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JNCHC

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council

Spring/Summer 2008 Vol. 9, No. 1

In This Issue

FORUM ON "HONORS CULTURE"

Charlie Slavin

George Mariz

Jim Ford

Annmarie Guzy

Paul Strong

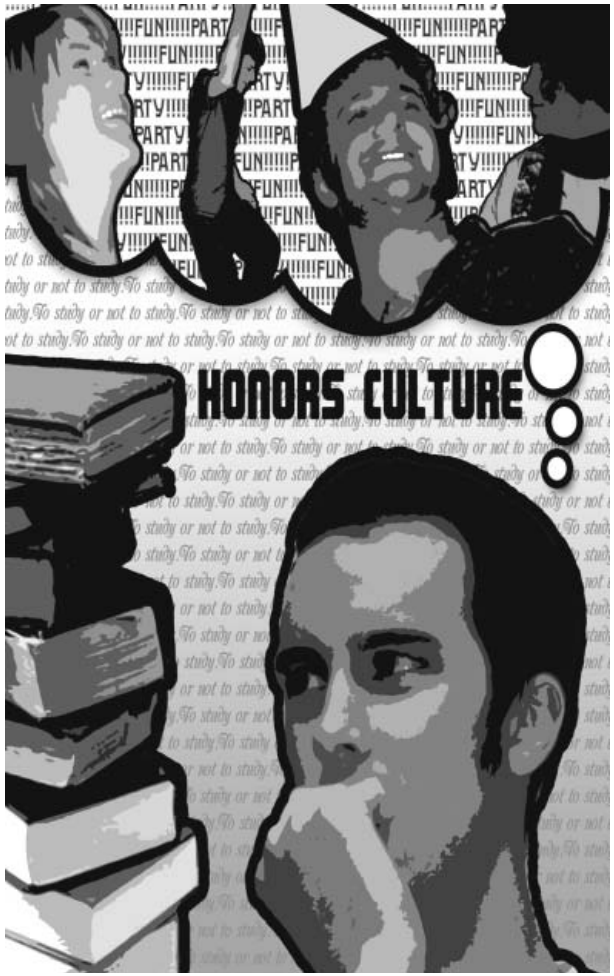
Dail Mullins

RESEARCH ESSAYS

Gary Bell

Maureen E. Kelleher, Lauren C. Pouchak, and Melissa A. Lulay

Gregory W. Lanier



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HONORS CULTURE

JOURNAL EDITORS

ADA LONG

DAIL MULLINS

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

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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.

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CONTENTS

Call for Papers 5

Submission Guidelines 5

Dedication to John Grady 7

Editor's Introduction
Ada Long 9

FORUM ON "HONORS CULTURE"

Defining Honors Culture
Charlie Slavin 15

The Culture of Honors
George Mariz 19

Creating an Honors Culture
Jim Ford 27

Honors Culture Clash: The High Achieving Student Meets the Gifted Professor
Annmarie Guzy 31

The Prairie Home Companion Honors Program
Paul Strong 35

The Times They Are A-Changin'
Dail Mullins 41

Research Essays

The New Model Education
Gary Bell. 47

The Role of Advanced Placement Credit in Honors Education
Maureen E. Kelleher, Lauren C. Pouchak, and Melissa A. Lulay 61

Towards Reliable Honors Assessment
Gregory W. Lanier. 81

About the Authors 151

NCHC Publication Order Forms 158

Cover image by Alex Mayfield, honors student at Oral Roberts University

Call for Papers

The next issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: September, 2008**) invites research essays on any topic of interest to the honors community.

The issue will also include a Forum focused on the theme "Honors and Academic Integrity." We invite essays of roughly a thousand words that consider this theme 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?

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

JOHN GRADY

John Grady is the ideal person to whom we might dedicate an issue of *JNCHC* devoted to the theme "Honors Culture." He not only exemplifies honors culture but has helped to create it for almost four decades. On the full-time faculty in the economics department at LaSalle College (now University) since 1960, John was appointed Director of the Honors Program in 1969, a position he has held ever since. He attended his first annual NCHC meeting in New Orleans in October of 1969, and its student-centered culture made NCHC a lifetime commitment for him. He has attended all but two national conferences since then, and he hosted the 1983 and 2006 conferences in his beloved Philadelphia. He also was one of the four original organizers of the Northeast Regional Honors Council in 1971 and hosted their annual conference in 1976 and 1996. In addition to serving on virtually every major NCHC committee, leading and presenting conference sessions, and serving as an official and unofficial consultant to countless honors educators, John has initiated many of NCHC's most significant initiatives. As the first co-chair of the Committee on Assessment and Evaluation and the first chair of the NCHC Personnel Committee, he led the development of the Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program, the criteria for NCHC certification as an on-site consultant/evaluator of honors programs, the biannual workshop on Assessment and Evaluation, and the job description and hiring process for the position of executive director. While many of John's

efforts have focused on defining and stabilizing the NCHC, he has always maintained his primary focus on students as the center and purpose of the organization. He has also been a continuous force for unity and respect; while a document defining the basic characteristics of an honors program threatened to be divisive, for instance, John made it an affirmation of common goals and shared community. The welcoming, inclusive, student-centered, and loving culture that people have cherished in the NCHC is in large part the creation of John Grady, and we have all been the beneficiaries of his wise leadership.

Editor's Introduction

Ada Long
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Community of campus leaders; gaggle of nerds; petri dish for future CEOs; IQ incubator; think tank for hippies; snob squad; bunch of pointy-headed intellectuals—all honors administrators have heard the culture of their programs characterized with some such epithet, usually embraced with affection by the students it supposedly describes and often embodying a kernel of truth.

Not just students or individual honors programs but the broader culture of honors will often emerge as a subject of conversation at NCHC conferences, and perspectives on this culture have shifted significantly during the past half-century. Older members of NCHC remark that honors directors used to be people who loved working with smart students and who created communities of scholars based on love of learning. Directors weren't paid very much and often taught a full load of courses in addition to administering the program. Honors programs typically flew under the institutional radar; they were pretty much left alone rather than serving their now common roles as institutional status symbols, recruitment tools, and image boosters. Careers and hierarchies play a more predominant role now: directors are becoming deans, programs are becoming colleges, the NCHC is contemplating transition to an accrediting agency, and students are focusing on prestigious national scholarships and admission to elite graduate programs and jobs. Honors has become professional.

While some components of honors culture have been changing dramatically, others have not. We begin this issue of *JNCHC* with definitions of honors culture that include permanent and transitory, particular and general, valuable and problematic characteristics of honors. We sent out a call to all NCHC members for contributions to our "Forum on Honors Culture," and the call included these remarks:

> During the past decade, numerous essays have appeared in the national media* trying to define the current undergraduate culture in contrast to that of previous generations. Is there a particular honors culture? What are its characteristics? Does it differ from non-honors culture and/or from the honors culture of former periods? To what extent, if any, do honors administrators control this culture? Does the culture generally coincide

with the stated goals of a particular honors program or contradict them? What are the particular roles of students, teachers, and staff within the honors culture, and which is culturally dominant? We invite essays of roughly a thousand words that consider the specific traits, if any, of honors culture in the context of your campus and/or a national context.

*Some relevant articles:

David Brooks, "The Organization Kid," *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 2001): http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200104/brooks

Rick Perlstein, "What's the Matter With College," *NY Times* (Sept. 30, 2007): http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/30/magazine/30wwln-essay-perlstein-t.html

Nicholas Handler, "The Posteverything Generation," *NY Times* (Sept. 30, 2007): http://essay.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/09/27/the-college-pastiche/

Thomas Friedman, "Generation Q," *NY Times* (Oct. 10, 2007): http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/10/opinion/10friedman.html?em&ex=1192248000&en=b68385a36eade5ac&ei=5087%0A

We asked Charlie Slavin of the University of Maine to write the lead article for the Forum and distributed his essay to the NCHC membership. Slavin's essay, along with the other five essays that were selected for publication, comprise a rich and varied conversation about the culture of honors.

In "Defining Honors Culture," Charlie Slavin considers what traits might, in any time period, distinguish an honors culture from the institution-wide culture in which it resides. He examines some of the characteristics we usually cite in describing our students and faculty: motivation and innovation, for instance. The trait that emerges as a distinctive element of honors culture, he suggests, is intellectual risk-taking, a trait shared by students, faculty, and administrators in honors. He sees intellectual risk-taking as one cornerstone of honors culture and invites his colleagues in honors to name three other corners.

George Mariz of Western Washington University, in "The Culture of Honors," ultimately echoes Charlie Slavin's definition of honors culture as intellectual risk-taking, but first he provides a historical and anthropological introduction to our general understanding of culture. Starting with its Latin roots and continuing through modern distinctions between common-interest, identity-related, and voluntary cultures, Mariz situates honors culture in a historical context and defines it in relation to other cultural groups such as hockey fans or urban dwellers.

Jim Ford of Rogers State University takes up Slavin's challenge to add other cornerstones of honors to intellectual risk-taking, and he offers passion for learning as a second distinctive trait. In "Creating an Honors Culture," he suggests that, while students are the center and focus of honors culture, honors administrators select the students and create the policies that inspire both passion for learning and intellectual risk-taking. Honors culture thus emerges from collaboration between students, faculty, and administrators.

In "Honors Culture Clash: The High Achieving Student Meets the Gifted Professor," Annmarie Guzy of the University of South Alabama complicates the concept of honors culture, pointing out its inherent tensions. She argues that honors programs attract two different and in some ways opposite kinds of students. After describing the contrasts between gifted and high achieving students, she suggests that conflicts may arise not just between these two types of students but also between students and their teachers, who also typically fall into a category of either gifted or high achieving. These conflicts, Guzy implies, may be intrinsic to honors culture.

In a delightful essay entitled "The Prairie Home Companion Honors Program," Paul Strong gives a glimpse of the unique and often hilarious culture of the honors program at Alfred University. Riddles, puns, goofy mottos, and fractured Latin—such as the Great Seal of the Honors Program, named Siggy, short for *sigillum*, Latin for seal—create a joyous parody of pomp and circumstance. Parody can only succeed when there is a common body of knowledge and understanding; the Alfred Honors Program's network of in-jokes bespeaks depth of learning within a strong community that knows how to mix fun and work. It also bespeaks the kind of flexibility and spontaneity that can be hard to maintain in today's institutional culture.

Providing a longitudinal perspective on honors culture, Dail Mullins suggests that the kind of honors experience Paul Strong describes may now be a cultural dinosaur. In "The Times They Are A-Changin'," Mullins offers an old-fogey perspective on his two decades in the University of Alabama at Birmingham Honors Program. He notes the shift from cultural accoutrements such as ashtrays in the classroom, typed or handwritten term papers, and hand-me-down decors to cell phones, iPods, and Wi-Fi. Students used to hang out, and now they multi-task. They used to banter, prank, and procrastinate, and now they network, text-message, and start working on national scholarship applications in their freshman year. Mullins muses on this cultural revolution in honors, suggests some explanations for it, and then cranks up the volume on the Allman Brothers' album *Eat a Peach*.

The research essays in this issue of JNCHC are also connected, directly or indirectly, to the Forum theme of honors culture. In "The New Model Education," Gary Bell of Texas Tech University addresses the theme from a primarily prescriptive rather than descriptive stance. Using the Boyer Report

as a starting point, Bell outlines the model that he thinks honors programs and colleges should both advocate and exemplify in order to lead higher education in America toward excellence in teaching undergraduates. He describes the qualities to which he thinks honors must aspire in order to achieve this positive position of leadership, qualities that include community, inclusivity, teaching excellence, and innovation. In his detailed advice about how to implement these qualities, Bell provides a set of ideals for honors culture, ideals that are substantially realized already in many honors programs and colleges and that, Bell contends, should fan out to include and inspire all of higher education.

The authors of "The Role of Advanced Placement Credit in Honors Education" suggest that AP credit may conflict with honors culture. Maureen E. Kelleher, Lauren C. Pouchak, and Melissa A. Lulay argue that the reasons high school students seek and value AP credit may be the same reasons that honors programs might be wary of them. While enabling students to narrow in on their majors, hurry through college, avoid subjects unfamiliar to them, and/or pursue more than one major, AP credits create challenges for honors programs in advising, curriculum development, and educational integrity. Based on a survey of the incoming students in the Northeastern University Honors Program and on consultation with their colleagues in NCHC via the listserv, the authors recommend deeper and more extensive consideration of the assets and liabilities of AP credit within the NCHC.

Finally, in "Towards Reliable Assessment," Gregory W. Lanier addresses issues that may well be central to the contemporary culture of honors. Lanier argues for the urgency of setting up reliable methods of data-based assessment and student learning outcomes. Probably few current honors administrators would disagree with his argument for good assessment practices although attempts to standardize such practices have stirred considerable controversy. In this essay, Lanier provides useful explanations and rationales for the practices he has established at the University of West Florida, with numerous examples of domains, outcomes, assessment matrices, rubrics, and data collection methods. While not all readers will share Lanier's enthusiasm for assessment or his notion that NCHC should develop a common set of assessment methods, surely all will appreciate the dedication and thoroughness of his advocacy.

Forum on "Honors Culture"

Defining Honors Culture

Charlie Slavin
University of Maine

Most of us in honors have a general sense of what the phrase "honors culture" might mean but would be hard-pressed to define it. Those who have been involved in honors education for any length of time realize that this thing we call "honors" varies widely across institutions. We also know that the components of honors culture at even a single institution include multiple and transient populations of administrators, staff, faculty, and students. Many of the recent writings on college culture by columnists like David Brooks and Thomas Friedman focus solely on undergraduate students, but a culture, if there is one, includes all participants and is shaped by relationships among members of successive generations that change over time.

The challenge of identifying an honors culture also involves distinguishing it from, or at least characterizing it within, the larger campus culture. To define honors culture, we need to identify a particular characteristic or group of characteristics that differentiates honors students, honors faculty, or the honors community from the corresponding university-wide group; this is not an easy task since, in many ways, members of an honors community may not differ all that much from their non-honors counterparts. The challenge is further confounded by the disparities among colleges and universities with different populations, missions, and structures, disparities that are reflected in their honors programs and colleges.

I will not, however, toss in the towel. I posit that an honors culture exists and that such a culture, which may appear in different guises at our institutions, always involves some common characteristics. My goal in defining this culture is descriptive, not normative, although it is based on my experiences and hence my own predilections.

One striking illustration of honors culture is that this essay is written by a mathematician, not an anthropologist, sociologist, or historian. My attempt to define a culture despite my lack of formal training in fields that normally might be devoted to such investigations illustrates one cornerstone (I leave the other three to my respondents and critics) that is common to the culture of honors: taking intellectual risks. My predecessor at the University of Maine, Dr. Ruth Nadelhaft, sponsored a series of all-university luncheon discussions about best educational practices with the title "Risky Business." All

administrators, faculty, and students in honors are involved in this kind of risky business.

When talking with perspective honors students, I often find myself coming back to the term "motivation." It might be tempting to say that honors is a culture composed of motivated individuals. However, after reflecting upon the individuals who most embody what I think of as honors culture, I contend that motivation is not the dominant trait. We surely all know students who are motivated, either by internal or external factors, but are not at all interested in taking risks or in stepping outside their comfort zone academically, socially, or culturally. Indeed, I am reminded of students I knew both as an undergraduate and as a faculty member who were highly motivated to be the best whatever (fill in the blank with your favorite profession) but did not want to take any course that might somehow thwart or slow their progress toward their job/graduate school/professional school. They were motivated by their personal economies and expended all their capital (time, emotion, mental energy) on their prescribed goals, looking for the least expensive (easiest grades, least amount of time, least challenging) way to satisfy any additional requirements. In my experience, such students are least likely to be interested in the challenges of honors education.

Students in honors are willing to take intellectual risks both in their discipline and outside of it; they enjoy the challenge. They are the exceptional English students who revel in discussions of quantum mechanics and the outstanding engineers who can't read enough history. Their personal economies guide them to get the most out of their undergraduate education. Sure, sometimes they are bored or turned off by topics they view as irrelevant to their education, but they are willing to explore and often find themselves surprised at their interest. They're willing to take the risk.

And what about faculty members? Do they take intellectual risks? The question is a bit thorny as we explore an honors culture that is universal enough to include the broad spectrum of honors curricula from totally interdisciplinary models to those that have their academic content solely within disciplinary departments. In the University of Maine Honors College, where the curriculum is constructed around a four-semester core multidisciplinary sequence, faculty members have to take intellectual risks. They are teaching texts and facilitating discussions in areas that are far outside their academic silos. In one semester, students are studying topics that include Dutch genre painting, evolution, nineteenth-century American poetry, and Marxism. Preceptors in the course, who include chemists, sociologists, and economists, are all taking intellectual risks. Faculty members teaching disciplinary honors courses also take risks, often pedagogical in nature, e.g., experimenting with new teaching methods, adopting new texts, or expanding the scope of a

course. The thirst for new ideas evidenced by their students pushes all of these faculty members, regardless of the course content, to expand their repertoires, to take risks.

If intellectual risk-taking is a fundamental characteristic of honors culture, it makes sense to ask why it arises in the disparate models of honors in place at the disparate institutions we inhabit. I would argue that intellectual risk-taking is catalyzed by another important and pervasive facet of honors culture, which I can best introduce with an example. Several years ago, a faculty member, having taught departmental-based service courses for years, started teaching in our multidisciplinary core sequence. About two weeks into the first semester, he came into my office expressing his delight with teaching in honors: "For the first time in my life, all of the students in the class are there because they want to be!" Suddenly what should have been obvious became clear to me: both students and faculty are involved in honors because they want to be. Students choose to accept our invitations or apply for admission to honors; they aren't forced to do so (this is the major reason I refuse to have honors-linked scholarships, but that's another essay). They elect to take these risks. Likewise, faculty choose to teach honors courses or to be part of an honors faculty. An honors culture that was not based on this idea of self-selection—among qualified candidates, of course—would not foster the intellectual risk-taking that I perceive to be at the heart of honors.

Having gone this far without addressing my principal audience is probably a bad idea. What role do honors administrators play in this culture? I contend that administrators play a key role in establishing this honors culture. More than any other unit administrators, honors directors and deans are personally involved with the faculty, students, curricula, and graduates of their programs and colleges. They establish the personality—dare I say the culture?—of honors at their institutions. While this is particularly true for new or revitalized honors programs, it holds true even for more established ones. Administrators have often taken risks themselves: leaving their academic departments, stepping off the tenure-and-promotion train, starting a new and usually under-funded program. They not only personify but also perpetuate honors culture when they recruit faculty and students by extolling the rewards and opportunities that derive from this risky intellectual business we call honors.

Most of us involved in honors could provide numerous illustrations of those rewards and opportunities. Here is one that I find irresistible. To graduate from honors, our students must write a thesis. In itself a thesis is not necessarily a risk; for most, while it is a stretch, at least it involves the discipline in which they have been trained. However, in addition to completing their thesis and then defending it before a five-person committee, they must also

create and discuss a reading list consisting of twelve to fifteen texts, defined liberally, that "have played a significant role in their academic development." The second hour of their oral defense is an extended conversation based on their reading list. I am always struck by the trepidation with which students view both the construction of the list and the subsequent discussion. From their perspective, they are taking a great risk, baring their academic and sometimes personal souls in front of five well educated and experienced elders. By this point in their honors careers, they are willing to take the risk. Even though they are already part of an intellectually risk-taking culture, this experience still makes them anxious, and anxiety is always a component of risk.

Many of the discussions about reading lists are captivating. In a complete role reversal, the student is intellectually engaging five faculty members without any peers for support. The conversation starts with the annotated reading list provided by the thesis student and often winds up several academic light-years away. The interconnections among the texts and their intersections with the interests of the student and committee members become richer as the discussion progresses. Our students come out of the experience on a tremendous high, one that is a direct consequence of intellectual risk-taking.

A culture of individuals who take intellectual risks and who participate in this community only because they choose to: does this completely describe the honors culture? As a mathematician—you knew I would get that in here somewhere—I might suggest these are necessary conditions, but they are not sufficient. Certainly they do not entirely characterize honors culture, but I am comfortable suggesting that they must exist in honors culture. I trust my colleagues will not only provide those other three cornerstones but will shore up mine or, if necessary, replace it completely.

****

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The Culture of Honors

George Mariz
Western Washington University

What is it that we talk or write about when we talk or write about the culture of honors? Almost always we begin with the second term in the phrase, i.e., honors, the enterprise embodied in programs and colleges in which virtually all of the readers of this journal are engaged. If we think at all about the first term, culture, it is almost certainly for no more than a few minutes, if at all, and then move forward to the really important work. As I write this piece, I am at the moment creating a syllabus for a class in the history of culture, to be taught as an honors seminar in the upcoming spring term, and I have been at some pains to define the word "culture" in terms of content and the methods appropriate to its study. I am confident that the task of definition plays an important role in how we think about and discuss the culture of honors, and so this essay begins with some preliminary considerations of the concept of culture.

To get at a precise meaning of culture, a historical sketch is in order. Such a sketch will provide a means to understand how the term came to have the diverse meanings it has acquired today and help to locate an honors culture more precisely. By this means we will take a somewhat different route than we would if we were to seek a standard, dictionary definition, but the journey is worth making. We will end at the same point, but by going via a different route we will see a different landscape and become more aware of the nuances in meaning of the word "culture" and how it came to have the denotations and connotations it now has.

The meanings of culture in the sense that I want to discuss them have evolved from disciplinary and more general discussions during more than a century, and the definitions continue to occupy hotly contested ground. What began as an attempt on the part of a small group of individuals, and later disciplines, to establish a beachhead soon became the site of a major culture war, if readers will forgive the term. Starting in the nineteenth century in both Europe and the United States, scholars tried to define the notion, and it is a good deal more than a linguistic or philological exercise to provide an appropriate context.

The word "culture" derives from the Latin for worship or religion (a binding together), and by the eighteenth century its usage in English was primarily concerned with cultivation of the land or husbandry, as Raymond

Williams in *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* has brilliantly shown. Its contemporary meanings having to do with the arts of civilization had not yet come into currency. Secondarily "culture" became associated with cultivation of the individual, in the sense of refinement of tastes, though no national language dictionary notes this usage as prominent until the middle of the nineteenth century.

The Swiss cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt introduced the term into modern discourse in his now famous *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, originally published in 1860, which established him as the founder of cultural history. He strove to write a more complete history of Italy than was the rule in his day, encompassing its cultural productions, including art, religion, and literature, as opposed to the more traditional history writing of the nineteenth century, which was concerned chiefly with politics and military affairs. Burckhardt traced the evolution of modern consciousness and modern culture to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Italy, where he also found the birth of the spirit of modern individualism, its hallmark. His work established the notion that this period witnessed the shift from a corporate, collectivist medieval society to one informed by a modern concept of personal autonomy.

The new spirit encouraged individual achievement, self-expression, and creativity. Above all, it required strenuous effort on the part of the individual. Of course, Burckhardt realized that not all of Italy, and certainly not every Italian, shared this spirit or benefited from its rebirth, but he believed it fed and characterized the cultural efflorescence that marked the age. His picture of Italian individualism was not rosy; those liberated by the new spirit were free to embark on hubristic political adventures, often with disastrous results, and to trample on those below them in the social and economic order. His was an understanding of the possibilities of the free individual tempered by the realization that excess was not only a possibility but a reality in this new milieu and that freedom might undo the actors in this new type of drama. His inquiry was fearless, not shying away from the negative aspects of the new autonomy or those who availed themselves of its opportunities.

Burckhardt found a ready if somewhat differently inclined audience in Matthew Arnold, the British poet and critic, who published essays along the same lines in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1867 and 1868; these were collected and published under the title *Culture and Anarchy* in 1869, and they constitute the next shot in the evolution of the concept of culture. In a disjointed fashion, the inevitable result of a series of separate pieces brought together in a single volume, Arnold largely charted the course that debates on culture were to take for more than a century, at least in English. Arnold advanced the idea that a culture represented the pinnacle of thought and activity of an age,

"the study of perfection [. . . and] the best that has been thought and known . . ." (Arnold 59, 79): in other words, what we now mean by "high culture." His idea of culture was less fraught with possibilities for excess and more congenial to the wholesome aspects of high culture than was Burckhardt's. While he was not a Pollyanna, Arnold did not share the starkly realistic outlook of his Swiss contemporary.

Arnold also wrote from a different social and occupational perspective than Burckhardt. While Burckhardt was a university professor who was able to steep himself in the richness of Italian painting from the isolation of an academic position, Arnold was a school inspector with a large family to support. Arnold viewed the contemporary social and political scene with alarm, and he believed it was his mission to rescue Victorian life from the wave of popular democratic reform which threatened to engulf it. His supporters, and there were many, saw things in much the same light while his opponents contended that his arguments were disjointed and often baffling—*Punch* had a field day satirizing him—as well as elitist in his definition of culture as attainable only by the refined, the affluent, and the well educated (Arnold himself had an Oxford degree). Arnold drew a careful distinction between culture and the barbarism he saw overtaking Europe.

The late-nineteenth-century anthropologist E. B. Tylor offered a conception of culture closer to our own and certainly more comfortable to us, one that serves as a riposte to Arnold's class-bound notion. Tylor defined culture as the sum of institutions, customs, ideas, and attitudes shared by a social group and which was transmitted from one generation to the next. To temper his remarks and distinguish his ideas from those of the social Darwinism common to his era, Tylor emphasized that this was a social process, not a biological one.

Contemporary notions of culture have developed along the lines of Tylor's. Today's major cultural anthropologists stress the shared nature of ideas and practices, whether they are structural-functionalists such as Bronislaw Malinowski, emphasizing social structures like religion, family, education, and occupation, or pattern-process anthropologists who focus on shared cultural patterns. The more modern schools of cultural interpretation—e.g., the anthropological symbolism of Clifford Geertz and Pierre Bordieu or the functional, sociological strain of cultural studies rooted in the study of consumption and pioneered by Marxist scholars—all remain grounded in these earlier views. Universally they share the assumptions that culture is broadly based, that it is plastic, and permeable, that it is an enveloping web, and that it links people in different classes and provides them with a shared identity. It informs everything from the food a cultural group eats to the music and art they commission.

