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Spring 2010

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council, Vol. 11, No. 1, Spring/Summer 2010

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JNCHC

JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

Spring/Summer 2010

Vol. 11, No. 1

IN THIS ISSUE

FORUM ON "HONORS AND ATHLETICS"

SAM SCHUMAN

JOAN DIGBY

BRADLEY J. BATES AND
CAROLYN A. HAYNES

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RESEARCH ESSAYS

SCOTT CARNICOM AND
CHRISTOPHER A. SNYDER

BORIS TESKE AND
BRIAN ETHERIDGE



JNCHC

**JOURNAL OF THE
NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL**

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

HONORS AND ATHLETICS

JOURNAL EDITORS

ADA LONG

DAIL MULLINS

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

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ISBN 978-0-9825207-3-4
ISSN 1559-0151

EDITORIAL POLICY

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council is a refereed periodical publishing scholarly articles on honors education. The journal uses a double-blind peer review process. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu.

DEADLINES

March 1 (for spring/summer issue); September 1 (for fall/winter issue)

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Cover photograph of Famatta Boimah and the Georgia Perimeter College women’s soccer team taken by Bill Roa.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The next issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: September 1, 2010**) invites research essays on any topic of interest to the honors community.

The issue will also include a Forum focused on the theme “Helping Honors Students in Trouble.” We invite essays of roughly a thousand words that consider this theme in the context of your campus and/or a national context.

The lead essay for the Forum will be written by Charles (Jack) Dudley, who was honors director at Virginia Tech during the massacre on April 16, 2007, in which three of his honors students were killed and one seriously wounded. Other colleges and universities have also experienced violence on campus. Such events are a particularly traumatic challenge to all students, faculty, and administrators, but students experience many other kinds of trauma as well, and the Forum welcomes essays on all such possible troubles.

Questions to consider might include: What are the most challenging crises that honors students face today in college or in honors? What are the most common problems they face? What are their greatest fears? Do the troubles that honors students experience differ from those of other students on campus, and in what way? What is the responsibility of honors administrators and faculty members in helping students manage their troubles, real or imagined? How can honors administrators and teachers help prepare students for trouble they might encounter? How far should honors administrators and teachers go in helping students? Are there boundaries to the help we can offer, and how can such boundaries be defined? How do legal considerations help or hinder our ability to help troubled honors students? What programmatic support services can we offer for honors students experiencing or likely to experience serious problems? How much help is too little or too much?

Forum essays should focus on ideas, concepts, and/or opinions related to “Helping Honors Students in Trouble.” Examples from one’s own campus can be and usually are relevant, but the essays should not simply be descriptions of “what we do at our institution.”

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 strongly preferred, and the editor will revise all internal citations in accordance with MLA guidelines.

There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.

Accepted essays are edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for infelicities of style or presentation. Authors 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



Photo by James Russell

NORM WEINER

Norm Weiner has been a visible and vocal presence in the NCHC for almost two decades, adding zest to the effectiveness and passion of the organization. Having received his Ph.D. at Syracuse University, he has been a faculty member at the State University of New York, College of Oswego since 1971 and SUNY Distinguished Service Professor of Sociology since 1998. Norm has thus weathered more than forty winters in upstate New York, which may explain part of his stamina and grit. His extensive administrative background may be another part of the explanation: in addition to his position as Director of the SUNY Oswego College Honors Program since 1992, he has been at various times Assistant Dean of Arts and Sciences, Director of General Education, Chair of the SUNY Press Editorial Board, and Chair of the Department of Sociology. He has won several major awards for excellence in teaching and happily exercises this talent both in and out of the classroom, as many of us in the NCHC know from personal experience. His contributions to the NCHC have extended far beyond his history lessons, personal anecdotes, and endless cache of humor: he has served in the full sequence of officer positions, including the presidency; been a member of and co-chaired the Publications Board; served on the Research Committee, the *HIP* Editorial Board, and numerous Conference Planning Committees; and, along with Mark Anderson and Trish Souliere, created NCHC's current

website. Norm has enlivened every meeting, talked in and through all of them, and helped us all become “embiggened.” It’s impossible to imagine the NCHC without him, and with deep gratitude we dedicate this issue of *JNCHC* to Norm Weiner.

Editor's Introduction

ADA LONG

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

At regional honors conferences, which typically occur around the same time as the NCAA and NIT basketball tournaments, many of us have facetiously wondered aloud whether basketball teams and their coaches spend as much time talking about honors as we spend talking about basketball. Back on our home campuses, a more serious connection between honors and athletics programs often takes the form of mutual recruitment efforts, schedule coordination, arrangement of make-up tests, co-advising, and enthusiastic attendance at sports events when honors students are in the competition. Many honors programs and colleges also sponsor their own sports events, fielding intramural teams or hosting Frisbee tournaments. Academics' attitudes toward sports programs are often complex; a faculty member might simultaneously play pick-up volleyball with her students, have season tickets to the school's football games, and grumble loudly about how much attention and money are devoted to the athletic budget. Some of that complexity occurs among honors administrators as well. The complexity and diversity that we value in honors is well represented in this issue's Forum on "Honors and Athletics," where the range of perceptions fairly well covers the spectrum.

Several months ago we sent out a Call for Papers on the NCHC/Hermes listserv and in the NCHC E-letter announcing the topic of the Forum and distributing the lead essay by Sam Schuman. The Call announced "Honors and Athletics" as the topic of the Forum and included the following suggestions:

Questions to consider might include: Is *mens sana in corpore sano* a concept relevant to honors? Are intercollegiate athletics an asset or disruption to the honors community? In what way have intramural sports added to or subtracted from the honors community? Is the analogy between honors and athletics a useful tool for gaining special privileges for honors students such as priority registration? Is this analogy apt, and are these privileges ethical? Are the honors director and sports coach natural enemies or allies? Does the special attention given to athletes help justify special attention for honors students? Does the brouhaha that surrounds high-profile athletics

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

help or interfere with recruiting and fundraising for honors?
Are scholar-athletes an important benefit to honors?

The suggested length, but not limit, for all Forum essays is a thousand words.

Sam Schuman has set the tone for the Forum in his essay entitled "College Sports, Honors, Five Liberal Lessons, and Milo of Crotona," in which he draws connections between honors programs and athletics. He points out the virtues in organized sports that are akin to those we seek and reward in honors: teamwork, persistence, diversity of talents, heights of achievement, and recognition of limits. Milo of Cretona carried a baby bull the same distance every day for four years until he could lift the huge weight of the mature bull; Schuman suggests that ideally athletes and honors students exert a similar ambition and persistence while also learning the limits of the weight they can carry, thus understanding an important lesson about being human.

Many of the following essays express the benefits of a connection between honors and athletics, starting with Joan Digby's "*GO HONORS!*" Digby, honors director at Long Island University, C.W. Post Campus, takes special pleasure in her honors athletes, who are often among the academic best in the program. She finds that they adjust happily to an honors culture that encourages playing well over winning, and they bring to this culture an already well developed sense of teamwork, experience at managing their time effectively, a habit of trying again if they fail, and a willingness to change direction. Digby then demonstrates how athletics can lead to creativity in two wonderful poems she wrote about her favorite sports: tennis and horseback riding.

"Bridging the Jock-Geek Culture War," by Bradley J. Bates and Carolyn A. Haynes of Miami University, is a collaborative essay about the mutually beneficial cooperation between an honors director (Haynes) and an athletic director (Bates), who have discovered how much they can learn from each other about recruiting, educating, and encouraging their students. Athletes and honors students, the authors suggest, have a lot in common given their competitive excellence and its attendant challenges, so coaches and honors educators can benefit from sharing tactics.

In the same vein, four co-authors—Rich Eckert, Ashley Grimm, Kevin J. Roth, and Hallie E. Savage—describe a joint honors/athletics project in "A Collaborative Recruitment Model between Honors and Athletic Programs." They give an account of a model developed by the honors program at Clarion University, an NCAA Division II school, for working in tandem with the athletic department on recruitment, scholarships, retention, graduation, and academic as well as athletic achievement of honors student-athletes. Preliminary data about this cooperative venture are promising based on four years of

experience and a small number of students. The results so far, the authors suggest, indicate that further research would be worthwhile.

An original collaboration at the University of Washington among honors, athletics, and academic affairs is the subject of “Student Athletics and Honors: Building Relationships” by James J. Clauss and Ed Taylor. Clauss, the honors director and a classicist, travelled to Greece with the men’s basketball team, teaching them a course on Socrates while they played exhibition games. This experience became an inspiration for other joint academic and athletic projects, transforming the athletes’ perceptions of themselves and encouraging more of them to join the honors program.

Another original approach to the topic is “Honors Director as Coach: For the Love of the Game” by Larry Clark of Southeast Missouri State University. In this moving essay, Clark describes directing an honors program in comparison to coaching a sports team. Both roles provide moments of triumph, great and small, as well as pressures and defeats, also great and small. Despite the highs and the lows, one constant is not just love of the game or the program but love of the players or the students. This love is what matters and also what one can count on.

The next two essays address the concept of “*mens sana in corpore sano.*” In “Honors and Athletics: the ‘Sound Body’ Thing,” James S. Ruebel writes that, despite some skepticism about the sound mind/sound body formula, his experience as Dean of the Ball State University Honors College as well as faculty representative to the NCAA and Mid-American Conference has given him a perspective from which to appreciate athletes, especially those who also commit to honors. These scholar-athletes strive for excellence in two arenas at once, receiving the benefits of each while contributing to both. In many instances these multiple commitments are an extension of their pre-college experiences and can thus serve as a good recruitment tool for honors.

Taking a different approach from Ruebel’s is Kate Wintrol of the University of Nevada Las Vegas. In “Is *Mens Sana in Corpore Sano* a Concept Relevant to Honors Students?” Wintrol considers the ancient and modern usages of the Latin phrase, which in both contexts might be straightforward or satirical. She considers the combined admiration and condescension that seem always to have been part of attitudes toward athletes, providing an ironic perspective on “student athletes” and on the idea of harmony between mind and body.

Despite occasional skepticism, all but one of the essays in the Forum present positive views of college athletics. The one exception is “Honors and Intercollegiate Athletics” by Gary Bell of Texas Tech University, an essay that nevertheless surely represents the views of many in academia, including honors. Bell takes issue with Schuman’s idealistic view of intercollegiate sports and suggests the darker elements of athletics on college campuses,

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

especially at large universities where they have often taken precedence over and displaced the academic values that we promote in honors. The big-money spectator sports—football, basketball, and baseball, especially—do not encourage athleticism in the vast majority of students, instead turning them into mindless, frequently boorish, and often obese spectators. Honors should instead encourage intramural sports and other kinds of participatory athleticism in ways that are more commensurate with academic values than the spectator sports our institutions invest in.

Now we move on to academic values and away from “Honors and Athletics” to present two research essays in this issue of *JNCHC*. The first is “Learning Outcomes Assessment in Honors: An Appropriate Practice?” by Scott Carnicom of Middle Tennessee State University and Christopher A. Snyder of Marymount University. Carnicom and Snyder present an argument, rooted in theories and practices of the social sciences as well as the history of higher education in the United States, that learning outcomes assessment in honors—not to be confused with program evaluation—is flawed in its implementation, imposed on the academy by nonacademic entities, and perilous both to academic freedom and to effective teaching and learning. The authors do not reject assessment entirely but do make a strong case that it needs to be scrutinized more carefully lest it undermine the quality of education rather than improve it.

The other research essay—and final essay in this issue—is “Information and Communication Technology Literacy among First-Year Honors and Non-Honors Students: An Assessment” by Boris Teske and Brian Etheridge. The authors present a statistical study that compares honors to nonhonors students at Louisiana Tech University and also to four-year-college students nationally in terms of their abilities to understand, negotiate, and apply digital media at the freshman level. While the study indicated that Louisiana Tech honors students performed better than the other two groups in most areas, especially in understanding the principles of technology, they needed work in navigating and manipulating digital media. In the conclusion they describe some of their curricular and instructional plans for helping their students improve their technological skills.

**Forum on
“Honors and Athletics”**

College Sports, Honors, Five Liberal Lessons, and Milo of Crotona

SAM SCHUMAN

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA ASHEVILLE

At the very dawn of the sixteenth century, Michelangelo liberated from a large chunk of discarded marble the most famous statue in the history of western art. After a few centuries standing outside the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, today his David resides in the Galleria dell'Accademia, the academic gallery, where he contemplates his victory over Goliath, and daily hundreds of tourists and art lovers contemplate him. This incredible work of sculpture seems today to have two primary functions. The first, alas, is to provide a certain number of giggling philistines with sophomorically smutty postcards and other souvenirs that focus on David's distinctly masculine nudity. The second is to stand as an emblem of the pinnacle of human aspirations in the Renaissance. Michelangelo's David is a model of reason, piety, and athleticism. In our honors programs and colleges, in today's academies, I have come to think that in our eagerness to cultivate the first of these virtues, thoughtful rationality, we have grown to ignore, to our loss, the other two: spiritual depth and serious attention to physical vigor.

I want to say a few words about collegiate athletics from what is increasingly being designated the "30,000 ft." perspective. If your experience at 30,000 ft. is at all like mine, this means we all enter a tiny space that can barely contain us, lugging heavy little suitcases that won't quite fit into the overhead compartments, rather than paying to put our luggage in an actual baggage compartment. Then, an overworked attendant circulates among us, offering to sell us such luxuries as water or coffee, after announcing (as on a recent flight) that three of the four bathrooms to which we have access are unfortunately not working. Maybe the time has come to kill forever that "30,000 ft." metaphor. In any event, my primary subject here is honors and intercollegiate athletics for women and men. By and large, what I say would apply equally to less formal sporting activities—intramural sports and recreation as well as wholly unprogrammed individual and group endeavors. Of course, I would heartily endorse these ventures, too, especially since many honors programs field intramural teams for softball or touch football, and

honors students often engage in pick-up Frisbee or volleyball games. I'm focusing on interscholastic athletics because it is the most extreme form of regular physical activity on college and university campuses, and if the case can be made for athletics, it more or less goes without saying for intramural or casual exercise. Too, I confess, it seems to me more of a challenge to link honors and athletics since these are often seen as, if not hostile, certainly wholly disconnected collegiate endeavors.

