced another provocative

complaint, asserting that she could not be compelled to turn in work electronically as that would violate her constitutional rights protecting against self-incrimination. Still others have complained that the use of electronic databases is the intellectual equivalent of racial profiling: the ever vigilant professor, like the overzealous police officer, assumes guilt in a segment of the population, in this case students, who are subjected to in-depth examination on the assumption that guilt may be established if only we search diligently.

An issue of particular concern to honors educators is the conflation of honor systems/codes with honors programs/colleges. In the minds of some students, parents, and faculty, students enrolled in honors programs or honors colleges should be especially cognizant of issues of academic integrity and can be expected to adhere to higher standards of ethical rigor than non-honors students. The implicit assumption is that non-honors students, as a result of their lesser intellectual development, may be excused for their ignorance of academic standards of integrity whereas honors students, by virtue of their intellectual talents, should be held to a higher ethical standard. Such an interpretation might be consistent with Kohlberg's stage theory of moral development, in which higher levels of moral judgment are associated with more advanced levels of cognitive development (e.g., Kohlberg & Armon, 1984); however, Kohlberg himself asserted that more advanced levels of thinking about moral issues are not necessarily correlated with moral behavior. While I would argue that we should not confuse the academic excellence of honors education with the moral excellence of honorable behavior, I believe with equal conviction that we should encourage our students to behave with integrity in their intellectual and other pursuits regardless of the pressures they may feel to achieve excellence. Accomplishments of any sort are cheapened if they are achieved through dishonesty.

Stanlick (2006) has argued that the intellectual accomplishments signaled by participation in honors programs and honorable behavior (i.e., academic integrity) are intertwined, not merely conflated. She argues that the honor code at the University of Central Florida's Burnett Honors College is a defining element of its community. Full participation in this honors community requires the internalization of the set of principles of academic integrity under which the community operates. Individual commitment to these shared underlying principles is essential to the well-functioning community and the well-functioning individual. In Stanlick's view, "the honors student must, as a full and participating member of an honors community, internalize and exemplify honor as a way of life that maintains her real status in an honors community" (p. 90).

Anecdotally, others have argued that honors students face special pressures that may lead them to engage in behavior that exhibits less academic integrity than is seen among non-honors students. The pressures of maintaining high grade point averages in courses that are more challenging than those taken by their non-honors peers, the argument goes, lead students to feel that shortcuts, including plagiarism, are justified. Other students may violate elements of an institution's code of student conduct in pursuit of apparently lofty academic goals. At Syracuse University, for example, we had an honors student who violated the university's computing policies by creating software designed to undermine the campus's computer-security system. This behavior came to our attention in the Honors Program as the student was using this program as a major element of his honors thesis project. Neither of his faculty advisors, who had reviewed his thesis and given it the requisite final approval, were concerned that violation of university policy was at the heart of this student's capstone experience. Both faculty and the student expressed the opinion that the behavior was justified as a means of developing the student's programming skills since the thesis presented samples of several unsuccessful attempts the student made before ultimately breaking through the institutional security barrier. As administrators of the Honors Program, we took a different view and refused to allow the student to submit work that violated institutional policies. Although the thesis demonstrated intellectual growth and development, it also clearly demonstrated that the student was willfully attempting to violate the institution's security, a fact discussed in the text of the thesis, and it celebrated the student's success in finally doing so. Although my experience indicates that honors students generally recognize that such means-ends justification is morally ambiguous at best, students and faculty may advance such justifications in pursuit of intellectual goals.

Of course, student plagiarism is only one component of academic integrity. Faculty and others may also engage in plagiarism. Indeed, the Dutch publisher Elsevier has announced that it will use a database called CrossCheck (developed with iParadigms and Crossref) to examine journal submissions for originality (Foster, 2008). Like Turnitin.com, CrossCheck will compare submissions against a database of published articles to assure the originality of submitted material. Elsevier indicates that the use of CrossCheck will assist scholars by insuring that the resulting publications are not plagiarized.

A related issue, the falsification of data and research findings, is also an issue of concern to academics and other intellectuals. Preventing the falsification of data and of conclusions from research efforts motivated the pledge taken by students at the University of Toronto to represent their research accurately and honestly (Davis et al., 2008). Although faculty and administrators may feel it necessary to insist that students take such oaths to assure

intellectual honesty and integrity, students are not the only ones who may falsify or exaggerate their data.

A tragic case in point is illustrated in Calapinto's (2000) discussion of the case of Bruce Thiessen, one of a pair of twins who lost his penis in what was later described as a " bizarre accident" that occurred during his circumcision to correct his phimosis (a clinical condition in which the male foreskin does not retract as it should). The child and his parents were referred to Dr. John Money at the Johns Hopkins University. Beginning in 1972 (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972) and for decades afterwards, Dr. Money described this case as a successful example of how the biological influences on gender development (nature) could be overcome by rearing the child as a member of the other sex. He made these assertions despite the fact that Bruce (now Brenda) was resistant to Money's therapeutic efforts to get the child to identify with the new surgically and hormonally induced sex and the characteristics stereotypically associated with it. According to Calapinto (2000), Brenda's physicians and therapists were puzzled by the fact that they were unsuccessful in getting Brenda to adjust to "her" assigned gender role while Money was reporting unconditional success in another case with nearly identical characteristics. What they did not realize was that Money was not being entirely honest in his reports of success with his other patient (actually Brenda). Although it may not be the case, as Calapinto alleges, that Money's treatment of Bruce/Brenda was the cause of his/her unhappiness and eventual suicide, it is clear that his misrepresentation of the facts of the case led to many of us (myself included) teaching numerous students inaccurate information about the malleability of gender and gender roles.

I would not be the first to argue that intellectual integrity is the only currency academics possess, a fact that may account for reluctance to acknowledge intellectual dishonesty when it occurs. And, of course, academic communities are not the only place where integrity and honesty are important for establishing trust in both individuals and institutions (e.g., Lappe & Marshall, 2004). I would assert, however, that our reluctance to insist on academic integrity in both our students and our colleagues diminishes our claim to intellectual rigor and the value we can offer to society at large. I concur with Stanlick's (2006) argument that intellectual honesty is essential to the functioning of honors communities and of intellectual communities in general.

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Academic Dishonesty and the Culture of Assessment

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Mention the escalation of academic dishonesty and most of us working in education are immediately inclined to whistle for our moral high horse. But too much moralistic tongue-clicking can blind us to the ways in which we who constitute the system contribute to the very malady we lament. For if academic dishonesty is like a disease—and we repeatedly hear it described as an "epidemic"—we may all be carriers, even cultivators, of the virus that causes it. Let me explain.

Socrates sought to understand the essence of a thing by asking what all instances of it have in common. This approach is open to well-known objections, but it can have its uses. In the present case, for example, I think it leads to the following important observation: all instances of academic dishonesty are attempts to appear cleverer, more knowledgeable, more skillful, or more industrious than one really is. Buying or copying a term paper, plagiarizing from the Internet, using a crib sheet on an exam, accessing external assistance from beyond the exam room by means of a cell phone, fabricating a lab report, having another student sign one's name on an attendance sheet—all such practices serve this same purpose. The goal is to produce an appearance that is more impressive than the reality.

So far, so obvious, you might say. But what is not so obvious—and this is a key point in the argument I am making—is that this same prioritizing of appearance over reality permeates much of our education system. It is endorsed by parents, teachers, and administrators, and it is encouraged by many of our well-intentioned pedagogical practices. Students absorb this ordering of values over many years, especially in high school; so by the time they reach college they have been marinating in the toxin for a long time. Here are some examples of what I mean.

The College Board, The Princeton Review, Kaplan and many other organizations offer extensive advice on test-taking strategies for students taking SATs, GREs, AP exams, and so on. Most of us view such guidance as innocent and making use of it as sensible; but underlying it is an attitude that should give us pause. Here is how The Princeton Review describes its approach to "cracking the new SAT":

> This book will show you how to exploit the standardized format of the SAT. ETS uses the same tricks over and over again; once you become aware of them, you won't fall for them . . .
>
> Our job isn't to teach you math or English . . . Instead we're going to teach you the SAT. You'll soon see that the SAT involves a very different skill set. . . .
>
> You don't have to prove that you know why your answer is correct. The only thing EST's scoring machine cares about is the answer you come up with. If you darken the right space on your answer sheet, you'll get credit, even if you didn't quite understand the question. (The Princeton Review, *Cracking the New SAT* (New York: Random House, 2006), pp. 10–12.)

There is nothing surprising here. But we should reflect on both the message being conveyed and the alternative view that is being undermined. The message conveyed is that although SAT scores are supposed to reflect knowledge and abilities within a field, there are clever stratagems you can use to boost your scores beyond what you would get if you just relied on what you actually know. These test-prep "power tactics" (as SparkNotes calls them) are, in effect, ways of making yourself look smarter than you are. The view being undermined is that what really matters is genuine understanding of the material: achieve this—ideally on the basis of an interest in the subject and a love of learning—and the tests can take care of themselves.

Or consider a specific test-preparation methodology: using vocabulary lists to prepare for the verbal section of the SAT. One idea behind the test, presumably, is to gauge the range and depth of a student's grasp of English. Those with the best understanding will usually have acquired it through enthusiastically reading a lot of well-written texts in a variety of genres. This is how one becomes well-read. Poring over vocabulary lists, by contrast, is a short cut—but not to *being* well-read; the idea, once again, is to *appear* more well-read than one actually is.

Of course, studying vocabulary lists can have pedagogical value. Students who do this usually improve their knowledge of English; so the appearance given by the higher test score is not deceptive. In the same way, focusing on specific types of math problems that are likely to come up on the SAT can improve one's understanding of mathematics. Nevertheless, I would still argue that continually orienting one's studies toward the test subtly fosters an attitude that, from the standpoint of our highest pedagogical ideals, is inherently cynical.