Of course, nowadays everything has a culture. There is a hockey culture with many practitioners, and among its many practices are no doubt watching hockey games, drinking beer, getting either boisterous when the home team scores or belligerent when the opposition scores or an official makes a bad call, i.e., one that goes against the culture's team. There are also football, soccer (the other football), baseball, and many other sports cultures. If we were interested, we could make fine distinctions between the various athletic cultures and describe the more arcane elements of each; the point is that members of a particular sports culture are recognizable to one another. Examples of other such cultures, which we might call "common-interest" cultures, include antique collectors, racing car enthusiasts, fans of virtually every kind of popular music, tea drinkers, pigeon fanciers, chocoholics. Even corporations have cultures—the list could go on forever.

All of these cultures unite people by some sort of taste or loyalty, either crude or refined, but I think none of them has much in common with what we want to talk about in regard to honors. For two reasons none of the cultures mentioned above helps very much in defining the culture of honors: first, they are not connected in a systematic way to the academy, though adherents of many of them may be members of the academy; and second, none of them has a similarly serious purpose, at least in the eyes of those interested in a culture of honors.

In addition, it is important to understand that discussions of what we commonly call a culture involve at least three distinct kinds of social bonds and organizations. At one end are the **common-interest cultures** noted above, the sports and other cultures that involve allegiance of greater or lesser intensity to a team, social organization, or voluntary activity, often loosely described by sociologists and other social scientists as sub-cultures. The price for entry into these organizations is low in terms of intellectual investment. The second is defined by membership in a community, usually by virtue of birth, ethnicity, residence, occupation, or a similar circumstance. Among these are the culture of Islam, urban culture, and corporate culture—what we might call **identity cultures**. They typically provide a deep sense of belonging for their members, and they specify rules of conduct and requirements for membership in the culture. By their nature, these cultures can be, but are not necessarily, exclusive. A practicing Jew, for instance, cannot simultaneously also be a member of a Christian culture even though, of course, Jews often live in Christian societies; the same is true of observant Muslims residing in Jewish cultures. The third type is voluntary and exacts requirements from its members. Membership in **voluntary cultures** is neither automatic nor open to everyone, and, in contrast to the first type of culture noted above, the price for entry into these cultures is high and the rewards correspondingly great.

These cultures are not exclusionary in the same sense as identity cultures, but they may be "elite." To some degree, an honors culture partakes in all three of these kinds of groups but resides primarily among the voluntary cultures.

This brief introduction to the history and definitions of culture must necessarily precede the notion of an honors culture that I want to develop. Honors culture might share a good deal with common-interest cultures, for instance, but there are some critical differences, and to arrive at any useful definition of a culture in the context of honors, it is necessary to take pieces from each of the groupings noted above. Similarly, while the culture of honors differs from Burckhardt's and Arnold's in terms of its inclusiveness, it also is less open than that of the anthropologists while at the same time it shares some traits of identity cultures.

Let us take the following as a general working definition of culture for the purpose of this essay: a culture is a group of people who pursue a common aim, and for honors this means specifically students and faculty who pursue an academic aim. Honors culture is exclusive or elite to the degree that it admits only those who are committed the culture's mission, however and by whomever this mission is defined. Clearly it is a body or group with standards for admission. It is inclusive in that it admits anyone—regardless of creed, class, race, gender, or status—who meets the standards for admission and is committed to the kind of intellectual effort required of participants in it. Its adherents often display the same zeal as members of identity cultures in pursuit of their intellectual and academic aims.

It must now be obvious that some of the three cultures I noted above do not possess the same characteristics as honors. Common-interest cultures, for instance, have no requirements for membership and demand nothing substantial from their adherents save some degree of devotion to a team, a food, a cause, or some other center around which the culture forms. These cultures have nothing in the way of fixed, explicit standards. Members of identity cultures are almost always deeply connected to their communities, and typically choice is not a factor in membership since, as a result of birth or some other ineluctable circumstance, one is either in or out. Honors culture falls somewhere between common-interest and identity cultures: like the sports fan, the member of an honors culture chooses to belong, but like the member of an identity culture, the depth of commitment is significant and often lifelong. Honors culture also falls between identity and voluntary cultures: it is not open to everyone, and it makes substantial demands on its members.

In the context of historical views on culture, the province of honors is high culture in the sense that it partakes of a long and well developed history of refinement and values. It regards some subjects as worthier of study than others, or at the very least it holds that, while all subjects may be worth

studying, they are not all worth studying in the same way: More of this below. Nevertheless, the culture of honors does not regard anything as beyond the beyond the bounds of its inquiry.

While the culture of honors is catholic and inclusive, it is also both discriminating and critical. It is open to studying everything, but not necessarily in the same way. For instance, while honors educators might acknowledge that popular music, e.g., Pink, ABBA, and Elvis Presley, are worthy of serious attention, they would probably agree that these groups are not worth exploring in the same way that one would look at Mozart or Bach. I think the same holds for many other fields, and drama is a good example. The plays of the contemporary dramatist Sarah Ruhl (she has won a MacArthur Genius Award), with their sudden, unpredictable twists and turns and their inversions of traditional themes, create an engaging, highly interesting world. For instance, Ruhl's *Eurydice* retells the story of Eurydice and Orpheus from Eurydice's point of view rather than that of Orpheus. In that moment in the famous ascent from the underworld when Orpheus turns to look at her, Ruhl's play has Eurydice call him back; she has made the decision to remain behind with her dead father, and the story is anchored in the deep sadness Ruhl experienced upon the death of her father. Ruhl's version in no way diminishes the power or universality of the story; she has created her own surreal world, and it is easy to imagine that she will one day, probably very shortly, take her place with the most important American dramatists. Nonetheless, it is almost certainly not fruitful to study her plays in quite the same way that one looks at Sophocles, Aeschylus, or Shakespeare, save that they all participate in the same art.

The culture of honors looks at the excellent, whether ancient or contemporary, and it also looks at the quotidian in a serious way; it stands above all for inquiring into the best that has been done and into what has been done in the best way. In the tradition of Burckhardt, the culture of honors above all encourages, indeed demands, fearless questioning, and just as there is no field that escapes its purview, there is likewise no question it fears to ask. It is, above all, a culture of intellectual effort. Everyone who enters it must do so with a commitment to hard work, a spirit of inquiry, and a willingness to ask the hard question, often the uncomfortable question, and to live with the consequences of receiving an unintended or unpleasant answer. In the anthropological sense, it is inclusive in its openness to any member of the academy who meets its academic standards, but it has strict requirements for membership. Only the serious, the committed, and the intellectually energetic need apply. It is elite because it is intentionally discriminating and selective.

No essay that attempted even the poorest definition of an honors culture would be complete without addressing one final element in it: an honors

culture represents the perennial and the best element in academic life. It is a remarkable phenomenon, one that preserves our intellectual and cultural heritage and that welcomes what is new, always seeking the best in both.

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Creating an Honors Culture

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Charlie Slavin's excellent essay on "Defining Honors Culture" raises a host of compelling questions. As the director of an honors program just taking its first steps, I found myself returning again and again to the limits of my own role in shaping a nascent honors culture. Can honors administrators create an "honors culture"? Probably not, even in the case of a newly created honors program. The larger institutional culture and the particular characteristics of the first honors students make the creation *ex nihilo* of an honors culture difficult, if not impossible. But the stated goals of a particular honors program and the attitudes of honors administrators certainly play a crucial role in the development of the honors culture. When those goals and attitudes are enshrined in the admissions process, curricular requirements, and co-curricular activities of an honors program, honors administrators may enjoy a decisive role in the evolution of an institution's particular honors culture.

Given the diversity of honors programs and institutions today, the institutional context is certainly relevant. Rogers State University became a four-year university in 2000, after thirty years as a community college. RSU is an open-access public institution serving the northeast Oklahoma area. In the fall of 2004 the administration decided to institute an honors program to provide talented students with a more challenging and rewarding academic environment. A task force was formed, a director was hired, and mission statements were drafted; the first class of eighteen students was admitted in the fall of 2005. The honors program is now just three years old, and so, presumably, is the honors culture.

From the outset, honors at our institution has had several clearly stated goals: producing graduates who are "lifelong learners," "critical and creative thinkers," and "academically and socially responsible" citizens. Similar goals exist in a wide variety of honors programs. I suggest that the significance of such goals depends on the extent to which they are practically enacted. For instance, are admissions decisions made primarily on the numbers? In our case, all applicants who meet the minimum requirements for our honors program—the trinity of GPA, ACT, and class rank—are interviewed by a panel of faculty and current honors students, with the questions tailored as narrowly as possible to the program goals and we consider a broad range of criteria: Does the applicant have the kind of intellectual curiosity that

motivates lifelong learning? Is there evidence of the openness to new ideas necessary (but not sufficient) for critical thinking? Do answers to standard questions indicate creativity and insight, or are they lifeless and rote? Our program is extremely small, accepting only twenty students each year. Goals alone cannot create or determine an honors culture, but using the admissions process to emphasize a program's goals and to identify students who are good candidates for attaining them enables honors administrators to pull the honors culture in the right direction.

Of course, the reason that our program is limited to twenty incoming students each year is important: honors students receive a full four-year scholarship. As long as they continue in the honor program, school is free, and this is a thorny issue, one that Charlie Slavin raises in his essay. If their scholarships are tied to honors, will students have the right motivation? Will they be pursuing "honors for honors' sake," and so be the kind of intellectual risk-takers we honors administrators want and love? I take Slavin's comments on scholarships in honors as a challenge since the nascent honors program at my college owes its continued existence to such scholarships. Few of my students would have joined the honors program if not for the scholarship, particularly the program's inaugural class. But those who have persevered are, in large part, those who enjoy the challenge and are willing to take risks. What could be riskier than joining an honors program with no history, only a little planning, and a number of vague requirements? The truth is there are many ways to pay for an education, and even in our program's short history there have been several students who have decided that working for a living or borrowing money was much easier than taking honors courses. Even when the scholarship is the initial attraction, an honors program with the right goals and practices can have a culture of intellectual risk-taking and academic excellence.

Charlie Slavin considers motivation as a primary factor in honors culture but puts it aside in favor of intellectual risk-taking as one of the four cornerstones, leaving it to others to identify the remaining three. I think he has actually identified two of the cornerstones—which in our fledgling program seem more like tent-poles, but the metaphor remains useful. Perhaps motivation alone is not the dominant trait of honors students, but a certain kind of motivation—a genuine joy in learning—is as vital to honors culture as intellectual risk-taking. It's not just a willingness to take risks that leads to great interdisciplinary work, say, although that is certainly necessary; honors students *want* to learn about subjects outside their major; they have a *passion* for knowledge and for wisdom. That passion for learning is an indispensable component of honors culture and, like intellectual risk-taking, is characteristic of both honors faculty and honors students.

The distinction that David Brooks cites from Brainerd Alden Thresher—between students with a "poetic" frame of mind and those with a "prudential" one—is particularly apt. At our institution, and I suspect at many others, the honors culture emphasizes the poetic frame of mind. We try to find students who already have that poetic mindset, or at least those who seem open and willing to develop it (I do not say "able" because I think any student is capable of that frame of mind, which is a subject for another essay). Students play a key role within an honors culture, and having the right students makes all the difference. By emphasizing the program's goals and general honors attitudes throughout the admission process, curriculum, and co-curricular activities, honors administrators and faculty play a decisive role in shaping both the honors students and the larger honors culture.

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Honors Culture Clash: The High Achieving Student Meets the Gifted Professor

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In "Defining Honors Culture," Charlie Slavin's statement that "[w]e surely all know students who are motivated, either by internal or external factors, but are not at all interested in taking risks or in stepping outside their comfort zone academically, socially, or culturally" reminded me of an annual discussion that I have at the national conference with Anne Rinn, an educational psychologist whose body of work includes research on how a postsecondary honors program may be a good fit for the high achieving student but perhaps not as good for the gifted student. During our 2004 panel on giftedness and honors, she distributed a handout with a modified version of the characteristics of these student groups as outlined by Janice Szabos in "Bright Child, Gifted Learner."

High Achievers	Gifted Students
Know the answers	Ask the questions
Are interested	Are curious
Have good ideas	Have wild or unexpected ideas
Understand ideas	Construct abstracts
Complete assignments	Initiate projects
Enjoy school	Enjoy learning
Are technicians	Are inventors
Grasp meaning	Draw inferences
Enjoy peers	Prefer adults
Learn with ease	Already know
Listen with interest	Demonstrate strong opinions
Absorb information	Manipulate information
Copy accurately	Create new designs
Are receptive	Are critical
Achieve mastery in 3–8 repetitions	Achieve mastery in 1–2 repetitions
Top group	Beyond the group

Because Anne and I each have both professional and personal experience with gifted education and honors programs, we are aware of such differences among student groups in our own programs. For example, I distribute the Szabos/Rinn list to the freshmen in my honors composition course at the beginning of the semester to stimulate class discussion about their perceptions of and expectations from university-level honors education; the high achievers tend to react as if they had missed out on yet another laurel to be added to their resumés, while the gifted students are more relaxed and accepting of the list.

Granted, the gifted and high achieving groups are not mutually exclusive, and a certain amount of overlap exists among many students, supporting our organizational belief that the idea/ideal of honors education in general and honors students in particular is not a monolithic construct but encompasses a wide variety of academic and social interests. Certain common features of contemporary honors programs, however, may benefit the high achiever more than the gifted student. For example, most programs have GPA requirements for admission and retention, and students may believe that certain characteristics of intellectual risk-taking from the gifted column above, such as having wild or unexpected ideas and demonstrating strong opinions, are less conducive to earning As than absorbing the information and knowing the answers. Likewise, required service components seem ideal for high achievers looking not only to give back to the community but also to add more activities to their already overflowing resumés; gifted students, however, tend to be more introverted and need more downtime, and they may be overwhelmed by balancing academics and service activities.

As educational psychologists continue to research differences among gifted and high achieving students, I find that I have become increasingly self-reflective about my own giftedness and its potential effects on my performance as a faculty member in an honors program. Regarding my teaching style, for instance, I have begun to draw inferences about my teaching evaluation scores for "ability to control emotions" in light of current research on overexcitability in gifted people. On occasion, for instance, I become openly incensed with inflexible or naïve comments that students make during class discussion. Granted, we all have such moments, and perhaps reading the research exacerbates my introspection, but I find that the frustration I experience in my regular courses, which usually stems from basic classroom management issues such as students text messaging during class or failing to submit assignments on time, is relatively mild compared to the palpable, hair-pulling exasperation I experience in my honors classes. Do I simply have higher expectations for my honors students, or am I influenced by being in a room with a group of overly excitable gifted people? Together do we create a more volatile class dynamic,

in turn causing frustration among the high achievers who simply want to complete the assignment, get the grade, and go on to their next classes?

Below are some other potential locations for the high achieving/gifted culture clash.

HAVE GOOD IDEAS/HAVE WILD OR UNEXPECTED IDEAS

My writing courses are not lecture courses; rather, I require a good deal of class discussion so that students can participate actively in developing their own rhetorical skills. According to my teaching evaluations, however, I sometimes have difficulty staying on track, usually when I have ten inspirations at once and have trouble articulating them in an organized fashion. Inevitably, two or three of these ideas are so off the wall that students roll their eyes as if to declare, "I can't believe she just said that!" My own proclivities not only place me outside the proverbial box but also lead me to kick it and jump up and down on it. This tendency has long been apparent in my own academic work, from a high school paper on the symbolism of the original *Star Wars* trilogy to a graduate school post-*Inferno* in-class presentation on ways to navigate the afterlife given in the guise of a travel agent. I occasionally rail at my high achievers not to write on the same clichéd topics that earned them As in high school and not to be so closed-minded in class about other people's professional, political, or personal beliefs; their previous successes with simply "good" ideas, however, make them reluctant to stray onto the wild or unexpected path and thus risk the extrinsic reward of what they perceive to be the guaranteed good grade.

ENJOY SCHOOL/ENJOY LEARNING

I will happily admit to my honors students that I did not earn a 4.0 during my undergraduate career but that I learned more from some of the classes in which I earned Bs than from those in which I earned easy As and then proceeded to forget all of the course material. Several of the items in the high achieving column above emphasize successfully jumping through academic hoops while more of the gifted items entail the kind of critical thinking that we constantly call for but do not always reward through the structures of our honors programs. A high school friend of mine, who spent our geometry classes drawing cars and eventually became an automotive engineer, scored a 32 on the ACT, earned a National Merit Scholarship, went to Washington University, and promptly failed his first calculus class because he did not know how to submit homework; I wonder how this gifted student would have fared in an honors program. Yes, many high achievers maintain a 4.0 GPA, but what did they retain from each of those courses? Did they drop courses in

which they were earning Bs so that they could maintain a high GPA? Did they avoid taking a variety of challenging electives for fear of failure? As an honors faculty member, I acknowledge the pressures on these students, but I also let them know that I am not afraid to be the professor who destroys their perfect GPAs. Some refuse to acknowledge that learning is a process, a life-long one at that, rather than a performance to earn a grade.

ABSORB INFORMATION/MANIPULATE INFORMATION

I tend to be postmodern in my pedagogical approach, operating from my discipline's transactionalist camp, which advocates the principle that written communication is bound up in the contextual variables in which the writer is creating the document. In my classes, therefore, there is no *one* right way but *several* right ways in which to complete assignments and conduct class discussions. The high achieving students complain that we never solve any problems in our discussions of complex topics, that no one ever wins the debate, to which I always reply that these are not debates but rather scholarly examinations in which we learn how to use a variety of rhetorical techniques. The gifted students and I tend to enjoy grappling with an unusual thesis or an outrageous proposal while the high achievers generally want to know the one right way to compose a research paper or have the right, i.e., winning, answer in the class discussion.

As educational psychologists and honors educators continue to explore these facets of high achieving and gifted subcultures within honors education, perhaps they could expand their studies beyond the students' characteristics to include those of the instructors and program directors who also participate in constructing our honors cultures. If differences among student groups create potential sites for culture clashes in the classroom, then does the ideation of the professor or the program director, who has a great deal of power in and responsibility for the classes and programs, contribute to such a clash? Does the gifted professor frustrate the high achieving student, and does the high achieving professor stifle or overwhelm the gifted student? I look forward to reading about what my colleagues may discover.

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The Prairie Home Companion Honors Program

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"Ah, hear that old piano, from down the avenue." Every Saturday at 6:00pm, at home in Alfred or on the coast of Maine or in Chapel Hill, I can count on hearing those words, "coming to you live from the Fitzgerald Theatre." It's time to settle in for another edition of *A Prairie Home Companion*. The show's familiarity is comforting. I know just what to expect: The Adventures of Guy Noir (Private Eye), Dusty and Lefty, The Guys' All-Star Shoe Band, faux ads for Powdermilk Biscuits and The Duct Tape Council, lots of music and singing, and, finally, The News From Lake Wobegon. In a way that would warm Aristotle's heart, the show has a beginning, middle, and end. For many years it concluded with credits for its writers and producers: Oliver Closoff, Hedda Lettuce, Marian Haste, Mahatma Koat, Ivana Huginkis, Natalie Dressed, Warren Peace, and Anna Conda, among others. In short, Garrison Keillor has created a little world, and much of its pleasure comes from anticipating a favorite part. For me that means hearing from the Ketchup Advisory Council.

Some years ago I realized I was doing something like that with the Alfred University Honors Program, at first unconsciously, but then on purpose. Like *A Prairie Home Companion,* our program has its predictable rhythm, events students look forward to. The year begins with "Death by Chocolate" where freshmen meet the upperclassmen and get a head start on gaining their freshman fifteen. There's a make-your-own-cookie party at Christmas, then dinner for seniors at the president's house, and finally a year-end banquet, featuring student and faculty entertainment and another cascade of chocolate desserts. Like *A Prairie Home Companion'*s world, which trades heavily on parody of radio culture with its mock ads and retro sound effects, Alfred's "honors culture" works in part by gently making fun of some of the more pretentious aspects of university life.

SIGGY, THE SEAL OF THE HONORS PROGRAM

The existence of Siggy (or maybe Siggie), the Seal of our honors program, was certainly not part of any plan. He (or perhaps she) entered the

picture twenty years ago as I was looking for an image to grace the front of our brochure. When I was an undergraduate at Colby, the images our college designer produced for posters advertising campus events were so stunning that my friends and I would appropriate them to decorate our rooms. When it came time to choose an image to represent the Alfred Honors Program, I wanted something so classy that, I hoped, a high school student might put it up over his desk, and, just maybe, remember which honors program it came from. My first idea was to use Dürer's engraving of St. Jerome in His Study, which struck me as both scholarly and beautiful, but that didn't work out. Another Dürer image caught my eye: a pen and ink drawing, "Head of a Walrus," a rather fierce looking walrus at that. When printed on 8½" by 11" heavy stock it was striking, precisely what I had hoped for. I would have put it up on *my* wall if it had come my way in the mail, and, besides, it had the frisson of an inside joke: a paid consultant and a design faculty member in our art school had each proposed a logo for the university—a rather abstract pine tree and a "crown of King Alfred"—and both were universally derided. Because I wasn't directly involved, this seemed quite amusing. My university didn't have a logo, but the honors program had a seal (a walrus). As a trustee confided somewhat wistfully, unlike the university, the honors program was "branded." It was a hoot.

We'd had a long tradition of contests in our honors newsletter, *Sublunary Life*: why chocolate is better than sex (good chocolate is easy to find; you don't have to feel guilty for imagining your Eskimo Pie is a Dove Bar) and excuses for late papers (my girlfriend thought it was just a draft, so she scalloped the edges and used it for cupcake liners; my paper, "A Critique of the Mullahs," was all done, but I heard that you sometimes read papers aloud in class the day they're due, so I decided to wait for a few days). Why not a contest to name our seal? Two names that seemed worthy were "Claude" and "Finnbar," but the winning submission came from an honors mom, Caroline Mossip, who suggested either Celia or Siggie (short for the Latin *sigillum* or "seal"; AU stationery features *Sigillum Universitatis Alfrediensis*). This "anti-*sigillum*" struck me as appropriately silly, a wonderful play on one of the more pompous academic traditions, and so Siggie was born.

THE GREAT SIGGY VS. SIGGIE DEBATE

Siggie became an integral part of our program. He (or she) appeared on a mouse pad we gave freshmen. Students living in the Honors House embraced him (or her), and stuffed seals began to appear all over the place, even crowning a Christmas tree one year. A faculty member's mother painted a rock to look like a seal. An engineer used a jigsaw to create a lovely filigreed Siggie. An art student carved a two-foot-round version of Siggie to

grace the front of the Honors House. All was well until that same art student created a series of designs for a pewter medallion seniors could wear at graduation. Her sketches had names like "Siggy the Fat" and "Siggy the Proud." This, of course, led to another contest: first, was our walrus Siggie or Siggy? and, second, was our seal/walrus male or female? Everyone had an opinion; one Siggie defender thought Siggy was just an ugly spelling, a "perversion of the adjectives slimy, sloppy, and soggy [which] is not particularly conducive to comfort, nor is it very sophisticated, an important quality to have in an Honors Walrus." His view was countered by Gabrielle Gaustad who wrote, "I would hate to think about my name being shortened to Gabbie. Yuck. Gabby is so much better. I hate vowels. They make things so much more formal (thus having to pay for them on Wheel of Fortune—not only are consonants free—but you get paid for them!) and nicknames aren't formal or traditional, just like our Honors Program. Siggy all the way." And so Siggy it is, at least in my imagination.

Please see the Appendix for images of our Seal.

THE HONORS RIDDLES AND "OUR MOTTO"

Honors also has its own riddles (how do you get down off a horse? why do cows wear bells?). They're our version of a secret handshake, a way of initiating freshmen into our program. At the honors banquet, when I ask these questions, students seem to get pleasure from being first to respond "you don't; you get down off a goose" and "because their horns don't work." When I began to realize the power of these traditions, I decided a motto would serve us well. After all, Harvard has *Veritas*, Alfred has *Fiat Lux,* and even Faber College in *Animal House* has *Knowledge is Good.* We needed one, too. I settled on *Time Flies Like an Arrow; Fruit Flies Like a Banana.* Some years later we had a contest to replace "our motto." One student proffered *Sigillum Honoreaum: Tempus Fugit Qu Projectium, Fruitius Fugut Qu Bananaeum*. A few days after I interviewed a high school senior, she emailed *moths like a light and ticks like a clock*. (I let her in). Someone else suggested *bananas lack appeal*. The rest is history, that is, we stayed with what we had. And what a battle I had with *Peterson's Guide to Honors Programs*! They didn't want any part of our motto, but after more than a little back and forth they finally agreed to print it.

THE POOHBAH

Although I always put "Dr. Strong" on my syllabus and expected students to address me that way, I didn't want that level of formality for honors, especially for honors email. But I certainly wasn't about to become "Paul," either. I finally settled on "The Poohbah," and that is how I sign most of my

on-campus correspondence. Sometimes I allow myself to be addressed as "grand high exalted mystic ruler" (in *The Honeymooners* that's Ralph Kramden's title as president of the Order of Raccoons). Students like to play along; one of them treated me with the respect I know I deserve when she wrote, "Greetings, Poohbah. [If you do such and such] I, your humble advisee and Honors chickie would be eternally indebted to you (I am already your devoted servant, but everyone could use a little more abject devotion every now and again). Many thanks, oh splendiferous one, oh font of wisdom. I remain, Your Extravagantly Devoted Servant." Needless to say, she got what she wanted. Another wrote: "Heh, heh, heh. Grand High Walla Walla Oompah Zing-Zing Poo Bag. The plan is working. First we make them change their names. Then, we befuddle them. Then we tell Hugh and he brings the message to Big Moe. Big Moe is on the Wharf! The Blue Pansy snorts at 4:00 a.m. Curtains don't have shoes. Beware the Four Orange Pencils." Sometimes I sign off as Serene Highness, Sovereign Lord of Bipeds, His Beatitude, Grand Fuzzy Wuzzy, The Big Kahuna, The Bashaw of Tripoli or Hizzoner. But never Poo Bag.