Colleges have lots of reasons to develop and support intercollegiate athletics programs, some of which are quite pragmatic, and there are lots of reasons why such development and support should be viewed with suspicion. Sports programs help us with student recruiting, which is certainly a pragmatic, fiscal rationale for maintaining them; at many smaller colleges, as many as half of the students participate in intercollegiate athletics. On the other hand, they can be incredibly costly in lots of ways, including time commitment and raw dollars. Most of us don't really want to know what it costs just to outfit each of our 40–80 football players, much less to coach, transport, feed, and house them.

Our central mission as colleges is not fiscal well-being but education, so I want to ask what it is that young women and men, including honors students, can learn in their athletics careers. Since most honors programs and colleges see their enterprise as *liberal learning*, what sorts of liberating collegiate experiences might we be providing our student athletes that reinforce or complement what they are learning in the classroom, laboratory, library, faculty office, or elsewhere in honors. One caveat: the positive lessons of college sports will occur when the institution has a sensible, balanced, and appropriate perspective on the relationships between athletics and academics and when there is strong, solid collegiate leadership—from presidents and provosts, athletics directors and coaches, and even honors directors/deans—steadily affirming productive links; when institutions lose that good sense and/or when leaders do not seek and reward it, positive results are unlikely, and, as we all know, negative ones can take their place.

Let's start with the two easy links. Everyone knows that participation in sports teaches young people (and older ones, too) the value of team cooperation and hard work. Honors programs should teach these two skill sets, too. But we might want to pause a while and see if perhaps there is a more nuanced way to think about these two kinds of lessons.

TEAMWORK

It is a truism that much of the work of contemporary culture, including intellectual culture and work, is teamwork. Lone scientists hatching astounding discoveries in isolated labs, brilliant corporate executives making millions

on their own, solitary medical practitioners: these are all probably pretty anachronistic. Even we English teachers have to cooperate sometimes (although you might not know it). Athletics teaches individuals how to work in groups. Of course, this quality varies from sport to sport. The teamwork component of a volleyball or basketball team is considerably more ambitious than that of the wrestling or cross-country squads. Note that many honors faculty, across the disciplines, have discovered the value of dividing their classes into small teams and having them work on class activities together. A truism of honors pedagogy is that working in groups, collective participatory learning, is often the best learning. Team sports teach participants to assess realistically their potential contributions to the group, to heed the potential contributions of all the others on the team, when to take the lead, when to defer. All human beings are, finally, prisoners of our solitary consciousnesses, pounding on the walls of our individual cells trying to make connections with each other (as my favorite twentieth-century author, Vladimir Nabokov, reminds us). An honors seminar in history or literature or psychology or evolution helps; so does playing volleyball.

HARD WORK

All of us in honors want our students to understand that easy accomplishments are often cheap, that hard work is necessary to do projects that are truly valuable and important; this seems to me a particularly important lesson of honors work, where our students have often excelled throughout their academic careers without having to work very hard at it. Athletics, too, requires and rewards hard work, a particular kind of work: persistent and consistent labor. No one gets to be a good distance runner by working out once every couple of weeks, no matter how hard. No good pitcher goes very long without throwing the ball. Just as a violinist or a dancer or even a reader has to practice, practice, practice, so too do athletes. For an athlete to show up on the day of the contest unprepared is just as disastrous as for an honors student to realize a week before her thesis is due that she is not where she should be. Here, we should remember the lesson of Milo of Crotona, well known to all college jocks. Milo, you'll recall, was the ancient Greek wrestler who trained for the Olympics by picking up and carrying a baby bull the same distance every day for four years. At the end of the four years, and in time for the next Olympic competition, the bull was huge, and Milo was powerful. Athletics and honors should both teach us that persistence trumps irregular flashes of brilliance or labor.

Three more honors lessons from college sports:

TALENT DIVERSITY

College athletics reminds all of us that very few people are good at everything, and almost everyone is good at something. I taught a fitness class once when I was Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Guilford, and it was an important revelation to me that students I knew from the classroom as “quick” were sometimes “slow” on the track, and some students who were not very sharp at literary analysis were very smart indeed when it came to physical conditioning. Chaucer writes that “God clepeth folke to him in sundry wise,/And everich hath of God a proper yifte” (God calls folks to him in various ways, and everyone has from God his own gift). Remember, even Michael Jordan wasn’t much of a baseball player. Some of our honors students will excel in one kind of academic work but not in all areas. We should not expect anyone to be good at everything, and we should expect each of our students to bring to our programs some particular, individual excellence.

HUMAN CAPABILITIES—PART 1

Athletics can teach us all, athletes or spectators, the amazing capabilities of the human creature. It can be astonishing and inspirational to witness the strength of a linebacker, the leaping ability of a volleyball spiker, the endurance and speed of a runner. The athlete who is persistent and works hard learns what she is capable of, which is often far more than she would have dared believe. Those of us who watch her grow and improve from year to year are equally awestruck as she reaches higher and higher goals that we might never have imagined possible a few years earlier. We feel the same kind of admiration for the intellectual growth of so many of our honors students throughout their undergraduate careers. Liberal learning should teach us just such admiration of humanity: Shakespeare’s or Austin’s brilliance with character and language; Einstein’s expansion of our understanding of the way the universe works; Beethoven’s music and Michelangelo’s art; Darwin’s and Goodall’s insights into the structure of life. To grasp and understand and revere what women and men are capable of is one of humankind’s joys. Sports and honors programs help.

HUMAN CAPABILITIES—PART 2

And yet, if you’ll permit a literature teacher’s love of ambiguity, perhaps the ultimate lesson of college sports is that all human capabilities are, finally, limited. One of the key lessons of Shakespeare’s most majestic tragedy, *King Lear*, is that, at the end, each of us is only a “poor, bare, forked animal.” Next to British Renaissance drama, athletics may be the very best teacher of this lesson. In this imperfect and broken world, even the best of us are ultimately

SAM SCHUMAN

frail and flawed. Here, we are coming close to the place where the spiritual, physical, and rational aspects of a complete collegiate education come together. As we admire Roger Bannister for breaking the four-minute-mile barrier, we realize that nobody will ever run it in three. Nobody is ever going to pitch only no-hitters. Forty-one-year-old Dana Torres was wonderful in the Beijing Olympics, but she probably won't be back in London and certainly not in Chicago. Our college athletes and our honors students test how much they can do, how good they can get, and it is remarkable what they can achieve, but even more important is that they learn the great, tragic, and wonderful liberal lesson of our common flawed humanity. Nothing we can learn in college is more important than our human nature: that we can achieve greatness and that we will always be imperfect. Indeed, I think that only in our recognition of our limits can we push so close to them as to become only a little lower than the angels. I find that recognition and that push in a great college basketball game, in an all-out finish at a cross-country meet, in a wrestling match or a volleyball game where nobody has anything at all left at the end. I find it too in an excellent undergraduate honors thesis or an outstanding performance on a senior oral examination. College sports and the challenges of honors work, like the *Canterbury Tales* and *King Lear*, Milo of Crotona and Michelangelo, teach us what it is to be human: that's enough.

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GO HONORS!

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It comes to me as quite a surprise—and really a great shame—that honors and athletics are, as Sam Schuman describes, “often seen as, if not hostile, certainly wholly disconnected collegiate endeavors.” For more than thirty years I have had quite a different experience, which includes congratulating four long-distance runners and one Olympic speed-walker as honors valedictorians. I have always cultivated honors athletes, and coaches have always come to me directly to package athletes with honors scholarships. I may have reaped my rewarding experiences with athletes in part because I teach at a Division II NCAA campus where the coaches encourage players to do well academically; for instance, faculty members must sign all athletes’ attendance cards for every class session, and the athletes must attend daily study halls. But my sense that athletes make strong honors students is also a personal vision that comes from years of playing tennis and riding horses—often under the watchful eyes of my tennis- and equestrian-team students.

Let me begin by saying that I do everything I can to discourage competition among my students. Many have already been burdened with grade-related anxiety and stress, so the idea of fighting to get that A is not something I encourage. Oddly enough, the athletes adjust very well to an honors environment that is less about winning than about playing the game, a difference in perspectives that two writers have expressed particularly well. The first is George Orwell, who in 1945 published an article in the *Tribune* entitled “The Sporting Spirit.” Considering the climate of nationalism and “savage passions” of the mid-1940s, he entirely undermined the idea of sport as cultivating fair play. Instead, he argued that professional sport is “bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence: in other words it is war minus the shooting.” While the case may be overstated, it did arouse a wonderful argument among students in my freshman English course—particularly among the athletes. The discussion was led by a basketball player, who argued quite convincingly (especially given his height of 5’ 6”) that sport is a game played against oneself, to improve and grow as a player. This approach is close to the philosophy of an interesting new book, *Play*, by the second writer, Stuart Brown, psychiatrist and founder of the National Institute for Play. His research indicates that the activity of play “shapes the brain, opens the imagination and

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invigorates the soul.” It is not Orwell’s dark vision of winning that is suitable to honors but rather Brown’s elevating spirit of play that we want to encourage in our students. Among his discoveries is that play, like sleep, is “an essential, long-term organizer of brain development and adaptability” (42). In play, he also finds the basis for experiencing pleasure and thus overcoming propensities to depression. Since both sleep deprivation and depression are chronic problems among college students, it would seem that engaging in play should increase positive attitudes. Indeed, among Brown’s most interesting findings is “evidence that play *increases* immune strength” (171).

Having read Brown’s study, I went directly to my student athletes to find out what they had to say about balancing the demands of honors with the demands of their team. Interestingly, none of them spoke about winning or about stress that comes from playing sports. Katie, a tennis player, emphasized the way that sports negate the stress that comes from school. “If I have a bad day, I look forward to the three hours of hitting a ball, and then I go back home calm. . . . Of course when I go back home the paperwork hits, and I feel stressed out. As an athlete, I rarely get a chance to work ahead. Playing sports requires good time management.” Katie seems to have learned this lesson well since she was the first student to submit her take-home final for my class.

John has been a football player since his second year of high school. For him, school is the chore and sport is what he looks forward to. He trains seven days a week and works a part-time job as well. “I’m more competitive in sport than in academics, but I’m hard on myself in both.” This reflection reinforces what we know about honors students—that they push themselves; the fact that they do it in athletics as well as academics should not surprise us but should illustrate the compatibility of honors with sports. Like John, Luke—a baseball player—couldn’t go to college without the scholarships coming jointly from the team and from honors. Both are grateful for the friends they have made on the team. Both came to campus to practice long before the other freshmen arrived. By the time classes started, the athletes had already bonded with coaches and teammates, who remained the strongest support system throughout the first term. Luke added, “All my teammates complain about work, so being in honors is not particularly an issue.”

Steve, who is also a baseball player, admitted to an interesting role played by his parents. “Baseball has always been a big part of my life. School has always been equally as important in the eyes of my parents. If I didn’t get my work done, I knew I wouldn’t be able to go to practice or games. So sports in a way drove me to be an honors student. . . . I feel it is challenging balancing college athletics with honors, but it is well worth the reward of knowing that I am succeeding in both fields and fulfilling my roles as a student athlete.”

Some honors athletes are essentially “loners.” Joseph chose the equestrian team partially for that reason. He had previously played soccer and baseball but dropped both because he didn’t have the stamina. His grandfathers had been horsemen, so Joseph decided to try riding. “It’s good exercise,” he said, “but the horse does all of the work!” He smiled. Joseph likes the fact that the equestrian team does not practice every day, leaving him all the time he needs to attend to his studies. He finds the balance relaxing. Feeling accepted by the team (he is the only young man among women) has also given him a sense of belonging. “I’m more of a loner—riding suits that. I’m alone but working for the benefit of the team.” His experience finds sympathy among the long-distance runners and among honors students in general. Many are simply playing their own individual games.

An interesting mix of loners and team players occurs in the NCHC immersion/adventure program Partners in the Parks, which provides “sport” in the broadest sense. The week-long programs involve camping, hiking, sometimes kayaking, canoeing, storytelling, and performance. Students come from honors programs and colleges around the country, from all majors and from the widest possible range of outdoor experiences. Some have never camped or lit a fire, have never hiked, cooked out, or looked at the stars. Others have been eagle scouts who could survive much harsher environments than the friendly campsites in the national parks. Most important is that, in less than a week, everyone gets to build a tent, make a fire, invent creative meals, tell stories, and engage in learning that is essentially play—a pursuit undertaken, as Brown points out, purely for its own sake (18).

Like all sport, Partners adventures take place in the moment, disconnected from electronic communications and obligations back home. Within a matter of days the group organizes into comfort zones. The loners get to go on solo hikes or retreat to their tents to write in their journals. The experienced hikers get to choose the long way around while the novices take a shorter route to test their interest and endurance. On the very first trip to Bryce Canyon, Claire, who had never hiked at all, decided to go on the thirteen-mile overnight just to see if she could do it. Unlike competitive sport—where she would have been sidelined or sent to team B—everyone encouraged her and helped her get through. Claire’s triumph was a victory for group dynamics, the kind that I believe honors is intended to foster. Those of us who chose the one-mile “stop and smell the junipers” hike had our own victories. We cooked a marvelous meal at the bottom of the canyon and spent the night in sleeping bags without tents even though it was a brisk twenty-two degrees. For us, the hike down and up the canyon was more than enough to make us feel sufficiently athletic. Like Joseph, the rider, we did it alone and together.

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Alone and together is an excellent honors model. The way we work with students, after all, is by encouraging the individual to emerge from the team we call “class.” If we look beyond the Partners student/faculty adventure, which I offer as an example of how loners and team players can achieve within the same framework, we would find that honors faculty and directors are—as athletes—of the same mix. Some are team players—at a certain age team spectators more than players! More of my athletic colleagues seem to me attracted to sports that allow them to play their own individual games—perhaps in the same spirit that attracts them to honors! They are runners, hikers, swimmers, bikers, kayakers, golfers and tennis players.

Something about being alone and engaging in the moment, I believe they will agree, is totally liberating. I often write poems while I am hitting tennis balls or walking a horse. (I offer two of them at the end of the article for—I hope—your enjoyment.) In these moments I am learning to let go of the quest for perfection. Sport has taught me to improve by degrees and to slow down. It has also taught me to let up on myself and to look at my students with softer eyes, to guide them with a looser rein. Students have seen me get thrown and get back up. That, too, is a good lesson for honors.