This tremendous emphasis on grades and test results is probably the feature of education today most responsible for cultivating a strategic attitude

toward learning. The "culture of assessment" has many powerful advocates armed with cogent arguments. In the last issue of *JNCHC*, for instance, Gregory Lanier provides a detailed and sympathetic account of why honors programs should accommodate rather than resist this trend in his article "Towards Reliable Assessment." But in my view, the outlook engendered by the constant concern with assessment is like a pervasive weed that everywhere chokes out healthier, more idealistic, more creative attitudes among both teachers and students, especially in our high schools. Parents' night at my local high school largely consists of teachers explaining in boring detail their modes of assessment and grading policies. On one occasion I asked my daughter's AP biology teacher if she would be taking the students outside at all during the year to examine nature in the raw. Her answer: she'd love to, but she couldn't spare the time given the need to cover everything on the AP syllabus. Inevitably, the AP exam would be the guiding star that the class steered by: not love of nature, appreciation of natural forms, or delight in fathoming how living things function, but whatever needs to be known to do well on the test. Success on the test is the "measurable outcome" by which students are judged—and teachers, and principals, and schools, and, ultimately, entire education systems.

Students naturally soak up this message. Not long ago I suggested to a high school Spanish student that her Spanish might benefit from doing things like learning a Spanish song, reading young children's books in Spanish, or watching some Spanish TV. Her response was dismissive: she saw no point in doing anything except studying the material she knew would be on the next test. Once again, the underlying attitude here is that what matters is not how well she knows Spanish but how well she performs on the assignment that supposedly indicates how well she knows Spanish.

Study aids such as SparkNotes and CliffsNotes also do their bit to reinforce such attitudes. Ideally, they are supposed to be helpful in directing attention, assisting understanding, and facilitating review. But in text-heavy disciplines like literature and history, they more often direct students away from *experiencing* a work and toward covering up one's ignorance in class or on some assignment. We're all familiar with the situation. The quiz on *Great Expectations* is a few hours away. You're still three hundred pages from the end. So you put the novel aside and skim the notes, gleaning the basic plot along with some information about the main characters and salient themes. Now you're ready for the test. The purpose, once again, is to enable you to *appear* to be something you are not—viz. a person who has read *Great Expectations*.

Even some of our best-intentioned practices may reinforce the prioritizing of appearances over reality, usually by directing excessive attention to

evaluation. Review sessions prior to a final exam are popular with students and are typically offered by dedicated faculty. Ideally, they provide a final overview of a course and give students the chance to clarify topics they have not fully understood. In practice, though, they are seen by quite a few as a last chance to pick up enough bits and bobs to help them perform on the final *as if* they had kept abreast throughout the semester. Similarly, extra credit assignments may have a legitimate function in some circumstances, but they are often viewed by students as a sort of safety net hastily strung beneath a plummeting grade; they, too, indirectly emphasize assessment over experience, grades over understanding, appearances over reality.

Most teachers dislike students trying to haggle over grades, but this behavior is a predictable response to the educational environment students find themselves in. If appearances seem to matter more than reality—grades on a transcript more than less easily measured values like holistic grasp of a subject, appreciation of beauty, intellectual excitement, insight, or wisdom—we shouldn't be surprised to encounter such strategizing. The heroine of the 1995 film *Clueless* is praised by her litigator father for viewing a received grade as "just a jumping off point to start negotiations" and managing to negotiate it from a C up to an A. In the movie this is amusing, although in real life most of us would be highly critical, particularly of an instructor open to such influence. But while we might view the student's machinations with distaste, there would be no talk of dishonesty or cheating since no rules would have been broken. Yet the mindset behind this sort of manipulation overlaps with the attitude that underlies cheating: the goal is to secure the external trappings of success even though one lacks the internal merits of which they are supposedly a sign.

Test strategizing; syllabi and curricula made subservient to assessment; study aids that short circuit the learning process; continual emphasis on the details of evaluation; marginalization of more holistic, less easily measured pedagogical goals; grades as bargaining chips; grades as carrots; grades as sticks—all of this tends to produce and legitimize an attitude toward education that stresses appearance over reality. It promotes a frame of mind that is more likely to entertain the idea of trying to appear accomplished by using those other strategies that we classify as dishonest. It produces an environment in which the virus flourishes.

Obviously, not everyone will agree with this point of view. Three objections, in particular, will probably occur to many readers and deserve consideration.

First, some will argue that the appearance-reality distinction should not be drawn so sharply. Appearances often tell us a lot about the reality that gives rise to them. Scores on aptitude tests are usually related to aptitude;

high grades are a sign that a student has mastered material; low grades indicate the opposite.

This objection makes a good point, but it also misses the point. To be sure, there is usually a general correlation between measured performance and underlying achievement. The problem, though, is that everyone's attention has come to be excessively focused on the former. When school teachers are evaluated entirely by "outcomes" in the form of student test scores, the test becomes their overriding concern. Students pick up on this and begin to see the point and purpose of their studies as success on the tests. Success on the test becomes the end; coming to class, reading literature, learning about history, understanding science, or practicing the arts come to be viewed as simply means to that end. A strategic or instrumentalist attitude toward education becomes entrenched. It is reinforced by the college admissions process which makes admission to some college and/or a good financial aid package the end while grades, exam results, and extracurricular activities become the means. Once in college, students find that professors often expect this attitude and express the expectation through their own emphasis on such matters as attendance, late paper policies, grading criteria, and so on.

Sadly, but inevitably, teachers may come to internalize this way of thinking about education almost as much as the students. Cruising the corridors of colleges where I have taught, I have often been struck by the fact that the majority of conversations relating to academics that I overhear between students seem to concern assessment rather than course content. But as I participate in or eavesdrop on conversations among faculty, I get the impression that the same could increasingly be said about us also.

A second objection is that we should still insist on a very sharp line between any of the practices I have mentioned and cheating. Using clever guess methodologies or SparkNotes, contesting a grade, asking for extra-credit opportunities, or writing a note at the end of an exam saying how much you enjoyed the class may be appearance-oriented strategies. But they are all kosher, all clearly within the rules. Even aggressive haggling over grades or shameless toadying, while objectionable, do not constitute academic dishonesty. There is a big difference between what we should penalize and what we should merely discourage.

I agree that we have to make this distinction. And I am certainly not arguing that cheating should be tolerated or that what I am calling a strategic attitude should be a punishable offense. But we need to realize that, when we invoke this distinction, we are thinking legalistically. We are distinguishing between two kinds of strategic attitude—the kind that breaks the rules and the kind that doesn't. In focusing on where to draw this line and how to catch those on the wrong side of it, we lose sight of a more fundamental distinction

between strategic and non-strategic approaches to education. Our situation is rather like that of those fighting corruption in government by uncovering technical violations of ethical rules while all around them the corridors swarm with lobbyists and legislation is being packed with pork.

I am not claiming that students don't understand the rules concerning academic dishonesty or are confused over what constitutes a violation. To be sure, there are some grey areas, but most of the time things are pretty clear cut. I am arguing, rather, that by endorsing and even fostering a pervasive instrumentalism, we help create conditions in which cheating is likely to be common.

An analogy might help my case here. When raising children, parents typically reward good behavior and punish bad behavior; it is generally assumed that this will ensure that the children grow up to be people who abide by the moral rules the parents enforce. But someone who follows the rules from fear of punishment or hope of reward or mechanically as a sort of conditioned response is not our moral ideal. Most parents hope, I assume, that their children will grow to be *genuinely* good-hearted, kind, loving, compassionate, and generous. The hope is not just that they will practice the appropriate kinds of behavior; it is that they will possess these virtues at the core of their personality. Rewards and punishments may have a role to play in steering them toward this ideal. But by themselves they will not be sufficient; and too heavy an emphasis on them can be counterproductive, leading to a mindset that is more calculating and self-interested than one would wish. What is needed, in addition, are positive role models that exhibit the virtues in question.

Indeed, I would argue that in both the classroom and the home, positive role models who motivate and inspire are usually more effective pedagogically than rigid rule enforcement. And in an ideal world, nothing more than good examples would ever be needed. Which brings us to the third objection—that my outlook is hopelessly utopian. If you want to talk about reality, some will say, then start out by facing up to it. The population needs educating, and you cannot expect the majority to undertake their studies cheerfully, driven only by innate curiosity and love of learning. Most will at times resemble Shakespeare's "whining schoolboy . . . creeping like a snail unwillingly to school." Even Samuel Johnson attributed his superior command of Latin to his having a good teacher who, he said, "whipt me very well." A strategic attitude to learning will always be with us; we have to do what we can with the tools and materials we're given.

Well, some may say I'm a dreamer; but I'm not the only one. The proof of this is the success of honors programs across so many and such diverse colleges and universities. Honors students are typically people who go to college motivated by a genuine love of intellectual pursuits, whose natural curiosity

has not been pressed out of them by years of relentless carrot-and-stick schooling. They tend to be distinguished by the depth of their desire to learn, to understand, to create, to express, and to contribute. This is also the root of their success as students since those who enjoy studying don't regard it as a chore; they are simply doing what they want to do, so they go at it more readily, for longer, and with greater intensity. The same could be said, I suspect, about most of the faculty working in honors programs.

Honors programs thus do not just serve the individual students participating in them; they also help to keep alive a tremendously important ideal. Acts of academic dishonesty obviously are at odds with this ideal, but they do not directly threaten it. The rash of plagiarism and other forms of cheating currently troubling teachers everywhere is, rather, a symptom of a deeper problem: the ascendency of an instrumentalist view of education that focuses, to say it again, on assessment over enjoyment, outcomes over experience, appearances over reality. This is the corrosive atmosphere eating away at the ideal.

The best response to the apparent increase in academic dishonesty is thus not to rely on ever more sophisticated technologies for catching the miscreants. That is like using ever stronger pesticides to keep down the mosquito population. Inevitably, more resistant strains of the pest emerge (read: cleverer counterdishonestydetecting software). Ultimately, we need to drain the swamp, doing what we can to eliminate the favorable breeding conditions. Honors programs can, should, and do play a vital role here. They remind the academic community of its deepest values and its highest ideals—in particular, the ideal of studying not just (or even primarily) for some measurable outcome, but for the sake of learning itself and the delight we take in being intellectually alive.