SUBLUNARY LIFE

Sublunary Life, our newsletter, is the honors version of The News From Lake Wobegon, the glue that holds things together. For starters, it's how high schoolers are initiated into our lighthearted culture; Admissions mails it to juniors and seniors long before they get application materials. Every year I include excerpts of the previous year's essays in *Sub Life*, and, as the snippets below suggest, many kids get it, that is, recognize that honors on our campus isn't stuffy or elitist and that what's *not* wanted is an application essay written by a Jason Compson clone listing the clubs he belongs to and the awards he's won:

> I was relieved to find that where I see myself in five years doesn't appear to concern you. Five years from now I'll let everyone know, but right now it doesn't interest me much. Five years ago I never saw myself headed to Alfred. In fact, five years ago would have been right in the middle of my missionary phase. Ethiopia is a far cry from western New York.
>
> Here I am, on the edge of my childhood, writing an application for the Honors Program at Alfred University, desperately trying to avoid creating a swollen, narcissistic personals ad. Compressed, such an essay might read like this: **SWM w great personality seeks sexy fun-loving Honors Program for long nights in the Library.**

> Quite frankly I'm worried. I've been reading over the issue of *Sublunary Life* with some of last year's essays. I'm not even in the Honors Program yet (or I wouldn't be writing this), but I already have one suggestion to make: Don't send out any more former essays! We essay-writers-to-be have enough trouble making sense without having some epitome of essay perfection with which to compare our work.

Once they hit campus, our honors kids know irreverence is the norm, and it shows up in the most unexpected places. There was the senior thesis description a student slipped past his advisor: "The Effects of Group III Oxides on Glass-Ceramic Processing of BSCCO Superconductors, in a White Wine Sauce." There was a seminar evaluation responding to the question "Generally speaking, did the course fit your notion of what an Honors seminar should be?" that read, "I try not to have notions of what things should be like, because preconceptions lead to disappointment and prejudice." When they graduate and write updates to *Sub Life*, the results are occasionally something like this (I hope the writer wasn't thinking of Siggy):

> After graduating I pursued my lifelong dream of clubbing baby harpseals in the Yukon. Of course, I had to file for moral bankruptcy first, but I had all the applications for that sent in while still at Alfred. There's nothing like being out in the vast wilderness of the north and burning the few hours of daylight in picking up defenseless sea mammals and breaking their skulls with a blunt instrument (of course you get the same urge while teaching). Well, just dropping a little note for the Sublunatic Life.

Alfred isn't on the edge of the prairie or out in the vast wilderness of the Yukon, but our tiny village in the Southern Tier of western New York might as well be. It's snowy here much of the year, and the nearest city, Rochester, is more than an hour away, so we make our own fun. In this small, informal environment, a playful honors culture seems just the thing.

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APPENDIX

Images of Siggy the Seal

(Seal Maker: Felix Eddy)

The Times They Are A-Changin'

Dail Mullins
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Shortly before his death in 2002, the British author and dramatist Douglas Adams—author of *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*—composed his "Three Rules" for describing how people react to change (*The Salmon of Doubt*, p. 95): "(1) anything that is in the world when you are born is normal and ordinary and is just a natural part of the way the world works; (2) anything that is invented between the ages of 15 and 35 is new and exciting and revolutionary and you can probably get a career out of it; (3) anything invented after age 35 is against the natural order of things." While primarily concerned with technological innovation, Adams' "Rules" might just as easily apply to cultural change generally, including any of a variety of generational cultural markers such as music, dress, leisure activities, foods, and even the latest jargon. Dude, is there a generation alive whose musical tastes or slang expressions haven't offended the sensibilities of its parents?

In thinking about an honors culture—whether there is such a thing and, if so, what its characteristics might be, who or what determines them, and if they have changed over time—I find myself sensitive to Adams' three rules and whether there might be an "old fogey" factor to consider in all this. An interesting characteristic of the academic life is that, since incoming freshmen are always about the same age, faculty members have a kind of window on generational changes that may not be readily apparent to the students themselves. As Adams suggested, a steadily aging faculty, presumably set in its ways, may find itself increasingly critical or disapproving of these changes.

For example, early on in my tenure as an honors teacher and administrator at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), most students coming into the program from high school had never used a computer, either in class or at home, and we on the faculty were still fumbling around with green-screen Apple IIs and desk drawers full of floppy discs. Email still required horrendously long addresses, and the dawning of Google was over a decade away. By the time I retired nearly twenty years later, personal laptops were *de rigueur* in most high schools, and students were grumbling about Wi-Fi dead spaces on campus. While I pride myself on having managed to keep up fairly well with computers and the extraordinary changes they have brought to all our lives, there were other student-imported technological innovations that I often found more annoying or ominous than

helpful. Cell phones in the classroom come to mind, as does cut-and-paste plagiarism on exams and term papers.

The honors program I left for retirement in 2004 was in many ways quite different from the one I had joined nearly twenty years earlier. Some of the changes I witnessed—the replacement of our IBM Selectric typewriters with desktop computers and word processing programs, for example, or the university's conversion to a semester system from a quarterly calendar—were welcome in time, even if they took some getting used to. Others, such as the total renovation of the Honors House and the growing popularity of fraternities and sororities among even honors students, were to my mind the kinds of changes for which the expression "mixed emotions" was invented. For example, because it contributed in a major way to a change in the ambiance of the program—its furnishings and physical layout, its daily rhythms and flow, its traffic patterns, and even its sounds and smell—the renovation of the Honors House was not necessarily viewed by everyone as an improvement. Many alumni, students in attendance both before and after the alterations, and faculty members missed the "old house" with its Goodwill décor, graffiti wall, art deco collage bathrooms, and penknife-engraved wooden desks in the main classroom. Everything now seemed almost too new, too clean and sterile, to accommodate the kind of "lounge and learn" atmosphere that we had grown accustomed to. It was shiny and beautiful and techno-chic, but it didn't quite feel like home anymore.

Even before the physical renovation of its building, however, the climate of the Honors Program at UAB had begun to change. With the rise of the Lawyer Era, helicopter parents, and what Herman Kahn referred to as the age of "excessive risk avoidance," alcohol and ashtrays in the Honors House went the way of our typewriters, and we had to begin paying a bit closer attention to the verbiage on the graffiti wall. The faculty's annual "roasting" of the students at the end of our fall interdisciplinary courses took a hit when one of our invited lecturers expressed concern about the legal liabilities of such frank and risqué witherings. (Alas, I consider some of my own contributions to these roasts to be among my finest literary accomplishments!) Likewise, it became increasingly uncommon for groups of students to gather together in the house after exams or on a Saturday night for an old-fashioned collegiate *Bacchanalia*, never mind that faculty had long before had to forego joining in such revelries.

As veteran honors faculty well know, success in any college or university program invariably catches the eyes of administrators, who then begin making noises about growth and expansion, both in numbers of students and reams of paperwork. Increased numbers of incoming students, however, can dampen the group intimacy of such a program through a kind of balkanization phenomenon, with the result that there is often a decline in the variety of

friends and acquaintances that individual students may develop and so learn from. To make matters worse, students today claim not to require a specific locale—an honors house, or even a campus—in which to engage with friends; they can do so online. Ask a student today how many friends he or she has and the answer is likely to be in the hundreds; never mind that these friends will be scattered across the planet in front of keyboards and webcams and never actually encountered in the flesh. Too often, I suspect, such digital Facebook acquaintances trade opinions and photos but not life histories, accomplishments and plans but not late-night fearful musings. Texting does not lend itself well to the exchange of nuanced intimacies.

Again mindful of over-sentimentalizing the past and the old-fogey trap, I still find myself more attuned to the sensibilities and demeanor of our honors students a quarter-century ago than those I encountered during the waning years of my career. Students in the UAB Honors Program in the mid- and late-1980s seemed to me to be more casual, both in dress and in habits; more conversational and group-minded, sometimes to the point of boisterousness; seemingly more argumentative about ideas or opinions expressed in class, and yet nearly always good humored and primed for a joke or laugh; often less intensely focused on their futures, and so generally more inclined to explore options of many kinds. Cheating on exams and term papers was a less conspicuous problem than it was in later years, though this may be related to matters of temptation, feasibility and ease in the pre- and post-Internet eras. Interestingly enough—and as most faculty well know—the same Internet search capabilities that facilitate plagiarism by students also make possible its quick uncovering.

By contrast, today's honors students seem earnest to a fault about almost everything, and especially their careers. One surmises that changing academic fields would represent a major life crisis of sorts; better to double or triple major. Students today are nothing if not goal-oriented. Oddly, however, what faculty might view as frivolous distractions from a goal students see as necessary accoutrements to its full mastery. They seem strangely isolated from classmates, preferring instead their iPods or electronic friends; the cell phone, derisively termed the world's longest umbilical cord by critics of hovering parents, has replaced the conversational cigarette during class breaks. Doodling in the margins of notepads in class has evolved into multiple screens on laptops: one window for note taking, another for surfing the Internet, yet a third for email. It is perhaps not surprising, as pointed out by Mark Edmundson in a recent issue of *The Chronicle Review* (p. B7), that the most recent drugs to enter the pharmaceutical larder of college students are those designed to mitigate the symptoms of attention-deficit disorder (Adderall, Ritalin, Concerta, and Daytrana), the better to help them focus on

preparing their post-baccalaureate national scholarship applications, the administration of which has become a kind of cottage industry within academia (probably by now necessitating at least a vice-presidential slot).

One can speculate about the reasons for these dramatic changes in students, but I suspect such matters will always be more complex than speculation will reveal. Certainly a keen awareness of the near-absolute socioeconomic necessity of an education well beyond high school is a major factor. The heavy financial investment in this necessity, together with the parental desire to oversee and properly manage the investment, has been cited as a major reason for the rise of so-called helicopter parents. Another is the necessity of coping with the rapidly changing world our students now experience: technological change, to be sure, but also political, social, economic, and environmental change. They cannot afford simply to browse the elements of change; they must devour them. Honors students in particular may be especially cognizant of this need.

I am of an age and station in life, however, that can still afford to browse innovation, picking and choosing from among what seems interesting, discarding the rest into a pile of unnecessary nonsense and clutter. This does not make me an old fogey. Being someone who still prefers the Allman Brothers Band to Snoop Dogg or Nine Inch Nails makes me an old fogey.

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Research Essays

The New Model Education

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He came into the room, an immaculately groomed man, confident and clearly experienced in talking to groups. He was, after all, the foremost authority on Renaissance Florence, one of the reasons that history graduate students came to UCLA. His speech was assured—and a bit like a dash of ice water to the respectful, attentive undergraduates gathered before him.

There was no name, no introduction to the class at this point, no attempt at interchange with the audience. However, to give him his due, the attendance was unusually large.

"I am here," he told us, right at the outset, "because the state of California tells me that I must be here. In order to get paid, I must teach" (that is verbatim—its precision still rankles after all this time; from here, I paraphrase). "But you are a distraction from my real work, which is to do research on the Renaissance. I don't enjoy teaching, and I don't enjoy my contact with you. Therefore, while I must hold office hours, do not attempt to see me. Do not call me. If a conversation must take place, I will deal with you, briefly, at the end of class. I will give you cutting-edge lectures (although we did not use the phrase "cutting edge" in those days), you will take careful notes, you will not interfere with my presentations, you will not ask questions, and you will take the final exam which my teaching assistants will prepare. I do not want to discuss your results with you, and you will get precisely the grade that I deem you deserve. End of discussion on these matters."

I was a graduate student, doing stem work—that is, rectifying undergraduate deficiencies in my discipline—and as I recall the situation, I figured that I could read his books and forego the immediacy of his arrogance. I also recall feeling a wave of compassion for the undergraduates with less freedom to choose their instructor. But the experience left a lasting impression. He came to represent for me all that was deplorable in the undergraduate experience at a major research institution.

Nor was our "Renaissance Man" unique. A colleague of his, this time the foremost expert in the field of twentieth-century Spain, considered it sufficient value to us, the eagerly awaiting students, to have him read his latest book to us—page after tedious page, class session after numbing class session. He read until the book was half presented and the semester quite

exhausted, but not so completely as the patience of the increasingly hostile student audience—those that still came to class.

The vivid impressions that I took away from those experiences were apparently not unique. In the 1990s, a special commission created by the Carnegie Foundation took a close look at undergraduate education at the research universities of America. In its final report, its conclusions were harsh. Essentially, they declared, the system was broken, the undergraduates were little more than exploited pawns in an uncaring enterprise, and immediate reform was imperative. As the final report (commonly referred to as the Boyer Report) declared: "Baccalaureate students are the second class citizens who are allowed to pay taxes but are barred from voting: The guests at the banquet who pay their share of the tab, but are given leftovers" (Boyer Commission, 25).

Some reform has been undertaken in various schools, but the results have been spotty and slow (Wilson). Undergraduates still pay increasingly stout tuitions at the publics as well as the privates. For their investment, they seldom get the full value that they have been implicitly or explicitly promised in recruiting brochures. "Again and again, universities are guilty of an advertising practice that they would condemn in the commercial world" (Boyer Commission, 5). They are not likely to see the big-name professors. They are not going to receive much personalized attention. Instead, they deal with teaching assistants, they are herded into mass classes, and they find the support services frustratingly inadequate.

This is where honors, I have come to believe, should and indeed must intervene. It should be the role of the honors movement in the United Sates to provide a new model of undergraduate education. Yes, our niche at our institutions will continue to be as facilitators of interdisciplinary education. Yes, we have an obligation to provide the type of education that especially serves the more motivated students—a typically under-served group at many of our universities. And yes, relying on the honors orthodoxy, we must continue to be creative in our curricula and innovative in our programming. Yet, like Oliver Cromwell, from whose New Model Army the "New Model" imagery is drawn, we need to be militant in our effort to promote reform in twenty-first-century higher education in this country. We need to provide a New Model. Our greatest challenge, as a relatively young movement, may well be to demonstrate for all institutions of higher education, but especially research universities, the way to provide a high-quality and meaningful educational experience for all undergraduates. For the constituency that we serve, our programs must rectify the inadequacies of undergraduate education. In the process, we will provide inspiration for educating the larger student population at our schools.

THE DIRECTIONS IN WHICH WE SHOULD CONSIDER MOVING

We have much to learn from the Boyer Report and from our life experiences in the academy. I would first urge a reading of the Report for recommendations such as inaugurating an inquiry-based freshman year taught by experienced faculty (not teaching assistants), using a capstone experience (as many honors programs already do), providing faculty mentoring, and engaging in research-oriented undergraduate education. Following are some additional suggestions, emerging from the Boyer Report but from an honors perspective, amid a menu of so much that can be done. My suggestions are grouped in four major categories: establishing a community of scholars, practicing inclusivity, emphasizing pedagogy, and engaging in substantial innovation.

A COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS

One of the reasons that I consciously eschewed the more remunerative corporate world and pursued a life in academe was my innocent perception that professors, being officially certified as "intelligent," were too smart to engage in petty politics and personal vendettas. No water cooler intrigue for this naïf! My first-generation status as a college student led me to a wholly unrealistic perspective. I eventually learned that academics are not unusually problematic, but they are no better, on the whole, than the larger working world from which I was seeking refuge. Academic battles may be a shade more intense (because, as the wags have it, the rewards are so low), but on the whole we find all the personality types, from saintly to malevolent, and all the attitudes, from beatific to outrageous, that are found wherever our species congregates.

Then what should unite us? At a minimum, the cardinal rule of the honors world should be, as among our M.D. colleagues, "Do No Harm." (See Qin Zhang for an interesting account of "Teacher Misbehavior.") However, a great many academic proclivities militate against building community. For instance, university faculty are trained to be judgmental and disputatious. This training is in many ways an asset: critical thinking is and should be a prime objective of higher education because intellectual maturity is based on seeing and understanding multiple perspectives, then making effective decisions among them. However, contentiousness for its own sake is dangerous to our objectives.

While I was in London attending seminars at the Institute of Historical Research with a number of fellow UCLA students, one of the wise old men of Tudor-Stuart history who conducted the seminar pulled me aside and asked

in a most distraught tone of voice: "What is it with your American colleagues? I have never been in an academic setting where so many students felt free to disagree with the professor, to mock other people's work and to argue quite publicly with each other. Maybe in a union shop [for all of his dismay, he was quite a political 'lefty'], never in the university." Old World gentility had just collided with academically based California contentiousness.

As I reflected over the years on this London episode, I found I could not blame my peers. They had been trained to be über-critical and vocally declamatory in their perceptions. To a great degree, the same applies to many academicians. Our training has been in the art of dissent with received wisdom. In the cut and thrust of graduate classes, we were competing with each other by being vocal in our knowledge and opinions. We came of age professionally in a climate of intellectual contentiousness. We proved we were smart by always challenging authority. The problem with this pattern, however, is that it can disrupt community.

Community can also be difficult to achieve because of the nature of our work. Many of us matured toiling away in isolation on dissertations, creative works, and projects. There was not a premium on group collaboration. In fact, other members of the group were competitors. And compromise? Now there was a dirty word. Compromise meant lessening quality; it meant caving in to obscurantism, and we were having none of that. Therefore, as we today come to grips with a community-of-scholars notion, our instincts recoil. We are most comfortable with a one-on-one environment. We insist on personally prevailing despite the cost to the group that dominance may involve. As a result, building a community of scholars may be particularly challenging when so many of the scholars are untrained in the intricacies of group dynamics.

What the honors ideal must surely embrace, at its root, is a willingness to subordinate passionately held judgments to the higher good of a civil atmosphere of collegial cooperation. The ideal of fostering community has got to be our driving passion—a community in which intellectual rigor, mutual respect, and the search for educational advancement take priority over personal imperatives. What we have to achieve is so overwhelmingly important—teaching young people and thus molding the future of our society—that we need to restrain, in the interests of the common good, our own assertiveness.

The corollaries to this mandate are obvious, but often forgotten. Never, never, never draw students into one's own personnel, administrative, or intellectual disputes. Maintain a civil demeanor with your colleagues at all times. Try to leave your personal anxieties in the car in the parking lot as you walk to your office. Bury the emotional aspects of your political or intellectual

partisanship in your honors dealings. Do not let your classroom become a bully pulpit for your own perspectives at the expense of a free interchange of ideas. Given the disparities in power, it is never appropriate to express anger or hostility to staff or to students. We all know the rules. They simply must become immutable in the honors experience.

To be sure, honest and open disagreement, not to mention debate, must exist. I am not advocating mute acceptance of the world as we find it. But even here our collegial goals must prevail; we must demonstrate to our students how sincere but opposite opinions can be discussed with civility. Academic brawls are "out"; intellectually acute debate, laced with respectful collegiality, is "in."

Building a sense of community among all constituent elements in an honors program is a constant but crucial endeavor that we can accomplish by bringing all participants in honors, including students, into our scholarly deliberations and policy decisions. We can make sure that venues are provided where students, faculty, and staff can gather and interact socially and where they can get to know each other (Pascarella). The need to dissolve the barriers that exist between faculty and students is constantly present, and so field trips, sponsored dinners and coffees, educationally justified road trips, and discussion groups should all be a consistent part of our planning. We should be driven to search for ways students can exercise leadership through activities in the honors organization and through participation in regional and national conferences. We must secure funding that allows them to participate in a variety of professional activities. The main point is, of course, that learning is enhanced when all feel that they are part of a whole. Honors needs to promote this environment, an active community of scholars. In the process, and neither coincidentally nor undesirably, we build the environment in which we actually look forward to coming to work.

An important element in building such a community of scholars may be greater inclusivity than has been our propensity.

INCLUSIVITY

From the outset of the honors movement and almost by its very nature and history, honors bespeaks "exclusivity." Our programs are designed to serve a minority that we characterize as the "high-end students," which puts the rest—the average, the "at risk," the "less competitive" students—outside the scope of our oversight. We are fortunate to be working with the intellectually, artistically, and academically privileged; few of us would surrender this prerogative, which is the real reward of our calling. However, an ugly stain has crept into our approach and threatens, at many institutions, our very existence, namely the state of mind in honors that "We need to maintain standards for the university."

One professor at our institution used to say, not quite reflectively enough, "Many of these students think that they could go to Harvard, and by heavens, I am going to show them what a Harvard education is all about." This attitude led him to deliver a majority of Cs and Ds to an introductory chemistry class of honors freshmen whose quantitative and verbal SAT composite average was around 1370. Too often, as was certainly the case with this professor, this attitude leads to a punitive approach in the classroom, an approach that can also serve as a cover for bad teaching. We tend to confuse, at times, the imposition of "rigor" with an effective classroom style. (I need to note parenthetically that an in-house appeals process changed the majority of the final grades in this one class.)

Another variation on the "rigor in the classroom" theme is the determination to bar honors admission to any but a small cadre of select students. The selection criteria can be wide ranging, but typically they include exceptional standardized test scores, secondary school grades, class rank, and/or an Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or other types of specialized classes. While we need to design honors for more motivated, more accomplished students, we also need to maintain the flexibility to include a wide variety of them. We presumably would not want to overlook those with unique potential, those who matured academically a little more slowly, those whose backgrounds limited their access to educational opportunities, those whose skills lie outside standard assessment measures, and those who, genuinely wanting to achieve, have to work very, very hard with more modest results in their academic record. Honors must have participation standards—otherwise it is not honors—but we need constantly to allow ourselves to include students who have the potential to excel but lie outside our normal guidelines of admission, students who will ultimately benefit from our approach. Such students are always a gamble, of course, but the gamble is worth it.

Inclusivity might also mean including faculty and staff on campus who present a risk. At a former school, I had a non-honors colleague who complained bitterly about the terrible quality of students; not surprisingly, he was unpopular and gave every evidence of being ineffective in the classroom. He did, however, want to teach an honors class, and with great reservations I finally acceded. Happily for everyone, he flourished in honors. Finally, in his view, he was teaching the type of student that he deserved to teach. He worked hard at new presentation techniques, he cut the sarcasm in class, he started making office hours, and he generally became a valued colleague in honors class after honors class. When he retired, grateful students threw him an elaborate party. By including him, honors wrought something of a pedagogical miracle.

Including staff in the many manifestations of honors also pays dividends. If they are invested in the process and appreciated for what they offer, their contributions can be extraordinary. Perhaps they have not, for various reasons, attained the highest degrees that we hold sacred in academe. But we can draw them in, use their skills, and in the process find their contacts with honors students to be as extensive and influential as those of the faculty. Staff can be teachers in their own right and in their own areas of responsibility. Anything less than a partnership with them is an insult and a waste of resources. By investing them in our enterprise, we add to the education of our students.

Inclusivity means letting go of prejudices against certain fields of study. Honors administrators and faculty are often drawn from the traditional arts and sciences and can overlook the practical or vocationally structured disciplines on our campuses. As an engineering friend complained to me recently while acceding to my advocacy for the honors ideal of "breadth of education," "the things occurring in mechanical engineering are just as rigorous, just as intellectually challenging, and can be just as broadening as what you see occurring educationally in history." Touché. Let's draw in the engineering, education, agriculture, business, and human science professors with an appreciation for what they offer to students. At the same time, we can extend some of the advantages of honors to diverse students who can benefit from our objectives as much as can liberal arts majors, advantages that include emphasis on breadth of education, critical thinking, global awareness, interdisciplinary teaching, and communication skills. We should make it a priority to establish honors experiences in all sectors of the university.

Inclusivity means outreach to the university as a whole. Nothing is more politically dangerous to an honors program, in my experience, than withdrawing into our own ivory tower within the larger ivory tower. As we move to segregate ourselves, we also raise suspicions about our intents and our posture among colleagues and administrators. The results are not pretty—lower funding, lack of cooperation, and, in some cases, disappearance of the program altogether. "Outreach" inclusivity can take a variety of forms. Draw non-honors students into your field trips and special activities, include them in your study abroad programs, stage events on campus for the student body as a whole, make sure that non-honors students feel welcome at your lunch discussions of current events, and give them assistance as they apply for prestigious national and international scholarships.

On our campus, the issue of whether to include non-honors students in honors classes has led to intense debate. Even with high GPA requirement for non-honors participants, the argument runs, honors students are more motivated, have a right to their own classes, and give professors better material to

work with. Non-honors students, the purists argue, detract from the seriousness of the class for teachers and honors students alike. The counterargument for inclusivity runs from the practical—we need to populate our classes with enough students to justify their existence—to the idealistic: what better way to proselytize the educational ideals in which we believe than to try to convert, through exposure, the non-believers to the truth of our faith? Obviously, I believe in including the unconverted, which, if nothing else, offers a wonderful recruiting tool for our programs.

Above all, honors should be a bastion of outstanding teaching, demonstrating the teaching prowess that we have an obligation to bring to and model for the rest of the campus.

THE BEST PEDAGOGUES ON CAMPUS

Honors needs to re-enthrone the crucial function of teaching in many of the ways the Boyer Report recommends, and my remarks below are often influenced by that report.

We all know that, at least at research-oriented institutions, the surest way to tenure and promotion is not through effective teaching. It is not that teaching is unimportant, it is just that research, publications, and grants take so much greater precedence that teaching fades into the background as a legitimate or even viable professional activity. In some senses, universities cannot be blamed. When budgets are constrained by evaporating state support and/or limitations on tuition increases, outside funding becomes essential, and those who can secure it become critical. Yes, some professors are denied tenure because of poor teaching, and yes, we do try to work with truly awful classroom presenters, but mediocre or even poor teachers are often tolerated so long as the research, publication, and grant record is there.

A recurring conversation takes place on our campus about the possibility of a two-tiered faculty: a research-oriented faculty with fewer classes and a teaching faculty who would carry the burden of instruction. I am always intrigued by one component of these debates: the implicit assumption by both sides that the teaching faculty would be second-class citizens. Socrates, Aristotle, Galen, Abelard, Horace Mann—second-class citizens? Second-class citizens at the very institutions first conceived and now theoretically maintained primarily for instructional purposes? The idea is as ludicrous as the idea that universities have simply become farm clubs for big-time sports enterprises.

Let me advance, at this juncture, an heretical assumption: we are not here primarily to impose rigor on the classroom nor even to maintain exactingly high standards. I am not even sure that we are in the classroom principally to insure mastery of the subject matter we teach. In fact, I have increasing

reservations about how much "teaching" I have accomplished in my thirty-five years of professional life. I see our most important obligation as engaging students precisely where they are in their intellectual development as they enter college and then drawing them into the tremendously exciting and significant learning enterprise in which we are involved. (Robert A. Scott and Dorothy Echols, as well as Geoffrey P. Lantos, have provided excellent insights and advice about this enterprise.)