Another good lesson for honors is changing commitments. When I called student athletes to ask for an interview, several came forward who had been competitive athletes until college and then decided to give up their sport. Indeed, many students who include high school teams on their honors application have no intention of playing for a college team. Some have simply used up their interest in sports or have discovered that their dreams of going pro were unrealistic. Two young women who had competed in Western Pleasure horsemanship reached a day when tacking the horses and riding in shows seemed more of a burden than a joy. People change. Students change majors. Learning to face changes in commitment is important.

One of the most moving statements about changing commitments came from a student in my College 101 course in her essay entitled “I Never Made it to the NSL.” Nicole had been focused on a career in professional soccer from the time she was four. “The soccer field was where I felt at home”—that is, until the scrimmage in which she tore ligaments in a slide tackle. After three surgeries, it became clear that she would never be able to play soccer again. “It was hard to accept that I had to pursue another dream but I had to be realistic,” she wrote. Meeting physicians, nurses, and physical therapists over a long recuperation persuaded her that she wanted to go into a “therapy” profession. “Therefore I’m currently going to school pursuing a speech pathology degree. From being hurt, I learned that . . . I should do my best to help other people climb over their hills and mountains.” Thus Nicole’s

athletic self has found an alternative goal in her studies. And for that she is training in honors. *Go Honors!*

Excuses

I missed the shot because
the sun got in my eye,
the net's too high,
and wasps that burrow
at the baseline caught
the corner of my eye.

That shot I missed because
I couldn't concentrate,
get in position, anticipate;
the god-damn leaf blower's
grating on my nerves,
besides it's getting late.

I missed that shot because
I saw a chipmunk
scoot behind a maple trunk
in between the serve
and rally down the alley;
he caught me, now I'm sunk.

I missed the shot because
of shadows on the court.
I'm much too short,
the light was bad,
the lob was high—
I can't get too distraught.

Today I missed an easy shot,
I blame my allergies.
The flowering trees
rattled by the gusting breeze
showered their pollen,
and I simply had to sneeze.

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It's easy to miss a shot because
men embattled on court four
ignore the sport and plot a war
throwing racquets smashing balls;
I'm driven to complete distraction
by substitute hormonal gore.

But I missed *that* shot because
I lost my grip;
my feet were turned,
I almost tripped,
my tennis elbow
felt a twinge,
my partner poached,
I need new strings,
the ball was dead,
the surface dry,
I didn't bend,
my shoulder's sore,
and—let's face it—

I need to practice more.

Retirement

This morning Snowball told me he was thinking of retirement.
He has had enough of children on his back,
boring after so many years. It was easy for me to sympathize.
I, too, have given retirement some thought,
especially since I have students on my back
a hundred-fold of Snowball's burden.

He expressed the desire to be savoring grass and carrots all day long
free from the expectations of hard labor.
I knew exactly what he meant but reminded him
that I was the one who brought the carrots and took him out
to taste the clover and have a good roll in the luscious field.

It's clear he can't retire so long as I'm at work.
Thus we came to a resolution that—old as we are—
we would carry on working when we were called
and luxuriating in our time together taking long walks,

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jumping when we felt fit and tasting homemade oatmeal cookies
that I would bake so long as he enjoys them.

We're a pair, after all, the old pony and the old professor
making our way along the paths that give us peace.

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Bridging the Jock-Geek Culture War

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In his headline address at the Radio and Television Correspondents Annual Dinner last summer, comedian John Hodgman called the strife that exists between “jocks and geeks” the “culture war of our time.” His speech playfully argued that many tensions in American life stem not from differences in politics, culture, race or socioeconomic status but instead from differences in the ways athletic and scholarly types view the world. As directors of an honors and an athletic program at the same institution, we have discovered that each of our programs holds the capacity to freshen the outlook of the other precisely because they seem, on the surface at least, to be so different from one another.

This fact was brought home when, a number of years ago, the two of us served on a committee together. During a discussion over enrollment issues, Carolyn noted her frustration with the pressure that the university was exerting on her program to recruit top-tier students. At that time, the honors program did not engage in recruitment efforts distinct from those of the university, and any student who applied for university admission and achieved a particular standardized test score or graduated with a certain rank was automatically invited to enroll in the program. Rather than offer a critique of the honors recruitment approach, Brad drew from his own experience and simply inquired, “Have you considered focusing on building relationships with prospective students?”

This basic question prompted Carolyn to engage in what Senge et al. call the “capacity to suspend established ways of seeing” (35). Brad explained that the following principles guide the recruitment process of student-athletes:

1. Personalize your communications.
2. Offer students honest assessments of what to expect.
3. Allow students to gain an understanding of the student culture and university community.
4. Ensure that the visits and interactions promote the well-being of the student.

BRIDGING THE JOCK-GEEK CULTURE WAR

Guided by stringent NCAA rules, coaches typically sequence through a series of recruitment strategies including an initial academic and athletic assessment during students' sophomore or junior year in high school; cultivating relationships with high school coaches, administrators, faculty, family, and friends; encouraging visits to campus; promoting university assets; continuously sending communication and correspondence; and engaging students in university culture through current and prospective students, coaches, faculty, and staff.

Like their honors classmates, student-athletes make institutional decisions based on a variety of issues. However, the people representing the issues in trustworthy, sincere, and credible ways ultimately establish meaningful relationships that strongly influence university selection. The most powerful relationship initially is between prospective student-athletes and their recruiting coach. Subsequently, spending quality time with potential teammates on campus is critical to student-athlete perceptions of institutional culture and validates impressions of the university as represented by their recruiting coach. Finally, a comprehensive student-athlete recruiting system involves relationships with faculty, staff, administrators and students to further strengthen each prospect's connection with the university. Developing strong relationships serves all participants by verifying communications and data, determining institutional "fit," reinforcing desired experiences and outcomes, and matching student-athlete interests and aspirations with distinct university attributes. When strong relationships work well in influencing university choice, outcomes match objectives. Miami University has seen an eleven percent increase in student-athlete federal graduation rates in the last six years and has closed the academic gap between athletes and the university cohort from thirteen percent to one percent while earning a school record for championships during the 2008–09 academic year.

The relationship-based model of athletic recruitment prompted the Miami University Honors Program staff to develop a high-touch and personalized approach to recruitment. Because the honors program does not have core faculty and is highly student-driven, we decided to place students (rather than coaches) in the role of recruiters or "ambassadors." Approximately sixty students in our program undergo a one-credit training course to serve as ambassadors; in close consultation with our staff, they develop or revise text for our communications to students, are assigned caseloads of prospective students who share similar interests with them, and then develop a communication sequence to implement with their caseload of prospects. The honors staff is able to match the two sets of students by interest through Recruitment Plus, a powerful database operated by the university's admission office, as well as an integrated electronic communication system that invites prospective students to log onto a personalized URL where they can tell us about their interests and

then learn more about how our program can promote these interests. Once the ambassador is assigned a set or caseload of prospective students, she or he develops a personalized communication sequence with each one, typically including a combination of Facebook communications, emails, phone calls, and postcards. Ambassadors also develop and run a series of spring overnight programs and other recruitment events where they can meet their assigned prospective students in person and continue building their relationship.

Since moving to this relationship-based approach, the honors program has seen application numbers, yield rates and profiles of admitted students increase. As a result, we have quickly gained the favor of our university partners. More importantly, however, we have built a stronger community of students and attracted students who are more informed and thus more engaged in the program.

Following our initial communications relating to recruitment approaches, the University Honors Program and the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics have embarked on other collaborations. Brad and Enrico Blasi, the coach of our nationally ranked hockey team, recently led a leadership workshop with first-year honors students, emphasizing the power of teamwork (or “brotherhood”), school spirit, perseverance, integrity, and learning from failure; and we are in the process of planning a joint initiative to leverage the Miami coaches to recruit students from local high schools to the appropriate culture within Miami (athletics, honors, both or other).

Even more importantly, we now see numerous ways that the members of our two programs can learn from one another, partly because our students and staff face many similar challenges and concerns. For example, both sets of students confront stigmatization, battles with perfectionism, and a tendency to defer to authority that might hamper their individuation and development. In addition, athletes and honors students often enjoy special privileges in class registration, academic support and advisement, scholarships, and special housing. We are examining ways to help our students cope with these challenges, transcend assumptions relating to race, class, gender and student abilities, and understand their privileges so that they may grow into responsible, caring, and successful members of our society.

Finally, pressures to recruit the top student prospects and secure success, whether in winning championship games or competing for prestigious fellowships, can create ethical dilemmas and other challenges for both programs. We need to maintain the focus on student learning and development while still meeting the institutional goals of attracting top students and securing accolades. Coaches who must operate under such stringent regulations and honors staff members and students who operate with relatively few rules need to further investigate what they can further learn from one another.

BRIDGING THE JOCK-GEEK CULTURE WAR

Although we do not have all the answers, we firmly believe that, through thoughtful exchange among the members of our programs, we can not only overcome John Hodgman's culture war but also serve our students, staff, faculty, and institution in even more meaningful ways. We may thus be able to encourage our students and staff to transcend the "jock-geek culture war," about which Hodgman joked, and to forge authentic friendships and mutual support.

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A Collaborative Recruitment Model between Honors and Athletic Programs for Student Engagement and Retention

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INTRODUCTION

A common need in honors education is to recruit a student cohort that actively engages in educational experiences, demonstrates a motivation for academic challenge, and is likely to complete the honors program. Honors programs use varied quantitative (Green & Kimbrough) and qualitative admissions criteria to yield this desired student cohort. However, research is limited on the value of quantitative measures, i.e., SAT scores, grade point average, and/or class rank, in predicting qualities such as student engagement or outcomes such as program completion.

Attempting to recruit a more diversified student cohort and to increase student engagement, the Clarion University Honors Program initiated a collaborative recruitment model with the athletic program. In addition to the goal of student engagement, this model was designed to be mutually beneficial through coordination of recruitment scholarship incentives. From the standpoint of the athletic program, student athletes' engagement in honors education could positively affect academic performance and consequently graduation rates. From the perspective of the honors program, admission of student athletes could create a more engaged student population within the honors community.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN HONORS PARTICIPATION

Honors student recruitment is targeted to create an undergraduate cohort that enthusiastically engages in honors education and completes the program. Research has begun to document the positive influence of honors program

participation on first-year retention rate (Slavin, Coladarci, & Pratt; Shushok, 2006; Shushok, 2002) academic performance, retention, and graduation (Cosgrove, 2004). Factors that engage students in the honors community and enhance academic experiences need further investigation, but research on student learning and personal development has revealed the critical nature of student engagement (Astin; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991 and 2005). Described as integral to best practices in student learning (Chickering & Gamson), student engagement is enhanced by factors such as student/faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning contexts, prompt feedback, time on task, communication of high expectations, and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning. These principles reflect theoretical discussions of the combined value of athletic participation and honors education such as Schuman's description of the potential value of athletics within honors education, specifically the dynamics of team participation, development of a work ethic, and persistence in accomplishment. These learned qualities are integral to academic accomplishment, scholarly research, program completion, and graduation rates.

ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION AND STUDENT LEARNING

Over the past few years, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has developed policies that place a high value on the educational experience of student athletes (Gayles & Hu). For example, "Life in the Balance" is a current NCAA initiative to coordinate intercollegiate athletics with the goals of higher education. Such a program has the effect of balancing the number of hours spent in athletic conditioning, practice, and competition with the inherent demands of an undergraduate program of study. In addition, many athletic programs require academic support ranging from informal study groups to formalized academic programs tailored for student-athletes.

Each of the three NCAA divisions has a set of unique characteristics that differentiate it from the other two. Understanding these characteristics and rules is important not only to athletic departments but also to academic units. Division I universities are typically larger and offer a wider variety of athletic programs. According to NCAA legislation, Division I programs can offer individuals financial aid annually based on athletic talent, but the NCAA restricts the total number of scholarships a particular sport can offer at an individual school. Division I has been the subject of public concern over recent years with regard to the educational experience of student-athletes (Gayles & Hu; Wolverton); it receives high media attention and generates the most revenue. However, Division II and Division III offer individuals a different type of collegiate experience.

Like Division I, Division II can offer financial aid based solely on athletic talent or ability, but it receives less media attention, generates less revenue, and has fewer athletic scholarships. With limited scholarship funds, many Division II colleges can provide only partial scholarships to student-athletes; hence they have an incentive to collaborate with academic programs in order to offer larger scholarships to prospective student-athletes. Division II is also known for promoting a complete college experience for student-athletes. Balancing academic, athletic, and social commitments (student engagement) can be challenging; Division II athletic programs, as a whole, have agreed to make this balance a priority for all student-athletes, offering them an opportunity to compete at a high level athletically while maximizing social and academic experiences.

Division III, the largest NCAA division, is the only division that cannot offer athletic scholarships. Division III schools are often known for their academic strengths while also offering an opportunity to participate in athletics; they can use academic scholarships to attract prospective student-athletes, but athletic recruitment is challenging since these schools are often private institutions with higher tuition costs. Given this challenge, effective collaboration between academic and athletic departments at Division III institutions can produce a higher recruitment yield of student-athletes.

In all three divisions, academic and athletic departments can collaborate to recruit top student-athletes and maximize the available scholarship funds and recruitment resources. Effective collaboration requires ongoing communication between units that, in turn, can yield increased engagement in learning experiences, program retention rates, and graduation rates for the university as a whole. Sander has shown that the outcome of an increased focus on academic programs for student-athletes is an increased graduation rate; although graduation rates vary by sport and by gender, a trend is apparent toward increased graduation rates among NCAA athletes.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Increasing research is available to document the positive effect of honors program participation on retention and academic engagement. Collaboration between athletics and honors can positively influence undergraduate recruitment and retention of athletes as well as scholars. The purpose of this study is to provide a rationale for such collaboration and to describe a model for promoting it.

METHOD

BACKGROUND

Clarion University, located in Western Pennsylvania, has an enrollment of approximately 7,300 students. Based on decreasing regional demographics and a high concentration of colleges and universities located in western Pennsylvania and adjacent states, new student recruitment is characterized as competitive. Therefore, recruitment methodology was needed that was cost-effective, required no additional personnel, and yielded student applicants that met honors eligibility criteria.

The honors program was established in 1985 with 170 students enrolled in the program. Students are required to complete 19–21 credits and complete a capstone project. Applicants must have >1150 SAT (combined verbal and math) or equivalent ACT, > 3.64 overall grade point average, successful interview with honors, and essay. These criteria were structured as predictive of first-year retention, motivation for academic challenge, and basic oral and written communication skills. Student-athletes were recruited for 14 sports (Division II) and Wrestling (Division I).