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Speeding is Okay and Cheating is Cool

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Academic misbehavior occurs among all students—gifted students as well as the general student population. I believe that cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty are supported by a pattern of rationalization similar to that which supports other common but questionable social behaviors. In the following discussion, I will compare academic dishonesty with driving in excess of the speed limit and offer some comments about the pervasiveness of similar behaviors in other aspects of our lives. I wish to make the point that all of us, faculty included, probably perform some actions that violate the highest standards of behavior. Although I believe that academic dishonesty is unacceptable, I want to make a plea that faculty look to the factors underlying its existence and that they deal with student infractions temperately.

Most readers, if they are honest, will admit to driving above the speed limit from time to time. It is not a benign behavior. For one thing, it is illegal. Speeders incur the risk of tickets, fines, and suspension of driving licenses. Speeding puts the lives of the driver, the passengers, and other motorists at risk. In addition, excess gas consumption wastes natural resources. Yet many of us speed, and we feel little remorse for doing so. We incur minimal social sanction. Let us look at some of the rationalizations we make and compare them to explanations that are made by students and others to explain academic dishonesty.

"I DIDN'T MEAN TO DO IT."

It is not always easy to maintain a constant speed in hilly terrain, and we may be distracted by scenery, passengers, and our own thoughts. We may even be ignorant of specific traffic regulations in a strange city or state.

Likewise, students who are devoting little attention to an assignment may neglect to double check a reference or may omit reference for a paraphrase. Or a student may unintentionally overhear and make use of a correct answer whispered by someone else during an exam.

In high school, students may have perfected the art of "cut and paste," learning to cobble together a paper that incorporates numerous (often unidentified) internet sources. This practice may continue into college without students being aware, at least initially, that this method of composition is considered plagiarism.

"IT DOESN'T HURT ANYBODY; THERE ARE A LOT WORSE THINGS."

This response reflects a rather narrow view of one's responsibility to others, but it is probably the explanation many of us make to ourselves when we speed.

Similarly, it may be the private explanation students make to themselves when they decide to cheat, especially when an assignment is perceived as "busy work" or irrelevant. Does cheating hurt anybody? In my experience, it does. I have only to recall several undergraduate classes in which cheating on exams was widespread and the "grading curve" adversely affected those who were doing acceptable but not outstanding work. I believe that students do know that cheating can harm their classmates and themselves just we all know that driving too fast can cause horrific fatalities; however, it is more comfortable to deny the consequences of these actions.

Unethical acts may be further rationalized by comparing them favorably to even more egregious behaviors. Students may claim that fudging values in a lab assignment is not as bad as breaking into a professor's computer files just as others of us may assert that driving just a few miles faster than the speed limit is not nearly as bad as driving under the influence of alcohol. The implication is that there is a spectrum of unethical behavior and that acts occurring on the upper end of the spectrum are relatively acceptable.

"I HAVE COMPELLING PERSONAL REASONS."

We have an important job interview, an appointment with a medical specialist, a dying parent; we must arrive on time at all costs. Our personal priorities supercede the needs of others and negate the rules. We drive 5 or 10 mph faster than the speed limit and feel fully justified.

Scholarship students may feel something of the same sense of internal pressure and entitlement. To maintain scholarship eligibility, students are usually required to keep their grades up. Many students attending my college come from families in which the cost of state college tuition represents a significant financial burden. Without scholarship assistance, college attendance may be perceived as impossible. In addition, pre-professional students may feel compelled to do whatever is necessary to compete for admission to professional schools. They are rewarded for success and penalized for failure if

they are not admitted into the limited spaces available in the state's medical, dental, pharmacy, or nursing schools. They have "compelling personal reasons" to do whatever it takes to maintain a high GPA.

"EVERYONE ELSE WAS GOING SO FAST, AND I HAD TO KEEP UP."

There is nothing quite like the feeling of driving through an unfamiliar metropolitan area and noting that, although the speed limit is 55, the traffic on either side seems to be zipping by at 80 mph. Are we to creep along at 55, dealing with honking horns and hand gestures, or to join the flow of traffic at 70 mph?

Students must also make this kind of decision. They may feel the need to "keep up" with the class, which—correctly or not—they believe to be moving more quickly than they are. In my experience, gifted students who have not been fully challenged in high school are sometimes surprised to realize how much effort is required for college-level work. Cheating may seem necessary in order to stay abreast of the class. In addition, in classes where academic dishonesty is perceived to be blatant and widespread, students may feel they have no other choice but to join in.

"I HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY TO KEEP FROM GETTING CAUGHT."

The availability and use of radar detectors evoke little comment. Now we can speed and hope to evade the consequences. In addition, we can access the Internet to identify well known "speed traps" and modify our driving behavior accordingly.

Students are skilled in the use of technological devices with functions that support various forms of academic dishonesty. Some of the methods are variations of older, low-tech methods. For example, instead of marking the answers to an exam on a shoe, paper, or body part, answers may be loaded into an electronic storage device or transmitted in real time using the Internet or cell phones. Increasingly sophisticated calculators may give students an added advantage in the test taking environment. The push to integrate technology into the classroom has only exacerbated the problem by giving students access to the training and facilities needed to carry out dishonest acts.

"PEOPLE WERE GOING FASTER THAN I WAS, AND THE POLICE DIDN'T DO A THING."

We know that many speeders are not given citations, are not arrested, and never receive any type of censure. We may be tempted to argue that this lack of consequences implies tacit approval of our own speeding.

Some instructors—perhaps through inattention or lack of sophistication—refuse to believe that cheating is occurring in their classes. Other faculty may overlook the infractions of "good" students or students who depend on their scholarships. Such inaction serves to validate the acceptability of academic dishonesty.

"IT'S A THRILL TO GO FAST IN A COOL CAR."

There is certain glamour to speeding. We like the thrill of fast rides in amusement parks, and some of us like the feel of a powerful engine accelerating on a smooth stretch of road. After all, we may reason, why does the speedometer go higher than 70 mph?

Cheating on exams and assignments is purported by some students to embody the same kind of thrill. It becomes a challenge to see how much one can get away with. Acts of academic dishonesty may represent something of a game to be played against the instructor and the system.

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The seven rationalizations discussed above will be familiar to many readers. They play a part in supporting common violations of law and ethical behavior that are tolerated and embedded in our daily lives. It is possible to identify numerous problematic behaviors that are similarly accepted, defended and rationalized: copying and sharing copyrighted videos and software, photocopying musical scores for schools and church choirs, paying household employees "under the table," underestimating income from tips on tax returns, smoking in no-smoking zones, accepting student discounts (or senior citizen discounts) for which one is not fully eligible, or posting "open" job positions with requirements that can only be filled by one preselected individual.

The problem of academic dishonesty has much in common with the examples noted above. It reflects the pervasive social acceptability of self-gratification, and it also reflects our emphasis on competition and the power we have given to grades as a measure of academic worth. Establishing more rigorous rules and applying stiffer penalties will not make students more honest; it will only make them more creative about cheating and will reinforce the rationalizations they make for their behavior, whether or not they are caught.

I have several comments to make about we how can establish learning environments that promote academic integrity. First, I suggest that we emphasize to students that our goal is to help them grow and learn personally and academically and that by cheating or plagiarizing they are shortchanging their own education and diminishing the value of their credentials.

Second, I suggest that we deemphasize competition among our students when possible and remind students that academic competence will prepare them not only to meet their own professional and career goals but also to serve others. I do not think we will ever get away from grades, but we might reconsider pass/fail for upper-level courses. We also might reconsider the weighting of requirements for entry into graduate and professional schools. Finally, I suggest that we remember that students have the potential to learn from their mistakes. Draconian penalties such as expulsion should be only a last resort. Students should be subject to sanctions for academic dishonesty, but in addition they should receive support and guidance to improve their behavior. They, like all of us, must believe that is possible to live by high standards.

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Plato among the Plagiarists: The Plagiarist as Perpetrator and Victim

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When the Roman poet Martial applied the Latin term for the kidnapping of slaves and children ("plagiario") to those who stole his literary work (*Epigrams I, 52*), he became the first victim of plagiarism in its modern sense. Words are the author's children, and one can understand how the author might suffer when another claims (or kidnaps) them. But plagiarism has further victims: the reader is tricked into thinking the plagiarist clever; the words themselves are cheapened by unauthorized replication; the scholarly enterprise, the community of authorship, and the process of writing all bear the marks of injury. But the other and indeed the main victim is the plagiarist. As teachers our reactions to plagiarism should be shaped by this understanding that the perpetrator is the principal victim of the crime.

This view of crime, like plagiarism, boasts an ancient pedigree. It is better for the wrong-doer to be caught and punished than to escape and live as an unjust agent. In the *Gorgias*, Plato argues that punishment is a medicine that remedies the evil that afflicts the criminal (447e–449b). In the case of the student who plagiarizes, what purpose does punishment serve? We may hesitate to use Plato's medical analogy, or the term "evil," but the task of the professor punishing the plagiarist is also fundamentally restorative: we must make the student understand where he or she went wrong and how to work honestly.

Student writing lets the student speak to the instructor and the instructor, in turn, respond to the student. Only the professor and the student read the student essay and use it as a tool of communication. Plagiarism subverts the process and so harms the only person who stands to benefit from writing—the student. My colleagues know the emotional journey that accompanies the discovery of academic dishonesty. We move from vague suspicion through depressing confirmation and arrive at certainty in a cloud of disappointment, anger, and sadness. Plagiarism represents something defective in the student's understanding of writing or, more profoundly, the purpose of writing. This is the source of the sadness.

Three kinds of ignorance lead to plagiarism. The simplest and stupidest is forgetting to put in a reference or accidentally omitting quotation marks. Perhaps something is mistakenly pasted from a web source into the paper instead of onto a list of source information. Plagiarists may too lightly plead ignorance of the contents of their own work, attributing defects in a paper's composition to a lack of time or sleep or to one of the crises that seem to ravage some students' lives with unhappy (if sometimes convenient) regularity. If such careless ignorance of a student's own work is the cause of plagiarism, then a punishment that points out that it is unacceptable (such as an F on the paper) would seem to serve the purpose of educating the perpetrator.