My first premise of excellent pedagogy, then, is that we need to inspire a desire, even a passion, for learning; to encourage our students to connect with the subject matter on their own initiative; to convey to them the excitement of the learning process; and to lay the foundations for lifelong learning. From a personal perspective, I look back on a young professor who was continuously and loudly skeptical about the largely rural background of his students. He constantly complained about their lack of preparation. Only in my later years have I come to realize how arrogant I was. Instead of judging our students, we need to engage them.

My second premise is that we need to develop innovative and experimental teaching styles. We should constantly be searching for new and more effective ways of presenting the materials for which we are responsible in the classroom. Let's call this "the Sesame Street" phenomenon. As my children were exposed to this American experience, I used to marvel at the skill of Jim Henson and his crew in making pleasurable the ancient tasks of reading, writing, and computation. We cannot all be entertainers, but we can take it as a maxim that the cardinal sin, next only to being pedagogically dishonest, is to be boring. Humans have a natural curiosity about the world around them—how tragic to thwart that curiosity and to destroy the zest to find out about everything. Let us commit to packaging our efforts so that student curiosity is stimulated, not driven underground.

Thirdly, we need to establish a personal rapport with our students. I do not necessarily mean "professor as friend," but we should go to the extra lengths that are often customary at small liberal arts colleges, where professors invite students into their homes or make other special efforts to personalize teaching. We can arrange field trips or other extra-curricular learning enhancements, take students out for pizza, or in some way evince a personal concern and involvement with the students as individuals. The literature (see, for instance, Pascarella) tells us that a personal connection between mentor and mentee enhances the learning process; we need to make such connections.

In the fourth premise of excellent pedagogy, the research and publication thread within the tapestry of our "New Model Education" comes into play. We must be active professionally in our fields; this means reading deeply in

the literature of our area, and it usually means at least a modest contribution to our field of study. These contributions can come in conference presentations, in articles and books, in the stuff of traditional research, and it can also come in talks to lay audiences. How can we convey excitement about our subject matter to our students if we are not enthusiastic about and active in it? And how can we be enthusiastic if we are not current in the literature and contributing to the topography of our field?

As a fifth premise, we must always telegraph respect for our students as individuals regardless of how weak or strong they may be academically. This respect involves some obvious admonitions like eschewing sarcasm in the classroom, but it can also mean posting reasonable office hours and then honoring those times assiduously. Similarly, the first day of class is a crucial occasion for the professor to telegraph the importance of the work that stretches out ahead; a well prepared syllabus, a pep talk about the subject, and an engaged interaction during the entirety of the first class period are basic.

Respect for students means listening attentively when students have problems and then trying to find solutions in a reasonable and mutually satisfactory way. It means entertaining their point of view, no matter how problematic it may be, and then trying civilly to bring them to a better understanding of the material or situation. It is simply treating students as valued individuals.

As a sixth premise, we must be constantly involved in improving our teaching styles. This means participating in group sessions to discuss what we do, and it means going to conferences to acquire new insights. We learn from each other. We should never be satisfied about "where we are" when it comes to teaching skills. We need to encourage our colleagues to be similarly self-critical and oriented toward improvement.

Finally, we need to learn to measure teaching effectiveness. In this age of assessment, we should become the paragons for evaluating classroom performance and should constantly use this assessment to improve the delivery of our message.

Honors needs to re-enthrone teaching as the key function of higher education by being better at it than anybody else on campus; this teaching, along with our entire honors effort, needs to be constantly fresh, constantly experimenting with new approaches in educational delivery, and constantly adopting innovative strategies to make learning accessible.

INNOVATION

The historical challenge to honors has been the charge of elitism, but within the last twenty years, this old bugaboo of the honors movement has tended to ebb. Universities consciously seek top students, and society has

been won over to the premise that perhaps we need to cater to the academic elite. The old Reagan shibboleth that a rising tide raises all boats has made us comfortable with the tide raisers. Recently, however, honors has been more likely to come under assault because of its sometimes innovative or non-traditional ways of viewing the university.

At our institution, the move to establish an honors faculty to cover the interdisciplinary work, to foster team teaching, and to offer new classes was initially controversial. One senior official in the provost's office, for instance, let it be known that for her there was no debate; honors programs simply do not and cannot have faculty members, end of discussion. She had the strong support of a great many people in the Faculty Senate. Happily for honors, however, a certain amount of administrative turmoil plus a supportive regent (in a very top-down management system) made the change possible, largely "under the radar." The next struggle was over tenure policy; our heavy weighting of teaching in the award of tenure was anathema. Again, as attention was focused on other—in this case athletic—matters, the new Honors College adopted a teaching-sensitive tenure policy. The lesson to be learned is not necessarily to take advantage of institutional turmoil to effect change but rather to be savvy about the resistance you will encounter; prepare for it, and develop strategies to cope with it.

The changes that honors can effect are pretty extensive. Some have already been noted, such as treating staff as educators and offering them partnerships with faculty—possibilities not readily accepted by all of our colleagues. Bringing students into the decision-making mix can also be controversial. Many of our colleagues are of the "Paper Chase" rather than "Dead Poets' Society" variety.

Our emphasis on interdisciplinary work can also threaten traditional disciplinary emphases. If there is any doubt about the institutional bias against breaking out of strict disciplinary delivery of material, try to set up team-teaching assignments, or try to find professors who can, without personal time or material penalties, teach courses outside of their department's typical offerings.

Advising is another element for reform. Most honors administrators profoundly appreciate this critical function and, in the absence of support personnel, do way too much of it themselves. Advising needs to be personalized; preferably (but not necessarily) it requires specifically trained professionals; and it needs to involve detailed record keeping so that there is consistency and continuity in the advice given semester after semester. As importantly, advisors need to be a force for apprising their charges of the huge variety of opportunities open to them with a little planning, including undergraduate research, study abroad, and application for prestigious scholarships. Most of

our students are bewildered by the university experience and have little or no idea of the breadth of prospects available to them. A graduating senior should never have to say, "Oh, I wish I had done that, only I never knew about it." Honors needs to show the way to a better and more informed undergraduate experience; serious professional and at times personal advising is key.

Honors must also be programmatically experimental. One of our honors shibboleths is that we need to be a laboratory for new ideas and educational experiments on campus. With a small cadre of highly motivated students and an idealistic faculty, honors can undertake initiatives that others either cannot or will not. Experimental and unusual classes (our bread-and-butter activity), new degree programs, unusual study abroad and semester programs (such as the NCHC admirably sponsors), experiments with living and learning, commitments to service learning, new directions in undergraduate research, innovative advising—in these and other initiatives, honors must provide the cauldron out of which campus innovation can evolve. At our institution, for instance, honors is starting to blend the physical with the academic/intellectual; important intellectual insights can be generated while backpacking or canoeing down the Rio Grande River while studying the economic, sociological, and political dimensions of the border. The range of possibilities is as varied as are the distinct personalities of the campuses on which we reside.

Generally speaking, the principle is sacrosanct—honors must be a principal force on campus for innovation. Perhaps needless to say, innovation will meet with resistance.

COPING WITH RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

A former president at our institution used to remark: "It is easier to change history than it is to change the history department." In that aphorism, he has summarized one of the enduring truths of mankind, not to mention higher education: the impulse to retain the *status quo* is powerful.

As an example, the issue of "faculty rights" arises almost immediately as one wrestles with honors-related issues. To what extent, one might immediately ask, does an attempt to partner faculty and staff in decision-making roles mean a diminution of faculty prerogatives? After all, are not faculty the disciplinary experts? Is it not their task to run the ivied halls of higher learning? Has not faculty leadership had primacy since the medieval instigation of these enterprises? The learned "doctors" of Paris, Cambridge and Bologna, in their magnificent clerical garb, gave us some of the most enduring ceremonies and persuasive images for the role of the faculty in universities of our own time. The fear that bringing others, such as staff or students, into the mix will mean a lesser role for the professoriate is very strong indeed.

To address the historical objection first, I need simply to point out that medieval students at Bologna, Paris and Cambridge hired and fired their professors; they were the original arbiters of curriculum and professorial integrity. So much for the faculty as the sole "deciders."

But even something as ostensibly benign as collective discussion about teaching techniques, as we seek to become the best pedagogues on campus, can run into opposition. After all, to discuss improvement suggests professorial weaknesses; it can be seen as an implicit criticism of faculty that threatens their autonomy. The charge of violating academic freedom even creeps into proposals to have teaching workshops—although what I suspect this really means is the self-serving freedom to be terrible in the classroom.

Cromwell understood such challenges as he fashioned the New Model Army of the seventeenth-century English Civil War. The opposition to what he was doing was fierce. What do you mean promoting men on the basis of merit rather than birth? Has not divinity already established who has the best blood running in their veins? What is it with this discipline stuff? Are you not destroying the fighting spirit of men when you take away their individuality to excel on the battlefield? And uniforms—how unseemly for the proud peacocks of the aristocracy! Contemporary educational reformers face similarly persuasive and tradition-sanctified arguments in attempting to remodel undergraduate education. Too many on our campuses are satisfied with the way things are in higher education. Comfortable stasis and apathy, combined with a certain self-satisfaction in the degrees we hold, may be more of a threat to the honors role in recasting the nature of educational delivery on campuses than is outright hostility.

Honors administrators and educators need to be the shock troops for improving matters, especially in the research universities, where the gross exploitation of tuition-paying students is rife. Give them beer and circuses, and students will not criticize what they are experiencing. The lack of attention to good teaching, the herding together in mass classes, the absence of personal but crucial educational attention, the persistence of old models of instruction and undergraduate experience, the rising costs but diminishing attention, the arrogance, isolation and self-righteousness of some of the professoriate—these are often the norm. The system can appear to be working pretty well; after all, don't we reassure ourselves that our higher education system, like our medical system, is the best in the world? Are not foreign students clamoring to come here (mostly, I might point out, at the graduate level)?

But reform is stirring. Honors is the logical instrument for that reform, both through diplomatic modeling of a *better* way to do things and through militant demand for a *new* way to do things. There will be opposition to change, as there always is, from entrenched interests. But the idealism that I

find so pervasive in the honors cadre of faculty and administrators, as well as the clear wrongs that are being done to undergraduate students, make our task possible, noble, and imperative.

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The Role of Advanced Placement Credit in Honors Education

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INTRODUCTION

The role that Advanced Placement (AP) credit plays in an honors education is increasingly significant. More high school students have the opportunity to take AP courses and successfully complete the AP exams. As a result, they arrive on campus with credits toward some and often many of their early core-focused college requirements. This widespread bypass of early requirements often leaves honors programs scampering to find strategies for a robust experience in the early years of an honors education.

This essay emerges from our experience at Northeastern University, where the number of AP credits applied to our undergraduate degrees has increased dramatically over the last several years. We have developed a number of curricular responses to this phenomenon, and, in order to understand how students perceive the role of AP credits and plan to use them, we developed a survey instrument administered to our fall 2007 entering class.

This paper has several goals. First, as a backdrop for the larger discussion, we present a brief description of our honors program and an overview of AP credit. Second, we present the findings from our survey and a series of comments we received regarding AP credit through the NCHC listserv. Third, we situate the discussion within the larger concerns and challenges of honors education. The essay argues that the impact of AP credit directly affects many honors programs by presenting challenges to general education requirements as they are currently conceived and delivered at colleges and universities.

BACKGROUND

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY'S HONORS PROGRAM

Northeastern University (NU) is a five-year cooperative education institution located in Boston, Massachusetts. The twenty-three-year-old honors program provides a comprehensive approach that emphasizes curriculum opportunities throughout the five years on campus, a commitment to a

living-learning community model, and numerous opportunities to interact with faculty through seminars, dinners, and social activities.

The honors program offers three types of academic distinctions: Course, Junior/Senior Project, and University. Students *cannot use AP credit* to waive the requirements for Course Distinction. Currently students are required to take six honors classes (including an interdisciplinary seminar) in order to receive Honors Course Distinction recognition (students may take more than six courses and many do). Students joining after the freshman year have fewer course requirements.

Students may complete two courses for Honors Junior/Senior Project Distinction (usually a thesis or thesis-equivalent project). Students completing both Course and Project Distinction receive University Honors Distinction. If students meet all the requirements of the program, they take eight course equivalents (the equivalent of one academic year) in the program.

The majority of our courses match a typical general education curriculum. The number of entry-level courses far exceeds advanced classes in a particular major although, depending on the number of students in a major, some advanced honors courses are offered. Students may also do honors independent studies in their major, sign up for honors credit as teaching assistants, and use study abroad experiences as equivalents to honors courses. Advanced honors work in the major primarily occurs in the Junior/Senior Project.

Five years ago, we developed a number of interdisciplinary honors seminars. These courses are open to all upper-class students and have been offered by faculty in five of our six colleges. Currently we offer approximately fifteen honors seminars each year, with enrollment capped at nineteen students. The seminars are a unique honors requirement not mirrored in the university at large.

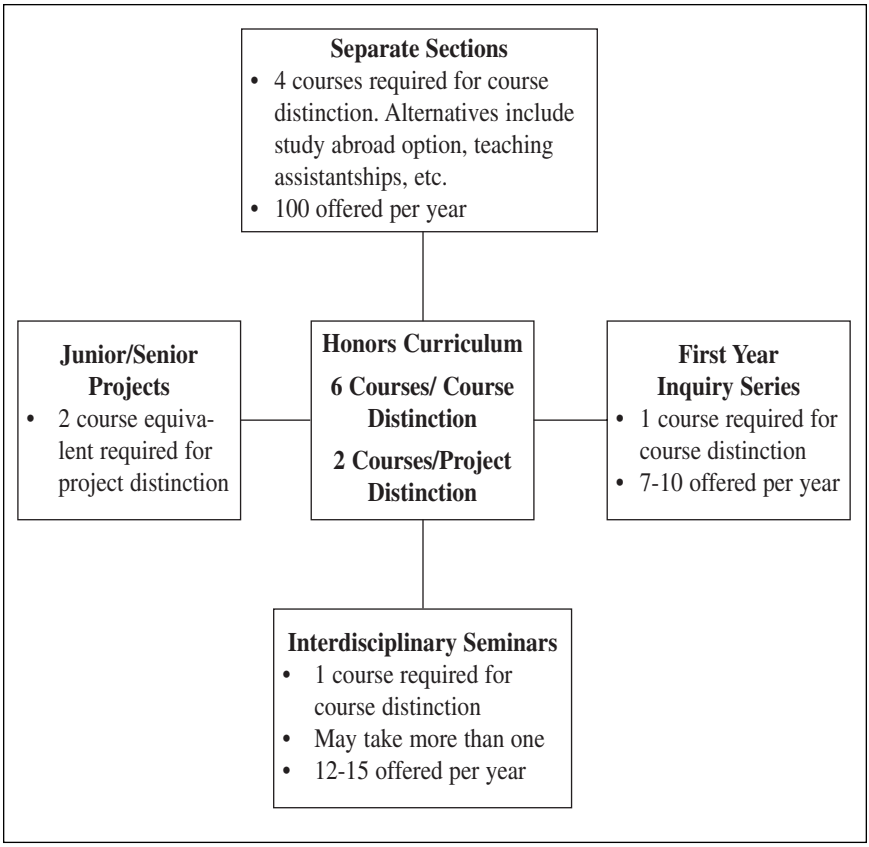
In 2006, the university underwent a revision of the academic core (general education) requirements. Prior to the academic year 2007–08, each college had different core requirements, with the College of Arts and Sciences requiring the most courses in its core. Now, all six colleges share the same core requirements. In response to these changes, the honors program developed seven courses for first year students called the First-Year Inquiry Series. The courses include comparative cultures, social sciences, science and technology, and arts and humanities (which all meet core requirements) as well as our own introductory course, Enhancing Honors 101. These courses are unique to the honors program and do not match university-wide course offerings. Below is a model of our academic program. Diagram 1 illustrates the academic programming that we offer in the program, including separate sections offered by departments, the First-Year Inquiry Series, the

Interdisciplinary Honors Seminars, and the Junior/Senior Project. A more detailed explanation of the coursework is included in Appendix A.

In addition, we have worked on academically linked initiatives such as the development of our First-Year Reading Project and expansion of activities in our Living-Learning Communities. All of these steps helped distinguish the honors program from the larger university, and they marked a radical change from the way the program was historically envisioned.

Two developments—the synergy between university-level curriculum changes and honors changes and the move to a new building—have contributed to a much higher profile for the program and a more significant institutional role. One of the unexpected consequences of the synergy is that we have become an incubator for university-wide innovation. This fall, our First-Year Reading Project will transition into a university-wide offering for all incoming students.

Diagram 1. Academic Programming Offered in the Program



Our relationship with the office of admissions also became more complex as the numbers of applicants increased and our program developed. Our curricular innovations are viewed as effective recruitment tools for the most academically competitive students. In addition, the adoption of the university-wide reading program came to fruition through collaboration between the two offices. As a result, we enjoy close ties with the office and feel that they are responsive to our concerns and needs within the program. One outcome of these close ties was the development of an admission system that goes beyond GPA/SAT scores to evaluate more subtle factors such as leadership and community-service, which the honors program highly values.

HISTORY OF AP EXAMS

The first AP exams were developed in the early 1950s, and the College Board gained oversight of the exams in 1956. The original AP courses were introduced at elite high schools for their top students. The College Board currently grades thirty-seven different exams on a five-point scale. Today, AP courses are offered in approximately two thirds of American high schools. Schools offer an average of nine AP courses in their high school curriculum (Lewin, 2008). Some states, such as Wisconsin, South Dakota, and Kentucky, have developed on-line AP programs to reach students (Carnevale, 2002; Carr, 2001; "Case Study," 2002). Other states, including Arkansas, pay the fees for students taking the test ("In Brief," 2005). In 2007, 1.5 million students took 2.5 million AP exams (Lewin, 2007).

Criticisms of AP courses have been raised around issues of access, particularly for minority students and students from rural areas. Each year, more minority students are participating in these courses, especially Hispanics. From the College Board's perspective, more is better. If more teachers are allowing students to take AP exams, it means a broader population than top students are taking AP courses (Farrell, 2006:A42).

President Bush pushed the link between success in math and sciences and AP courses in his 2006 State of the Union Address. In that speech, he promised to help train more teachers for AP courses as a way to fuel high school reform (Marklein, 2006). Although Bush sees AP courses as a way to improve high school innovation, questions are being raised at the college level regarding the use of AP credit to bypass course work (Marklein, 2006).

Elite schools such as Harvard are now requiring the top score of five for advanced standing. Other elite schools, such as the California Institute of Technology, award no advanced placement credit (Lewin, 2002). Certainly, there does seem to be a shift, at least at elite colleges, to rethink the appropriateness of accepting AP courses as substitutes for campus core requirements ("Rethinking Advanced Placement," 2006). In part, these schools are

concerned that focus on AP credit serves to distort the preparation of high school students for college. For example, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology no longer awards AP credit for chemistry courses (Lewin, 2002). Some educators argue that AP classes are preoccupied with teaching to the test and that this preoccupation distorts high school learning (Oxtoby, 2007).

This rethinking of AP credit at the college level is also taking place at many mid-level institutions across the country. A recent report published by George Washington University, for example, argues for both raising the standards for AP credits—shifting from 4 to 5 for test scores assigned undergraduate credit—and limiting the number of AP credits that can be counted toward a degree to fifteen (George Washington University, 2002). The goals of these suggested reforms are to encourage enrollment in more college-level courses with fewer options to place out of primarily general education courses.

A slow shift is also occurring within high schools themselves. Some elite private high schools have already pulled themselves out of the "AP game," arguing that their own courses are more challenging and interesting and that they provide better preparation for college-level coursework (Oxtoby, 2007). Some public high schools are also beginning to rethink the appropriateness of AP offerings. For example, in early 2007, Scarsdale High School was the first public high school to consider eliminating AP, arguing that they could develop a challenging college prep curriculum without AP course offerings (98.9 percent of their students go on to college) (Ashford, 2007).

As a response to a flurry of college criticisms, the College Board initiated an AP Audit program. Schools, through this audit, are required to submit "a copy of the course syllabus to an auditing board . . ." to "ensure greater consistency in the content and quality of high-school advanced-placement classes . . ." (Wasley, 2007:A32). The College Board hopes that this new auditing system will assure that AP courses meet a level of uniform quality wherever they are taught in the country.

HOW STUDENTS USE AP CREDIT

A review of the literature on AP usage suggests three main ways that students anticipate and/or actually use their AP credit: early entry into the major, reducing the time to complete a degree, and lightening the workload.

Research at the University of California system supports anecdotal evidence that students use AP courses to bypass introductory level courses and "take a larger number of advanced courses or to take more courses in more subject areas than they would otherwise be able to do. . ." (Eykamp, 2006:84). Eykamp found that, although many students and their parents anticipate that their time to degree will be shortened by AP credits, there is in fact little evi-

dence that students use AP credit to graduate early. Although there has been a rapid rise in the number of AP credit at the UC campuses, there is ". . . little evidence of a close relationship between AP units and the time to degree" (Eykamp, 2006:84). Only students at one UC campus made use of AP to reduce their time to degree, although it was not clear what factors influenced their usage patterns at that campus. Eykamp's finding runs counter to the conventional wisdom that students use AP credits to graduate early.

More commonly, students may use their AP credits either to reduce their semester load or to supplement a dropped course. Eykamp's research found that students more typically might use AP credits to reduce course loads during some semesters. In his conclusion, Eykamp notes, "we cannot predict which individual students will use their AP units or how they will use them if they choose to do so. In fact it appears that the factors influencing student use of AP units are nearly entirely exogenous" (2006:99).

THE EFFECT OF AP CREDIT

Whatever effects AP courses may have on high school education, they have a clear and positive impact at the college admissions level. College admissions offices recognize AP courses as indicators of a challenging high school curriculum. Admissions offices often give students with AP courses extra points or a "grade premium" on their transcript (Oxtoby, 2007). Some students take the AP classes just for the GPA bonus, intending never to take the AP exams (Morgan, 2002). They use AP courses as a tool to get into college (Mollison, 2006).

The College Board argues that it is possible to take too many AP courses; it recommends that five courses are sufficient and that students should have a rich high school experience beyond the classroom in, for instance, leadership and community service activities, which also enhance an admission application (Matthews, 2007). There is no evidence, however, that this recommendation has affected high school AP enrollment.

In the discourse on AP credit at the college level, a number of concerns arise with regularity: issues of "readiness," of bypassing general education requirements, and of missing college-level math, English, and social sciences. Recent research by Klopfenstein and Thomas on students in Texas has found that ". . . the three most popular categories of AP classes, math, English, and history, do not significantly improve college retention or GPA . . ." in a state university system (2005:12); students with these AP credits prove themselves to be no more prepared for college than their non-AP-taking peers.

EXPANDING THE DIALOGUE

In NU's honors program, concern about the role of AP credits in the context of our honors course offerings (which in part reflect university-wide general education options) and about the challenges inherent in effectively advising students with significant AP credit, made us decide to look internally at our incoming students last fall. In advance of the development of a questionnaire, we contacted members of NCHC who shared some of their strategies and/or questions about how these credits affected their own programs. We hoped, at the least, to gain a better insight into students' understanding of the impact of AP on their early college career. We also believed that a survey might point to improvements that we could undertake in our advising. Finally, we hoped we might get closer to an understanding of why students wanted to use AP credits to start the major earlier rather than to explore interesting classes across a range of fields in the first years of school.

RESEARCH METHODS

An instrument was developed to survey first-year students about their understanding of and planned use for AP credits. The instrument consisted of twelve questions distributed to students via a link to the first-year honors introductory class, Enhancing Honors 101. We achieved a 78% response rate (257 respondents out of 331 students). The results were tabulated and are used in this essay to initiate a discussion of issues related to AP credit and honors education.

As previously mentioned, a question regarding honors and AP credit was also posted on the NCHC listserv. We received comments and suggestions from twelve honors programs from various parts of the country, and these comments also inform some of the discussion.

HOW STUDENTS PLAN TO USE AP

The survey instrument asked honors students several background questions concerning the number of AP courses and exams they took and how many course credits they received in the NU admissions process. Table 1 shows that forty-two percent took five or more AP classes. Fifty-two percent received credit for one to three courses. Almost 26% received credit for more than three courses (a semester's worth of course work—usually in the core curriculum). Fewer than 5% did not take AP courses in high school.

When students first arrived on campus, they were asked how they planned to use their AP credit as undergraduates. They could choose more than one answer for this question. Table 2 shows that three "anticipated patterns" received the most responses: taking a range of electives, enrolling in upper-level courses in their major, and having a minor.

Table 1: How Students Plan to Use AP—Background Questions

How many AP courses did you take in high school?		
Answers	**Number Answered**	**Percent Answered**
0	12	4.46%
1	5	1.86%
2	13	4.83%
3	44	16.36%
4	37	13.75%
5	47	17.47%
6	36	13.38%
7	31	11.52%
		83.63%
How many AP exams did you take in high school?		
Answers	**Number Answered**	**Percent Answered**
0	17	6.49%
1	17	6.49%
2	22	8.40%
3	36	13.74%
4	38	14.50%
5	42	16.03%
6	28	10.69%
7	21	8.02%
		84.36%
How many AP exams did you get college credit for at Northeastern?		
Answers	**Number Answered**	**Percent Answered**
0	35	12.82%
1	40	14.65%
2	51	18.68%
3	52	19.05%
4	35	12.82%
5	19	6.96%
6	12	4.40%
7	4	1.47%
		90.85%

Table 2: How Do You Plan on Using your AP Credit?

Having the opportunity to take a range of electives	165	60.89%
Enrolling in upper level courses in your major sooner	153	56.46%
Having a minor	125	46.13%
Being able to study abroad	86	31.73%
Having a double or dual major	69	25.46%
Having additional co-ops or internships	48	17.71%
Graduating early	41	15.13%
Other	30	11.07%
Unanswered	25	9.23%

Although students ranked taking electives the highest, in our advising we have found that students prefer to use their AP courses as a way to fast-track into their major. A challenge for honors education is that many programs offer a wide variety of entry-level courses in a number of areas and far fewer courses at the advanced level.