RECRUITMENT METHOD

At the first coaches' meeting, the honors director presented the collaborative recruitment model, including its features and benefits. Coaches were given an opportunity to ask questions and indicate interest in participation. Subsequently athletic coaches reviewed all athletic prospects with regard to academic qualifications. Similarly, the honors administration reviewed academic prospects for potential athletic participation. Visits to the honors program were systematically included as part of the prospective student-athlete's campus visit. Itineraries typically consisted of meetings with the following:

- Faculty in the prospective student's major
- Honors program administrator
- Coaches
- Athletic director
- Honors student-athletes as campus escorts
- Athletic team

Campus visits were built primarily by coaches and coordinated by one member of the honors office staff, supported by the university's admissions staff. As part of the honors visit, prospective students were given a standard

presentation that included information on features and benefits of honors participation. In addition, prospective students were offered an opportunity to interview. These interviews were conducted by “trained” honors administration, faculty, or student office staff; therefore, no additional personnel were required.

Upon completion of the honors application and admissions process, scholarship awards were coordinated between the athletic department and the honors program, specifically the honors director and the athletic coaches. Scholarship values were maximized through coordination of these recruitment incentives.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents data trends for student-athletes enrolled in honors education over a four-year period. Given the discovery mode of this study, proportional changes in the honors student-athlete population were observed. The academic year 2004 served as the baseline for comparison. To begin to examine the results of this collaborative model, the number of honors student-athletes enrolled in the honors program was recorded.

We observed increases in the number of honors student athletes recruited each academic year. This trend occurred despite the elimination of the men’s track and field team in 2006. Initially, track and field was part of the collaborative recruitment model. The effect of team elimination was predicted to negatively affect the 2007 recruitment results; however, trends appeared relatively stable.

Grade point averages were recorded as a general indicator of academic performance. As with the number of student-athletes, small but steady increases in the overall grade point average were apparent. Concomitantly, the overall grade point average of all students in the athletic department

Table 1. Number of honors/student-athletes, relative increase within honors population over a four-year period, and average grade point (academic performance)

Year	# Honors Student Athletes	% of Honors Population	Overall GPA
2004	8	4.1%	3.49
2005	12	5.6%	3.51
2006	15	7.4%	3.52
2007	16	8.0%	3.58
2008	18	10.3%	3.70

increased; specifically, a steady increase in the total number of athletes with a 3.2 grade point average or above was observed. Finally, program completion rate for the honors student-athletes was examined. Over the observation period, all students who entered the honors program completed the program within four years.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to provide a rationale for programmatic collaboration between athletics and honors. Given this rationale, a collaborative model was designed that started with recruitment and continued throughout the academic program of study. The data trends suggest that this model is worthy of further research. Qualitative data based on interviews with coaches suggest that the collaboration provided benefits in recruitment and institutional commitment. Coaches also reported that honors program advising positively influenced the student-athletes' program of study, and initial data documented that all athletes completed the honors program.

Future investigation of the collaborative model should include longitudinal investigation of new student recruitment outcomes, qualitative description of retention efforts, outcome measures such as program completion rate, and qualitative studies of the collaborative model's impact on athletic programs and honors programs.

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Student Athletics and Honors: Building Relationships

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Few university administrators today would argue against having more student athletes applying for and successfully completing honors curricula. Such students are great for PR. But, sad to say, coaches and faculty, at least at tier-1 universities like the University of Washington, are often suspicious of each other's intentions. Some coaches see too much focus on education as a threat to their team's success and ultimately their jobs; some faculty see athletes, especially in the revenue sports, as uncommitted to education, exploited by universities, and biding their time in school to enter the lucrative professional careers they believe await them. Yet, there exists a goal that both honors students and student athletes, faculty and coaches, share, a goal that could well provide the basis for beginning a productive relationship, namely the pursuit of excellence. In what follows, we make the case that Honors is uniquely situated to assist in the creative development of the way professors and coaches see student athletes. Our case is based on courses offered to student athletes that were overseen by the UW Honors Program and on the useful exchanges the program developed with Student Athletic Services and Undergraduate Academic Affairs, the unit in which the honors program is housed at the University of Washington. This three-way relationship was not part of a preconceived plan; rather, we followed where circumstances led. What we offer here thus represents observations and suggestions, not a fully developed model.

In 2007, the University of Washington men's basketball team had the opportunity to travel to Greece to play five exhibition games with local professional teams over ten days. Looking for ways to add an academic experience to the trip, the Associate Athletic Director for Student Development contacted Ed Taylor, Dean and Vice Provost of Undergraduate Academic Affairs (UAA). Taylor in turn contacted the incoming Director of the Honors Program and Professor of Classics, James Clauss, to discuss the possibility. Clauss developed a class on Socrates and, for the week before the group traveled to Greece, the student athletes read and discussed several Platonic dialogues featuring the early Socrates (*Apology*, *Crito*, part of the *Phaedo*, and *Euthyphro*). These texts introduce clearly and dramatically an approach to

inquiry that bears the name of its chief proponent: the Socratic method. Socrates as represented by Plato continues to entice readers of all ages to take up his call to question our most cherished presuppositions and biases. These works are typically a slam dunk in the classroom, and this was our experience with the Husky basketball team.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the pre-trip class was the fact that the coach, Lorenzo Romar, attended all of the sessions. Romar's influence on the success of the course was crucial. He took this educational opportunity seriously, so the students did as well. The student athletes of this highly competitive team contributed to class discussions, some of which were heated, and both during and after the trip completed all of the writing assignments, including the composition of dialogues on topics such as the nature of justice, goodness, and success. During the last class before the trip, one of the student athletes exclaimed with apparent surprise: "I can't believe it. I'm a philosopher!" The athlete identified himself, possibly for the first time, as a student. It was a transformative moment in the life of this individual and the rest of the class, who realized that they too had entered into a different relationship with education.

On one level the academic experience was successful because the student athletes read the material, engaged in discussions not only in class but in the locker room and completed all the writing assignments. But a more powerful measure of the class's success can be seen in what happened afterwards. One of the basketball players was later selected to play with the USA team in Serbia, and on his own he found a way to turn his journey to the Balkans into an academic experience modeled on the previous trip. The influence of the Greece trip did not stop with basketball. Inspired by this event, the coaches of the women's soccer team and women's golf team contacted Taylor and Clauss to ask for assistance in creating academic experiences for their teams going, respectively, to Brazil and New Zealand, for which professors in appropriate disciplines were drafted. The potential long-term success lay not in these individual classes but in the creation of a relationship between individuals willing to work together. Trust and mutual respect between teachers and students, professors and coaches, opened a new and promising rapport between honors and student athletics. The willingness on the part of a program associated with academic excellence to cooperate in an educational endeavor with a program associated with athletic excellence was—as Bill and Ted, protégés of Socrates (pronounced "So-Crates"), might have put it—"most excellent."

Because Coach Romar was willing to sit in on the classes, he witnessed first-hand the positive response that his players had to what might have seemed esoteric philosophical texts. Not only did their studies not get in the

way of the athletes' preparation for the exhibition games, but those same young men identified themselves as students, appeared to enjoy learning the material, and competed unhindered by the foray into pure academia. (That the Huskies won the PAC-10 championship in 2009, however, is probably unrelated.) During the trip, Romar built in time for the class to meet, and he and the other coaches accompanied the team to the various sites, confirming the importance of encountering ancient and modern Greece. The team members took the educational side of the trip seriously because their coaches did.

Developments after the trip in 2007 have included a number of phone calls and emails from coaches and assistants asking about student recruits who expressed an interest in honors. We plan to encourage other sports programs to look to honors as a partner in attracting outstanding student athletes. Also, Taylor has organized joint meetings between advisors in student athletics and UAA in order to further the connection between the two units and create avenues for student athletes to feel more a part of campus life, a problem that can be acute at a large state university where athletes often live and eat separately from the rest of the student body.

Honors programs and colleges may be uniquely positioned to work with athletic departments in part because of their shared commitment to excellence. Honors students and student athletes both strive to excel in their various arenas. Professors and coaches, as educators in their respective fields, want to work with superstars, athletic and academic. We have common ground upon which to build a solid foundation for future cooperation.

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Honors Director as Coach: For the Love of the Game

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Conflict: if we are to believe some of the great probers of the human mind like Freud and Shakespeare, it goes to the very core of our existence.

Look at our history books. The great conflicts form the timeline of our American past: the Revolutionary War, the French and Indian War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the First World War (“the war to end all wars”), the Second World War, Korea, Vietnam (even if it was only a “police action”), Iraq, Afghanistan; and that’s skipping over some “minor conflicts” in Granada, Kosovo, the Persian Gulf, and elsewhere. Where next? Iran, North Korea, the Middle East? We just don’t seem to be able to stop. And that’s us! The good guys!

Between wars, and sometimes during, we move our conflicts onto the playing fields (sublimation according to Freud) where we shrink our timeline to the seasons: football, basketball, baseball (insert your own favorite). On a slightly larger scale, we have the quadrennial, now biennial, Olympics where we get to witness “the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.” Maybe that’s why we reach to sports as a metaphor for some of our great endeavors, physical, mental, and emotional.

IT BEGAN ON A SANDLOT

It began on a sandlot. You were there just to help kids have fun and develop a positive sense of self, to help them hone a raw talent or discover a new one. It took time and effort, but it was all worth it to see the look of joy on a kid’s face when she achieved what she didn’t know was possible. “Wow, Coach, did you see that?!” With time their talents grew, individually and as a team, so much so that your success was noticed and you were tapped for the Big Time: the varsity (honors) team.

RECRUITING: THE COACH OF THE VARSITY ACADEMIC TEAM

One of the common duties of honors directors is to help recruit academically talented students to our schools and our honors programs. In my

fourteen years as an honors director, I was fortunate to work with an excellent team of professional recruiters in the admissions office. They did the heavy lifting, spending time on the road (just like sports recruiters), visiting schools, and organizing recruiting days on campus (“Show-Me Days” at my school). I got to step in to talk to the academic elite and try to convince them to join the honors program.

I used a sports analogy. I often began by asking these potential applicants how many of them had played varsity sports in high school. Many hands would go up, dispelling the myth that most good students are nerds. (As with most stereotypes, bright students tend to think that other bright students are “nerds”; not them, just most other bright students.) I said that I was the coach of the academic varsity team at the university and that we fielded a team that was five hundred strong and deep. I challenged them to go beyond the usual academic requirements of college “to be the best that you can be.” I extolled the virtues of an honors education: smaller classes, hand-picked honors faculty, opportunities to be recognized as some of the most accomplished students on campus. Ultimately, though, the challenge was theirs to accept or decline. A swell of anticipation would grow on the sea of faces, and a majority of the group would sign on. Usually a reluctant few would inch forward and say their parents thought they should join. Thus our team grew.

BACK TO THE FUNDAMENTALS: KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL

When a team’s performance begins to flag or when they are preparing for a defining competition, a savvy coach will often take them back to the basics: get down on the ball, tackle him low, off the fingertips. Many honors students never learned the academic fundamentals prior to college. They didn’t have to. With their talents they could pull the last minute all-nighter, whip it together and grab their A. Or maybe over the years they had developed the fundamentals at an unconscious level by trial and error, but they didn’t know that they knew them, e.g., that memory is based on associations and that acronyms help in recalling strings of items. These old, unconscious habits worked fine when the demands of school fell well within their level of ability, but now in college, and especially on the honors varsity team, they were not going to cut it. Many talented students panic when they get that first B (or worse!) in college. Alert honors faculty (the assistant coaches) catch that moment of terror and use it to take students back to the fundamentals, to show them that they can make it over this higher bar that has been set for them; they just have to hone their basic skills. It can be an eye-opening growth moment for the student and a supremely rewarding experience for the teacher.

Time management and prioritization are other skills that some honors students need to learn. Because of their abilities and motivation, everybody wants a piece of them. They are aggressively recruited by academic departments, social and academic organizations, the central administration, everybody. Some end up as president of the student body, editor of the school paper, leader of a fraternity or sorority. Time is precious, and theirs can become golden. Some may begin to falter academically or wear out physically and emotionally as they get caught up in the heady rush of their celebrity status, just as some sports stars do. Again the seasoned coach/teacher with an eye for this dilemma can pull the conflicted student aside and help him untangle his priorities. Making choices and learning to say “No thank you, I don’t have time for that right now” are probably more important and fundamental skills in life than learning how to solve a quadratic equation or place a fierce backhand in the deep corner.

MOTIVATION: “GRADE GRUBBERS”

Our honors students come to campus with academic potential, but they need motivation to develop that potential and apply it. Motivation is essential to win the championship or to graduate with honors, but it can be elusive, and, in the guise of perfectionism, it can freeze a student in her tracks, even crush her. Motivation is a tricky beast to tame.

A central issue in the study of motivation is the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is endurance at a task for rewards found within the endeavor itself, e.g., striving for mastery. Extrinsic motivation is working for goals outside of the task itself, e.g., fame or cash. We shine the spotlight on the athlete kissing the trophy or on the team piled in the middle of the field after winning the championship, but a caring coach feels the same tug of satisfaction when he spies the gymnast alone in the gym long after practice, beaming after she has finally nailed the new trick she had been afraid of for so long.

A common complaint heard by honors directors from their colleagues is “Why are the honors students such grade grubbers? All they care about is earning that A. I thought that they would all have a love of pure learning.” The veteran honors director might reply, “They may not share your love of learning in *your* discipline. Do you share the love of learning of all of your colleagues in *their* disciplines?” She might also reply “Don’t blame them. We set up the system. When your scholarship, your shot at the graduate school of your dreams, and your opportunity to walk across the stage at graduation wearing the honors medallion all rest on your GPA, you tend to be grade-

conscious.” To top off the discussion she might ask, “If faculty are intrinsically motivated, why do they need promotion and tenure or merit pay?”