The next kind of ignorance, which is also easy to confess, is ignorance of the rules of citation. A source is not cited; a source phrase is lightly reworded but not adequately paraphrased; a cited source is misidentified. Many first-year honors students have very imperfect notions of what proper citation entails. Of course there is a great deal to learn about how to paraphrase or how to adapt to conventions prescribed by different schools of citation. Add the profusion of web sources (how does one cite an online edition of a translation of Martial?), and one can see that the topic is fraught with possibilities for error. Furthermore, many instructors assume students know how to cite and do not teach them how to do so. Honors composition course syllabi often contain dire warnings about plagiarism, but the writing class schedule devotes little or no time to citation. If ignorance about citation is the source of plagiarism problems, then perhaps punishments should include remedial lessons in citation. If such ignorance is a common problem in the class, then formal lessons in citation should be added to the syllabus early in the term.

It is difficult to distinguish ignorance of one's own work or of the rules of citation from the third, most troubling, and least confessed kind of ignorance, which is ignorance of the purpose of writing. Intentional plagiarists mistake the external rituals of education for education itself. My getting an A is meaningless if the work that earned it is not mine since I have not learned and demonstrated the excellence that the grade is supposed to signify. This kind of ignorance is the most dangerous and hardest to remedy because it is a conscious rejection of education in an attempt to earn a grade. The intentional plagiarist defies honors codes and holds that the superficial end of a good grade justifies the means used to receive it. Students may cheat in this way either because they have lost their respect for the institution they are part of or because they have lost their belief in their own ability to be "good enough" for the tasks they are assigned. Whether they are betraying the university or themselves, they have lost the core belief in genuine learning that makes the relationship between the university and the student possible. The expulsion of such students is less a punishment than a simple recognition of

the fact that the intentional plagiarist has broken off an honest relationship with learning.

An emphasis on academic integrity such as that urged by Bruce Carter seems an obvious conclusion—not, however, primarily for the good of honors communities but for the individual students themselves. They must be taught how to find and use information, exhorted to honesty, and encouraged to discuss and think about academic integrity. It is well within our power as educators to go beyond grim warnings in syllabi and to take simple steps that can save some of the many students who, attracted by the ease of taking a shortcut or lulled into comfort by low expectations, are tempted to become victims and perpetrators of plagiarism. In kidnapping the words and ideas of others, they betray an ignorance that holds their own education hostage. Educators can help them see that ignorance and restore, even to the plagiarist, a functioning understanding of what it means to learn.

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Authenticity in Marco Polo's Story and in Honors Student Research: An Aside from the Early Renaissance

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Recently I read and skimmed editions of the writings of Marco Polo, including Komroff's *The Travels of Marco Polo* and Moule and Pelliot's encyclopedic *The Description of the World*. Apart from cataloguing details about Asian lands, peoples, and inventions fantastic in the eyes of early fourteenth-century Europeans, these, along with Laurence Bergreen's well-documented biography *Marco Polo: From Venice to Xanadu*, unexpectedly suggested to me how, increasingly in this digital age, student research projects present questions of authenticity similar to those of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts—Polo's being no exception.

In the 1960s when I first read about the Venetian merchant and emissary of Kublai Khan in middle school and watched the colorful European-produced film adaptation of his life downtown, I questioned neither the story details, the particulars of its original composition, nor the liberal translation of the textbook story to film. The twenty-plus years of Polo's often difficult Asian travel, which I studied, and the cinematic spectacle of the court of the Great Khan, which I watched, engaged my imagination more as an adolescent male excited by curious customs, siege warfare, and exotic sensuality than as a critical scholar.

As a student and professor of writing and literature for over forty years, however, I have been much more engaged in the questions of textual origins. With respect to Polo, through commentaries and Bergreen I discovered a generations-long, multi-faceted debate. One issue centers on whether he actually visited all the places he recorded. A second focuses on the veracity of details about some sites he did visit—from the descriptions of beasts and characters of the people he encountered to the "miracles" he witnessed. Third, shortly after his return from the East, while held as a prisoner after a disastrous sea battle between Venice and Genoa, Polo is believed to have dictated his story

to Rustichello of Pisa, who may have mingled his own voice with the story. Finally, *Travels* appeared over centuries in many differing manuscripts with a wide range of details, styles, and titles. Even though modern scholarship has settled many authorship issues, others may never be.

Yet we who assess honors student projects in the current age of much higher standards of publication honesty sometimes ask ourselves similar questions about the origins of some researched projects received in class: Has he done the research? Has the research been accurately presented and interpreted? Has the student done her own writing—or do we detect other voices on the pages, perhaps of another student or published expert whose work was copied or closely paraphrased without attribution?

Just as personal entertainment has shifted from the one-way, big screen production of my early teens to the interactive streaming of video on laptops and iPods today, so apparently have many students' views of ownership. Because of easy on-line accessibility to and duplication of digital music and video, static also seems to be building in the meaning of academic integrity. How could it be that despite ubiquitous stern warnings that downloading pirated songs and DVDs is theft, some simply shrug off such warnings when doing research? Since acquiring words and visuals can be just as easy, students sometimes acquire the mistaken belief, "If it's on the web, it belongs to everyone!" In academic writing, one can string together a paper for free from on-line sources, pick up a finished paper online for a few dollars, or hire a classmate to write one for money or favors. All this can drive the honest professor to despair—and to honor codes, Google, Dogpile, and Turnitin.

I wonder, however, if honors directors and faculty should be less reactive and more proactive by insisting on a different approach to assignments that would short-circuit the temptations offered by the Internet and encourage greater academic honesty by our students. We in honors programs can do a better job of showing that we promote creativity and integrity in approach, sources, organization, and composition of student work. Given the explosion of sources and acceptable academic writing styles, it simply seems less possible for faculty to have the same intimate knowledge of the scholarship in their fields as those of us who earned doctorates back when I first met the merchant-cum-explorer who acquainted the West with paper money and gun powder.

Perhaps we can provide guidance in research integrity that encourages academic camaraderie rather than threatening discovery—offering a carrot, if you will, instead of brandishing a stick.

- Promote Rogerian argument. Projects aimed at synthesis of conflicting positions are not only more intellectually challenging, but should be more difficult to locate as ready-made papers.

- Mentor student research from start to finish. Just as group projects are more successful for students when faculty introduce, explain, and supervise, we should increase the potential for intellectual and ethnical success by guiding individual students through the research process.
- Proceed in steps. Although some students—even those in honors—cling to "one-night stand" writing, faculty can share the development of students' projects in real time by scheduling flexible serial deadlines for the topic and rationale, initial sources, and preliminary draft well in advance of the due date.
- Encourage students to submit original research material—reading notes, questionnaire results, survey tabulations, lab reports, web sites, print-outs, and photocopies. Along with proceeding in steps, reviewing sources in their original form encourages further study, conversation, and insight into students' research processes.
- Invite peer sources. Some of the more interesting reading in my students' research surfaces when they include excerpts of interviews with their friends—whether as lab partners, mutually interested parties, or simply persons with first-hand experience—addressing the topic.
- Assign an annotated works cited. I find that students give more careful attention to sources when required to compose annotations of the works cited either as a step in the research or as an inclusion with the final draft.
- Have the project due several weeks before the end of semester. My students and I "close the circle" of researched writing during one-to-one conversations about the finished projects that I have already read.

None of these steps will guarantee academic integrity, some may seem old-fashioned, and all require more instructor time. Encouraging honors students along these lines, however, will likely help them gather their facts, report and interpret them critically, and create authentic voices in their research projects. Although Marco Polo scholars may never have all of their questions of authenticity answered, we in honors can help our students avoid questions about theirs.

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Research Essays

On Training Excellent Students in China and the United States

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INTRODUCTION

In many countries, the training of researchers who will be internationally competitive has become a primary objective, leading to extensive discussion of the curricula, educational content, and methods that may ensure a high level of student achievement. In this global climate, only the most excellent students have the potential to engage successfully in international competition and become leading-edge researchers in the world-wide marketplace of research. Thus, any country seeking to be internationally competitive must consider ways to further raise the level of excellent students.

In this study, we investigate university programs, specifically honors programs, that take special measures for training the most excellent students. Honors programs can be found in the United States, Canada, Holland, China, Singapore, Chile, and other countries; among these, the highest number of honors programs are in the U. S. (Digby, 2005) and China. Consequently, the authors chose these two countries as the objects of this study, surveying and comparing the characteristics of honors programs as training courses for excellent students. In both countries, the focus of our study was limited to higher-level universities. In the case of China, only universities identified by Kitagaki & Fuang (2008) as "Key Chinese Universities" were investigated. A small sample of universities in the U. S. was selected from *America's Best Value Colleges* (Owens & Meltzer et al., 2006). Our other major sources of information were university websites and the literature available through the National Collegiate Honors Council.

In both China and the U. S., honors programs have a common aim to gather and train particularly excellent students in the universities while the specific content of each program and training course is distinct. The characteristics observed in the two countries as well as the comparison of such characteristics may help serve as models for Japan and other countries wishing to create honors programs.

CHINA

Starting in 1993, the "211 Project" in China targeted key universities for the twenty-first century with the aim of creating a global revolution in new technology. This project has now been succeeded by the "985 Project," with its central concept being to create world-class universities. As of 2007, over a hundred universities, including Peking University and Tsinghua University, have been designated as key universities for developing honors programs.

Our research on these universities has shown that honors programs have been put into practice in 42 universities. It can be assumed that the existence of these and future honors programs will exert a great influence on the development of science and technology in China.

The authors provide below an overview of the characteristics of honors programs practiced in the key universities.