Fewer than a third of the students saw AP credits as creating opportunities for study abroad experiences; this may be in part because they had not yet had a chance to be exposed to some of these opportunities, but it is interesting that students—many of whom were in highly structured majors like engineering and pharmacy—did not see AP credits as a way to make room for an international experience.

Of equal interest is that 15% saw AP as a vehicle to early graduation. However, as we have seen in the literature, most students do not use that option, instead using AP credits to reduce their academic load (Eykamp, 2006). We did not offer "to lighten academic load" as an option on the survey because the instrument was given to them at the beginning of their academic work. Students usually see the utility of lightening their academic load further into their undergraduate work, often at the thesis stage.

Our experience demonstrates that students are much more optimistic and flexible in thinking about their plans than they turn out to be in actual use patterns, especially in the case of international study. Honors programs would do well to maximize this initial enthusiasm in planning opportunities for students.

AP AND NU ADMISSIONS

We have found that the admission profile for students entering the NU Honors Program is steadily creeping upwards. Table 3 shows the middle

range scores of students admitted into the Honors Program for the 2006–2007 and 2007–2008 academic years.

Table 3: Impact of AP Credit on High School GPA Scores

Fall 2007 Admitted Honors Profile
• Middle 50% GPA: 4.0–4.3 (weighted)
• Middle 50% SAT (1600 scale): 1380–1450
• Middle 50% ACT: 31–33
Fall 2006 Admitted Honors Profile
• Middle 50% GPA: 3.9–4.2 (weighted)
• Middle 50% SAT (1600 scale): 1370–1440
• Middle 50% ACT: 30–33

Note that the middle 50% of admitted applicants had GPAs of 3.9 to 4.3, reflecting the additional weight given to AP classes. Such high scores are becoming more characteristic of incoming students at competitive universities.

Table 4 shows that 45% to 50% of the respondents had AP credits that fulfilled either the math or English (or both) general education requirements. Another 40% arrived on campus with their social science general education requirement met.

Table 4: Impact of AP Credit on NU CORE Requirements

Answers	Number Answered	Percent Answered
Math	138	50.92%
English	122	45.02%
Social Science	105	38.75%
Science and Technology	94	34.69%
Arts and Humanities	40	14.76%
Foreign Language	27	9.96%

By avoiding general education requirements in areas such as math, English, social science, and science and technology classes, students potentially miss important courses embedded in university-wide core curriculum offerings. As universities and honors programs in particular move toward developing living-learning communities, the lack of entry-level shared courses prevents critical connections among entering students as well as the opportunity to develop a common learning experience.

SURVEYING HONORS PROGRAM STRATEGIES

In the course of discussing AP credit with staff at other honors programs, we gained some sense of what is happening nationally. In the twelve contacts we made via the NCHC listserv, the comments clustered in four areas:

- Curriculum diversification
- Reduction in required courses
- Ineligibility of AP courses as substitutes for honors requirements
- Reevaluation of the role of AP credit

Many honors programs are *diversifying curriculum* offerings. They offer classes that are unique to the program and often interdisciplinary. As one program director put it, "If . . . your Honors curriculum is distinctive enough that AP work doesn't line up with what goes on in the Honors classroom, then it would make sense not to accept AP work and use that opportunity (when the question comes up) to discuss how Honors classes are materially different from standard single-discipline classes." Others, primarily at public universities, find that they need to establish honors courses for specific majors beyond the general education requirements in order to increase course options for students. One director remarked "rather than beating my head against a brick wall, I decided we needed to focus on how to make sure our students get a valuable Honors experience regardless of how many credits they bring in."

Some programs choose to *reduce the number of required honors courses*. An honors college dean described ". . . making a judgment call about reducing honors course expectations when a student comes in with, say, at least 15 hours of AP or other prior dual-enrollment credits." From his perspective, this solution seemed fair for students who "just don't have as many opportunities to take honors gen. ed. courses . . ." Other programs are not as flexible in viewing the role of AP and mandate *no AP credit for honors requirements*. One dean stated firmly, ". . . our policy is that 'we do not give Honors credit for high school work.' The student will always get some kind of credit, but it will not be Honors credit." Other programs draw a line between general education courses that are required at the university level and courses that are unique to honors. In one case, a program director stated that AP courses were not accepted for honors core requirements ". . . because there aren't any AP courses exactly like them . . . a student coming in with AP psychology has not satisfied the Honors social science requirements, because we have our own, required, multidisciplinary social science course."

Then there are the programs that are *re-evaluating the role of AP credits in an honors education*. One program director remarked on being in the

"throes of a new gen ed curriculum and it is a nightmare . . ." Assessing the role of AP courses within honors programs remains a challenge. However, as one director bluntly put it, "Ultimately, I don't think you can 'have it both ways' with AP credit; you need to decide one way or the other and then stick to your guns."

DISCUSSION

Because of the increased numbers of students successfully completing AP courses prior to arrival on campus, honors programs nationally need to assess how they are going to adapt to the impact of AP credit on an honors curriculum. Three issues emerge as particularly important for honors programs to address in the process of assessing AP credit. First, a set of unique challenges for honors programs includes student advising, the potential "narrowing" of an honors education, and curriculum offerings in honors. Second, we need to take part in the on-going dialogue about AP credit at the high school and campus level. Third, we need to have a more effective dialogue about AP credit within the NCHC community.

CHALLENGES FOR INDIVIDUAL HONORS PROGRAMS

The challenges for delivering honors options to entering students with AP credit are multiple. Many honors programs provide their own advising beyond college or university-wide advising systems; assigning credit for numerous AP courses makes this advising complex. Honors programs often offer a range of interesting courses at the general education level that these students will bypass. If an individual program requires a certain number of core honors courses, it may prove to be difficult for the student to find enough classes. At the college or department level, student advising can more easily accommodate bypassing early requirements through AP credit.

Many students feel that they should start right out in their major and are eager to move immediately to advanced work; this is, in part, how AP credit has been framed for them at the high school level. As a result, it is difficult to persuade students with a number of AP credits to expand their work beyond the focus of their major when they arrive. In our advising experience, we find that students are reluctant to "look around" at possible fields that might be of interest and to take additional courses as supplements to their AP work in fields such as math, social sciences, and English. However, these courses may provide a foundation for more advanced work. For example, early English classes may provide a strong foundation for thesis work. Even specialized first-year honors curricula in these areas often do not attract large numbers of students.

Because of student reluctance to enroll in first-year honors courses, they sometimes find themselves "narrowing" their college level work. "Narrowing" is the process of eliminating unrelated electives in the early part of an honors curriculum. Part of this "narrowing" is a result of the historical shift from a five- to a four-course load at many schools; previous generations of college students often regularly carried electives in a wide range of courses unrelated to the major field. "Narrowing" is sometimes compounded by the goal of students to do a double or dual major/minor. Since each program they affiliate with has a set number of requirements they must meet, students find that they may have only three or four electives in their entire undergraduate experience; thus, their course selection process may be the antithesis of what an honors education promotes.

Some students focused on entering their major quickly face an existential crisis by the third year. They have met all the requirements of their major and have no idea what other courses might also interest them. Because they are advanced students, the idea of shopping around among entry-level courses does not appeal to them, and because they bypassed the first-year experience, they have had no chance to explore interesting subjects beyond their major.

Outliers—students with twenty-four or more AP credits—also present serious challenges to honors programs. University admissions offices need to have regular conversations with directors of honors programs about the appropriate candidacy of such students for an honors program.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGH SCHOOL/COLLEGE DIALOGUE

The role that admissions offices play in the discussion of AP credit is significant. Admissions offices may feel "trapped" into taking large numbers of AP credits in order not to jeopardize their admissions "yield." One strategy is to establish residency requirements that mandate a certain number of semesters in residence for a degree unless a student applies for advanced standing. Students with advanced standing might not be suitable candidates for honors programs.

Although AP courses are seen as a "critical tool" in raising student achievement at the high school level, there is little or no larger discussion of the contemporary nature of an AP-infused high school education. In the process of extending opportunities for a larger number of students to take AP classes, what has happened—perhaps inadvertently—is that AP courses are now a typical and normal part of a high school career. While AP courses may now better serve high school curricula, they have less value at the college level. It might be time to initiate the discussion of whether AP courses are just another level of honors curriculum at the high school level and have no meaningful link to college work other than as an admissions tool. Oxtoby, framing

the argument a little differently, contends that making a high school curriculum match a college one does not necessarily improve the high school experience (2007).

NCHC DIALOGUE

Different challenges and options face public versus private colleges and universities and their honors programs. Nationally, do honors programs at private universities have the ability to create less AP-flexible programs than state schools? NCHC should move to try to substantiate trends.

Have honors programs nationally moved to develop unique and innovative first-year courses that have no parallel in the larger campus curriculum? Alternatively, are honors programs developing and requiring innovative upper-level classes or developing more major-based offerings? Once again, this information would be useful for the larger NCHC community in curriculum planning.

For all of us, the AP question opens the door for future research. It would serve NCHC members well to expand this discussion so that we could benefit from the strategies and wisdom of other programs. One approach would be to develop a survey instrument for program directors so that we would have a larger body of data to share. Another strategy would be to develop a national survey instrument for honors program students to be used by interested NCHC members. Shared data might provide insight into student expectations. NCHC might also develop a series of case studies to elucidate conversations on this issue.

The role of AP credits at the college level is not going to change quickly. These credits are significant players in the careers of many of our undergraduates. Our willingness to engage in a dialogue about these credits will help to enhance our understanding of these challenges, help to inform program development, and allow us to participate in a wider conversation on successful undergraduate experiences. Ultimately, honors programs may make the hard decision not to admit students with AP credits that place them out of the first year in the interest of the vitality of their honors community.

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APPENDIX A

SEPARATE HONORS SECTIONS

Separate Honors sections are equivalents of non-honors courses in subjects like Calculus, College Writing, Accounting, and American Government, to name a few. These Honors courses carry the same course numbers as non-honors sections but are designated by an (HN) in the title. These courses will appear in the Registrar's course books as such. These classes have fewer students, may use different source materials, and cover the subject matter in a more in-depth fashion than the non-honors equivalents of these classes. The overall academic expectations are to broaden your experience but not to make any individual course more difficult to successfully complete.

HONORS FIRST YEAR INQUIRY SERIES

Freshmen have the option of taking courses in the First Year Inquiry Series which consists of honors-only entry level courses that meet the new Domain requirements for the NU CORE. One course, *Theology, Ethics, and Practice in the World's Religions* allows for an intellectual link from the First Year Reading Program and all Welcome Week activities to a semester-long course and meets the Comparative Understanding of Cultures core requirement. Additional First Year Inquiry Series courses meet the domain requirements of Arts & Humanities, Science and Technology, and Social Sciences.

HONORS SEMINARS

Upper class students are required to take an Honors Interdisciplinary Seminar as part of their six-course requirement. Students may choose to take more than one seminar. These 4-credit seminars are designed to expose students—primarily sophomores and middlers—to a variety of topics through an interdisciplinary format.

These seminars may be either team or individually taught. Recent seminars range from Eating and the Environment to Espionage. Most of these courses fulfill NU CORE Level Two requirements. Honors students must complete one HNR seminar to receive *Honors Course Distinction*.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT AP SURVEY

Question 1	*Fill in the Blank*
	Gender (optional)
Question 2	*Fill in the Blank*
	Major
Question 3	*Fill in the Blank*
	How many AP courses did you take in high school?
Question 4	*Fill in the Blank*
	How many AP exams did you take in high school?
Question 5	*Fill in the Blank*
	How many AP exams did you get college credit for at Northeastern?
Question 6	*Either/Or*
	Did you take any college classes prior to coming to Northeastern?
	Answers
	No
	Yes
Question 7	*Fill in the Blank*
	If yes, how many courses did you receive credit for?
Question 8	*Multiple Answer*
	How do you plan to use your AP credit while at Northeastern? (Please select all that apply)
	Answers
	Being able to study abroad
	Enrolling in upper level courses in your major sooner
	Graduating early
	Having a double or dual major
	Having a minor
	Having additional co-ops or internships
	Having the opportunity to take a range of electives
	Other
	Unanswered

Question 9	Which NU core classes did you place out of with your pre-college credits?
	(Please select all that apply)
	Answers
	Arts and Humanities
	English
	Foreign Language
	Math
	Other
	Science and technology
	Social Science
	Unanswered
Question 10	*Multiple Choice*
	How many Honors classes are you taking this fall?
	Answers
	0
	1
	2
	3
	4
Question 11	*Multiple Choice*
	Do you think AP courses are a similar experience to courses at Northeastern?
	Answers
	Yes-all
	Yes-some
	No
	Unanswered

Towards Reliable Honors Assessment

GREGORY W. LANIER
THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

ASSESSMENT: THE PROBLEM

In the recent *JNCHC* volume devoted to "Outcomes Assessment, Accountability, and Honors" (Spring/Summer 2006), we can find a marked division within the honors community between those for and against the current climate of program assessment, with the "againsts" carrying the day by a two to one margin (six negative essays vs. three positive). In her editorial comments, Ada Long declares:

> Honors educators do indeed need to be in the forefront of the national conversation about outcomes assessment, but first we will each need to decide whether we should join or resist the movement. (p. 15)

I wonder if honors educators have emerged as even a tiny voice in the forefront of this national conversation; I am even more unconvinced that honors educators have the choice to join or resist the "assessment movement."

All of us struggling with assessment owe a great debt to the NCHC monograph *Assessing and Evaluating Honors Programs and Honors Colleges* authored by Rosalie Otero and Bob Spurrier, and many of us have also benefited from the work on portfolio assessment championed by John Zubizarreta. Other material contributions to this effort have been made in both the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* and *Honors in Practice* by, for instance, Frank Shushok, Steffen Pope Wilson, Rose M. Perrine, John R. Cosgrove, Gale E. Hartleroad, Scott Carnicom, and Michael Clump. Nevertheless, the need to develop honors assessment strategies based on student learning outcomes is a relatively new phenomenon with neither an extensive history nor a wide scholarly corpus, and honors educators have expressed serious reservations about assessment as an infringement on their authority and autonomy.

In my experience, the issue of creating effective and reliable program assessment measures is far more overarching than the natural academic denunciation of legislative threats to impose standardized testing or to create

an educational equivalent of automotive assembly lines. For better or for worse, assessment practices, now inextricably linked to the legitimate call for accountability in higher education, have become a significant piece of our academic landscape, and resisting the call to develop best assessment practices for honors education seems a bit like standing on the seashore and repudiating the tide for coming in as it laps about our feet. The honors community needs to recognize that assessment and learning outcomes are here to stay and that they haven't been put there by anti-education legislators; they have been put there by us, by the academy itself. Assessment plans and student learning outcomes are now central components of all accreditation reviews at all levels, whether focused on the institution as a whole or on specific programs. Accreditation reviews conducted by the Western (or Southern, or Middle States, or North Central, et al.) Association of Schools and Colleges all include extensive stipulations about assessment and student outcomes. An example drawn from one of the institution-level accrediting bodies (New England Association of Schools and Colleges—NEASC) indicates the status quo:

> The institution implements and supports a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning focused on educational improvement through understanding what and how students are learning through their academic program and, as appropriate, through experiences outside the classroom. This approach is based on a clear statement or statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The approach provides useful information to help the institution understand what and how students are learning, improve the experiences provided for students, and assure that the level of student achievement is appropriate for the degree awarded. Institutional support is provided for these activities.

Assessment practices and student outcomes are perhaps even more prominent in "specialty" accreditation reviews like those conducted by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, the Association for the Advancement of Colleges and Schools of Business (AACSB), the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Education Training (CAATE), and the National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission (NLNAC). All of these entities—as well as overarching bodies like the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and the Council for the Advancement of

Standards in Higher Education (CAS), just to name two—have embraced assessment planning and learning outcomes as central and significant practices. If honors educators are to have a voice in the forefront of this national conversation, we need to recognize at the least that we are coming to the table very late in the process. It is time for us to become proactive, collectively develop the best practices for assessing honors programs, and document specific learning outcomes for our honors students.

Instead of seeking to avoid the problem by laying the blame on legislative cretins or "the business mentality," let us look instead at the published and influential positions of academic entities. In a widely disseminated piece titled "Our Students' Best Work: A Framework for Accountability Worthy of Our Mission," the Association of American Colleges and Universities states:

> . . . despite the development over the past two decades of a veritable "assessment movement," too many institutions and programs still are unable to answer legitimate questions about what their students are learning in college. The lack of evidence on student learning outcomes has proved damaging. (p. 1)

That statement can be pointed directly at honors programs; in fact, it *is* pointed at us on a fairly regular basis. How often have those of us who have been in honors for even just a few years heard cries for help from a program director under fire from a provost who wants to downsize, eliminate, or radically change an honors program? And what evidence can honors or the NCHC provide that answers these simple questions:

- What have honors students actually learned?
- What is the educational value provided by an honors program or college?
- What have honors students learned or gained from participating in honors that their non-honors counterparts have not?
- What gains in student achievement and learning have been made through the substantial investments in "living-and-learning-communities," undergraduate research opportunities, cross-, multi-, and interdisciplinary programs of study, international experiences, special honors advising, and the like?
- Why is honors important?
- Why should honors be funded?

At its meeting in February, 2007, the NCHC Board of Directors briefly discussed these questions in response to an appeal for help posted on the honors listserv, and the group came up with the following (to the best of my limited memory) list of reasons why honors education is valuable:

- High-caliber students provide intellectual enrichment for the entire campus
- Retention and six-year-persistence rates are often much higher for honors students, so graduation rates are better
- The higher retention rates for honors students have a significant economic impact on the campus
- Honors students bring social enrichment to the campus
- Honors students bring service enrichment to the community through service activities
- Honors students provide an active and effective alumni base
- Honors students have good personal experiences: the small college within the large university feel
- Honors students create a community of like-minded individuals
- Honors residential living enriches the campus
- Honors alumni create donation/development opportunities
- Honors programs foster the exploration and development of new courses/pedagogy
- Honors programs provide faculty/student interactions/mentoring opportunities
- Honors programs contribute significantly to the institution's undergraduate research agenda
- Honors students provide leadership & involvement on campus

This list is impressive, but as we all quickly recognized, there is no central repository of data, no comprehensive and direct evidence to show that any of it is true. We hope that the new NCHC research listserv and the NCHC Research Committee can provide such comprehensive data, but I am struck by the fact that not one of the items on the list relates to anything an honors student *specifically learned*. Much learning—much advanced, fruitful, and deep learning—no doubt takes place in all of these honors activities, but what exactly do the honors students learn from being in our programs? What are the learning outcomes from honors undergraduate research? What leadership skills are gained as a direct result of honors activities? What do the honors students learn about themselves, their communities, and those around them by participating in service activities?

Those questions are not trivial or ancillary; they are at the heart of good learning assessment practices. But since honors is coming late to the table, we can take advantage of what others have already accomplished, and to that end I would like to reproduce the learning outcomes recommended by the

AAC&U in "Our Students' Best Work." Their proposed student learning outcomes (SLOs) are:

1. strong analytical, communication, quantitative, and information skills—achieved and demonstrated through learning in a range of fields, settings, and media, and through advanced studies in one or more areas of concentration; deep understanding of and hands-on experience with the inquiry practices of disciplines that explore the natural, social, and cultural realms—achieved and demonstrated through studies that build conceptual knowledge by engaging learners in concepts and modes of inquiry that are basic to the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and arts;
2. intercultural knowledge and collaborative problem-solving skills—achieved and demonstrated in a variety of collaborative contexts (classroom, community based, international, and online) that prepare students both for democratic citizenship and for work;
3. a proactive sense of responsibility for individual, civic, and social choices—achieved and demonstrated through forms of learning that connect knowledge, skills, values, and public action, and through reflection on students' own roles and responsibilities in social and civic contexts;
4. habits of mind that foster integrative thinking and the ability to transfer skills and knowledge from one setting to another—achieved and demonstrated through advanced research and/or creative projects in which students take the primary responsibility for framing questions, carrying out an analysis, and producing work of substantial complexity and quality. (pp. 5–6)

The outcomes above, of course, developed not for honors programs but for a college-level experience centered on a fairly traditional concept of liberal education, as the statement below reveals:

> . . . in today's knowledge-based economy, a good liberal education embraces science and new technologies, hands-on research, global knowledge, teamwork, cross-cultural learning, active engagement with the world beyond the academy, and a commitment to lifelong learning, as well as the acquisition of knowledge and skills. (p. 4)

These outcomes and this description come very close to what I believe honors education is supposed to do; moreover, they correspond well to a list of learning outcomes that John Zubizarreta posted on the NCHC listserv in September of 2004. According to that compilation, an honors student:

- Thinks critically
- Thinks creatively
- Reads critically
- Employs an effective process to produce clear, persuasive writing
- Conducts research effectively
- Takes risks with learning
- Demonstrates cultural sensitivity
- Demonstrates aesthetic sensitivity
- Demonstrates gender sensitivity
- Participates actively and effectively in large and small groups
- Assumes multiple roles in groups
- Demonstrates responsibility outside classroom and school
- Demonstrates awareness of the "outside world"
- Appreciates learning for its own sake
- Appreciates diversity
- Demonstrates personal integrity

I am going to skip over the fight about whether all those outcomes really do fit all honors programs and colleges; this may well be a discussion for a later date. My focus here is on the need for and methods of assessment, and there are legitimate assessment questions that arise from these or any set of outcomes adopted: 1) Do our honors programs and colleges actually provide educational opportunities and curricular structures that enhance our student's ability to attain these outcomes and goals? 2) What is the evidence that shows that our honors students have actually achieved these outcomes? Beyond those two fundamental questions are matters of method and practice: How can an honors program consistently measure the outcomes such as "thinks critically" or "achieves strong analytic skills" given the breadth of a typical honors program (which is often quite unlike the sharp focus and coherence of the curriculum in a major)? What exactly do we mean by these outcomes? Where in the honors curriculum do honors students demonstrate these behaviors for faculty to gauge?

Although it is tempting, I don't think honors can simply afford to wave its collective hands and vaguely state that, well, they graduated as honors scholars (or whatever), so obviously they gained those skills. In my mind, too much is at stake—particularly funding. We are in a transitional moment, and even though those of us who have been in honors and higher education for a long time might wish to duck our heads and hope that the assessment fad

quietly fades away, I think we need to prepare the enterprise of honors education for an assessment-permeated future. We are all keenly aware of the damage an honors-inimical CAO can do in the name of financial expediency. We also need to be keenly aware that the next generation of CAOs will almost surely link assessment data directly to funding formulas—especially in public institutions. If honors does not have solid assessment data demonstrating that honors students "achieve strong analytic skills" while the undergraduate research program next door can trot out reams of data indicating that their students do, then we can bet that the next-generation CAO will not hesitate to shift funding from honors to undergraduate research and that NCUR, not NCHC, will be the venue of choice for administrators to highlight the achievements of their best undergraduate students. (*Nota bene*: even as I am writing this, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education is developing and will soon publish comprehensive learning outcomes for undergraduate research programs that include at least sixteen learning outcomes that overlap with typical honors learning outcomes—as well as a host of outcomes that speak to a student's personal development).

We need to be fully aware, I think, that within only a few short years academia will incorporate this mantra into its basic culture: "Clarity about essential learning outcomes is the foundation of both a robust educational program and an accountability framework (AAC&U, p. 5). Many, if not all, institutions that have undergone accreditation reviews recently (and yes, I am at one of these institutions), have already incorporated learning outcomes; more and more will surely follow. We can expect that by the end of this first decade of the twenty-first century:

> Each college and university should make public on its Web site:
>
> a. General and departmental goals for student learning
>
> b. Proficiency expectations for rating levels of student achievement in relation to these goals
>
> c. A description of the kinds and range of performances that are used in assessing student progress (with links to different programs and departments)
>
> d. A report on student achievement levels (e.g., advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic) in relation to each goal (AAC&U, p. 12)

If honors programs and colleges cannot or do not embrace assessment, they are likely to be swept aside by those parts of the university that do. Assessment is here to stay. And honors programs will be at risk if they ignore the need to establish best assessment practices tailored to their specific nature.

During his plenary address at the 2006 Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation hosted by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Peter Ewell made some simple points about the bottom line of assessment, assessment data, and a culture of ongoing assessment, which he said are necessary for an institution's internal management because:

- "Seat of the pants" decision-making is no longer sufficient
- Assessment information must be used openly, consistently, and continuously to inform academic decisions

For external constituencies, ongoing assessment is necessary because:

- "Trust me" is no longer sufficient
- Institutions need to demonstrate clear, understandable evidence of student academic attainment

At another session during the same 2006 Institute, a second academic leader in the assessment movement, Peggy L. Maki, Senior Scholar and Director of Assessment in the American Association for Higher Education, argued that we need to do assessment properly and do it well, that it is the right thing to do if we care about what we are teaching our students and how well we are doing our job:

> More than an externally driven act, assessment is a process of discovery about the relationship between teaching and learning. How do we position students to demonstrate, reflect on, and chronicle their learning to inform our educational practices and document their learning? How do faculty and staff position themselves to inquire into students' learning along the continuum of students' studies using multiple lenses? And, how do institutions of higher education position themselves to become learning organizations—to learning about the efficacy of collective educational practices, build knowledge, and use assessment results to improve pedagogy, curricular and instructional design, and educational experiences?

The challenge currently facing us is: how do we as honors educators position ourselves to learn about the efficacy of honors educational practices, build knowledge about the particular nature of honors education, and use reliable and verifiable assessment practices to improve honors pedagogy, honors curricular and instructional design, and honors educational experiences? We all have anecdotal evidence that shows how well we are doing our job, but to date the NCHC has not embraced or archived any reliable assessment methodology or data. We now need to do the right thing in honors education

and develop reliable assessment practices that will generate reliable data and demonstrate convincingly that honors does have the impact on students that we all assert as a matter of faith. "Trust me, honors is important and our students do very well" just doesn't work any more, no matter how much we may want to fuss or drag our heels.