One thing that honors faculty can do to help ease the grade anxiety of honors students is structure classes so that students can build a comfort zone within which to explore outside their area of expertise. When I taught an honors section of our freshman seminar, I began the semester with a “Name Quiz.” I took photos of all the students and constructed a table with each student’s picture, first name, home town, and major. I told the students that they would have a couple of weeks to learn that information before they took a quiz on it. The quiz consisted of a table with the photos on it where the student had to fill in the rest of the information. It was scored as a mastery test: get 90% of the names and 75% of the other information correct the first time around, and you earn 100% of the possible points. If not, you get a second chance to earn 90% of the possible points. The vast majority of the students aced the test the first time (they were, after all, honors students). The few who did not take the exercise seriously at first mastered the material the second time around and still got an A, albeit a low A. Some students questioned the relevance of the exercise to the stated purpose of the class until they began to realize that it now gave them, at the very beginning of their college experience, a feeling of community. “Hey look, there’s Aron; he’s an anthropology major, too!” Now they were part of a team.

With a little grade cushion under them, the students were a tad less apprehensive about taking on some of the more esoteric projects I threw at them in the seminar. One of the most challenging was the “Box Art” project. It involved getting a box (broadly defined) and putting things in, on, and around it to represent you: who you are now, what factors in your life influenced you to become the person you are today, and what kind of person you hope to become in the future. Later in the semester the students would present and explain their box art to the class. To justify the project I explained that, as a developmental psychologist, I see college as one of the major transition periods in life. Whether they realize it at the time or not, most students use college to help them make important career, family, interpersonal, and personal transitions in their lives. I explained that, when we face such developmental milestones, it is a good time to stop and take stock of who we are now and where we are headed.

The first couple of times I made the assignment, most students produced boxes adorned with lots of photos. “Here is me with my friends. Here is me with my family. Here is me at graduation.” So I began to tell them to stretch. Don’t just present yourself concretely; express who you are abstractly. Then the results were amazing. In the papers they wrote for the project, many students complained about how confusing and daunting the assignment was at

first. They had never been asked to do such deep self-analysis before. Then, for most of them, came a moment of epiphany, and they became energized by the assignment. For some the project opened up dialogues with their families and friends that deepened their appreciation of both. Some found a rationale for choosing the life paths they were on. Some, for perhaps the first time, were able to savor their prior achievements. The joy and pride of self-discovery were palpable in the words of their papers and in their expressions during their presentations. A satisfied coach smiled to himself alone in the gym.

POINTS ON THE BOARD

The life of the elite athlete is not easy, obviously. The long hours of toil, the assaults to the body and the sense of self, and the sacrifice of other opportunities in life are more than most of us want to pay. The life of the coach must be no less fraught with costs to be paid for the elusive prize. The revolving door that is the professional life of many coaches demands a special kind of dedication to one's sport and athletes. Reasons for being replaced may be beyond the control of the coach: maybe you were trying to compete at the Division 1 level on a Division 3 budget; maybe you inherited some NCAA sanctions for the shenanigans of your predecessor; maybe you gave some kids with questionable backgrounds an opportunity to show that they had grown up, and they repaid you with headlines in a police report. The bottom line, you are told, is that you didn't put enough points on the board, enough trophies in the case. A special kind of loneliness must come with that call from the front office to tell you that "we have decided to go in a different direction."

In honors you strive to help the program grow, or at least remain viable, and to create learning experiences that will fire the imagination of students. Sometimes you succeed, at least in your own mind. You struggle to keep the numbers up—the number of students who enlist in the program, the number who enroll in honors classes, the number who win prestigious fellowships, the number who complete the program. Meanwhile, institutional decisions about the allocation of academic scholarship money, minimum class enrollments, disciplinary and administrative boundaries, and a host of other issues make it increasingly difficult to meet your goals. You keep yourself up at night and distracted on the weekends trying to think up creative new ways to make it all work. You also try to reassure yourself that, whatever is happening on the administrative side, as an educator you are still having an impact on students—pairing them up with outstanding faculty to fulfill their scholarly potential; helping them sort out their multiple talents and interests to find their own life path; organizing a seminar series that helps them understand that the events of the 60s were not just chapters in a history textbook but

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events that wrenched a nation and shaped their parents' generation; making them believe in themselves.

Then you get a call from the front office. You are being replaced. We are going in a different direction. You leave the office and walk with a heavy heart through the empty locker room one last time.

You emerge on the old sand lot, playing with the kids, and you realize that this is where you belonged all along. "Great shot, Sydney. What an arm!" You see her beam, and it is good.

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Honors and Athletics: The “Sound Body” Thing

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I have always hesitated at the aphorism *mens sana in corpore sano*. When Juvenal originally wrote in his tenth Satire that “we should pray for a sound mind in a sound body” (*orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano*), he was not exalting physical and mental perfection; he meant only that our health is more important than the false benefits of greed and vanity (*Sat.* 10.356). In the modern Olympic environment, *corpus sanum* is clearly exalted above *mens sana*, and the ancient Olympics were, if anything, worse; David C. Young has written a sobering account of the rather disreputable origin and history of amateurism and its relationship to Olympic competition. The modern participant spends hours per day, days per month, and months per year for year after year perfecting a physical skill and adapting her perceptual skills to enhance it. The NCAA, a defender of modern amateurism, limits student-athletes to twenty hours a week of required athletics-related activity during the season of competition. Does anyone think that an Olympic figure-skater or gymnast or sprinter practices only twenty hours a week for only part of the year? While elite athletes are physically magnificent, they appear to be valued for this magnificence out of proportion to its importance. The Greek poet Xenophanes 2500 years ago wrote:

Now, supposing a man were to win the prize for the footrace
at Olympia, there where the precinct of Zeus stands beside
the river, at Pisa: or if he wins the pentathlon, or the wrestling,
or if he endures the pain of boxing and wins, or that new
and terrible game they call the *pankration*, contest of all holds:
why, such a man will obtain honor, in the citizens' sight,
and be given a front seat and be on display at all civic occasions,
and he would be given his meals all at the public expense,
and be given a gift from the city to take and store for safekeeping.
If he won with the chariot, too, all this would be granted to him,
and yet he would not deserve it, as I do. Better than brute strength
of men, or horses either, is the wisdom that is mine.
But custom is careless in all these matters and there is no justice
in putting strength on a level above wisdom which is sound.

Nevertheless, in an abstract sort of way, the ideal of physical and mental excellence is hard to argue with, and this ideal reflects the goals of athletes in honors.

Two or three times a year I am asked to talk with school children about the Ball State University Honors College and the value of excellence in education. With this young audience, the wonders of student-driven or experiential learning are unlikely to have the same resonance that they might with high school juniors or seniors. Usually, part of my solution to the danger of death-by-lecture is to begin by asking how many of them are athletes or members of bands (at the higher levels, marching band competition is very big in Indiana); invariably most of their hands go up. I then ask them to think about excellence and what you need to do in order to be good, or excellent, in sports or band. The answers tend to echo notions (differently expressed, to be sure) stressed by coaches and band leaders of “dedication, discipline, and desire”—talent, yes if possible, but hard work and attitude often compensate for deficiencies in raw talent. I go on to tell them that, if they understand this principle, they already know what it takes to succeed academically and that an honors college is a way for them eventually to make all that dedication, discipline, and desire pay off in the classroom.

It has seemed to me, in short, that there is a real conceptual connection between athletics and honors and probably among all pursuits of excellence. Anecdotally, I have reason to believe that the web is woven very closely indeed. One of the several hats I wear, besides classics professor and honors dean, reflects my role as institutional faculty representative to the NCAA and Mid-American Conference. In this role I interact regularly with coaches and athletes in many sports and with a wide range of academic backgrounds and abilities. My experience with athletes, even those with rather low GPAs, is that they are mainly hard-working students who mainly want to graduate and, as the NCAA puts it, “go pro in something other than sports.” At Ball State, the graduation rate for athletes exceeds that of the general population by over 15%, and honors athletes graduate and also persist through the honors diploma at the same rate as other honors students. Granted, I have found Division I athletes at Ball State to be a genre unto themselves, but honors athletes are another matter.

I invited two dozen athletes at Ball State who are active members of our honors college to come and talk, in exchange for pizza and wit, on a Wednesday evening. Twelve athletes came for this conversation, representing ten sports, from football to gymnastics, and a fairly typical range of majors. A similarly wide spread exists among majors for all athletes at Ball State (I check this every term) although it is unsurprising to find significant pockets of physically active, goal-oriented students majoring in exercise science or

business. My question to the honors athletes was a simple prompt: “How, if at all, do honors and athletics mix? And what’s in it for you to do both?” The “mix” part of the prompt was intended to evoke discussion of time conflicts; the benefits part looked toward why they are active in both, especially since honors is optional but athletics mandatory for some scholarships and for some the other way around.

Some of the answers met my expectations, and others didn’t. The students began by talking about the problems they face, mainly having to do with their majors (“the most stress I have comes from my double-major and trying to make that work with competitions”) and time management (“the bus-ride is a great way to read and think, but it’s not easy”; “my major is so focused on itself that I have less and less flexibility”). The frustrations include especially and perhaps surprisingly the mandatory study table; everyone is required to attend for a certain number of hours, and some students find it frustrating because “none of my stuff is there; I need to do work in the studio [or lab], not in a room full of people studying basic English or getting math help” or “sometimes we just sit there, or decide to dress up in formal or silly clothes.” Social pressures also arise from participation in sports; a lot of people, including faculty, “have a stereotype about us, the dumb jock” or “don’t much care about our sport themselves so can’t understand why we spend all this time on it.” But the conversation quickly left these issues behind. As far as honors is concerned, “Honors isn’t the problem.” The stress they feel comes from their majors or from social pressure or from faculty who don’t know they are honors students.

At approximately this point, the conversation turned. Following a pause, one honors athlete said, “You know, I think we get the same benefit from the honors college that everyone else gets.” The student meant that they appreciate the small classes and the interactions in them, where they have a “better relationship with faculty” and “understand more”; they enjoy having to figure things out rather than listen to lectures; they are grateful for the scheduling flexibility and the variety of choices available to them through the honors college; honors is “more flexible,” the professors are “more accessible,” and “we have a lot more freedom in our honors courses.” They enjoy the social mix among honors students, and, while they find the closeness of their teammates rewarding, they are glad not to spend all their time just with other athletes. They even enjoy having lots of reading, which “breaks up the day.”

When I asked them for a summarizing idea that we could take away from the conversation, they described themselves: “We hate to be idle; we’ve never been idle. This is not new for us; we have always been involved in everything. In high school we took AP classes and played three sports and were on the Quiz Bowl team and were members of the school orchestra or thespian

society.” They are, in short, used to difficult time management; they are over-achievers and always have been, both athletically and academically; and they are “used to sacrificing some things for other things.” Combining Division I athletics with their school work is hard, but “you still get results from working for what you want.”

Other university pursuits also make similar demands. For example, students in the College of Fine Arts (Theater, Music, Art) and a few other majors face requirements that occupy fully two thirds of the minimum credits for graduation. They practice or work in a studio on a schedule not much, if at all, less burdensome than an athlete’s. They sacrifice some opportunities in favor of this one and in favor of remaining in the honors college; many of the roughly two hundred honors students in the fine arts, most studying for a B.F.A, are involved in physical, performance-based forms of excellence. Even if their motivations are not precisely physical, they are competitive to a degree that can sometimes be worrisome; but in some ways, they have a real advantage over athletes. Their heavy requirements are built into their degree program, and they *can* (and expect to) “go pro” in their area of excellence. Also, our culture tends to value their contributions and appreciate their hard work in a way that we often do not when we think of athletes. Is it that we think one form of excellence is better than another, is more socially redeeming than another? Evidently, just like Xenophanes, we do.

The men and women with whom I spoke on a Wednesday evening amid pizza and wit are not just elite athletes; they are also elite students. They seek and achieve excellence in more than one endeavor among others who are excellent. They are conscious of the implications of choosing to do both, and they have integrated that choice into their daily lives; the consequences of this choice include sacrificing other options and accepting a degree of distance from some of their friends. In our conversation, the honors athletes reflected, I think, the idealized version of *mens sana in corpore sano* in intentional ways that go well beyond the standard notion of walking for health and studying hard. Moreover, unlike ancient Olympic athletes and to a more socially redeemable extent than their nineteenth-century forebears (again see Young), they are in fact amateurs.

My little seminar for schoolkids addresses the right issues to this extent: the connection between competitive excellence physically and intellectually is real. The connection is not for everyone, but honors athletes emerge as leaders in our program in the same proportion and to the same degree as honors actors or members of the jazz band or painters. We don’t recruit student-athletes specifically to the honors college whereas we do recruit fine arts majors—in fact, we recruit the student-athletes in the context of their majors rather than their sports—but the Ball State University Honors College

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provides a place for honors athletes that is otherwise not available, a place where they can express themselves and grow individually in at least two of the ways that have been most important to them for the previous years of their lives.

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Is *Mens Sana in Corpore Sano* a Concept Relevant to Honors Students?

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Belief in a “healthy mind, healthy body” is as relevant to twenty-first-century honors students as it was to their ancient counterparts. The ancient Greek athlete and the honors student-athlete both share the dedication and discipline needed to excel, and our culture still finds praiseworthy those who exhibit excellence in both mind and body. At the University of Nevada Las Vegas, the library is sponsoring a poster series promoting literacy by featuring student-athletes reading their favorite books. An honors college student athlete will be featured in the near future, a symbol of distinction somewhat akin to Myron’s *Discobolos* (Discus Thrower).

Yet we should examine the phrase in its literary context. The line comes from the Satires of the Roman poet Juvenal, known for his biting and bitter verses about the foibles and injustices of life during the *Pax Romana*. In his tenth Satire, Juvenal ponders the correct use of prayer—not for wealth, power, or revenge, but for a sound mind in a sound body (10.356). However, considering Juvenal’s cynical views, he might also be commenting on the rarity of a sound mind in a sound body. One thing is certain: Juvenal was not discussing the scholar-athlete.

Although *mens sana in corpore sano* is a Latin phrase, it evokes in our culture the Classical Greek ideal of the scholar-athlete. As the perfect combination of brains and brawn, the idealized image was held up for emulation by founders of the modern Olympics (Young, 22). Many in the nineteenth century considered the ancient Greek athlete with a mixture of awe and nostalgia, mistakenly viewing the Archaic and Classical ages of Greece as times of harmony between mind and body, when the gymnasium was a place to study philosophy and when Plato wrestled and competed at the games.

Athletic competition was an integral part of Greek society and identity. The Olympic games are traditionally thought to have begun in 776 BCE, just as Greece was climbing out of its Dark Ages. At nearly the same time, the first written accounts of the *Iliad* were published. In Book 23, Achilles organizes an athletic competition to honor his beloved fallen companion

Patroclus. From the beginning of the epic, Achilles has been outside the community of warriors, but through athletics he restores his humanity and becomes reconciled to the community.