Chronology

The chronological development of honors programs in China can be summarized by division into the periods indicated in Table 1, which shows a rapid increase in number of honors programs after 1990. The first university to introduce an honors program was the University of Science & Technology of China, which in 1978 initiated a program called "Special Class for the Gifted Young" for students who had not yet completed a secondary education. This program was set up to train gifted students in the fields of science and technology. Making the most of its successful experience, this university also founded the "Experimental Class of Teaching Reform" in 1989 for the purpose of training students who had been evaluated as the most excellent at the entrance examination of the university.

In 1986, the "Special Class of Mathematics" was established at Nankai University, and in 1989 Nanjing University established an honors program by adding two intensified classes to the science curriculum and the humanities curriculum. Among the key universities, the University of Science & Technology of China, Nankai University, and Nanjing University were the first to adopt honors programs.

Other general honors programs have been put into practice since 1985. The authors counted the number of such honors programs in each specified time division from 1985 up to 2004. The results of four different data sets are shown in Figure 1 together with the approximate regression line.

Disciplines

Table 2 shows the number of honors programs arranged by discipline, showing that "science" courses comprise over 66% while "humanities"

courses comprise fewer than 25%. It should be noted that "humanities" courses in this instance include economics and business administration.

Because the Fundamental Science Class of Tsinghua University, the top-ranking university (Searchina Research Institute), was included in the science courses, the authors will describe the outline of its honors program. The Center for Advanced Study at Tsinghua University was founded in 1997. This Center has as its objectives to strengthen fundamental research, foster

Table 1: Chronological Development of Honors Programs in the Key Universities of China

Chronological Period	1975–	1980–	1985–	1990–	1995–	2000–	2005–	Total
Percent (Number of Programs)	1 (1)	0 (0)	3 (3)	5 (5)	13 (12)	41 (39)	38 (36)	100 (95)

Figure 1: Changes in the Number of University-Level Honors Programs in China (1985–2004)

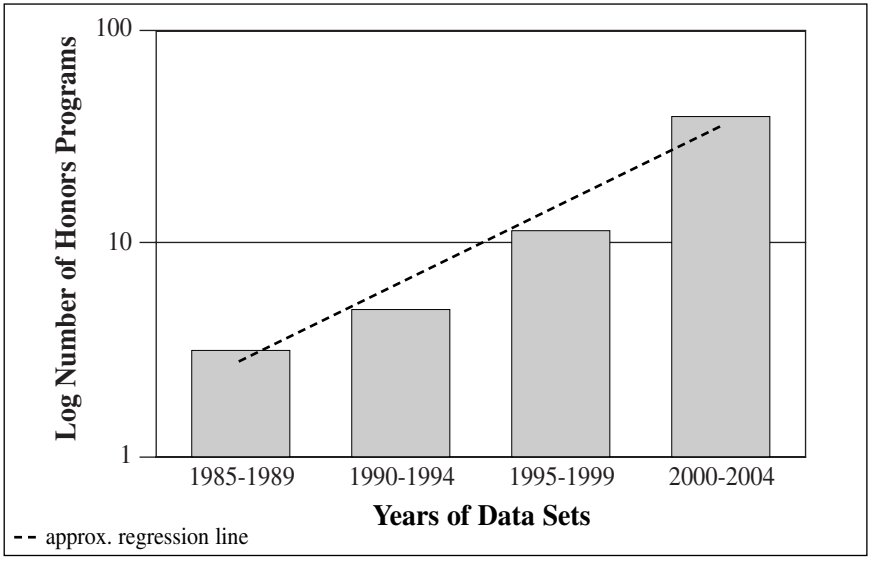

Table 2: Disciplinary Focus of Honors Programs

Course	Science	Humanities	Other	Total
Percent (Number of Programs)	69 (66)	25 (24)	5 (5)	100 (95)

creative human resources, and expand international academic exchange and cooperation. Toward these objectives, the Fundamental Science Class was established in 1998, and the sixty most excellent students were recruited in 1999. In this Class, great importance has been attached not only to fostering talents in mathematics and physics but also to emphasizing education in the liberal arts.

Tsinghua University also has an honors program called the "Sino-Foreign Culture Integrated Class," which corresponds to the humanities course. This class was started in 1999 with the recruitment of nearly thirty students. The objective of this program was to remove a traditional barrier existing between courses of study and to promote the coordination and unification of multiple courses, thus establishing the basis for "Chinese and English Culture" of, in American Terms, interdisciplinary study. Through reading the sutras as literature, the program has been putting an emphasis on strengthening the exchange of "Sino-Foreign Culture" as well as the global expansion of Chinese culture.

Training programs that are difficult to categorize as either humanities or science courses are classified as "Other." For instance, the "21st-Century Student Union" of East China Normal University, which was founded in 1994, is a program aimed at training future leaders and is included in "Other."

Training

In general, five major points about honors education in China can be identified.

The first point relates to the goals. Some honors programs have included education in the liberal arts, but on the whole they have focused on science and technology. In an attempt to model themselves after world-class universities, about 70% of all honors programs are focused on science.

The second point relates to preferential treatment. Students who have been admitted to honors programs are given various privileges such as library access, scholarships, and residency in privileged dormitories.

The third point is the retention system. An excellent student who has been admitted to a special class may be eliminated and returned to a normal class if he/she cannot maintain excellence in examination results. East China University of Science and Technology, for instance, has a dropout system for the lowest-ranking students in which roughly 20% of the students—those whose performance is lowest on a school end-of-term examination—are weeded out.

The fourth point is the tutorial system. The number of students admitted to an honors program is naturally small. Specific teachers are assigned to

these students as individual tutors. In many cases, teachers and students mutually choose each other.

The fifth point involves the method of selecting excellent students. As is the case with college entrance exams like the SAT or ACT, the selection method is based on test results and can be said to be objective. In this way, a set percentage of all students is selected.

UNITED STATES

America's Best Value Colleges (Owens et al., 2006) lists the names of respected and competitively priced universities in the U. S. We cross-checked this list with the information collected in *Peterson's Smart Choices: Honors Programs & Colleges* (Digby, 2005) and took a sampling of 71 institutions of higher education broken down into 60 public and 11 private universities. In view of the quantitative underrepresentation of private universities, we restricted our survey to state universities in this study.

CHRONOLOGY

Sixty state universities listed honors programs and/or colleges in *Peterson's Smart Choices*; one of them listed two programs and another listed three, so we found a total of 63 honors programs/colleges. Forty-two program descriptions among these 63 included the year in which they were established. Table 3 shows the chronology of the establishment of these programs by decade, starting in the 1950s. Some universities did not record the establishment year of their program, so the authors computed the year themselves. For example, Ohio State University indicated that their honors program was twenty years old, so we assumed it was founded in 1985, twenty years before the publication of this Peterson's guide.

In the changes seen from the 1950s to the 1990s, there is little evidence of a steady growth in the number of honors programs despite a general assumption that such growth has occurred. Instead, within this limited sample there seem to have been two periods of rapid growth in the 1960s and 1980s. The influence of the Sputnik launch in 1957 on the rapid growth in the 1960s would be an interesting topic for further study.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

The literature about honors programs and colleges in the United States contains a great variety of essays about leadership (Wilson, 2007), internships, social service (Parker, 2007), creation of community (Cobane, Thurman, and Lindsey, 2007), and interactions among class participants. The authors examined references to four key concepts—interaction among class participants, involvement in society, leadership, and internships—and

tabulated the number and percentage of programs that referred to these concepts. The results are shown in Table 4.

One example—the concept of "interaction among the class participants"—will illustrate the methodology we used in devising this table. First, from the many descriptive sentences that attached importance to this concept, we took a sampling of the words that appeared frequently. As a result, four words—"seminar," "colloquium," "interaction," and "communication"—together with their variations (such as plural forms and other parts of speech) were obtained and identified as keywords. Then we examined descriptions of all 63 honors programs and counted the number of keywords. Consequently, it can be said that, in 45 out of the 63 programs, "interaction among class participants" was an important concept. We used the same method of calculation for the concepts of "involvement in society," "leadership," and "internship."

From Table 4, it can be seen that 75% of program descriptions focused on the concept of "interaction among the class participants"; almost half focused on "involvement in society"; and nearly 40% stressed "leadership."

Characteristic Practices

Digby (2005) sent a questionnaire to universities with honors programs in order to obtain details about each program, and she published the replies without modification. Using these data, we calculated our basic statistics.

Table 3: Establishment of U.S. Honors Programs by Decade Since the 1950s

Chronological Period	1950–	1960–	1970–	1980–	1990–	2000–	Total
Percent (Number of Programs)	5 (2)	33 (14)	12 (5)	29 (12)	14 (6)	7 (3)	100 (42)

Table 4. Use Situations of the Words for Explanation of Honors College/Programs

Concept	interaction among class participants	involvement in society	leadership	internship
Key words	seminar/colloquium/ interact/communicate	social/service/ community	leader	internship
Percent (Number of Programs)	75 (45)	48 (29)	38 (23)	32 (19)

Among the respondents, 80% reported on general honors programs that required more work than departmental honors. In terms of the relative size of honors programs, 52% were large (with the number of enrolled students over 500), 22% mid-sized (100–500), and the rest small (<100). These results indicate that most major public research universities in the United States have adopted general programs and that more than half of these enroll over 500 students. However, 62% of the universities have no specialized honors advising system; 37% do have special academic advising for honors; 22% have a special honors fellowship advising system; and 5% have special honors graduate advising. Ten percent have both a special academic advising system and a special fellowship advising in honors.

The literature indicates that the roles of honors directors or deans differ according to program size. In a small program (fewer than 100 enrolled students), the director seems to be responsible for all components and activities of the program. Large programs (over 500 students), employ several administrators who divide and/or share the responsibilities (Shuman, 2006; Long, 1995).

FINDINGS

Our comparison between honors programs in China and the United States yields the following results:

1. In China, there has been a steady increase in the number of honors programs since they were introduced in the 1970s. In the United States, where honors program have existed for a longer period of time, growth may have been more sporadic.

2. Two of the earliest programs in the United States were established at Colorado State University in 1957 and Purdue University in 1958. The initial honors program at a major university in China was started at Nankai University in 1986, two decades later than in the U. S.