In my opinion, we need to move quickly to collect hard data that demonstrates to internal and external constituencies that significant achievement in learning by honors students justifies the substantial monetary investments in:

- Living-and-learning honors communities
- Small classes
- Undergraduate research opportunities
- Special speakers
- Cross-, multi-, and inter-disciplinary programs of study
- International experiences
- Cultural enhancement trips and activities
- Special honors advising
- Student leadership opportunities
- Focused active-learning opportunities

Those of us in honors education need to face some real and difficult challenges in order to do honors assessment well. As we move into our future, we need to recognize that assessment data and funding will be closely linked and will make our efforts now critical. Virtually all honors administrators would agree that honors is an academic activity with a series of classes and specific academic experiences and that it also entails extensive extracurricular support and enrichment. As consequence of this duality, proper assessment of honors needs to mirror the assessment of an entire university in its scope. I have found it useful to draw a distinction between the assessment of the honors academic mission—which is student-learning focused—and the honors enrichment mission, which includes the many value-added activities—such as international studies, cultural and diversity experiences, speakers, and living-learning experiences—that support and enrich academic learning. The two approaches are no doubt interrelated and inextricably joined, but, like an analysis of a skeletal structure followed by an analysis of the musculature, together the two perspectives can give us a good sense of the shape of the organism.

THE FIRST STEP: TOWARD THE ASSESSMENT OF HONORS STUDENT LEARNING

Measure what you value, rather than valuing what you can measure.
—Kermit Hall, former President, University at Albany – SUNY

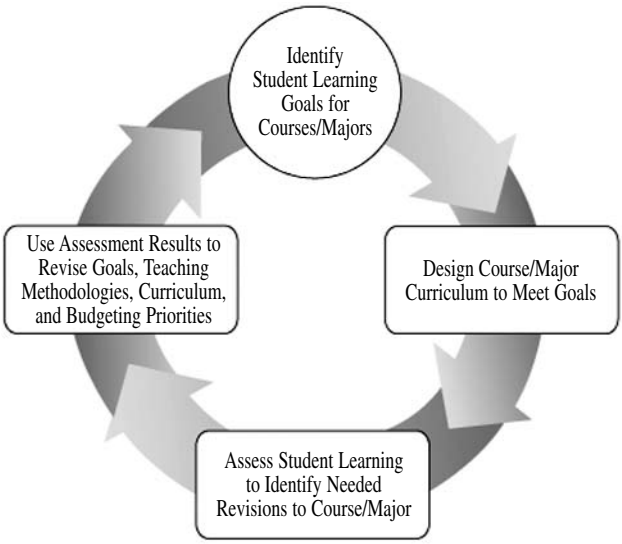
At the center of the assessment effort are the "student learning outcomes" that have provoked some controversy in the honors community. I would like to consider them as not only useful but essential to what honors educators are all about: providing educational enhancements for superior students so that they not merely succeed but excel once they have left our campuses. The first of the student learning goals articulated by the AAC&U and quoted above is: Strong analytical, communication, quantitative, and information skills—achieved and demonstrated through learning in a range of fields, settings, and media, and through advanced studies in one or more areas of concentration. (pp. 5–6)

If we start with just this first dictum, a number of us might dismiss it with "Of course our students have these skills. They're what honors is all about, and no one who graduates with an honors designation could possibly have less." But the assessment skeptic will ask first "What's the proof? Where are the data?" and second "Is that really true across the board? Do honors students who are engineering majors really have the same level of communication skills that honors English majors have? Do honors theatre majors have the same level of quantitative skills that honors mathematics majors exhibit?" Only if we are lucky will the skeptic not ask the very pointed question: "What significant, quantitative evidence do you have indicating that an honors student outperforms a non-honors student of similar ability?" In other words, what data do we have showing that honors makes a significant difference in student learning?

The first question in good assessment is "What do we want our students to learn?" The second is "How do we know they learned it?" Because every honors program or college is unique, each assessment plan must also be unique, but even honors programs typically share a common set of characteristics, as described in the NCHC's Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program, so the assessment of honors programs might have a common set of assessment practices.

Developing assessment plans and student learning outcomes is fundamentally no different for honors than for other disciplines save for the twist that honors programs in general do not have a central, shared content as do discrete disciplines like chemistry, art, accounting, or physical therapy. The cycle below graphically summarizes the assessment process:

Once in place, a good assessment plan becomes a continuous feedback cycle with the four steps indicated in the graphic.



(http://depts.washington.edu/learning/)

STEP 1: ASSESSMENT DOMAINS

Assessment domains are, generally speaking, over-arching rubrics that encompass a number of closely related student learning outcomes (SLOs). An incomplete list of possible domains that could be useful in honors assessment might include:

- Content (knowledge specific to a discipline or major as well as knowledge specific to interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary activities)
- Communication (writing skills, oral communication skills, media/computer communication skills, numeric skills, etc.
- Critical Thinking
- Analysis
- Project management (both group and individual work)
- Moral Values/Integrity
- Problem solving
- Citizenship
- Leadership

- Diversity
- Creative ability
- Professional behavior/skills
- International experience
- Foreign language proficiency
- Active learning
- Interdisciplinary learning
- Service learning
- Community service
- Cultural awareness

The first step in an honors assessment plan is to consider which of these domains not only engage honors students in specific learning activities but are also central to the mission of an honors program. The point of proper assessment is to reflect not only on what we do but why we do it and how we can do it better. Assessment should give us insights into our programs that data such as grade point averages, graduation/retention rates, or post-baccalaureate placement statistics can't provide. For example, let us consider the domain "project management." Most honors programs have capstone projects or senior theses requirements, and the extent of that activity in honors education suggests that, as a corpus, honors values project management as one of the specific skills that honors students acquire in an honors program. The task then is to devise specific student learning outcomes related to the domain and figure out ways to gather data about whether students are actually learning and accomplishing the goals indicated in the outcomes. At the University of West Florida, we have settled on the following SLOs (more on the development of SLOs later) under the domain of project management; each student is expected to

- Exhibit disciplined work habits as an individual
- Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based knowledge to design a problem-solving strategy
- Conceive and plan a high-quality research and/or creative capstone project in the appropriate disciplinary or multi-disciplinary context

The last SLO listed above speaks to what many faculty members would cite as the first crucial step toward successfully completing an honors thesis. In order to actually write a thesis, one has to have sufficient background and training in a disciplinary context to conceive a useful and productive research design or creative project. Evaluating that step in the process obviously is not quite the same as evaluating a finished thesis. The step of conceiving and

planning is equivalent to the prewriting exercises and drafts used in composition classes; although in some composition programs some of the "prewriting" phases are graded, in practice most institutions only assess (by assigning a grade) the finished product. The final grade of "Honors" or "Satisfactory" assigned by the instructor, director, or honors thesis committee does not address the process or difficulty or learning gains that students evince in the planning stages. At UWF, the data that we received on this SLO (much more about gathering data later) revealed that some of our honors students handled the planning very well, but others did not, and it further revealed that the disparity was somewhat discipline-specific. Students from the hard sciences at UWF (where there is in general a culture of undergraduate research) did very well in this area; students from other areas, business in particular, did not fare nearly as well. We now know that we need to do something else or something more to help students from outside the hard sciences get started on their theses. We haven't yet figured out exactly what to do, but we will be trying at least one new mentoring approach for those students during the next academic year.

The first step toward building an assessment plan for honors is to identify the domains that are most central to the mission of an individual honors program or college. International experiences and foreign language proficiency are distinctive and prominent features of some honors programs, but certainly not all. Similarly, leadership development is a central concern in some but not all institutions. The key is to have frank and in-depth discussions with the faculty who teach honors courses and the students who take those courses about what is valuable and important in the honors curriculum, looking for common themes and experiences that lead to the educational enrichment of our students. Allowing ideas to emerge from wide-ranging discussions is far better than the scenario I had to face in Florida, where we all woke up one morning to discover that the Florida legislature had mandated that assessment plans based on the domains of content, communication, and critical thinking be developed for each baccalaureate degree program at every public university in the Great State of Florida.

At UWF, a rather strange thing happened when we woke up that morning and faced the legislative edict. Perhaps because we were also staring at an impending SACS accreditation visit at the same time, the faculty didn't launch a protest but instead took the task seriously; we rolled up our collective sleeves and got started. After lots of talk and some posturing, as an institution we decided to see the three state-mandated domains and raise the state two by adding the domains of integrity/values and project management to the list. We made this decision because we realized that, as an institution, we value the gains made by our students in these two areas. So now at UWF all of our assessment plans, the one for honors included, are built on the five

domains of content, communication, critical thinking, integrity/values, and project management.

Whatever domains are chosen, they should reflect not only what is valued in the program but also what can be measured with data. In general, the domains should:

Promote curricular coherence: The very concept of a "program' implies that there is a unity and definable focus in the totality of a student's educational path.

Facilitate collaboration: We all know that we gain strength and quality through interactions among faculty and students from multiple disciplines and backgrounds.

Showcase strengths: Each of us has unique areas of achievement that are models of educational quality, and these areas should be highlighted in an assessment plan.

Build from the bottom up: Honors faculty and students should decide what to assess and why; the buy-in alone will make the implementation of the plan simpler and less painful.

Satisfy multiple "drivers": Assessment data and plans are needed both for external entities (like accrediting bodies) and for internal operations.

One final caveat: had it been left solely for me to decide, I would not have included the domain "content" in my honors assessment plan because, like so many honors programs nationally, the UWF Honors Program has students in every one of the 180+ majors UWF offers; therefore, the task of defining and measuring content for all of those majors is, to say the least, a challenge. We were lucky at UWF in that we had long required an honors thesis (which is almost always done in the student's major as their capstone project) for graduation as an Honors Scholar; hence, we were able to tie the SLOs in content directly to the subject area of the thesis discipline. Without such a capstone product, finding a way to assess content across the breadth of an honors program in which student activity is spread across an entire institution will be a very tough challenge.

STEP 2: STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Once the domains are identified, it is time to develop the SLOs: statements that describe what students will be able to know, do, or value as a result of their honors educational experience. I find it curious that SLOs have attracted widespread distaste since all they really do is articulate clearly the knowledge, skills, abilities, and values a student gains from a course of study. Perhaps in honors we have become gun-shy because we simultaneously do

and do not see honors as a discrete discipline. Consider the case, say, of a student attaining a B.F.A. in musical theatre: what knowledge, abilities, and values should a student be able to demonstrate upon receipt of a B.F.A. in this major? We might say that such a graduate should be able to go to an audition and (1) quickly and crisply pick up whatever dance steps are demonstrated by the choreographer, (2) sight read and perform well whatever musical piece is thrust into his/her hand by the musical director, and 3) deliver two contrasting (one comic, one tragic) one-minute monologues for the director while exhibiting professional poise, grace, and attitude. If we start there, we are most of the way home. The major change in our thinking prompted by SLOs is a shift in focus away from course grades to student behaviors: we need to concentrate on changes in the student's knowledge, skills, abilities, and values rather than how much or how well the student can parrot back what the instructor has presented. I think this shift is a good thing.

In order to develop SLOs for an honors program, we need to remember that we are identifying overarching concepts that span several courses, not individual course objectives. Further, we need to devise statements that describe what students should know and be able to do when they finish the honors program, and these statements need to be expressed in behaviorally measurable terms. In general SLOs should focus on observable student behaviors and work products, and they should describe the products or outcomes of these activities. In other words, we need to describe what understanding or learning has occurred as well as what the students have done or produced as a result of the honors learning.

As many people have stated, writing successful SLOs stems from adapting the language of Bloom's Learning Taxonomy to the specifics of a curriculum. Bloom's hierarchy of higher-order learning skills (http://www.apa.org/ed/new_blooms.html) is roughly thus:

Higher-Order Skills

1. Create
2. Evaluate
3. Analyze
4. Apply
5. Understand
6. Remember

Since this hierarchy distinguishes the types of learning students can achieve in order of depth or sophistication, we need to remember that honors students should be expected to demonstrate the higher order skills regularly, and we should therefore craft honors SLOs primarily but not exclusively in terms of the top three skills. In order to craft language appropriate for SLOs, it is useful

to start each SLO with one of the action verbs from Bloom's taxonomy; an abbreviated list appears below (a fuller list is provided in Appendix B).

Action Words for Bloom's Taxonomy

Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
define	explain	solve	analyze	reframe	design
identify	describe	apply	compare	criticize	compose
describe	interpret	illustrate	classify	evaluate	create
label	paraphrase	modify	contrast	order	plan
list	summarize	use	distinguish	appraise	combine
name	classify	calculate	infer	judge	formulate
state	compare	change	separate	support	integrate
match	contrast	choose	explain	compare	hypothesize
recognize	discuss	demonstrate	select	decide	substitute
select	distinguish	discover	categorize	discriminate	write
examine	extend	experiment	connect	recommend	compile
locate	predict	relate	differentiate	summarize	construct

As an example, let us consider crafting SLOs for the domain of critical thinking since it is an area where we would expect honors students to excel. The link between writing and critical thinking has long been established, and so an SLO that points toward the type of critical thinking that appears in a typical writing assignment might be:

- Select and organize credible evidence to support converging arguments.

Most writing teachers would argue that the organization of credible evidence into a well-shaped and pointed argument is a central hallmark of a well-written analytic or research paper; these same teachers, though, would probably not agree that selection and organization of evidence are the only criteria on which a paper is graded. Paper grading is a more holistic process that involves the evaluation of grammar, syntax, content, thesis statement, paragraph structure, tone, voice, and many other factors beyond the organization of the evidence. These multiple criteria point toward one of the reasons that overall grades are not that useful in assessment plans. Overall course or assignment grades are a function of many different factors while SLOs should focus on a single behavior or skill we would like to see our students attain. A few examples of SLOs are reproduced below:

- Identify and describe major theories in the discipline
- Evaluate competing hypotheses and select the one that is best supported by existing data

- Write clearly using the editorial style endorsed by the discipline
- Comply with professional standards of ethics associated with the discipline
- Manage time and resources to carry a long-term project in the discipline to completion

(http://uwf.edu/cutla/Assessres.cfm)

In general, well-written SLOs will provide clear goals for honors students to achieve, will promote the design of well-organized honors courses and active learning, and will provide the basis for precise, reliable, and valid assessment of the honors curriculum so that improvements can be made on the basis of empirical data rather than subjective impression.

In summary, we need to devise honors SLOs that state in objective, measurable terms the skills and behaviors we expect our honors students to achieve. As a tentative example, the Academic Learning Compact for the UWF Honors Program with its sixteen separate SLOs is attached as Appendix C. Whatever SLOs are devised, four general precepts are important:

1. Be honest! Is this something you really want to assess?
2. Be honest! Is this what really happens in the honors class?
3. Be smart! Where and how are you assessing this activity already?
4. Be efficient! How can you extract data you might already have?

In the end, each SLO should be the targeted assessment of a specific and discrete facet of the honors student's learning, and solid assessment plans for an entire program should incorporate some twelve to twenty specific SLOs (the UWF Honors Assessment Plan in Appendix C has sixteen SLOs spread across five domains).

STEP 3: MAP THE CURRICULUM

Once the SLOs for an honors program are devised, a curriculum matrix or map should be used to indicate how the honors curriculum aligns to the SLOs. Basically, the matrix is a graphic representation of the interface between the curriculum and the SLOs that lets us identify where the desired outcomes are introduced, reinforced or practiced, and then mastered by the students. The matrix also lets us see if there are curricular or educational weaknesses or gaps as well as where there the best opportunities for assessment exist. A portion of the curriculum matrix for the UWF Honors Program looks like this (the UWF Honors Assessment Plan in Appendix C has sixteen SLOs spread across five domains):

	LIT 1110	IDH 403x	IDH 4970	
	Direct Measure: Course Number			
	Direct Measure: Course Name			
Content	Review and evaluate the knowledge, concepts, techniques, and methodology appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis		**I, P**	**M, A**
	Identify major issues, debates, or approaches appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis		**I, P**	**M, A**
	Synthesize complex information appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis		**I, P**	**M, A**
	Develop an argument or project and defend or present it appropriately in accordance with the methods of the discipline of the Honors Thesis	**I, A**	**I, P**	**M, A**
Critical Thinking	Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills to a range of topics and issues	**I, A**	**P, A**	**M, A**
	Select and organize credible evidence to support converging arguments.	**I, A**	**P, A**	**M, A**
	Solve discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based problems using strategies appropriate to the subject of the Honors Seminar or Honors Thesis		**P, A**	**M, A**

As is common practice, the individual SLOs are listed across the top of the matrix, with the courses in the curriculum listed down the left-hand side. In this matrix, I stands for Introduced, P for Practiced, M for Mastered, and A for Assessed. So for each of the SLOs in the domains of content and critical thinking, we can quickly see where the desired outcome is first introduced to the students, where it is practiced and or otherwise reinforced, where the student should be able to demonstrate mastery of the behavior/skill, and where the SLO is assessed.

Here I need to interject a few words of explanation lest I give the impression that the UWF honors curriculum consists of only three courses: Great Books 1, an honors seminar, and an honors thesis. Actually, the UWF honors curriculum consists of 27 semester hours of required honors courses, distributed as follows:

1. LIT 1110 Great Books 1
2. Honors Lower-Division Elective 1
3. Honors Lower-Division Elective 2
4. Honors Lower-Division Elective 3
5. IDH 403x Honors Seminar 1
6. IDH 403x Honors Seminar 2
7. Upper-Division Honors Elective or Honors Seminar
8. Upper-Division Honors Elective or Honors Seminar or University Honors Research Project
9. IDH 4970 Honors Thesis
10. Complete 40 hours of volunteer credit certified through the Volunteer UWF! office and participate in at least one Honors Council service event (the hours earned during the Honors Council service event count toward the 40-hour total). These hours must appear on the student's transcript in order to fulfill the service requirement.

A crosscheck of the requirements against the matrix will reveal that I have not listed any of the elective courses but only those courses that constitute what I refer to as the honors core, and there's a reason for that. Assessment is simplest in programs where students have to complete a very specific series of courses with few or no exceptions—engineering, for example. For assessment, I use the three nodes in my program that I know all honors students have to take—the Great Books course, the two seminars, and the capstone thesis—precisely because they are stable and predictable requirements. I do not include the sections of general studies courses or honors by contracts or the widely dispersed upper-division honors classes because they are hard to

fit into assessment models. What specific learning outcome could be assessed in an honors psychology course here or an honors zoology course there? The worst assessment nightmare is the "Chinese menu" interdisciplinary program that requires a student to choose any nine courses from department A, any six from department B, and any four from department C. The Interdisciplinary Humanities and Interdisciplinary Social Sciences programs at UWF used to be organized in such a way; I was charged with overseeing and changing these programs into focused and coherent curricula that could be assessed properly. As Linda Suskie of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education puts it, "the problem with many of these programs is not assessing them per se but the fact that they're poorly designed: they're simply a collection of courses, and a collection of courses does not make a program." In practice, the number of courses in a program makes no difference in assessment, but the presence of a discrete core—no matter what the focus—does; this is a major assessment challenge facing honors education, particularly those programs that have neither a common entry-level experience nor a capstone experience. Assessing an honors program made up primarily or exclusively of honors contracts could be done, but it would be difficult and costly, probably requiring blind readings or holistic scorings.

A second confusion might arise from the appearance of the A for assessment in all of the courses listed under the critical thinking domain. The reason I chose to assess critical thinking skills in all three assessment nodes was longitudinal; I wanted to see if there was appropriate progress in critical thinking as a student advanced from the freshman to senior year. Happily, the UWF core honors curriculum is structured so that only first-year students are in Great Books; the honors seminars are populated by sophomores and juniors (with some seniors on occasion); and the honors thesis is completed almost exclusively by seniors, and so I have a means to gauge whether students are improving in that skill over the course of their honors career. Happily, the data indicate that they are, just as we would all expect; more on that later.

STEP 4: GATHER THE DATA

Now that we have identified what is going to be assessed and where, the strategies for collecting the assessment data can be explored. A single caveat guided all of our work in this area at UWF, namely KISS: KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID. In devising a good assessment plan, we should strive for practices that are feasible, manageable, transparent, and measurable. Assessment falls apart completely if faculty members don't buy into the practice, and one sure way to alienate faculty is to force on them tasks they consider silly, worthless, confusing, or onerous. The general honors consensus seems to be that assessment is a useless pain, and this may be the primary reason that it has

often been resisted. It can be done well, however, in a way that has little impact on a faculty member's time and energy.

There are two kinds of assessment activity: direct and indirect. Direct assessment is any type of evaluation done by faculty or by recognized educational entities such as the people who put together licensure examinations; it consists of evaluations of classroom activities—course papers and presentations, honors theses, work done in capstone courses, learning portfolios, case notes, laboratory exercises—and activities that occur beyond the classroom such as state or national licensure, certification, professional examinations, or other forms of standardized tests. Indirect assessment consists of data gathered from sources such as self-reports from students (often in-class self-evaluations); reports from clients, employers, or other non-academic experts; surveys of current students and alumni; and exit interviews (one-on-one or in focus-group settings). Solid assessment plans will incorporate both direct and indirect data since the primary purpose of assessment is diagnostic: finding out what works well in our teaching practices and program designs (and why) as well as what does not work (and why) so that we can improve our classroom teaching and the layout of our curricula.

Since one of the keys to good assessment is keeping the workload for faculty to a minimum, we should look at what we already do to see if we have generated assessment data that we can capture without extra work. Many excellent assessment practices (and the attendant data) already exist, embedded in what we do in the classroom on a daily basis. One example is the critical thinking SLO "Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills to a range of topics and issues." Most of us (maybe all of us in my discipline of English) would rightly argue that we use this SLO in nearly every assignment we ask students to complete. My students apply such thinking skills every time they take one of my in-class quizzes, and in Great Books I, I give them lots of quizzes. Here is a typical quiz question on Homer's *Iliad* (the students have about seven minutes to write their response):

> How does the single combat between Aias and Hektor end, and what does that entire episode tell you about Aias and Hektor? (5 pts)

An example of a solid student response that got all five points is:

> The fight between Aias and Hektor is literally called on account of darkness. Neither soldier seems to get the upper hand in the struggle; they simply throw spears at each other and talk a lot. But it tells me that both Hektor and Aias are honorable men. They agree to do something, do it, and they fight fairly. And when the contest is over, they each speak respectfully about each other and they exchange gifts, much

> like *xenia*. This episode is in great contrast to what happened between Paris and Menelaos, which ended so weirdly when Aphrodite stepped in to save Paris.

Less resonant or developed responses, of course, receive fewer points (more on scoring rubrics later). My point here is that I am already accumulating numeric data that can be used in the assessment plan. I give quizzes not to check students' grammar or writing skills nor to see if they are increasing their awareness of history or diversity or Western culture but to make certain that they are thinking critically, that they are identifying patterns, drawing analogies between episodes, incorporating a specific moment into the general context—in other words, thinking actively and critically. Every time I give a quiz, I am directly assessing their ability to apply discipline-based higher order thinking skills to a new topic, and each time I grade a quiz, I am recording the result with a 6-point Likert scale (5 for "Great!"; 0 at the other end for "Totally Wrong" or blank), so I already have plenty of assessment data; I just need to pull it out of the spreadsheet I am already using to calculate their overall course grade.

A small portion of the spreadsheet I use to track scores and calculate the overall grade for each student at the end of the term looks like this:

	IL-1	**IL-2**	**Od-1**	**Od-2**
Name	1	3	4	3
Name	4	3	4	3
Name	4	3	4	3
Name	4	2	3	2
Name	5	4	4	3
Name	5	5	2	5
Name	4	4	5	4
Name	1	5	5	4
Name	2	4	4	2
Name	4	4	4	4
Name	4	1	3	2
Name	2	2	2	4
Average	**3.1**	**3.3**	**3.4**	**3.1**
Count	**133**	**133**	**133**	**133**

When I need to find data that tell me how my freshman honors students are doing in applying discipline-based higher order thinking skills to a topic, I only need to pull up my spreadsheet and check the numbers (the overall quiz

average for the course historically has been 3.5±0.1 out of 5). Often we are already collecting hard, specific, and useful data that we can pull out and use in our assessment practices rather than building new (and often too complicated or labor-intensive) paradigms from scratch.

The process I have just outlined describes one of the key features of assessment—and one of the most common misconceptions. Student learning outcomes and grades—especially course grades—are not and cannot be the same thing. A student's average quiz grade in my class is just one factor in the overall grade; quizzes, midterm and final exams, papers, and participation are factored in as well. It is possible a student might exhibit good critical thinking skills but still fail the course. Properly crafted SLOs should reflect one specific learning behavior or skill, but a course grade is an overarching judgment about a student's performance over a range of learning outcomes; writing clear and concise prose, for instance, can also be an SLO, and it is not necessarily the same as critical thinking. When I score papers or grade final exams, I am not only estimating how well students have identified patterns, drawn analogies, and performed other critical thinking tasks; I am also checking their grammar and writing skills, seeing if they have increased their awareness of history or diversity or Western culture, and evaluating their ability to synthesize or organize large amounts of information. Assessment is one piece of the learning continuum, not the whole, but many of the pieces are useful in an assessment context.

Assessment also lets us know if our students are acquiring other skills that we value. For instance, students should have disciplined work habits. Students who do their work well, turn it in on time, and always give their work a professional polish not only do well in college but are likely to perform well in graduate or professional school or the workforce. Disciplined work habits are not the sole basis for a high grade, but we value them. We do not, however, assess them, and, maybe if we did, we might find that "exhibiting disciplined work habits" is a characteristic that distinguishes honors students from their non-honors counterparts.

STEP 4: SCORING RUBRICS AND DATA SHEETS FOR DIRECT ASSESSMENT

Even though the data embedded in everyday pedagogic practices gives us useful information, we still need to gather data from other viewpoints in order to assemble the best diagnostic evaluation of our programs. Just as a more complete picture of what actually transpired during a traffic accident comes from assembling all available perspectives (eyewitness accounts, the police report, forensic analyses of the physical damage, skid marks), so the best picture of our honors pedagogic practices and design comes from assembling feedback from multiple sources. The full picture is especially important when

we are assessing the effectiveness of what we do in courses with multiple sections taught by different faculty or when various classes are used to assess one or more of the same student learning outcomes. I face this challenge in the case of assessing student learning in the UWF honors seminars. Each term we offer four or more of these seminars, and a quick list of the titles will give a sense of the diversity in course content:

Shakespeare in Performance

Philosophy of the Horror Film

Biomedical Ethics

Buddhist Psychology

The History of Science and Technology

Tolkien and Rowling

Leadership Ethics

First Amendment Rights

Vietnam

Life Choices

History of Latin America

Dante in Florence

Cuba in Context

Marine Archaeology

The challenge is to devise methods that will provide useful assessment data about the specific skills and/or abilities that honors students gain from taking those courses (each UWF honors student must take two honors seminars to graduate as an Honors Scholar). The key is both in how we have crafted the SLOs that we measure in the honors seminars and in the development of clear rubrics that the faculty can use for direct assessment of student performance.