Ancient Greek society valued success and competition—on the battlefield, in the political arena, the courts and at the games—and awarded winners many accolades. The lyric poet Pindar is known for his poems exalting the accomplishments and skills of winning athletes. Success at the games meant more than simply being memorialized by words; triumphant athletes might receive cash prizes and free meals for life as well as see their image replicated in bronze or marble and placed prominently in the polis.

Such adulation also brought criticism. A contemporary of Pindar, poet and philosopher Xenophanes, proclaimed that “the current custom of honoring strength more than wisdom is neither proper nor just” (qtd. in Miller, 183). Later, the provocative playwright Euripides wrote his famous diatribe on the cult of athletes: “Of the thousands of evils which exist in Greece, there is no greater evil than the race of athletes. . . . What man has ever defended the city of his father’s by winning a crown or wrestling well or running fast or throwing the discos far or planting an uppercut on the jaw of an opponent” (qtd. in Miller, 183).

Separated by more than two millennia, the modern college athlete receives both the exaltation and the fierce criticism of the ancient competitor. Like Greek athletics, college sports were once the realm of the elite. Individual and team sports began in the Ivy League schools. Richard Davies asserts that Yale invented football in the late nineteenth century (Davies, 66), and prior to World War II the biggest college weekend event was the Harvard-Yale football game.

In spite of the ideal of ethics in sports, early college football games were vicious, engendering concerns about the level of violence, the rowdy behavior after games, and the dubious academic achievements of some players. At first, many in academia demanded the abolition of football, and the Carnegie Foundation sponsored a 1929 study that resulted in a blistering indictment of college sports: “Apparently the ethical bearing of intercollegiate football contests and their scholastic aspects are of secondary importance to the winning of victories and financial success” (qtd. in Davies 147).

The United States is perhaps as fiercely competitive as ancient Greece, and no other country supports and finances collegiate athletics like the United States (Davies 62). Just as victors at the ancient games received antiquity’s form of media adulation, so do today’s NCAA superstars, aided by 24-hour sports television. Schools with high scholastic ranking—such as the University of Southern California, Stanford, and Notre Dame—also excel in sports.

Today, scholars of recreation and leisure studies, university administrators, sports commentators, and pundits voice endless concern about the role money and fame play in collegiate athletics. Many have criticized the monstrous budgets of college athletic departments and astronomical salaries paid to coaches while others worry about the lack of genuine educational skills offered to athletes as well as their often woeful graduation rates. With television contracts and the national spotlight focused on winning teams, the educational or intellectual mission becomes muted. Yet, like the ancient competitions, college athletics is an integral part of the American social fabric and identity.

Although perhaps not as biting as Euripides, the modern media stereotypes are still brutal. From the football players in the Marx Brothers comedy *Horse Feathers* to Moose, the dimwitted athlete in *Archie* comics, to countless television stereotypes of the dullard in a uniform, the modern college athlete may be idealized and rewarded but often not respected. Yet no other students are asked to miss a third of their classes to keep their scholarships. As audience was vital for the Greek athlete, so it is to the modern one, now numbering in the millions for televised high-profile games.

The phrase “healthy mind, healthy body” was not intended to refer to athletes, scholars, or honors students. The memorable words have been taken out of context and misused for eons. However, the phrase and its misappropriation do demonstrate the tension inherent in sports and athletic competitions as well as the human desire to find harmony between mind and body and to acknowledge excellence. Although improperly used, the Latin phrase is as valid today as it was in ancient Greece. Both the ancient and modern athletes demonstrate perseverance, hard work, and a suitable thick skin to weather criticism. Honors students in particular can, like Juvenal, appreciate the implicit irony in its misuse.

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IS MENS SANA IN CORPORE SANO A CONCEPT RELEVANT TO HONORS

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Honors and Intercollegiate Athletics

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Can there be anything more graceful and more athletically inspiring than a downhill slalom racer carving between the gates and proceeding at stunning speeds to vie for a medal? As a passionate skier, my personal favorites are downhill races and ski jumps, but whether it be ice dancing, figure skating competitions, triathlons, or even snowboarding, the recent Vancouver Olympics, in all of their international pomp and circumstance, reminds us of the place of athletic competitions in defining our humanness. It is exactly as the lead author, Sam Schuman, would have it in his well-written essay: the limits but also the glories of physical achievement, the role of hard work, and the importance of others in anything that we achieve, teamwork being essential to even individual events since there is always a support group behind even the single competitor.

How regrettable, then, that Professor Schuman chose to organize his essay, despite his opening disclaimers, around the medium of intercollegiate sports in his paean to athleticism. While it is true that he also gives a passing nod to intramural competitions and personal athletic prowess, the images that he conjures, at least to this Texas denizen, run more to “Saturday Night Lights” than to “Downhill Racer.” In taking the tack that he has, he has underlined, in my mind, one of the true catastrophes of American culture; in the process, the message of what athleticism can truly mean has been curiously obscured. The catastrophe is that we have become a society of observers, and this is perhaps nowhere more evident than in our relationship to intercollegiate athletics and its “grown-up” manifestation, professional sports. The fact, for example, that the recent Super Bowl activities registered the largest viewing audience in TV history, now surpassing the last television episode of *M*A*S*H*, is certainly worth noting (National Football League: Super Bowl XLIV website).

We historians look for societal markers of the status and health, past and present, of our national community, and for me the increasing popularity of Super Bowl Sunday, much like the establishment of the Guantanamo Bay Detention Center, marks a turning point in American civilization. Guantanamo threatens, from my perspective, the rule of law, a hallmark of

our national identity and character. Super Bowl Sunday is similarly enervating. In all of the hoopla surrounding the Super Bowl, we have taken what is essentially an utterly trivial pursuit (does it make one iota's worth of difference to the human situation whether the New Orleans Saints or the Indianapolis Colts win or lose?) played out by grossly overpaid performers, and we have turned it into an artificially constructed "cosmic event." Is even one child helped by this competition to climb out of poverty or ignorance? Is a senior citizen provided with even a modicum of improvement to her well-being in her declining years? Is any nation nudged toward greater accommodation and a more peaceful co-existence with its neighbors? Is any municipality (with the possible exception of Miami) assisted in its economic doldrums? (Vancouver, just for the record, has been left with a billion dollar tax hangover.) We are essentially saying, as a society, that it is perfectly fine, first of all, to focus nationally and obsessively on a completely inconsequential occurrence and, secondly, to be thoroughly passive observers in the process. Athleticism has become simply a spectator phenomenon. And where does it all start? I do not need to stress that, as Pavlovian mammals, we are conditioned to "Superbowlism" in our college or even our high school years. We are encouraged to believe that the victory of my university team over your university team is a matter of supreme importance. It simply is not.

But, one may argue, those fellows on the playing field ennoble us by showing us what spectacular achievement and close teamwork can accomplish. Hardly. First of all, very few of us play football (or basketball, or baseball . . .) past our early twenties, and very few of us played systematically even before those years. On our campus there are 350 student athletes out of a student body of roughly 30,000. The ratio of participants to spectators is a little better in high school, but not much. Early on, we have been socialized into being passive observers. Since the Super Bowl and its prequel, intercollegiate athletics, are strictly vicarious athletic experiences, "virtual" athletic realities rather than the real thing for their audiences, any lessons learned, I would submit, are similarly ephemeral.

As a second point, probably no more than a handful of our fellow Americans will be motivated by intercollegiate athletics, by the Super Bowl, or even by the Olympics for that matter to get off the couch and to do something physical. We have become a grossly obese and indolent nation. From my perspective, the rise of spectator sports, abetted by all manner of electronic conveyance mediums, has greatly contributed to this deplorable state of affairs. Just sit in the DFW airport and look at your fellow citizens walking by to gain some appreciation for this fact (US Department of Health and Human Services).

Finally, and most perniciously, as educators we can document the harm that collegiate spectator sports have done to what used to be a reasonably worthy pursuit: educating students. Remember those 350 student athletes to whom I alluded? The budget for athletic enterprises at my university jumped from \$45 million to \$54 million this last year, a figure that does not include the efforts to build a new \$25-million addition to the \$100-million stadium (used seven times a year for university purposes) that itself was completed just five years ago. We continue, of course, to service the bonded indebtedness for these facilities and for the relatively new \$65-million basketball arena, the new baseball diamond, and the rest of a list that keeps growing alarmingly. The academic units here, parenthetically, have been asked to give back 5% this year and 5% next fiscal year after having already experienced deep cuts in many of their previously anticipated funds.

But, the special pleading asserts, athletics brings in donor dollars, it cements alumni loyalty, and it is a key marketing tool for the university. While this is undeniably the case to a limited extent, it has been demonstrated repeatedly that athletic programs, at least in the “big name universities” but seemingly everywhere, are woefully expensive and consistently draining of scarce educational resources. Organized athletic efforts simply do not come close to paying their way, either through donations or revenue generated. We can argue about the marketing piece of the equation, but the bottom line at many schools is glaringly obvious. Intercollegiate athletics is literally devastating the educational missions of the universities in which they are prominent (see Murray Sperber’s indictment in *Beer and Circus*).

Well, the final plea goes, these events enhance school spirit and add to character development. Not even close. The “spirited fans” at many institutions have a justifiable reputation for reprehensible behaviors at sporting events. Often alcohol-fueled, they rush the field inappropriately; they shout fan language that regularly draws admonitions in local papers from embarrassed citizens; they boo the entry of the opposing team; and at least at our sporting events, they throw food onto the athletic pitch (in our case, tortillas) to express their disdain for referees and opponents. All this falls far short of “character enhancing.”

Nor are universities unique in these matters. The same story is repeated at athletic events throughout the nation—and abroad. While living in London, I resided in Tottenham, where the Hotspurs, a local football (soccer) team, held sway. Regularly, when the Hotspurs won, local fans trashed High Street in celebration; when the Hotspurs lost, the local fans trashed High Street in frustration. European football hooliganism is now a cliché. Spectator sports, it would seem, hardly inculcate anything noble in their spectating adherents (for an elaboration, see Christopher Hitchens, “Fool’s Gold”).

No, Professor Schuman, intercollegiate (and professional) athletics has much to discredit it. There are, moreover, too many Tiger Woodses among its practitioners at all levels. Athletes and their highly organized competitions should not be held up as universal exemplars. They most certainly should not be compared to the efforts that honors exerts on campuses nationally. If anything, campus athletics is seriously inimical to honors programs and honors ideals.

Rather, I suggest that we should reframe your panegyric completely. To be sure, the mind and the body are inextricably linked. As many of us in NCHC have been able to note personally, if there is a weakness in honors efforts nationwide (besides that omnipresent lack of resources), it is that they are geared almost exclusively to the intellectual world. We have exceptions—such as the offering of “Ropes” courses and the encouragement of some honors students to participate in intramural sports—as you correctly note (but only in passing). I would, however, make a plea that honors, with its current one-dimensional emphasis on academic group achievement and its encouragement of superlative individual intellectual accomplishment, should extend this focus into areas of physical endeavor as well. Honors should become an arena where we encourage and celebrate the athleticism of our student participants as well as their inevitably superior academic achievement. We should begin to stress the importance of rigorous **personal participation** in athletic and physical endeavors of all types. It can be cross-country skiing, backpacking, early-morning swimming, or pick-up basketball games. It can be jogging five miles through frozen fields at sunset, or it can be, as it was for Milo of Crotona, lifting a bull as the little rascal gets heavier by the day. It can be anything that pushes our bodies and (as medicine tells us) by extension our minds to their maximum as we search for a **personal, participatory** best effort. Teamwork, individual accomplishment, learning one’s limits, and coming to value hard work can all be inculcated even more thoroughly through the inclusion of athletic efforts; this is where sports becomes ennobling rather than patently destructive on a personal, societal, and educational level.

Personal participation, then, is a dimension that one might wish Professor Schuman had emphasized in a more balanced presentation of his tribute to the glories of athletic prowess. One can only wish that Milo of Crotona had prevailed, in the presentation, over the BCS-winning University of Alabama football squad. Maybe Milo, much as sportscasters and circus-promoting college administrators already do too readily, needed to sling around even more bull to enhance his celebrity and get the attention of an audience valuing brawn over brains.

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Research Essays

Learning Outcomes Assessment in Honors: An Appropriate Practice?

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In its ideal form, systematic assessment is a legitimate way for honors programs and colleges to gauge strengths and weaknesses, measure the effect of various learning environments, and evoke positive institutional change based on objective, empirical data. Such assessment can take two main forms. *Programmatic assessment* (also known as program evaluation) is an extremely useful tool for gathering evidence and evaluating whether an honors program embodies the NCHC's basic characteristics (Sederberg 159) and/or meets its own institutional goals, e.g., higher rates of retention, graduation, graduate/professional school acceptance, and successful competition for national fellowships. Furthermore, as Otero and Spurrier argue (5), this often-required process can offer honors programs a way to improve, tailor the assessment mechanism, demonstrate program strengths, and garner financial support. Like it or not, in these competitive times programmatic assessment has become a part of American higher education, and honors programs or colleges that do not engage in it, or at least shape it to their own purpose and design, risk alienating accountability-driven entities on and off campus.

While honors programs are certainly not immune to such self-interested concerns, our true bottom line is providing students with an enriched education that cultivates learning at the very highest scholarly levels. To this end, the second main type of assessment, *learning outcomes assessment*, attempts to measure what college students learn as a result of participation in honors and also to distinguish the unique characteristics of an honors education. This essay will focus on the second type, highlighting some limitations to the assessment of learning in honors. First, we will examine limitations in the methodology and logic of learning assessment from a behavioral science perspective, raising concerns about what we are truly measuring and how we are evaluating, interpreting, and applying this information. Second, we will raise

important professional concerns about the necessity of learning assessment and the impact, if any, it has on the basic tenet of academic freedom.

GENERAL LIMITATIONS TO THE MEASUREMENT OF LEARNING

Human learning is a complex set of intertwined neural processes; it is a vast, adaptive, higher-order cognitive mechanism that consists of numerous levels of serial and parallel information encoding, processing, consolidation, retention, manipulation, and recall. For over a hundred years, behavioral scientists from Ebbinghaus to Skinner to Kandel have dealt with the immensity and ambiguity of learning by dissecting it and measuring discrete and often simple behaviors potentially dependent on learning, e.g., syllable recall, key pecks, and gill withdrawal. Scientists are reductionists. Breaking extremely complicated phenomena such as learning into smaller parts allows for easier, systematic study. It is understood, though, that such limited measurements only hint at the tip of a very big iceberg. This focus on small details in order to approach large, complicated topics partially explains why learning has been of such great scientific interest for well over a hundred years to countless researchers across a wide variety of fields and disciplines. Learning possesses numerous, intricate layers and can't be limited to any one single measure.