3. Descriptions of honors colleges and programs in the United States focus significant attention on communication, leadership, internships, social service, etc.; it seems that great importance has been attached to such activities as preparation for students' social and professional futures. By contrast, descriptions of honors programs in China focus on traditionally distinct courses of study in the humanities and in science courses such as electricity, mechanics, physics, and economics.

4. Frequently, science-oriented honors programs in China emphasize the importance of studying a foreign language as part of the required curriculum. For instance, the importance of learning English is implemented in the following honors curricula: Special Class for Excellent Students of

Nanjin University of Science and Technology; Longji Class of Lanzhou University; Experimental School of Harbin Institute of Technology; Fundamental Science Class of Central South University; and the Department of Excellent Students of Science and Technology of East China University of Science and Technology.

5. In both countries, it is usual that the results of nation-wide examinations are taken into consideration in the admission of students into an honors system. In China, the entrance examinations are nation-wide and unified; in the U. S., the SAT and ACT are standard requirements for honors admission.

6. In any university of either country, there is a tendency to provide various kinds of preferential treatment to students who are admitted to honors classes. Such students receive such privileges as access to libraries, scholarships, and admission to special dormitories.

7. At a university in any country, even after students are admitted to an honors class, they must maintain a certain minimum level of grades and/or examination results. If they fall short of such a level, they are obliged to return to a non-honors class. In the case of East China University of Science and Technology, students with a relatively low level of accomplishment are automatically eliminated at the end of each school term, and vacancies are filled by recruiting from the general student population. United States universities tend to have more diverse and complex policies on retention.

8. In U. S. universities, special honors academic advisers are often appointed. At some universities, honors fellowship advisers take on the role of honors advisers. In China as well, there is a tutorial system in which a teacher individually advises each honors student. However, honors fellowship advising was not found at universities in China that were surveyed for this study.

CONCLUSION

In the universities of Japan, honors programs are virtually nonexistent. One of the reasons lies in the fact that there is a cultural emphasis on equality and distrust of elitism. On the other hand, as the percentage of students who go on to higher-level schools has grown to almost 50%, a wide variety of learning capabilities is now found in university students. Unless honors programs are put into practice, Japanese universities will find it difficult to cultivate excellent students who are able to stand up in international competition. Our study has resulted from awareness of this issue, and we believe

that the situations of honors programs in China and the United States, including a comparison between the two, will be a good guide for Japan and for other countries facing similar situations.

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Honors Admissions Criteria: How Important Are Standardized Tests?

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In 2007 I had the rare pleasure of overseeing the transformation of our 45-year-old honors program into an honors college. The entrance requirements for our honors program had been designed to maximize the number of participants and largely boiled down to whether the student was interested in pursuing honors. However, admission to the Honors College included a scholarship and thus required more discernment in admission standards. Thus, I began to review the entrance requirements for ten honors colleges in Texas and its surrounding states of Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Not surprisingly, most other universities focused on high school grade point average (GPA) and standardized test scores. The general practice among the schools was admission to the honors college for students in the top 10% of their high school graduating class, a 27 or higher composite score on the ACT, and 1200 or higher on the math and reading portions of the SAT. As a result we used those numbers as rough benchmarks for what we wanted our "typical" Honors College student to look like. In addition to these numbers, we added an interview to the selection process.

One of the benefits of starting a new program is that research questions are also policy questions upon which action can be taken. Investigating the success and failure of our first cohort had the potential to help us shape our entrance criteria in order to enhance the likelihood of success for future students. Whereas an established program might be resistant to change, a new program can be more flexible. Thus, the ability to predict the performance of first-year students was an exciting area to study. However, as Khe (2007) pointed out, the issue of what criteria best predict success is a large and complex question that has led to no shortage of debate. The literature surrounding the question of entrance criteria contains a wide range of opinion. Wolfe and Johnson (1995) found that 19% of the variance in freshman GPA could be accounted for by high school GPA. Anastasi (1988) summarized 2000 studies investigating the link between SAT scores and GPA and concluded that the scores predicted 18% of the variance in freshman GPA. A more recent

meta-analysis including research involving over one million students indicated that the SAT is a valid predictor of first-year GPA (Hezlett et al., 2001). On the other hand, Robert Sternberg has long been an opponent of an overreliance on standardized testing. His claim is that "tests only work for some of the people, some of the time" (Sternberg, 1982; p 157).

Complicating the question is the fact that there are numerous ways to define success in an honors college; these include retention rates, graduation rates, *cum laude* status at graduation, quality of theses, involvement in honors activities, and subjective ratings by its participants. However, for the purpose of this investigation we focused on the first-year GPA of our initial cohort. Our goal was to investigate the relationship between our admissions criteria and first-year academic success. Our premise was that we needed to insure that students could get through the first year before those other outcome variables became relevant. The first-year cohort had the following characteristics: an average combined math/reading score of 1220 on the SAT, an average composite score of 28 on the ACT, and an average class rank in the top 12%. The fall GPA for our 55 students was a 3.17, with a range from 0.0 to 4.0 (*sd*=.88). Seven students left the program before the spring semester began. The students who left had similar standardized scores to those who remained; both groups averaged a 28 on the ACT while the group that left had a slightly higher SAT than those who remained in the program (1241 versus 1217). Although the numbers are too small to run a meaningful analysis, it does appear that the two groups differed significantly in their average class rank. The students who remained in the program had an average class rank in the top 11% and those who left the program had an average rank in the top 21%. The spring GPA of the remaining students was 3.35, with a range of 1.0–4.0 (*sd*=.63). This GPA compares very favorably with the 2.15 GPA for non-Honors College freshmen at our university.

Correlations were calculated among GPA, standardized test scores, and high school class rank percentile. Looking first at the standardized test scores, the correlation of the fall GPA with the SAT was .07 while the correlation with the ACT was -.08. The relationships between the two variables became slightly stronger when looking at spring GPA. Here the correlations were .09 for the SAT and -.28 for the ACT. Although these correlations are slightly stronger, none of the correlations is statistically significant. The correlations between high school class rank percentile and GPA were much stronger than the correlations with standardized test scores. In the fall the correlation was .59 and in the spring it was .58; both were significant at the $p<.01$ level.

These results are supported by subsequent stepwise multiple linear regressions on the fall and spring GPA. The two outputs were extremely similar, so for the sake of brevity only the output for the spring data is included.

The regressors were class rank, ACT, and SAT scores. The regression was a good fit (R^2_{adj}=89%), and the overall relationship was significant ($F_{1,3}$ = 24.33, p<.04). Only the effect of class rank was significant; as class rank improved (i.e., closer to 1), GPA increased.

The numbers from the first year of our Honors College indicate that high school class rank percentile is a good predictor of academic success for our first-year students. Individuals with lower class ranks, regardless of their standardized scores, were less likely to remain in the program. Overall, there was a significant correlation between class rank and college GPA in the freshman year. Further, standardized tests seem to be weak to poor predictors of success; note that the correlation between ACT scores and GPA is negative. However, we also believe that it would be premature to throw out standardized tests as part of the admission process. Our sample size in this study is relatively small and may be unique. Thus, we would like to continue to investigate this relationship with successive cohorts. Further, the freshman year, and particularly the first semester, is a unique time in a college student's life. The pattern of data reflected here may not carry over to the sophomore through senior years. Although the literature suggests otherwise, it may be that the standardized scores will be good predictors of GPA for the remaining three years of college or will accurately predict other criteria of success (e.g., graduation rates).

The finding that high school class rank was a good predictor of first year GPA should not be too surprising. It is an axiom in psychology that the best predictor of a future behavior is past behavior (Connor & Armitage, 1998). Success in college requires a combination of intelligence, motivation, work ethic, and study skills; this is the same set of skills that is required to do well in high school. Even with the debate surrounding standardized tests and what they measure, few would argue that a timed test measures work ethic.

With that said, these numbers were compelling enough for us to adjust our admissions formula for the second-year cohort. Although we still use standardized tests while considering applicants, success in high school now receives a greater weight in our decision making. If future data continue to indicate that standardized scores do not predict success for our students, we will be faced with the question of whether to drop the scores from our admissions criteria. A number of universities and colleges have moved in this direction in the last few years. However, there is frequently resistance to such a move, ranging from questions about the comparability of different high school systems to the preference of upper-level administrators to sell programs by talking about the high standardized scores of the students within such programs.

Ultimately our goal is to increase the likelihood of success of our Honors College students. Although many steps can be taken once the student is admitted to the university, entrance criteria may assist us in improving the students' odds of surviving the first year of college. Thus, I echo Khe's (2007) statement that further analyses of admissions standards will help improve quality in all academic areas.

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Is Student Participation in an Honors Program Related to Retention and Graduation Rates?

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INTRODUCTION

Do students who participate in an honors program have higher retention and graduation rates in comparison to otherwise similar nonparticipants? This is the question we address, and we do so within the context of the Honors College at the University of Maine. We present our investigation both as a contribution to the limited research in this area and as an illustration of the practical challenges one faces in doing applied work of this sort. Regarding the latter, one must be careful when comparing the retention and graduation rates of honors and nonhonors students because of differences between these two groups at the outset—especially differences in academic ability, for instance, that arguably are related to subsequent retention and graduation rates (e.g., Murtaugh, Burns, & Schuster, 1999). How, then, does one go about making such comparisons? We present our comparisons in several stages, differing in sophistication, thus showing how our results changed and, further, how these changes shaped our understanding of the relationship between honors participation at UMaine and retention and graduation rates.

RELATED RESEARCH

To many, particularly those involved in honors education, the advantages of honors curricula have been and continue to be obvious. Honors students are engaged, they are challenged, and they are exposed to interdisciplinary analysis. They have a wonderful experience and achieve great things during their undergraduate careers. All of this is good; the students flourish, and the faculty have enjoyable experiences. So, what's the problem? The problem is that we have little data to support these claims.