If we check the assessment matrix (Appendix D), we can see that, even though many of the SLOs may be practiced or reinforced in an honors seminar, not all of them are assessed. From the six SLOs that are assessed in the seminars, let me pick four:

- Communicate effectively in on-on-one or group contexts
- Employ writing conventions suitable to the research method and/or creative process of the subject of the Honors Seminar or Honors Thesis
- Solve discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based problems using strategies appropriate to the subject of the Honors Seminar or Honors Thesis
- Exhibit disciplined work habits as an individual

If we think about the underlying purpose of these SLOs, we can see that they reveal pedagogic practices that the honors program at UWF values as central features of every honors seminar. As the name implies, these honors seminars are small classes grounded in discussion and free flowing interchanges among the students and instructor. Students are frequently assigned to be the discussion leaders for one or more classes, with the instructor functioning as a resource and/or facilitator rather than a fount of all knowledge. Hence, effective communication is a key component of the class. Each student must complete a seminar paper (or project) that is the culminating effort for the course, and that effort must reflect best presentation practices in the discipline. We expect our honors students to work efficiently, hard, and well. Because we obviously have a varied and diverse group of faculty teaching our honors seminars, we have developed a set of rubrics that guide the faculty in their assessment of student learning and help to ensure that the data are accurate and consistent across the wide range of seminars.

In general, rubrics should provide explicit criteria for assessing student work by describing the characteristics of performance at different levels of skill. As an example, here is the rubric we use to evaluate the second SLO listed above:

SLO	**Exceeds Expectations**	**Met Expectations**	**Fails to Meet Expectations**
Employ writing conventions suitable to the research method and/or creative process of the seminar	Presentation of work was exceptional, very well organized, and reflected a highly competent and professional level of writing standards and conventions; the work revealed great familiarity with the disciplinary standards and followed appropriate APA, MLA, etc. guidelines	Presentation of work was adequate and mostly well organized and/or reflected at least the minimal professional level of writing standards, formats, and conventions as presented in disciplinary guidelines	Presentation of work was inadequate, sloppy, disorganized, and/or failed to recognize or follow professional writing guideline standards, formats and conventions

No matter what faculty member is teaching the honors seminar, and no matter what subject the student has chosen, the instructor can use this rubric quickly and consistently to assess the students' performance on this SLO as evinced in their term papers. The scoring for direct assessment data, as this example reveals, does not have to be a 5-point Likert scale to be effective. At UWF, we were strongly counseled by experts we brought in to help us devise our assessment plans to gather only data that is useful and to remember that, the faster and easier it is for faculty members to gather and submit the assessment data, the higher the chance that they will accept the assessment methodology and incorporate it into their daily practices. Hence we adopted three-point assessment scales for nearly all of our assessment rubrics: the student failed to meet the instructor's expectation in the targeted area; the student met the instructor's expectations; the student exceeded the instructor's expectations. Since assessment data should be diagnostic so that improvements in pedagogy can be made, the questions become how much data and how the data are arrayed to identify areas for improvement. It's a little like being a car mechanic: if the car is running smoothly and getting good mileage, I don't need to do much more than routine maintenance; if it's running roughly or pulling off the road, I need to do some aggressive tinkering; and if the wheels fall off or it won't start at all, I know I have some major overhauls ahead. In reviewing assessment data (more on analyzing and using the data later), I know that, if students are failing to meet or are just meeting expectations, something is wrong and I need to figure out how to fix it. If nearly everyone is exceeding the faculty's expectations, then this assessment area is probably okay. It is reasonable for me to expect that nearly all honors students eventually exceed expectations; this is what we should all expect of honors students.

When we create scoring rubrics for the SLOs, it is wise to realize that any set of standards is somewhat arbitrary; there is nothing magical about three-point versus five-point or even twelve-point scales. The first key is to have clear indicators that enhance accurate scoring, and there are many good models of effective rubrics out there, some examples of which are included in Appendix E. The second key is to be consistent: if a five-point scoring system is chosen as the most workable, then a five-point scoring rubric needs to be developed for the direct assessment of each and every SLO.

Once the SLOs and scoring rubrics are finalized, the data collection can begin. At UWF, we decided to develop simple scoring sheets that can be quickly and easily filled out by the faculty member at the end of the semester; a section of the sheet that we use to capture assessment for the honors seminars is reproduced below (the entire sheet can be found in Appendix F):

Assessment Data Sheet

Honors Seminar: _____ Faculty _____

Department _____ Date _____

Instructions: Please fill out the appropriate area with the number of students who fit the criteria over the total number of students in the class. For example, if 10 students in a class of 12 exceed the expectation of "Exhibit discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills," please enter **10/12** in that box, and please return this form to the Honors office, 50/224.

Critical Thinking

Learning Outcome	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Fails to meet Expectations
Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills to a range of topics and issues			
Select and organize credible evidence to support converging arguments			
Solve discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based problems using strategies appropriate to the subject of the Honors Seminar			

In this example, using the scoring rubric as a guide, the instructor reviews the final papers/projects and then fills in the appropriate box with the requested data as is shown in the example below:

Critical Thinking

Learning Outcome	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Fails to meet Expectations
Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills to a range of topics and issues	8/15	5/15	2/15
Select and organize credible evidence to support converging arguments	6/15	7/15	2/15
Solve discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based problems using strategies appropriate to the subject of the Honors Seminar	4/15	9/15	2/15

As the director of the program, I oversee the gathering and analyzing of the data, which are recorded in a spreadsheet. The entire process, including the data entry, takes less than thirty minutes to complete. The data sheet we use for assessing the honors thesis is, naturally, much larger since we use that capstone project as an opportunity to assess nearly all of our SLOs, but the process is the same. Once a student completes an honors thesis, the UWF Honors Program office sends the form to the thesis director, who in turn fills out the form and sends it back to the honors office where the data are uploaded into the master spreadsheet. Faculty members who have directed honors theses recently report that it normally takes less than ten minutes to complete the form, and this may be one reason why we have had 100% return rate.

Direct assessment happens whenever faculty evaluate the skill or behavior stated in the SLO, but in some cases even faculty assessments must be safeguarded in order to ensure objectivity. A charge of bias can occur if there is an aura of suspicion or paranoia on a campus, in which case the accusation runs something like this: "These scores are way too high and therefore inaccurate because the faculty are basically reporting on their own effectiveness and making themselves look good by reporting that everyone is meeting or exceeding the standard."

Here are a few ways to ensure that assessment data are gathered in an objective manner. The quickest and simplest is to find a node in the assessment plan where the student products can be evaluated by an independent group of faculty. The honors thesis or capstone project serves well as such a node. In order to get solid and objective data, all one needs to do is assemble a faculty committee and give them copies of the honors theses (or other similar capstone projects or products, such as learning portfolios) that were produced during that academic year, along with the scoring rubrics and data sheets, and have the committee score the theses using the criteria. At large schools it may not be feasible to submit every thesis to this level of scrutiny; a representative cross-section is likely to yield the same information as a consideration of the entire corpus, so a random sample (or maybe all the theses completed in, say, the fall term) can be sufficient. Each spring at UWF, a faculty committee looks at a random sample of fifteen theses completed in the previous academic year, and the results have been excellent in yielding data for feedback, expanding buy-in for the program, and generating new ideas and enthusiasm for honors. I invite a mix of faculty who are already invested in honors (they serve on the University Honors Program Committee or teach honors courses) and faculty who have not been involved in honors. The process to this point has rallied faculty to the banner of honors once they get a close look at what honors students have produced. On campuses where honors is viewed with suspicion, assembling a scoring committee composed entirely of non-honors faculty will not only produce objective results but also establish allies for honors. The only downsides are the obvious ones of time and money. So far I have been able to assemble my scoring group and get the data from them with only an invitation and the promise of pizza at the scoring meetings; however, if the task were larger and more onerous, I would probably need to devise a way to compensate the faculty for their time and professional judgment. I have avoided using the portfolio method for assessment at UWF because, even though they are probably the most extensive and sensitive assessment tool for student learning, properly assessing portfolios is extremely time-consuming, even with excellent rubrics and highly trained and efficient faculty. Typically, significant funding is required to compensate faculty for their time and professional judgment. For a small program with relatively few graduates each year, comprehensive learning portfolios would probably be the way to go, but for my program (450+, headed for 500), portfolio-based assessment would be prohibitively time-consuming and expensive.

Step 5: Surveys and Interviews for Indirect Assessment

Assessment works best when the data related to each specific SLO come from a number of different sources and perspectives. Direct assessment is no doubt the Cadillac and should be given the most weight when using data to draw conclusions, but it is not the be-all and end-all; data from indirect assessment also yield insights into what we are and are not doing well. However, we need to keep in mind that indirect assessments—particularly surveys—are subject to the bias and error of self-reporting. Typically indirect assessment instruments serve most effectively as supplementary information. However, in those cases where there is a significant disparity between what the students report they have mastered and what the faculty report their students have mastered, I have reason to look more carefully at what is going on; once again, assessment data collection should be diagnostic. The most common indirect assessment tool is no doubt the student survey, and a wide range and number of student surveys have been developed over the years. Even though the Assessment Matrix in Appendix D may make it appear that we use two student surveys ("Exit Survey" and "Alumni Survey"), they are essentially the same document, differing primarily in the timing of their administration: the exit survey has to be completed by every student graduating as an Honors Scholar; the alumni survey is sent each spring to those students who graduated five years earlier. The timing of an exit survey might well coincide with the primary vehicle used for direct assessment, namely the honors thesis. In order to get good data from a survey's self-report format, it needs to include questions that are linked to the assessment SLOs. A portion of the exit survey used at UWF appears below (see Appendix G for the entire survey):

Your Learning

Please circle the response that best describes your sense of accomplishment for each item listed below. If you did not take a course that applies to the question, please circle N/A.

29. I reviewed and evaluated the knowledge, concepts, techniques, and methodology central to my Honors Thesis:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

30. I identified the major issues, debates, or approaches central to my Honors Thesis:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

31. I synthesized complex information central to my Honors Thesis:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

32. I developed an argument or project and defend or present it appropriately in accordance with the methods of the discipline of my Honors Thesis:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

33. I exhibited discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills in my classes:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

As can be seen at a glance, this survey uses a five-point Likert scale rather than the three-point scale we use in our direct assessment documents. I was curious to see what the frequencies of 1s and 2s would be for the honors SLOs. My assumptions were that the responses would cluster around 4 (they did) and that the occasional 1 or 2 would signal areas that needed improvement. Out of the 200+ surveys completed to date, however, only two 2s have appeared in the responses, both on one survey in the Integrity/Values domain related to the SLOs on professional behavior. My suspicion is that, although candid enough now to admit it, one student during his/her career engaged in

some dubious practices, but, since our exit survey uses an anonymous format, I have no way of knowing who the student was.

Another inference might be drawn from the survey snippet above, which lists questions 29 through 33: many questions on our survey are not directly related to SLOs or assessment. As most of us in honors know and practice, surveys are great opportunities to gather lots of information about our programs, so, in addition to questions directly related to our SLOs, we ask about our honors courses and seminars, advising, service and social events, international experiences, etc. Surveys that have already been developed can be expanded to include questions related to the SLOs, transforming an extant survey into one that supplies assessment data. Exit interviews, in both individual and focus-group formats, are also a good source of assessment information. Some examples of questions used in exit interviews are included in Appendix H. The challenge is to capture and quantify the anecdotal data that always emerge in such interchanges, but if we have reliable data generated by direct assessment strategies, then the anecdotal data gathered in exit interviews can shed light on the practices of the honors program.

STEP 6: WHAT DO THE DATA MEAN?

Now that we have all the sets of data, what do we do with them? Obviously, if the process stops and nothing is done to analyze the data, or if meaningful changes are not implemented, then the whole assessment process has been a waste of time. There is a widespread notion that assessment is silly or pointless, but the primary purpose of assessment is to improve our programs and teaching strategies; looking at the data for strengths and weaknesses allows us to see what needs improvement. For example, here are some of the data that emerged from the first year's assessment at UWF, as was reported in my 2007 Annual Report, related to the SLO "Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills to a range of topics and issues":

> Summary of Assessment Results
>
> The data from the three assessment points (Great Books, Honors Seminars, and Honors theses) suggests that students master this SLO over time. The data from the Great Books 1 class (freshman level) indicates that 31.9% of the students exceed expectations in this area, that 62.9% meet expectations, and that 5.2% fail to meet expectations. But by the senior year, things have changed. The data from the Honors theses show that 62.5% exceed, 33.3% meet, and that 4.2% fail to meet (the Honors Seminar, most often taken by sophomores and juniors,

> reflects data that is [*sic*] almost exactly medial: 51.3% exceed, 41.0 meet, and 7.7% fail to meet).

I will confess that I was extremely pleased by the data in this area because that's exactly what I expected. Ample evidence exists that critical thinking skills develop during a student's tenure at college, and we would all hope that honors students would post gains in critical thinking as they grow from freshmen to seniors. Our UWF data indicated just such gains. Further, the data showed that UWF honors students entered college with fairly strong skills in critical thinking (only 5.2% failed to meet the minimum standard) but exited the program with much stronger critical thinking skills; nearly two thirds exceeded the faculty's expectations with another third meeting their expectations. So we can conclude, as I did in my annual report, that for this SLO "the data evinces [*sic*] that students develop their higher order thinking skills over time, just as many would expect." For right now, these assessment data tell me that I don't need to worry about any problems in that segment of my program.

There will be areas where the data signal problems. The first year's data in the domain of critical thinking were solid, but the news was not as good in the domain of communication:

> The assessment data in this area suggests [*sic*] that students struggle with the writing of Seminar papers and the Honors Thesis. The faculty reported that while 23.5% of the students exceeded and 51.7% met the standard, 24.8%—a full quarter of the student population—failed to meet this standard. This lack of writing skills is both surprising and dismaying, but corrective action needs to be taken since writing is such a fundamental skill for success, both in the Honors program and in their subsequent careers.

Further scrutiny of the data revealed that many of the cases where students failed to meet writing expectations occurred in one of the three UWF colleges—Business—while students fare best in the hard sciences. Perhaps a research culture in the hard sciences at UWF promotes good writing while the professional schools emphasize group work and projects. We have taken some steps toward improvement: students are now being exposed to the expectations of the thesis much earlier (their first term) in workshops led by honors seniors, and we are instituting "Thesis Seminars" this spring that will be offered by seasoned honors faculty and advanced students. We continue to consider other ideas for improvement, but assessment practices have already demonstrated that honors students were having problems with skills we had

assumed they already had, and we now have the opportunity to get creative, try new strategies, and fix the problem; this is what assessment is all about.

STEP 7: CLOSING THE LOOP:
USING ASSESSMENT DATA TO IMPROVE WHAT WE DO

Effective assessment practices make use of the data collected to improve our:

- Instructional strategies
- Curricular designs
- Course offerings within the curriculum
- Course sequencing in the curriculum
- Support and advising services

These and other areas should be under constant review if we are serious about offering a high-quality and enhanced educational experience for our students. One of the NCHC Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program is:

> The fully developed honors program must be open to continuous and critical review and be prepared to change in order to maintain its distinctive position of offering distinguished education to the best students in the institution.

The assessment loop is closed when we develop a culture of feedback and improvement, clearly establishing continuous and critical review. At least on a yearly basis, the honors leader, honors faculty, and honors students should meet to review carefully the assessment results and devise appropriate courses of action. It may be that heretofore unnoticed problems in the curricular design or course sequencing emerge; it may be that certain desired skills are not being acquired as well as one might hope (as in the case of writing skills in my own program); it may be that certain activities do create the "distinguished education" that honors strives to attain. Whatever information emerges, however, can be used to initiate and shape improvements. At the same time, thorough records and appropriate documentation will be essential when an external audience wants to see what we have done and also when the budget cycle rolls around.

Good assessment practice also calls for continual re-evaluation of the assessment plan and practices. It may be that not all the SLOs are applicable; other skills or behaviors may emerge as important, thus needing to be included instead. Similarly, rubrics, data gathering devices, and spreadsheets need to be scrutinized regularly for their utility and potential improvement.

Assessment should tell us not only how well we are teaching our students but also how well we are practicing assessment. Nothing is so well devised and executed that it is perfect on the first pass, but assessment promotes the pursuit of excellence by letting us know where and how to focus our efforts.

Assessment-based evidence allows us to move away from anecdotal or seat-of-the-pants decision making as we refine our curriculum and classroom practices. Used properly, assessment can be one of the most powerful tools and potent practices we develop for honors education. What I have described here is just one example of assessment in one honors program. Two challenges face the honors community and NCHC: (1) developing assessment tools that indicate gains honors students make as opposed to their non-honors peers, and (2) developing assessment tools that indicate gains made by our students because of educational enrichment practices in honors such as cultural trips, international education, and campus leadership. I will be taking on these challenges for the next couple of years. Anyone care to help?

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APPENDIX A

Useful Online Bibliographies on Assessment

The American Library Association:
http://www.ala.org/ala/acrlbucket/infolit/bibliographies1/assessmentbibliography.cfm

Clemson University:
http://assessment.clemson.edu/links/arbiblo.htm

Indiana University Southeast:
http://www.ius.edu/assessment/biblio.cfm

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
http://www.library.uiuc.edu/assessment/biblio.html

Other Resources Relevant to Assessment

APA Cyberguide on Assessment
http://www.apa.org/ed/guide_outline.html

Board of Directors of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, "Our Students' Best Work: A Framework for Accountability Worthy of Our Mission," 2004
http://www.aacu.org/About/statements/assessment.cfm

Educational Technology Training Center at Kennesaw State University
http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/

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http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm

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University of Washington
http://depts.washington.edu/learning

University of West Florida: Assessment Resources Page
http://uwf.edu/cutla/Tipsheet.cfm
http://uwf.edu/cutla/Assessres.cfm

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
http://www.uwec.edu/assess/plan/

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http://wsuctprojectdev.wsu.edu/

APPENDIX B: BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Action Words for Bloom's Taxonomy

Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
define	explain	solve	analyze	reframe	design
identify	describe	apply	compare	criticize	compose
describe	interpret	illustrate	classify	evaluate	create
label	paraphrase	modify	contrast	order	plan
list	summarize	use	distinguish	appraise	combine
name	classify	calculate	infer	judge	formulate
state	compare	change	separate	support	invent
match	differentiate	choose	explain	compare	hypothesize
recognize	discuss	demonstrate	select	decide	substitute
select	distinguish	discover	categorize	discriminate	write
examine	extend	experiment	connect	recommend	compile
locate	predict	relate	differentiate	summarize	construct
memorize	associate	show	discriminate	assess	develop
quote	contrast	sketch	divide	choose	generalize
recall	convert	complete	order	convince	integrate
reproduce	demonstrate	construct	point out	defend	modify
tabulate	estimate	dramatize	prioritize	estimate	organize
tell	express	interpret	subdivide	find errors	prepare
copy	identify	manipulate	survey	grade	produce
discover	indicate	paint	advertise	measure	rearrange
duplicate	infer	prepare	appraise	predict	rewrite
enumerate	relate	produce	break down	rank	role-play
listen	restate	report	calculate	score	adapt
observe	select	teach	conclude	select	anticipate
omit	translate	act	correlate	test	arrange
read	ask	administer	criticize	argue	assemble
recite	cite	articulate	deduce	conclude	choose
record	discover	chart	devise	consider	collaborate
repeat	generalize	collect	diagram	critique	collect
retell	give examples	compute	dissect	debate	devise
visualize	group	determine	estimate	distinguish	express
	illustrate	develop	evaluate	editorialize	facilitate

Action Words for Bloom's Taxonomy, continued

Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
	judge	employ	experiment	justify	imagine
	observe	establish	focus	persuade	infer
	order	examine	illustrate	rate	intervene
	report	explain	organize	weigh	justify
	represent	interview	outline		make
	research	judge	plan		manage
	review	list	question		negotiate
	rewrite	operate	test		originate
	show	practice			propose
	trace	predict			reorganize
	transform	record			report
		schedule			revise
		simulate			schematize
		transfer			simulate
		write			solve
					speculate
					support
					test
					validate

APPENDIX C: STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

University Honors Program
University of West Florida
Honors Academic Learning Compact

Student Assessment

Students wishing to achieve the status of University Honors Scholars will be assessed through their performance in the sequence of Honors Core classes. In Great Books 1, quizzes and short answer questions will be used to assess progress in the areas of Critical Thinking and Communication. Formal papers and presentations in the Honors Seminars will be used to assess progress in the areas of Content, Critical Thinking, Communication, and Integrity/Values. The Honors Thesis, a demanding and discipline-specific capstone project, will be used to assess overall achievement in all five domains.

Student Learning Outcomes

University Honors Scholars should be able to:

Content

- Review and evaluate the knowledge, concepts, techniques, and methodology appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis
- Identify major issues, debates, or approaches appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis
- Synthesize complex information appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis
- Develop an argument or project and defend or present it appropriately in accordance with the methods of the discipline of the Honors Thesis

Critical Thinking

- Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills to a range of topics and issues
- Select and organize credible evidence to support converging arguments
- Solve discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based problems using strategies appropriate to the subject of the Honors Seminar or Honors Thesis

Communication

- Communicate effectively in one-on-one or group contexts
- Express ideas and concepts precisely and persuasively in multiple formats
- Employ writing conventions suitable to the research method and/or creative process of the subject of the Honors Seminar or Honors Thesis

Integrity/Values

- Practice civic engagement through Honors-related service activities
- Practice appropriate standards related to respect for intellectual property
- Practice appropriate professional standards of behavior

Project Management

- Exhibit disciplined work habits as an individual
- Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based knowledge to design a problem-solving strategy
- Conceive and plan a high-quality research and/or creative capstone project in the appropriate disciplinary or multi-disciplinary context

APPENDIX D: ASSESSMENT MATRIX

	Direct Measure: Course Number	LIT 1110	IDH 403x	IDH 4970		Indirect: Exit Survey	Indirect: Alumni Survey
	Direct Measure: Course Name	Great Books 1	Honors Seminar	Honors Thesis			
Content	Review and evaluate the knowledge, concepts, techniques, and methodology appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis		I, P	M, A		A	A
	Identify major issues, debates, or approaches appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis		I, P	M, A		A	A
	Synthesize complex information appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis		I, P	M, A		A	A
	Develop an argument or project and defend or present it appropriately in accordance with the methods of the discipline of the Honors Thesis		I, P	M, A		A	A
Critical Thinking	Exhibit discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills	I	P	M, A		A	A
	Select and organize credible evidence to support converging arguments	I	P	M, A		A	A
	Solve discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based problems using strategies appropriate to the subject of the Honors Seminar or Honors Thesis	I	P	M, A		A	A
Communication	Communicate effectively in one-on-one or group contexts	I	M, A	M, A		A	A
	Express ideas and concepts precisely and persuasively in multiple formats	I	M, A			A	A
	Employ writing conventions suitable to the research method and/or creative process of the subject of the Honors Seminar or Honors Thesis		M, A	M, A		A	A
Integrity/Ethics	Practice civic engagement through Honors-related service activities	I				A	A
	Practice appropriate standards related to respect for intellectual property	I	M, A	M, A		A	A
	Practice appropriate professional standards of behavior	I	M, A	M, A		A	A
Project Management	Exhibit disciplined work habits as an individual	I	P, A	M, A		A	A
	Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based knowledge to design a problem-solving strategy		P	M, A		A	A
	Conceive, plan, and execute a high-quality research and/or creative capstone project in the appropriate disciplinary or multi-disciplinary context		P	M, A		A	A

Key: I=Introduced P=Practiced M=Mastered A=Assessed

APPENDIX E: SCORING RUBRICS

Model of a 4-Point Rubric Template from Kennesaw State University:

	Beginning 1	**Developing 2**	**Accomplished 3**	**Exemplary 4**
Stated Objective or Performance	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting a beginning level of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting development and movement toward mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting the highest level of performance.
Stated Objective or Performance				
Stated Objective or Performance				

(http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/intech/rubrics.htm#templates)

Honors at University of West Florida
Student Learning Outcome Scoring Rubrics

Content

Learning Outcome	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Failed to Meet Expectations
Review and evaluate the knowledge, concepts, techniques, and methodology appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis	Review and evaluation demonstrated extensive breadth, highly selective quality and was and superbly organized; methods were well developed or employed cutting edge disciplinary techniques or exceptional creative processes and exceeded the range necessary for the project	Review and evaluation was solid, appropriate and adequate for the task but not extensive and may have failed in spots; methods recognized traditional and accepted disciplinary techniques or creative processes	Review and evaluation was incomplete spotty, inconsistent and inadequate to the task; materials revealed haphazard disorganization; methods were pedestrian and barely up to disciplinary standards
Identify major issues, debates, or approaches appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis	Major issues were addressed comprehensive, appropriately, were judiciously chosen, and well suited to the task, revealing exceptional care in approaching the project	Major issues were adequate to task but sometimes not appropriate or complete, portions seemed off task	Major issues were absent, approaches were outside of the discipline, unacceptable, inappropriate and off task

Content, continued

Learning Outcome	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Failed to Meet Expectations
Synthesize complex information appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis	The information and synthesis displayed insight and thorough development of ideas, strong support, sophisticated writing, mature thought	The information and synthesis displayed some consistency and depth as well as adequate support. The writing shows analytic skill, support, and convincing facility with major thoughts	The information presented lacks convincing support, no real analysis, little attempt to connect ideas, no real integration of ideas, no convincing ability to convey the argument or purpose
Develop an argument or project and defend or present it appropriately in accordance with the methods of the discipline of the Honors Thesis	Overall impact of the argument or project was comprehensive and deeply knowledgeable and thoughtful, the presentation revealed had clear depth and sophistication, the strategy was complex and rich	Overall impact of the argument or project was adequate and at times seemed comprehensive and mostly knowledgeable, the presentation was workmanlike and up to the task, but not overly impressive	Overall impact of the argument or project was incomplete, and inadequate, the presentation was flawed, poorly designed and unworkable