Furthermore, by focusing on publicly observable behaviors, behavioral scientists can empirically measure concrete data. Indeed, the classic behaviorist definition of learning is a relatively permanent change in behavior. Learning is an invisible psychological construct that can only be measured through related behavior. Unfortunately, we can't pop the hood and directly observe the mental process of learning. Even when using advanced visualization technology such as magnetic resonance imaging, what we are really measuring is regional blood flow, another related behavior. A behavioral measurement is a stand-in for some underlying cognitive process and may only encapsulate a small portion of this process.

We can only indirectly witness learning via behavior. The trick is using our professional judgment and logic to pick the best set of behaviors to measure, which raises the issue of measurement validity. Validity, in its psychometric sense, describes how accurately a tool measures what it purports to measure (Moss et al. 112). For example, if you attempt to measure a person's height by taking his temperature with a thermometer, you will have a measurement very low in validity. Alternatively, if you use a bathroom scale to measure height, your validity will go up slightly because taller people *tend* to weigh more than shorter people. Validity is a matter of degree ranging from 0 to 100% accuracy. Using a bathroom scale to measure height isn't perfect, but it will get you closer to the ballpark than a thermometer.

Invoking another example, an IQ test may tap into some aspects of intelligence and therefore be partially valid, but it is not a 100% accurate index of intellectual prowess and potential, unaffected by say, socioeconomic status. In other words, validity is the extent to which the behavior we have chosen correlates with the underlying construct, but correlation does not imply causation. Thus, any simple measurement of learning is unlikely to be 100% complete or valid because all tests of learning have a built-in level of error resulting in less-than-perfect accuracy.

Thus, the reductionist/behaviorist approach is a tradeoff, providing greater internal validity but less generalizability. Behavioral scientists gain insight and objectivity by dissecting learning into smaller parts and studying related behaviors, but they knowingly lose focus on the bigger picture. In other words, while single scientific measures of learning are useful and interesting, by definition they provide a limited and potentially inaccurate view of overall learning. This is not a criticism of behavioral science but rather a logical premise and limitation of experimental methodology that is often overlooked when standardized tests or rubrics are developed as expedient measures of collegiate learning. According to Gardner, the developmental psychologist who has advocated for multiple intelligences, there is

. . . a bias towards focusing on those human abilities or approaches that are readily testable. If it can't be tested, it sometimes seems, it is not worth paying attention to. My feeling is that assessment can be much broader, much more humane than it is now and that psychologists should spend less time ranking people and more time trying to help them. (23)

Accurately summarizing learning—especially the breadth and depth of learning that occurs across four years in a collegiate honors program—in a few simple quantitative measures is a difficult task to say the least and one that we can and probably should avoid.

LIMITATIONS TO STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT

Given the basic limitations of all learning measurements noted above, we should cautiously and skeptically view any single or standardized assessment of “collegiate learning” that doesn’t include, at bare minimum, a wide variety of observations across several years. However, such standardized tests not only exist but have been promoted by officials within both the Bush and Obama administrations (Spellings Commission Report; “Assessment disconnect”), and are voluntarily used by some institutions to reveal “learning,” e.g., the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress or MAPP (renamed the ETS Proficiency Profile in December 2009). The basic rules of behavioral

science tend to be forgotten as the job of assessment is foisted on beleaguered institutions and unprepared faculty (most of whom are not trained social scientists) trying to satisfy the demands of external agencies questionably seeking transparency in the collegiate learning process.

While a standardized measurement may satisfy these pressures, it oversimplifies learning in a one-size-fits-all package. Another way to look at this problem, if we may borrow from Long, is that if you condense or distill learning down to something very simple, all you are going to measure is simple learning, and this is what such standardized forms of learning assessment tend to do by definition and design. Tests of this nature tend to suffer from construct under-representation; they are too narrow, failing to fully encapsulate all facets of learning, especially the higher forms of learning aspired to by honors faculty and their students. Nonetheless, some universities require pending graduates to complete such tests assessing students' knowledge within their subject area and also within the general education core. Honors students are expected to score higher on both tests than their non-honors colleagues, but such low, quantitative standards seem especially antithetical to honors education.

In addition to representing merely basic levels of learning, such tests can become a political football. Which knowledge and skills are important? What is important to memorize and what isn't? Who sets the agenda? To what extent are faculty members involved in the decision? Again, any simple test is extremely limited in its ability to assess overall learning at a wide variety of institutions with a high degree of validity. Interestingly, though, the degree of validity of such tests (which is often not known by those using them) is usually estimated via comparison to a real world measurement of learning, namely students' grades, a measure that external agencies don't accept (Educational Testing Service, "Validity . . .").

Not only do tests of this type tend to measure merely factual knowledge (as compared to understanding, reasoning, or creative ability), but they do so in a manner that lacks meaning to the student. Because these tests are usually given at the end of a collegiate career and usually have no impact on grade point average, students have little extrinsic incentive to perform well on the test and little or no opportunity to learn from it. Low scores on such standardized forms of assessment might indicate poor learning or the frustration of seniors who have to pay their parking tickets, not to mention library fines, and take two more tests before they can get their diploma in the mail. Thus, in addition to not fully gauging learning, such measures are subject to confounding variables that are unrelated to learning but can greatly affect so-called "learning" scores.

Additionally, many of the standardized assessments that seemingly possess high face validity are given at the end of a collegiate career without the benefit of a comparison pre-test. Such post-tests might help institutions or external agencies categorize or sort students based on preexisting abilities but provide little or no glimpse of what was acquired during college. In this scenario, one can assess whether students are meeting some limited, static, absolute standard but learn nothing about the growth or change in the students across their academic career or beyond. Furthermore, this less than ideal practice raises concerns regarding temporal validity; even if a single test could demonstrate the complicated array of student learning from start to finish with 100% accuracy, it could make no claims of validity five or ten or fifty years from now. In other words, such a measure cannot gauge continued reflection, intellectual growth, and curiosity across the lifespan of students, nor can an assessment snapshot taken at the end of a collegiate career accurately predict the effect of a college education at the age of twenty-two, much less seventy-two.

The goal of a good education is a lifetime of continuous learning and critical thinking. Education isn't just about the memorization of narrow, immediate, transitory knowledge and vocational skills; it is a habit of the mind that keeps us intellectually nimble, offers a way to adapt to an ever-changing environment, and prepares us for a vocational landscape that doesn't currently exist. Education, especially the form to which we aspire within the honors community, should obviously go far beyond basic competency and literacy. While standardized tests might appease external agencies and ease the pain of their assessment mandates, this streamlining dilutes and belittles the significance of learning.

LIMITATIONS TO OTHER FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

Our objections to simplified or standardized forms of learning outcomes assessment are not new and should come as no surprise to those of us in the honors community. Indeed, some in the honors community have opted for the use of more holistic, qualitative, customized forms of assessment such as learning portfolios and theses (Zubizarreta). Such autonomously designed forms of evaluation may provide a viable alternative to standardized assessment, yielding more meaningful data (to professors and students) and allowing faculty members to rethink and reformulate their teaching approach. By integrating and examining multiple forms of evidence, as in a learning portfolio, we provide a more robust picture of higher forms of learning. From a behavioral science standpoint, multiple measures of learning (especially across time, disciplines, and observers) greatly increases reliability and

allows for a more complete and potentially more accurate prediction of learning.

But, with or without portfolios, assessment is still often objectionable to some professors outside (and within) the social sciences. Many humanists have concerns about such nascent assessment techniques, arguing that Homer's epic verse does not lend itself to such measurement, that no one should subject Shakespeare to a rubric, that the purpose of studying philosophy and theology at the highest levels is not to generate "learning outcomes," and that a student's interpretation and understanding of such work cannot be condensed into a simple measurement. Assessment ideas are alien to many professionals in the humanities, who may view the human condition as Hamlet did (or parodied):

What [a] piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving, how express and admirable in action, how like an angel in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world; the paragon of animals . . .
(II.2.303–307)

Wrong we may be (and Hamlet certainly had his doubts), but to force the creative arts, the humanities, and perhaps even the natural sciences into a social science paradigm is to privilege one view in the university and do disservice to the others. Even customized assessment techniques, which admirably attempt to collect more direct evidence of learning, fail to capture the essence of learning in some fields, rendering them no better if not worse than traditional grading practices. Objective assessment rubrics that define student deliverables may work very well in some situations or disciplines (and faculty members should be free to try them in an effort to improve instruction and optimize learning), but whether they are better than traditional techniques is highly questionable.

Critics might argue that no one is forcing a unitary form of assessment upon faculty. Rather, accrediting agencies are encouraging faculty to tailor or create more objective assessment techniques that yield more visible evidence of student learning. Such an approach, even if not mandated, has pitfalls, though, because higher forms of learning yield less overtly and immediately to demonstration and are thus assessed less frequently or accurately. Therefore, as Gardner suggests (23), such accountability practices potentially could decrease standards over time, insidiously lowering the bar of expectations we have for our graduates to basic skills and knowledge. In other words, by gradually simplifying our rubrics or measurements to better capture "learning," we ignore higher and more elusive forms of learning vital to scholarship. It's a case of the tail (or test) wagging the dog.

Despite these methodological concerns, large portions of the academic world seem to have accepted the inevitability of assessment. Institutions are scrambling to deal with these new assessment demands, forming committees, hiring consultants and gurus, creating new administrative posts, and spending countless dollars on this thorny issue. An obvious question is: why reinvent the wheel? Across eight semesters, an honors student will take approximately forty different courses with forty different grades comprising their grade point average, thus providing forty opportunities for the collective wisdom of a variety of different professors to reliably measure the many faces of the behemoth that we call learning. When viewed in this light, assessment data are redundant at best and limited in their usefulness.

However, instead of using grade point averages, accrediting agencies seeking increased transparency in the evaluation of student learning demand “objective” student learning outcome data. They want to see tangible evidence of learning demonstrated directly by the student. Why is this necessary? For many, many years, teachers at all levels have engaged in assessment of student work, codified with grades. Yet, accrediting agencies do not accept course grades as evidence of learning even though they are used as a yardstick to assess the validity of standardized tests like the MAPP. Instead, they want institutions to demonstrate that the course grades given by professors are based on objective tests. Do the accrediting agencies go too far? Is the demand for objective tests an infringement on academic freedom or a reasonable request given grade inflation and the proliferation of dubious for-profit universities?

The use of grades as an assessment tool is certainly not without controversy. Some in the pro-assessment camp imply that professors are unable to grade objectively because of a built-in conflict of interest since student learning is linked to evaluation of teaching effectiveness. This is an interesting argument because it too touches on a basic tenet of behavioral methodology: experimenter bias. The behavior and evaluation of subjects (or, in this case, students) can be greatly affected by the bias or expectations of the experimenter (in this case, professor). Thus, one must strive to remove this potentially confounding variable (and the temptation to inflate grades) when measuring learning. However, linking teacher effectiveness to assessment scores of student learning firmly places the professor in this quandary. Traditionally, professors used to be third-party guides, providing students with learning opportunities and feedback along the way. By directly linking assessment and evaluation of teaching, you make the instructor partial and, at worst, create a system where it is advantageous to teach to some limited test or rubric customized by the teacher to “objectively” demonstrate learning (or a simplified version thereof). In this case, the problem of teacher bias is created by the

requirement of assessment. Grades may not be the optimal way to assess learning, but neither are assessment techniques.

Furthermore, the task of assessment distracts faculty from their primary scholarly duties: teaching and research. Ironically, this kind of distraction runs counter to the business-like demands for increased faculty accountability and productivity. If faculty are constantly engaged in assessment exercises (or even, as here, pointing out flaws with assessment), they are by definition spending less time preparing for class and doing research within their specific field.

Finally, even if assessment data of student learning outcomes were completely valid, comprehensive, and unique, it still would not provide specific data about teaching. Even if we can accurately measure learning from multiple, diverse sources via grades or formal learning outcomes assessments, we still do not have a direct measure of teaching. While professors certainly do have some control over student learning, it is only indirect; what we have much greater control over is our approach in the classroom, how we teach. We would be remiss if we didn't admit that there is a potentially strong relationship between student learning and teaching, but our point is that assessment in its current mandated forms doesn't directly measure teaching effectiveness.

Identifying a deficit in student learning does not necessarily indicate a problem with instruction. Furthermore, if we do see a valid problem with student learning related to poor instruction, our assessment tool tells us nothing about how to change teaching to improve the situation; it advocates trial and error based on questionable data. We often hear from external agencies that we need to focus on student learning, but, in doing so, we mostly focus on the assessment mechanism instead of teaching. Good assessment is not the same as good teaching. We shouldn't confuse the two and we shouldn't neglect the one behavior we have direct control over: how we teach. Instead of customizing assessment rubrics to better reveal "learning," we should focus on optimizing teaching and maintaining the highest scholarly standards in the classroom.

The goal is, or should be, improving teaching to optimize learning. No single approach to teaching works equally well in all situations, at all times, with all students, at every institution, so professional judgment and teacher autonomy are crucial. Statistical analyses can take a dizzying amount of data and reveal patterns and trends; descriptive statistics of learning outcomes data can reveal that students are not meeting certain basic goals or standards in a class; but statistics compress data, providing information about some imaginary average person well after semester's end. Many would argue that the best teachers vary and tailor their approach to different students during the

term, respecting the diversity of perspectives and learning styles. Probably most do, and probably most succeed, so we need to question the so-called crisis in higher education and seek out any direct evidence that American higher education is broken as a result of poor teaching.

ASSESSMENT AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

As scholars, the *idea* of assessment, evaluation, and improvement should not sound surprising or threatening because this is what we all normally do every day. No matter what our discipline or academic field, we share our ideas and approaches with others, offering them up for public scrutiny and challenge via conference presentations, exhibitions, performances, peer-reviewed journals, and books. As professors, we engage in a similar, albeit sometimes less formal, practice in the classroom; we tailor and strive to improve our teaching based on interaction with and feedback from students, peers, and the literature.