Astin (1993), in his regression analysis of student success in college, employed 135 "college environmental" measures and 57 "student involvement" measures to explain the variability in each of 82 outcome measures. One of Astin's student-involvement measures was enrollment in an honors program. Among the other involvement measures were participating in student clubs and organizations, talking with faculty, joining a fraternity or sorority, taking writing courses, studying abroad, and exercising. Astin found that honors students tended to fare better than nonhonors students with respect to retention (defined as being retained for four years and receiving a degree at that point), desire to make a contribution to a scientific theory, self-reported growth in analytical and problem-solving skills, and admission to professional or graduate school. In contrast to his earlier study (Astin, 1978), Astin (1993) found no association between honors status and college GPA. Nor did he find associations with respect to self-reported growth in general knowledge, critical thinking skills, writing skills, leadership, or satisfaction with the overall college experience.

Much of the early work in the area of honors participation and student success focused primarily on identifying appropriate students for an honors program. The questions asked were of the sort, "How can we select students to be in honors who will be successful?" where "success" typically was indicated by a high GPA and graduation from honors (e.g., Coursol & Wagner, 1986). While such questions are still of interest, they do not address the *effects* of participating in an honors program. In the words of Sam Schuman (Schuman, 2004, p. 22), "What happens to comparable students who do and do not enter Honors programs?"

With few exceptions (e.g., Pflaum, Pascarella, & Duby, 1985), only recently have we seen systematic research on the effects of being in honors. Shushok (2002, 2006), comparing matched groups of honors and nonhonors students, reported a GPA advantage in the first collegiate year that then disappeared by the fourth year. He also found that honors students were more likely to meet with faculty members, discuss career plans with faculty members, and discuss social/political issues with other students outside of class. The first two effects were decidedly stronger for male students. Further, male honors students also were more likely to be involved in academic extracurricular activities than their nonhonors counterparts.

Cosgrove (2004) took a different tack in investigating the effect of honors participation. Drawing on several institutions in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, he considered three groups of students: those who completed an honors program (n = 30), those who started but did not complete an honors program (n = 82), and "high ability" students who never participated in an honors program (n = 108). Cosgrove found that honors

completers had a significantly higher five-year graduation rate compared to that of the other two groups: 100% for honors completers versus 82% and 76%, respectively, for partial completers and high-ability nonhonors students. Among those who did graduate within five years, honors completers required fewer semesters to do so than did the other two groups (although the statistical significance of this finding is not reported). What about academic performance? Among students graduating within five years, honors completers earned a mean GPA of 3.71—significantly higher than the 3.48 for partial completers and 3.36 for high-ability nonhonors students.

In their early study, Pflaum et al. (1985) reported a higher freshman GPA for honors students than for statistically equated comparison groups. However, there was no honors advantage with respect to one-year retention.

PROBLEMS FACING RESEARCH ON HONORS PARTICIPATION, RETENTION, AND GRADUATION

As we acknowledged in our introduction, honors students tend to differ from nonhonors students at the outset in ways that arguably are related to subsequent retention and graduation rates (e.g., greater academic ability). Consequently, our question—*Is student participation in an honors program related to retention and graduation rates?*—cannot be answered with the degree of confidence that is warranted when one randomly assigns subjects to different conditions, thereby effecting group equivalence at the outset. Nevertheless, what we can do is identify a comparable group of nonhonors students (e.g., with respect to academic aptitude) and later see whether their retention and graduation rates differ from those of honors students. Further, we can employ more sophisticated procedures that statistically control for initial differences between honors and nonhonors students, rendering the two groups more comparable.

While neither strategy allows the luxury of drawing cause-and-effect conclusions, each eliminates certain "plausible rival hypotheses." For example, if we simply report that retention rates are generally higher for honors students than for nonhonors students, one rightly could wonder whether this difference merely reflects the generally higher academic ability of honors students (a plausible rival hypothesis)—not their participation in the honors program. Had we statistically controlled for differences in academic ability, however, this rival hypothesis would be nullified. Although we still would be unable, absent a randomized experiment, to unequivocally attribute the differential retention rate to participation in the honors program, we would be reasonably confident that this difference did not simply reflect an underlying difference between honors and nonhonors students in academic ability. As we

elaborate below, "elimination of plausible rival hypotheses" is how we approached our analysis.

METHOD

Setting

Honors at the UMaine began in 1935, with the first four theses submitted in 1937. As with many early honors programs, a Rhodes Scholar founded the UMaine Honors Program : Stanley R. Ashby, an English professor who had been a member of the first group of American Rhodes Scholars in 1904. Ashby's goal was to incorporate into the UMaine curriculum "the individual tutorials, unfettered outside reading, and small group discussions" he valued so much at Oxford (Wicks, n.d., para. 1).

In 1962, the UMaine Honors Program expanded from the College of Arts and Sciences to include students from all colleges. The *Honors College at the University of Maine* was inaugurated forty years later, in October 2002. The Honors College was conceived to provide educational opportunities that both broaden and deepen the undergraduate experience while fostering a community of scholars comprising students, staff, and faculty. With this transition, the faculty of the new Honors College reconceived and enhanced the honors curriculum. The new model requires students to complete eighteen credits (versus eight credits previously) of interdisciplinary core courses during their first two years. With this change, students completing the honors core satisfy all five areas of the *Human Values* and *Social Contexts* component of general education, as well as the *Ethics* component, in an intentional and integrated manner. Formerly, the required honors first-year courses satisfied only three areas of *Human Values* and *Social Contexts*.

The Honors College has its home in Colvin and Balentine Halls, two elegant buildings constructed in the early 1900s. Colvin houses the recently renovated Robert Thomson Honors Center: administrative offices, two classrooms, library, seminar room, and small café. Renovations to Colvin, scheduled to be completed by December 2008, will renew the residential spaces on the second and third floors and create a great room and visiting scholar apartment on the fourth floor. Balentine Hall is a residence for additional honors students, and it contains a classroom and substantial undesignated honors space. Future renovations call for the creation of office space for Honors College faculty and staff as well as additional classroom and recreational areas.

Definitions

We examined one-year retention rates of honors and nonhonors students for each of five cohorts of first-time, full-time students enrolling at UMaine: Fall 2002 through Fall 2006. Consistent with prevailing practice, we defined one-year retention rate as the percentage of students in a cohort who returned the following fall. For the Fall 2002 cohort, we also examined four-year graduation rates. We began with the Fall 2002 cohort as it was the first to experience the new honors curriculum initiated in conjunction with the inauguration of the Honors College at the University of Maine.

For the one-year retention analyses, we defined an honors student as one who completed Honors 111 and 112—the first two courses in the four-course honors sequence—in the student's first two semesters. That is, we excluded from these analyses the student who completed only Honors 111, or who completed both Honors 111 and 112 but not in the first two semesters. We defined the nonhonors student as one who had never taken an honors course during the first year or thereafter. Further, to make for a fair comparison of honors and nonhonors students, we included only nonhonors students who, like honors students (as defined here), were present for both semesters of their first year.

For the analysis of four-year graduation rates, we defined an honors student as one who completed Honors 111, 112, 211, and 212 in the first four semesters. (Honors 211 and 212 are the third and fourth courses in the honors sequence.) If fewer than four honors courses were taken, or the four courses were not taken in the first four semesters, the student was excluded from this analysis. Nonhonors students had taken no honors courses (ever) and, to make for a fair comparison, these students were included in this analysis only if they were present for the first four semesters.

Thus, our comparison of honors and nonhonors students reflects a particular subset of all UMaine students: "honors students" had taken the honors courses in the timeframe described above, and "nonhonors" students were present for the same number of semesters as the honors students. These stipulations should be kept in mind when considering our results and their generalizability.

Analyses

We compared honors and nonhonors students in a three-phase analysis. First, we compared honors and nonhonors students without making any adjustments with respect to entering characteristics. This comparison provides a helpful baseline for considering subsequent comparisons.

Second, we then made the same comparison using a more select group of nonhonors students. We identified this select group by successively eliminating nonhonors students having low SAT scores until the median SAT score for this group equaled that for the honors students; we did this separately for each cohort. We also identified the select group of nonhonors students who were in the highest 20% of their high school class. By comparing honors students and a select group of nonhonors students, we are able to examine retention and graduate rates of more comparable groups—at least with respect to SAT scores and high school rank. A shortcoming of this analysis is that, by restricting nonhonors students in this fashion, the vast majority of students in this group were lost (as will be seen below). An additional shortcoming is that the method of forming the select group of nonhonors students is statistically rather informal.

The third phase of our analysis addresses these shortcomings. In this analysis, we used logistic regression to examine the relationship between honors participation and retention/graduation rates, statistically controlling for SAT scores and high school rank. Specifically, we regressed student retention (1 = returned the following fall semester, 0 = did not return) on honors status (1 = honors, 0 = nonhonors), high school rank (expressed in deciles), and total SAT. We lose relatively few students by doing this analysis, statistical control is more sophisticated than "hand picking" a more select group of nonhonors students, and results are obtained in a single analysis (rather than separately for SAT selectivity and rank selectivity).

RESULTS

Retention After One Year

Although the majority of honors and nonhonors students returned in the fall of their second year, the percentage was greater for honors students in each of the five cohorts (see Table 1, first column). Consider the 2006 cohort, for example, where the retention rate for honors students was 94% versus 81% for nonhonors students. This result is not unexpected insofar as these comparisons are not adjusted for either SAT or high school rank—both of which have been shown to be related to retention (e.g., Murtaugh, Burns, & Schuster, 1999). Again, perhaps the differences in the first column simply reflect retention-relevant differences between honors and nonhonors students at the outset. The honors advantage persists, however, even when the comparisons are restricted to a more select group of nonhonors students with respect to SAT scores (second column) or high school rank (third column). Focusing on high school rank, for example, we see that 90% to 96% of honors students return for their second year, compared to 85% to 90% for nonhonors students. Further, the difference is larger for more recent cohorts: a

Table 1. One-Year Retention Rates

Cohort	Unadjusted		SAT-select[a]		HS rank-select[b]	
	nonHonors	Honors	nonHonors	Honors	nonHonors	Honors
2006	81% (1,159/1,431)	94% (174/185)	86% (194/226)	94% (174/185)	85% (334/391)	94% (174/185)
2005	82% (1,127/1,369)	96% (197/205)	81% (154/190)	96% (197/205)	90% (351/391)	96% (197/205)
2004	82% (1,046/1,276)	93% (192/206)	82% (132/161)	93% (192/206)	88% (313/354)	93% (192/206)
2003	84% (1,091/1,304)	91% (163/180)	87% (136/156)	91% (163/180)	86% (355/412)	91% (163/180)
2002	82% (1,076/1,319)	90% (172/192)	82% (186/228)	90% (172/192)	88% (332/376)	90% (172/192)

Note. All students were registered for the first two semesters.