Critical Thinking

Learning Outcome	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Failed to Meet Expectations
Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline based higher order thinking skills to a range of topics and issues	Applications revealed insight and thorough development of ideas with mature, rich, and sophisticated connections between ideas and/or concepts evident in analysis and/or synthesis over a wide range of topics and issues	Applications revealed some insight and some development of ideas with adequate connections drawn between ideas and/or concepts evident in analysis and/or synthesis over a sufficient range of topics and issues	Applications failed to reveal insight and development of ideas and/or lacked connections drawn between ideas and/or concepts; analysis and/or synthesis appeared weak, and the range of topics and issues insufficient
Select and organize credible evidence to support converging arguments	Documents reflect clear and well-developed controlling ideas that are well supported by evidence that has been judiciously and appropriately selected, all woven properly together into strong and highly convincing arguments	Documents reflect mostly clear and adequate controlling ideas that are mostly supported by solid and appropriate evidence; the parts fit together properly enough to create a credible argument	Documents lack clear and controlling ideas or the ideas are not supported well by solid evidence; the evidence selected seems inadequate or off the point, the sum of the parts don't fit together well and don't establish a credible argument

Critical Thinking, continued

Learning Outcome	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Failed to Meet Expectations
Solve discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based problems using strategies appropriate to the subject of the Honors Seminar or Thesis	Strategies evinced were sophisticated, professional, and well developed throughout; problem solving skills seemed exceptional and salutary	Strategies evinced were sophisticated, professional, and well developed throughout; problem solving skills seemed exceptional and salutary	Strategies evinced were inadequate to the and/or inappropriate; problem solving skills seemed lacking or rudimentary

Communication

Learning Outcome	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Failed to Meet Expectations
Communicate effectively in one-on-one or group contexts	Verbal communications were articulate, clear, concise and presented with poise and maturity in both one-on-one and group contexts; in one-on-one contexts superb listening and proper interpersonal skills were always in evidence; in group contexts superb listening skills as well as respect for differences in opinion and for others always apparent	Verbal communications were sufficiently clear, articulate, and concise as well as presented appropriately in both one-on-one and group contexts; in one-on-one contexts good listening and interpersonal skills were mostly in evidence; in group contexts good listening skills as well as respect for differences in opinion and for others were predominant	Verbal communications were unclear clear and/or rambling and/or suffused with bad verbal habits (lots of "ums" or vocal infelicities) in either one-on-one and group contexts; in one-on-one and/or group contexts listening and interpersonal skills were lacking; respect for differences in opinion and for others were not evident
Express ideas and concepts precisely and persuasively in multiple formats	Ideas and concepts in documents and projects were consistently presented with precision, clarity, and thorough development so as to be very persuasive, and also appeared in multiple written and verbal formats of varying length and focus	Ideas and concepts in documents and projects were mostly presented with adequate precision, clarity, and enough development to be persuasive; not all written and/or verbal formats evinced consistent quality of focus and appropriate length	Ideas and concepts in documents and projects lacked precision, clarity, and development and were not persuasive; no range in written and/or verbal formats attempted evinced; quality, focus and appropriate length lacking or ignored

Communication, continued

Learning Outcome	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Failed to Meet Expectations
Employ writing conventions suitable to the research method and/or creative process of the subject of the Honors Seminar or Thesis	Presentation of work was exceptional and very well organized and reflected a highly competent and professional level of writing standards and conventions; the work revealed great familiarity with the disciplinary standards and followed appropriate APA, MLA, etc. guidelines	Presentation of work was adequate and mostly well organized and/or reflected at least the minimal professional level of writing standards, formats, and conventions as presented in disciplinary guidelines	Presentation of work was inadequate, sloppy, disorganized, and/or failed to recognize or follow professional writing guideline standards, formats and conventions

Integrity/Ethics

Learning Outcome	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Failed to Meet Expectations
Practice civic engagement through Honors-related service activities	Completed more than 60 hours of community/Honors service	Completed 40 to 59 hours of community/Honors service	Completed fewer than 40 hours of community/Honors service
Practice appropriate professional standards of behavior	Interactions and practices reflected thorough advance preparation; interpersonal behaviors were characterized by consistent maturity, grace, poise, and high personal standards	Interactions and practices reflected some preparation and were adequate to the task; interpersonal behaviors were characterized by flashes of maturity, grace, and poise, but were not of consistent quality	Interactions and practices reflected little preparation and were often inadequate and lacking; interpersonal behaviors were immature and awkward with little evidence of inward personal standards
Practice appropriate standards related to respect for intellectual property	Thoroughly professional and ethical behaviors were consistently in evidence; all appropriate boundaries related to property and persons were highly respected at all times	Professional and ethical behaviors were mostly in evidence; appropriate boundaries related to property and persons were mostly respected with only scattered and unintentional lapses evident	Professional and ethical behaviors were not in evidence; appropriate boundaries related to property and persons were not respected and/or acts of theft or fraud detected

Project Management

Learning Outcome	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Failed to Meet Expectations
Exhibit disciplined work habits as an individual	Student kept all deadlines; material consistently presented in a professional and organized manner; no waiting until the last minute	Student missed a few deadlines; materials were adequately organized and mostly well presented; deadlines were an at times an issue	Student missed most deadlines and waited until the last minute; presented materials were unorganized and sloppy; missed deadlines created issues for the instructor
Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based knowledge to design a problem-solving strategy	The problem-solving strategy reflected comprehensive and sophisticated familiarity with the discipline(s) and was well-thought out, complex, and very applicable	The problem-solving strategy was adequate for the task, reflected sufficient familiarity with the discipline(s), and was applicable and workmanlike, but not brilliant	The problem-solving strategy was inadequate for the task, revealed gaps in knowledge central to the discipline(s), or was not applicable or useful
Conceive, plan, and execute a high-quality research and/or creative capstone project in the appropriate disciplinary or multi-disciplinary context	Conception and planning of the project evinced comprehensive, knowledgeable, and wide-ranging familiarity with the disciplinary/multidisciplinary context; the project itself was rich, complex, or cutting-edge and reflected obvious and thorough mastery of the discipline(s) central skills and behaviors	Conception and planning of the project was adequate to the task and covered the necessary areas within the disciplinary/ multidisciplinary context; the project itself was appropriate and reflected acceptable mastery of the discipline(s) central skills and behaviors	Conception and planning of the project was inadequate to the task with obvious omissions or holes within the disciplinary/ multidisciplinary context; the project itself was substandard and did not reflect acceptable mastery of the discipline(s) central skills and behaviors

Critical Thinking Rubric from Washington State University:

Guide to Rating Critical & Integrative Thinking
Washington State University, Fall 2006

For each of the seven criteria below, assess the work by:

a) circling specific phrases that describe the work, and writing comments

b) circling a numeric score

Note: A score of 4 represents competency for a student graduating from WSU.

1. Identifies, summarizes (and appropriately reformulates) the **problem, question, or issue**.

Emerging		*Developing*		*Mastering*	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Does not attempt to or fails to identify and summarize accurately.		Summarizes issue, though some aspects are incorrect or confused. Nuances and key details are missing or glossed over.		Clearly identifies the challenge and subsidiary, embedded, or implicit aspects of the issue. Identifies integral relationships essential to analyzing the issue.	
Comments:					

2. Identifies and considers the influence of **context** * and **assumptions**.

Emerging		*Developing*		*Mastering*	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Approach to the issue is in egocentric or socio-centric terms. Does not relate issue to other contexts (cultural, political, historical, etc.).		Presents and explores relevant contexts and assumptions regarding the issue, although in a limited way.		Analyzes the issue with a clear sense of scope and context, including an assessment of audience. Considers other integral contexts.	
Analysis is grounded in absolutes, with little acknowledgment of own biases.		Analysis includes some outside verification, but primarily relies on established authorities.		Analysis acknowledges complexity and bias of vantage and values, although may elect to hold to bias in context.	
Does not recognize context or surface assumptions and underlying ethical implications, or does so superficially.		Provides some recognition of context and consideration of assumptions and their implications.		Identifies influence of context and questions assumptions, addressing ethical dimensions underlying the issue.	
Comments:					

(http://wsuctproject.wsu.edu/ctr.htm)

APPENDIX F: DATA COLLECTION SHEETS

Honors at University of West Florida

Assessment Data Sheet

Honors Seminar: _____ Faculty _____

Department _____ Date _____

Instructions: Please fill out the appropriate area with the number of students who fit the criteria over the total number of students in the class. For example, if 10 students in a class of 12 exceed the expectation of "Exhibit discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills," please enter **10/12** in that box, and please return this form to the Honors office, 50/224.

Critical Thinking

Learning Outcome	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Fails to meet Expectations
Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills to a range of topics and issues			
Select and organize credible evidence to support converging arguments			
Solve discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based problems using strategies appropriate to the subject of the Honors Seminar			

Communication

Learning Outcome	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Fails to meet Expectations
Communicate effectively in one-on-one and/or group contexts			
Express ideas and concepts precisely andpersuasively in multiple formats			
Employ writing conventions suitable to the research method and/or creative process of the subject of the Honors Seminar			

Integrity/Ethics

Learning Outcome	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Fails to meet Expectations
Practice appropriate professional standards of behavior			
Practice appropriate standards related to Respect for intellectual property			

Honors at University of West Florida

Assessment Data Sheet

Honors Thesis of: _____ Faculty _____

Department _____ Date _____

Instructions: Please mark the box that best describes the performance of your Thesis student in each area. For example, if you thought that your student met the expectation of "Exhibit discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills," please put a check or "X" in that box, and please return this form to the Honors office, 50/224.

Content

Learning Outcome	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Failed to meet Expectations
Review and evaluate the knowledge, concepts, techniques, and methodology appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis			
Identify major issues, debates, or approaches appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis			
Synthesize complex information appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis			
Develop an argument or project and defend or present it appropriately in accordance with the methods of the discipline of the Honors Thesis			

Critical Thinking

Learning Outcome	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Failed to meet Expectations
Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills to a range of topics and issues			
Select and organize credible evidence to support converging arguments			
Solve discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based problems using strategies appropriate to the subject of the Honors Thesis			

Communication

Learning Outcome	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Failed to meet Expectations
Employ writing conventions suitable to the research method and/or creative process of the subject of the Honors Thesis			

Integrity/Ethics

Learning Outcome	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Failed to meet Expectations
Practice appropriate professional standards of behavior			
Practice appropriate standards related to respect for intellectual property			

Project Management

Learning Outcome	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Failed to meet Expectations
Exhibit disciplined work habits as an individual			
Apply discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based knowledge to design a problem-solving strategy			
Conceive, plan, and execute a high-quality research and/or creative capstone project in the appropriate disciplinary or multi-disciplinary context			

APPENDIX G: HONORS EXIT SURVEY

Honors at University of West Florida

Exit Survey

Thank you for taking the time to give us feedback on how we're doing. Please call our office if you have any questions (850.474.2934). Completed surveys can be returned in the enclosed envelope or taken to the Honors Office (Bldg. 50, Rm. 224).

Please circle your answer. If a question does not pertain to your experience, please leave it blank.

Honors Program Courses

1. I utilized the early registration benefit of being an Honors Student:
   Yes No
2. Rate the value of early registration to you:

1	2	3	4	5
No Value	Poor Value	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable	Extremely Valuable

3. I took Great Books:
   Yes No
4. Rate the value of the learning experience in Great Books to you:

1	2	3	4	5
No Value	Poor Value	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable	Extremely Valuable

5. I took an Honors section of a general studies course:
   Yes No
6. Which Honors sections of general studies courses did you take?

_____

_____

_____

7. The types of general education courses offered by the Honors program fit my degree plan and timeline:

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Mostly	Always

8. Rate the value of the learning experience in Honors sections of general studies courses to you:

1	2	3	4	5
No Value	Poor Value	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable	Extremely Valuable

9. I took an Honors seminar:
   Yes No
10. How many Honors seminars did you take? _____
11. Rate the value of the learning experience in an Honors seminar to you:

1	2	3	4	5
No Value	Poor Value	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable	Extremely Valuable

12. I would like to see the following topics developed into seminars:

_____

_____

_____

13. I completed an Honors Thesis:
    Yes No
14. Rate the value of the learning experience in an Honors Thesis to you:

1	2	3	4	5
No Value	Poor Value	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable	Extremely Valuable

15. The benefits of being in an Honors class I have experienced include: (check all that apply):
    ___ Small class size
    ___ More teacher-student interaction
    ___ More in-depth information
    ___ More engaging coursework
    ___ Other: _____
16. My favorite Honors course (courses) was:

_____

17. I would like the following to be offered as Honors Courses:

_____

_____

_____

Honors Advising

18. What was your overall satisfaction with advising services in the Honors Program?

1	2	3	4	5
Highly Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Highly satisfied

19. What was the value of advising services in the Honors Program to you?

1	2	3	4	5
No Value	Poor Value	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable	Extremely Valuable

20. My Honors advisor was available during regular office hours:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

21. My Honors Advisor responded promptly to telephone and e-mail questions:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

22. My Honors Advisor became personally acquainted with me:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

23. My Honors Advisor listened to my questions and was sure we understood each other:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

24. My Honors Advisor was knowledgeable about General Studies requirements:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

25. My Honors Advisor was knowledgeable about Honors requirements:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

26. My Honors Advisor discussed my academic progress and goals with me:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

27. My Honors Advisor discussed my long-range life and career goals with me:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

28. My Honors Advisor expected me to be a responsible partner in the advising process:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Your Learning

Please circle the response that best describes your sense of accomplishment for each item listed below. If you did not take a course that applies to the question, please circle N/A.

29. I reviewed and evaluated the knowledge, concepts, techniques, and methodology appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often	Beyond all my expectations	N/A

30. I identified major issues, debates, or approaches appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often	Beyond all my expectations	N/A

31. I synthesized complex information appropriate to the discipline of the Honors Thesis:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often	Beyond all my expectations	N/A

32. I developed an argument or project and defend or present it appropriately in accordance with the methods of the discipline of the Honors:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often	Beyond all my expectations	N/A

33. I applied discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based higher order thinking skills to a range of topics and issues:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often	Beyond all my expectations	N/A

34. I selected and organized credible evidence to support converging arguments in my writing:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often	Beyond all my expectations	N/A

35. I solved discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based problems using strategies appropriate to the subject of the Honors Seminar or Honors Thesis:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often	Beyond all my expectations	N/A

36. I communicated effectively in one-on-one or group contexts:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

37. I expressed ideas and concepts precisely and persuasively in multiple formats:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

38. I employed writing conventions suitable to the research method and/or creative process of the subject of the Honors Seminar or Honors Thesis:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

39. I demonstrated an active commitment to civic engagement through service:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

40. I practiced appropriate professional standards of behavior:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

41. I practiced appropriate standards related to respect for intellectual property:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

42. I exhibited disciplined work habits as an individual:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

43. I applied discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based knowledge to design a problem-solving strategy:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

44. I demonstrated the ability to conceive, plan, and execute a high-quality research and/or creative capstone project in the appropriate disciplinary or multi-disciplinary context:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	At times	Regularly	Very often Beyond all my expectations	N/A

45. We welcome general comments you have about the academic portion of the Honors Program:

_____

_____

_____

Honors Benefits

Housing

46. Choose the Housing option that best described your living situation (circle one):
    I lived in Honors housing
    I lived in other on-campus housing
    I lived off campus

47. Assuming Honors had space available in all three different residence hall options (The Village, South Sides, and North Sides), if you were given the choice between living on-campus in Honors housing OR living on-campus in general housing, what would you choose?
    Honors housing Non-honors housing

48. Rate the value of having Honors housing space in North Sides:

1	2	3	4	5
No Value	Poor Value	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable	Extremely Valuable

49. Rate the value of having Honors housing space in the South Sides/Villages:

1	2	3	4	5
No Value	Poor Value	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable	Extremely Valuable

50. Did you take advantage of any of the Honors Housing activities (Ice cream socials, etc.)?
    Yes No

51. Are special Honors Housing activities important?
    Yes No

52. Rate the value of special Honors Housing activities to you:

1	2	3	4	5
No Value	Poor Value	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable	Extremely Valuable

53. If the Honors Program had a new Honors Living & Learning Center near the center of campus, would you be drawn to live there?
    Yes No

54. What facilities would you like to see in a new Honors Living & Learning Center?

_____

_____

55. Did you have any problems with Housing? If so, please describe.

_____

_____

56. How has living in an Honors Housing space been of value to you?

_____

_____

57. We welcome general comments you have about Housing.

_____

_____

Service Events

58. I participated in an Honors service event.
    Yes No

59. Rate the value of service events to you:

1	2	3	4	5
No Value	Poor Value	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable	Extremely Valuable

60. The service event I enjoyed the most was:

_____

61. I would like to see Honors provide the following service event:

_____

Social Events

62. I participated in an Honors social event.
    Yes No

63. Rate the value of social events to you:

1	2	3	4	5
No Value	Poor Value	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable	Extremely Valuable

64. The social event I enjoyed the most was:

_____

65. I would like to see Honors provide the following social event:

_____

Conferences

66. I attended conferences (NCHC, SRHC, FCHC) through the Honors program:
    Yes No

67. Rate the value of conference attendance to you:

1	2	3	4	5
No Value	Poor Value	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable	Extremely Valuable

International Trips

68. I participated in an international travel opportunity that Honors offered:
    Yes No

69. Rate the value of international travel to you:

1	2	3	4	5
No Value	Poor Value	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable	Extremely Valuable

70. I would like to see Honors sponsor an academic trip to

_____

71. in order to study

_____

72. We welcome any general comments you have about our Honors opportunitiesother services.

_____

_____

73. How did being a member of the Honors Program make a difference to your *personal growth* as an individual and to your college experience (e.g., your thinking, self-image, personal outlook, values, friendships, intellectual development, preparation for subsequent academic work, career plans, etc.)?

_____

_____

74. If you had to make this decision again, would you be an Honors Program member?
    Yes No

75. What is your *strongest recommendation* for improving the UWF Honors Program experience?

_____

_____

76. What are your future plans?

_____

_____

Is there anything else you'd like to share with us?

APPENDIX H: EXIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE:

Exit Interview Project

Rationale

Exit interviews have been selected as an assessment procedure because this process provides both qualitative and quantitative data. Exit interviews provide contextual information about the UWEC learning environment. Also, the scoring procedure that has been defined for the Exit Interview Project avoids the lengthy analysis usually associated with qualitative data and provides an added benefit of actually hearing from students how they have experienced the curriculum.

Sample Exit Interview Questions

1. UW-Eau Claire requires students to take general education courses. What reasons do you see for such a requirement? In what ways, if any, have general education courses been valuable to you? How are courses you've taken in general education related to your major?
2. What are your intellectual interests outside of your major? Did you pursue any of these while in college, either through coursework or otherwise? Did you already have these interests when you came to college or were they newly developed? Are there courses or other intellectual activities that you wish you had pursued? If so, why didn't you?
3. What are the best things college has done to prepare you for life after college? Have you learned things in courses that you've used outside of the academic environment?
4. How are you different, that is, how have you grown by attending UWEC rather tan taking a job right out of high school? Identify university-related experiences that have changed you.
5. In what ways have you actively participated in the university learning community? As you think over your college career, what learning experiences stand out in your mind? What learning experiences have you had outside of the classroom?
6. How has your experience here influenced the way you think about people of different races, cultures, or sexual orientation, and about people with disabilities? Have you ever been in a situation where someone else has been insensitive and how did you respond
7. In what ways did your experience at UWEC influence your interest in the arts?

8. What values do you use to guide your life? Have those values changed since you have been in college? Explain. Tell me a few experiences here that helped you to develop or demonstrate your values/rules.

Scoring Scales

The following scale will be used for all questions except 4d:

Response	**Value**
Student has no understanding of issue or unable to make the relationship; inaccurate understanding; no acceptance/internalization of the issue has occurred; deny value of issue	1
Student provides a general or basic response; internalization may not have occurred	2
Student demonstrates an in-depth understanding; specific examples or in-depth response provided; student can clearly connect the example to the issue	3

The following scale will be used for 4d:

Response	**Value**
Communicates poorly, uses phrases and incomplete thoughts, unable to clearly present ideas	1
Student exhibits appropriate nonverbal behaviors, interacted with interviewer appropriately, avoids excessive use of slang	2
Outstanding communication, articulate, makes eye contact, appropriate pauses, interviewers understand the student	3

(http://www.uwec.edu/assess/plan/appendE.pdf)

About the Authors

Gary Bell is currently the founding (foundling?) dean of the Honors College at Texas Tech University, where he is a reluctant administrator and an enthusiastic teacher. He considers the high point of his career to have been designated "Teacher of the Year" at a previous institution, Sam Houston State University, where he also founded the honors program. His research is in World War II and Tudor-Stuart diplomatic history, with his Ph.D. from UCLA. He has served on the Executive Board of the NCHC, was president of the Great Plains Honors Council, and is currently co-chair of the Finance Committee in NCHC.

Jim Ford is in his fourth year as Founding Director of the Honors Program at Rogers State University. He is Associate Professor of Humanities, Philosophy, and Religious Studies. He earned his B.A. from the University of Tulsa and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Princeton University.

Annmarie Guzy is an associate professor of English at the University of South Alabama. She earned her Ph.D. in rhetoric and professional communication from New Mexico State University, and she teaches courses in honors composition, technical writing, and horror literature and film. She currently serves on the NCHC Board of Directors, the Publications Board, and the Research Committee.

Maureen E. Kelleher is Director of the Honors Program and Associate Professor of Sociology at Northeastern University. She is a member of the teaching team with upper-class mentors for a first-year honors course called Enhancing Honors 101, and she also teaches an upper-level honors seminar. Her research interests include risk-taking behavior on college campuses.

Gregory W. Lanier is Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences and Director of the University Honors Program and Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of West Florida. He holds joint appointments in the Department of Theatre and the Department of English and Foreign Languages due to his interest in the dynamics of Shakespeare in performance. Dr. Lanier currently serves as a member of the NCHC Board of Directors, a co-chair of both the Finance and the Assessment and Evaluation Committees, and an NCHC-Recommended Site Visitor.

Melissa A. Lulay is a graduate assistant for the Northeastern University Honors Program. She has a master's degree in counseling and applied psychology with a concentration in college student development and counseling from Northeastern University. Before attending Northeastern, Melissa received a bachelor of arts from Ithaca College.

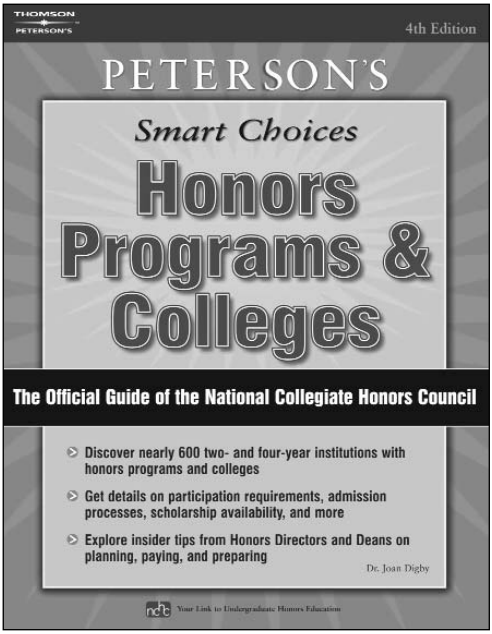
George Mariz is Professor of History and Director of the Honors Program at Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA. His research interests are in the history of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European religion and European cultural and intellectual history. He is at work on a book on the social and cultural ideas of ministers and their sons in nineteenth-century Europe.

Dail Mullins is the former associate director of the University of Alabama at Birmingham Honors Program, a former chair of the NCHC Science & Mathematics Committee, and currently a co-editor of *JNCHC* and *HIP*.

Lauren C. Pouchak is Associate Director of the Honors Program at Northeastern University. She has an M.P.A. from Northeastern University in political science and a M.Ed. from Lynchburg College. She coordinates the Honors Welcome Week Program and a variety of other programmatic initiatives that include editing *The Honors Perspective,* a 2006 winner of the NCHC newsletter competition.

Charlie Slavin is Dean of the Honors College at the University of Maine. In a previous life he was on the mathematics faculty, having earned degrees at Princeton and Wisconsin. He continues to explore his long-term interests in the history and philosophy of science, the writings of John McPhee, and detective mysteries, all of which are riskier than studying singular integrals.

Paul Strong is Kenyon Distinguished Professor of English at Alfred University. He's been Honors Director since 1985 and will retire—from both honors administration and teaching—in the spring of 2008.



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Assessing and Evaluating Honors Programs and Honors Colleges: A Practical Handbook by Rosalie Otero and Robert Spurrier (2005, 98pp). This monograph includes an overview of assessment and evaluation practices and strategies. It explores the process for conducting self-studies and discusses the differences between using consultants and external reviewers. It provides a guide to conducting external reviews along with information about how to become an NCHC-Recommended Site Visitor. A dozen appendices provide examples of "best practices."

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.

Honors Composition: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Practices by Annmarie Guzy (2003 182 pp). Parallel historical developments in honors and composition studies; contemporary honors writing projects ranging from admission essays to theses as reported by over 300 NCHC members.

Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges by Samuel Schuman (Second Edition, 1999, 53pp). How to implement an honors program, with particular emphasis on colleges with fewer than 3000 students.

Innovations in Undergraduate Research and Honors Education: Proceedings of the Second Schreyer National Conference edited by Josephine M. Carubia and Renata S. Engel (2004 145pp). Essays on the importance of undergraduate research, course models, connections to service learning, and learning strategies that support undergraduate research.

Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning edited by Bernice Braid and Ada Long (2000, 104pp). Information and practical advice on the experiential pedagogies developed within NCHC during the past 25 years, using Honors Semesters and City as Text™ as models, along with suggestions for how to adapt these models to a variety of educational contexts.

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 accomodates 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.