[a] For each cohort, nonHonors students in these comparisons were selected so that their median SAT score equaled the median SAT score of Honors students.

[b] All nonHonors students in these comparisons were in the top 20% of their high school class.

2-percentage-point difference in 2002 grows to a 9-percentage-point difference in 2006.

These results are consistent with what we learn from the logistic regression analyses (Table 2). We provide the full regression equation for each cohort although our primary interest lies in the odds ratio (last column in Table 2). Consider the 2006 cohort, where the odds ratio for the honors variable is 3.1. This means that the odds of an honors student returning the following fall semester are roughly three times greater than the odds of a nonhonors student returning—regardless of SAT and high school rank. Table 2 shows that the odds ratio for the honors variable generally increases with successive cohorts (although dipping slightly in 2006). We begin with a statistically nonsignificant odds ratio of 1.0 (p = .98) for the 2002 cohort. That is, honors and nonhonors students have "even odds" of returning the following fall semester. With the 2003 cohort, the odds ratio increases to a marginally significant 1.8 (p = .08). In subsequent cohorts, the honors odds ratios are all statistically significant. As with our less sophisticated analyses reported in Table 1, then, the relationship between honors participation and retention generally grew stronger with successive cohorts.

Table 2. Results of Logistic Regression Analyses: One-Year Retention Rates.

Cohort		*b* (*s.e.*)	*p*	odds ratio
2006	constant	.94		
	Honors status	1.14 (.44)	.01	3.1
	high school rank	-.16 (.04)	<.001	.86
	SAT	.00 (.001)	.11	1.0
2005	constant	2.65		
	Honors status	1.34 (.48)	.01	3.8
	high school rank	-.28 (.04)	<.001	.76
	SAT	.00 (.001)	.90	1.0
2004	constant	2.30		
	Honors status	.97 (.38)	.01	2.6
	high school rank	-.20 (.05)	<.001	.82
	SAT	.00 (.001)	.88	1.0
2003	constant	2.75		
	Honors status	.60 (.34)	.08	1.8
	high school rank	-.16 (.05)	<.001	.85
	SAT	.00 (.001)	.41	1.0
2002	constant	.95		
	Honors status	.01 (.31)	.98	1.0
	high school rank	-.19 (.04)	<.001	.83
	SAT	.00 (.001)	.06	1.0

Note. The dependent variable is the dichotomous measure of student retention (1 = returned the following fall semester, 0 = did not return); the independent variables are Honors status (1 = Honors, 0 = nonHonors), total SAT, and high school rank (decile). *N*s for these analyses are: 2006 cohort (Honors = 185, nonHonors = 1,202), 2005 cohort (Honors = 205, nonHonors = 995), 2004 cohort (Honors = 206, nonHonors = 955), 2003 cohort (Honors = 180, nonHonors = 993), 2002 cohort (Honors = 192, nonHonors = 1,025).

FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATES

We examined four-year graduation rates for the 2002 cohort. As Table 3 shows, almost two thirds (64%) of honors students graduated in four years compared to 43% for nonhonors students (first column), a discrepancy that does not change appreciably when based on a more select group of nonhonors students with respect to SAT scores (second column). However, when the group of nonhonors students is selected based on high school rank, their four-year graduation rate jumps to 60%—not markedly different from that for honors students. The follow-up logistic regression analysis yields a similar finding: among 2002 cohort members, honors and nonhonors students essentially had even odds of graduating in four years (regardless of SAT scores and high school rank).

Table 3. Four-Year Graduation Rates (2002 Cohort)

Unadjusted		SAT-select[a]		HS rank-select[b]	
nonHonors	Honors	nonHonors	Honors	nonHonors	Honors
43% (436/1009)	64% (76/118)	48% (83/173)	64% (76/118)	60% (191/320)	64% (76/118)

Note. All students were registered for the first four semesters.

[a] For each cohort, nonHonors students in these comparisons were selected so that their median SAT score equaled the median SAT score of Honors students.

[b] All nonHonors students in these comparisons were in the top 20% of their high school class.

DISCUSSION

Our results suggest that participation in the UMaine Honors College is related to one-year retention. Although our analyses do not permit cause-and-effect conclusions regarding the relationship between honors participation and retention, we at least have weakened any plausible rival hypothesis that is predicated on initial differences between honors and nonhonors students with respect to academic ability (as measured by SAT and high school rank). Thus, our findings are more suggestive of a retention effect than would be the case had we limited our study to a simple comparison of these two groups.

This suggestion is stronger still in the apparent increase in the magnitude of the honors advantage over time (i.e., across subsequent honors cohorts). This trend is not unexpected given the 2002 modifications to the honors curriculum—which, with each successive year, have been enacted with greater fidelity. A larger percentage of the honors college population in each successive year has been involved with the new curriculum, and thus

each successive cohort is more integrated and less isolated. From the outset of this transition, we observed that, as the 2002 cohort made its way through the Honors College, these students increasingly viewed themselves as *Honors College students*. As this community continued to coalesce and grow, it provided more support and more experienced mentoring to incoming Honors College students. In whole or in part, these factors may have contributed to the generally increasing relationship between honors participation and retention. That said, we might expect the honors effect on retention to plateau now that there is a stable honors community having a common set of experiences. Future analyses will tell.

We found no relationship between honors participation and four-year graduation rates—a relationship we could examine only for the 2002 cohort. Whether this null finding persists with subsequent cohorts remains to be seen. However, one might expect that the increasing honors advantage with respect to retention, and the hypothesized causes behind it, ultimately will result in an honors advantage with respect to four-year graduation rates as well.

Our statistical control of SAT and high school rank notwithstanding, there doubtless are other entering characteristics in which honors and non-honors students arguably may differ. Academic motivation comes to mind (for which high school rank is only a crude proxy, to be sure). Whether our results hold up when such variables are taken into account, only subsequent investigations can say. Further, if in fact honors participation influences retention, our analyses are silent on *how*. Is it that honors participation strengthens social and academic engagement, as Shushok (2006) suggests? Does honors participation perhaps engender institutional commitment? Further, maybe the relationship between honors participation and retention is multiplicative rather than additive; maybe the retention effect is stronger for honors students having certain characteristics or in certain situations. For instance, anecdotally there seems to be an "honors housing" effect at UMaine—an effect that is supported by some preliminary research (Houle, 2005). Subsequent studies can throw additional light here as well.

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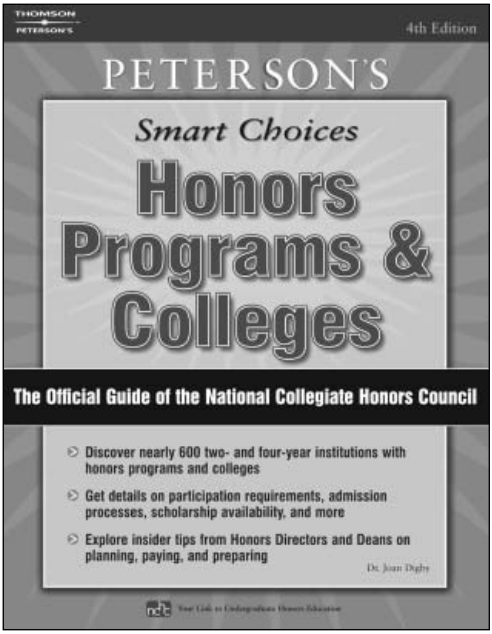

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Beginning in Honors: A Handbook by Samuel Schuman (Fourth Edition, 2006, 80pp). Advice on starting a new honors program. Covers budgets, recruiting students and faculty, physical plant, administrative concerns, curriculum design, and descriptions of some model programs.

A Handbook for Honors Administrators by Ada Long (1995, 117pp). Everything an honors administrator needs to know, including a description of some models of honors administration.

A Handbook for Honors Programs at Two-Year Colleges by Theresa James (2006, 136pp). A useful handbook for two-year schools contemplating beginning or redesigning their honors program and for four-year schools doing likewise or wanting to increase awareness about two-year programs and articulation agreements. Contains extensive appendices about honors contracts and a comprehensive bibliography on honors education.

The Honors College Phenomenon edited by Peter C. Sederberg (2008, 172pp). This monograph examines the growth of honors colleges since 1990: historical and descriptive characterizations of the trend, alternative models that include determining whether becoming a college is appropriate, and stories of creation and recreation. Leaders whose institutions are contemplating or taking this step as well as those directing established colleges should find these essays valuable.

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Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education edited by Peter A. Machonis (2008, 160pp). A companion piece to *Place as Text*, focusing on recent, innovative applications of City as Text™ teaching strategies. Chapters on campus as text, local neighborhoods, study abroad, science courses, writing exercises, and philosophical considerations, with practical materials for instituting this pedagogy.

Teaching and Learning in Honors edited by Cheryl L. Fuiks and Larry Clark (2000, 128 pp). Presents a variety of perspectives on teaching and learning useful to anyone developing new or renovating established honors curricula.

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (***JNCHC***) is a semi-annual periodical featuring scholarly articles on honors education. 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.

Honors in Practice (***HIP***) is an annual journal that accommodates the need and desire for articles about nuts-and-bolts practices by featuring practical and descriptive essays on topics such as successful honors courses, suggestions for out-of-class experiences, administrative issues, and other topics of interest to honors administrators, faculty, and students.

NCHC Handbook. Included are lists of all NCHC members, NCHC Constitution and Bylaws, committees and committee charges, and other useful information.