For hundreds of years, academics in search of truth and wisdom have engaged in this traditional process of dissemination, critique, reflection, and revision; as a result, the academy and many of our fields have progressed without the benefit of external oversight. Even the critical Spellings Commission Report admits in its preamble that “most Americans don’t see colleges and universities as a trouble spot in our educational system. After all, American higher education has been the envy of the world for years” (vi). The report cites, as evidence of success, the number and variety of U.S. institutions of higher learning, the increasingly open access to their campuses, their role in advancing the frontiers of knowledge through research discoveries, the new forms of teaching and learning which emerge from them, and the number of Nobel Prizes and Rhodes Scholarships earned by Americans.

Nonetheless, the *practice* of assessment emerged in the mid-1980s and has transitioned away from an individual academic exercise in self-reflection and improvement to an institutional requirement, mandated by external accrediting agencies (Miller). In programs such as nursing or accounting, perhaps assessment is a vital aspect of quality control overseen by the discipline. However, in the liberal arts, in which most honors programs are based, the need for assessment is not necessarily a matter of health or wealth. Even so, honors programs are increasingly being required to engage in outcomes-based learning assessment.

Universities used to generate new ideas and create models that were adopted by those outside the ivory tower, from art and entertainment to industry and politics. However, the modern university, perhaps lacking its old confidence, turns again and again to the corporate world for many of its practices, including so-called accountability. Politicians, claiming to speak for the

“consumers” of higher education who spend ever-increasing sums for college tuition (as state contributions dwindle), have in many cases required colleges and universities that receive state and federal funding, which means just about every institution of higher learning, to show transparency and accountability, and the schools, urged by accreditation agencies, have decided that assessment of student learning is the best response to critics and consumers alike. Through reaccreditation, budgeting decisions, curriculum approval, and other means, pressure has been exerted on academy members to embrace the culture and practice of assessment.

At the root of this accountability and assessment movement is a lack of trust in faculty and an erosion of academic freedom. For most faculty members, academic freedom is seen as the right, earned through the long and rigorous process of tenure review, of a professor to present potentially unpopular or controversial material and arguments in our classes and research without censure from university authorities. When academic freedom was first defined for American institutions of higher learning in the early twentieth century, academic leaders attempted to break away from the master-servant model that had previously characterized the relationship between administrators and faculty. In the United States, academic freedom was first formally defined in 1915 by the American Association of University Professors’ (AAUP) *Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure*. According to this document, university faculties are “appointees” of the legal governing authority “but not in any proper sense” its “employees” (295). “[O]nce appointed, the scholar has professional functions to perform in which the appointing authorities have neither competency nor moral right to intervene” (295). The definition was revised and reissued in 1940 by the AAUP and the Association of American Colleges as the *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*. It states in part:

Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.

Academic freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning. It carries with it duties correlative with rights. (3)

These definitions mainly concern First Amendment free speech protection, itself vulnerable after recent court decisions (AAUP, “Protecting”). However,

many of us assume that these protections extend to content, method, and evaluation within our courses. Instructors define assignments, evaluate student work in accord with fairness and the practices of our disciplines, and assign a final grade according to a scale established by our institutions. Under course-based assessment, however, instructors are advised by assessment officers or committees to adopt certain types of assignments, to devise rubrics for evaluating these assignments, and then to use the data to measure student learning. We have pointed out some of the concerns that many non-social scientists have with this approach. But our point is that, even if you believe in the value of such an approach for your course, the individual instructor should be the one to make the determination, not an administrator, committee, or outside agency. Imposition of a specific educational philosophy or practice from outside a discipline—be it from a politician, an administrator, or a faculty colleague—is an infringement of academic freedom.

CONCLUSION

Our position is that program metrics provide tangible evidence on which to base institutional change, but similarly acquired evidence about *learning* is not nearly as useful given limitations of validity. Objective assessments of learning, borrowed from the social sciences, are interesting theoretical tools that shouldn't necessarily cross over to the practice of teaching or policy-making in all disciplines. Learning outcomes assessment data can suffer from low validity; couple this problem with misinterpretation, and you can end up with a skewed view of learning at your institution over time. Given the limited nature of some forms of assessment data, the academy should resist the outside pressure to assimilate and adopt easy measures of learning that fail to capture the complete essence of our complex fields of study.

Methodologically questionable assessment techniques ranging from standardized tests to course-based rubrics have been hastily and redundantly adopted to reveal learning already demonstrated through traditional academic work. As a profession, we should use the best evidence available to improve teaching and learning, which are our passion, our calling. While many see assessment as a panacea, a perfectly accurate index of learning, we have argued that all tests vary in their degree of validity; institutions and accrediting bodies must avoid making rash decisions based on them. If we base changes to teaching on oversimplified measurements of learning, then we are by definition teaching to a sub-standard test. If the measurements are flawed or merely tap into simple types of learning, we may think learning has increased when, in reality, we've abandoned common sense, logic, and autonomous professional judgment in favor of an externally applied practice we don't know how to use responsibly.

LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT IN HONORS

Furthermore, simple, untested, and questionably valid assessment techniques are not a good measure of, or substitute for, good teaching. Professors should continue to strive for excellent teaching and optimal learning for each individual student, but they should be free to do this in an appropriate professional manner consistent with best practices in their discipline. We should continue fostering intellectual diversity and creativity instead of worrying about lowest-common-denominator accountability scores. We should retain the academic freedom that has contributed to the great success of the American higher education system. Innovation is the product of freedom and diversity. Requiring faculty to assess learning in a specific way is the same as telling faculty how to teach within their respective disciplines; it is a slippery slope and an erosion of academic freedom undermining the best traditions and continued success of the academy.

While the practice of learning outcomes assessment is fraught with limitations and controversy, we don't want to leave the reader with the impression that we are against progressive ideas leading to academic innovation. Indeed, we hope that this paper will stimulate further inquiry on this topic within the honors community. Assessment is an interesting idea worth additional discussion and exploration, but, as often practiced, it is subject to many flaws, restricts our understanding of learning, has not been empirically demonstrated to lead to optimal instruction, and unnecessarily imposes a particular pedagogical approach on professionals in a wide variety of disciplines.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is partially based on a roundtable discussion held at the 2009 NCHC conference in Washington, DC (Carnicom, S., Snyder, C., Bruce, K., Engel, S., Lanier, G., & Salas, A. 2009. Honors assessment: A valid exercise? Annual meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council, Washington, DC). Many thanks are due to our co-authors and participants for a thoughtful and stimulating exchange. Many thanks are due as well to Phil Mathis, professor emeritus and former dean of the honors college at MTSU, for his helpful comments.

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Information and Communication Technology Literacy among First-Year Honors and Non-Honors Students: An Assessment

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Today's students should be able to retrieve and critically evaluate information from digital media; to organize, interpret, and apply the information; and to compose an effective presentation that responds to a clearly articulated research problem and communicates to a particular audience. These skills have been of special concern to the honors community, as evidenced by the 2009 JNCHC Forum on "Honors in the Digital Age." Development of these twenty-first-century competencies, called information and communication technology (ICT) literacy, is the object of a curriculum enhancement project underway in the honors program, jointly with general education, at Louisiana Tech University. Recently, in the project's initial phase, an assessment of student performance was conducted using the Educational Testing Service's (ETS) *iSkills* test. This article reports results which respond to the following questions: How ICT-literate are the university's freshmen? Do first-year honors students demonstrate greater proficiency in these skills than non-honors freshmen? How do Louisiana Tech's honors freshmen compare to those at other four-year colleges?

The Louisiana Tech University Honors Program has grown significantly in the last few years. The program currently counts between 460 and 480 students in its program, with a little more than half of those students majoring in science and engineering. Students are admitted to the program as freshmen if they meet one of two criteria: a 26 composite ACT score or a ranking in the top 10% of their graduating class. Our program is reworking its curriculum to place greater emphasis on undergraduate research, that is, to focus on the process of generating knowledge and to develop students' college-level competencies in original inquiry, evidentiary analysis, critical use of information, and purposeful communication in writing or public presentation. The

program is promoting information and communication technology literacy because the abilities to marshal and interpret sources in the digital environment of the twenty-first century are indispensable to undergraduate research, expected by institutions of higher learning, desired by employers, and required by accrediting agencies.

Funded by a Traditional Enhancement Program grant from the Louisiana Board of Regents Support Fund, principal investigator Brian Etheridge, Director of the Louisiana Tech Honors Program and Chair of the University's General Education Requirements Committee, assisted by co-principal investigator Boris Teske, College of Liberal Arts Liaison Librarian, administered the ETS *iSkills* test to a total of 97 freshmen and 73 juniors during fall quarter 2009. The object was to pilot a nationally renowned, standardized performance assessment to inform curriculum enhancement: to establish a baseline for cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis through repeated and multiple authentic assessments, such as the evaluation of portfolios; to identify practices proven to be effective; and to adapt and apply them to general education using the honors program as a "laboratory" or test bed for curricular innovation.

THE ASSESSMENT

The *iSkills* test was a product of evidence-centered design: performed tasks elicit test takers' behaviors, and inference from this evidence reveals and estimates their proficiencies (Egan & Katz; Katz; Somerville, Smith & Macklin). Originally developed in 2003 as the ETS's *ICT Literacy Test*, *iSkills* has been emended and replaced since November 2009 by the *iCritical Thinking™ Certification* offered jointly by the ETS and Certiport. The ETS has also developed concordance tables to enable reliable comparisons of *iSkills* and *iCritical Thinking Certification* scores (Educational Testing Services 2009). The seven proficiencies and fifteen specific tasks of *iSkills* were derived from and closely aligned with the standards, performance indicators, and learning outcomes of the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (Association of College & Research Libraries 2000); see Figure 1.

This assessment instrument was Web-based and delivered online to client institutions through a secure browser. Unlike multiple-choice standardized tests, *iSkills* was a performance assessment. It was a timed test, taking a total of seventy-five minutes. Equipped with a PC, test takers responded to fourteen short tasks, each targeting a single skill, and one longer task targeting two skills. Providing opportunities to demonstrate problem-solving skills and measuring the application of knowledge, *iSkills* engaged students in interactive tasks based on authentic, real-world scenarios. Test takers,

Figure 1: Information & Communication Technology Literacy Skill Areas

Define	Formulate a research statement to facilitate the search for information
Access	Find and retrieve information from a variety of sources
Evaluate	Judge the usefulness and sufficiency of information for a specific purpose
Manage	Organize information for later retrieval
Integrate	Summarize or otherwise synthesize information from a variety of sources
Create	Generate or adapt online information to express and support a point
Communicate	Adapt information for an audience or for delivery via a different medium (e.g., e-mail, slide presentation, text document, spreadsheet)

using simulated software rather than demonstrating proficiency with any particular proprietary package, queried a Web search engine, extracted information from a database, created spreadsheets, composed email research reports, and performed other digital research and composition.

The ETS offered two versions of *iSkills*. The Core version, for students beginning the first year of postsecondary education, comprised more straightforward scenarios and fewer choices. The Advanced version, for rising juniors or transfers transitioning to upper-division coursework, measured ICT literacy readiness for advanced study and implemented assessments of how well programs develop student proficiencies over time.

The ETS communicated a variety of reports to the test administrator. A spreadsheet tabulated *iSkills* test takers' scores as well as the demographic and educational data each supplied in the Background Questionnaire. Two reports provided aggregate data useful for demonstrating strengths and weaknesses of cohorts or subgroups defined by attributes such as class year or academic major. An Institutional Skill Area Report for each cohort of test takers compared their overall performance in the seven skill areas to the national average. An Aggregate Task Performance Feedback Report for each cohort of test takers, requiring a minimum sample size of fifty, compared to the national average their frequency of giving the best, highest-scoring response to each task. Finally, the Individual Performance Feedback Report documented each student's overall score and responses to the tasks. These individual reports could be used in advising and guidance for each student's decision making about a major, prerequisites, placement, need for improvement or remediation,

satisfaction of graduation requirements, and readiness for the demands of graduate study or a profession.

RESULTS

During the first two weeks of October 2009, a total of 97 Louisiana Tech freshmen, including 54 honors students, took the Core version of *iSkills*. The Advanced version was administered to 73 juniors, of whom 33 were honors students. This study is confined to the assessment of the freshmen.

Expectations of student performance in this pilot test were low. Nationally, only 39% of four-year college freshmen tested with *iSkills* between 2005 and 2008 met or exceeded the Core version’s cut score of 165, the minimal standard for satisfactory performance, out of a range of 0–300 (Tannenbaum & Katz 2008). Louisiana Tech’s non-honors freshmen met or exceeded the cut score more often (44.2%) than the national average with an average score of 149.8. Honors freshmen passed at double their rate (88.9%) with an average score of 179.2.

Figure 2: Louisiana Tech Freshmen Attainment of iSkills Core Cut Score

Freshmen	Did not meet	Met	Exceeded	% at or above
Honors (n=54)	6 (11.1%)	1 (1.9%)	47 (87%)	88.9%
Non-Honors (n=43)	24 (55.8%)	5 (11.6%)	14 (32.6%)	44.2%

We received from the ETS an Aggregate Task Performance Report comparing 53 of the 54 honors and 42 of the 43 non-honors freshmen from Louisiana Tech to four-year college freshmen nationwide. This report refers only to percentages of test takers who responded with the best answer. Bar graphs below represent these comparisons of freshmen responses given while performing the fifteen specific tasks in the seven skill areas.

Individual reports of each Louisiana Tech student’s performance document not only when the test takers selected best answers (scored 1.0) but also the responses that were partially correct or somewhat appropriate (scored 0.5) and those that were inappropriate, incorrect, or incomplete (scored 0.0). These data afford a more thorough analysis of student performance and differentiation between honors and non-honors, but, unlike the aggregate reports, they do not provide national peer comparison. Unfortunately, these data are incomplete and represent only portions of the two groups of Core test takers. Just prior to the ETS’s deactivation of *iSkills* and suspension of customers’ access to their data files on November 15, 2009, individual reports were made available for only 35 of the 53 honors freshmen and only 22 of the 42 non-honors freshmen. Furthermore, a couple of these test takers did not

have the opportunity to see or to perform particular tasks. One honors student's online access froze midway through the test, and a non-honors student left without proceeding to the second half of the test. In some instances test takers appear to have left tasks incomplete by having either timed out or prematurely moved on to the next task.

We believe, nonetheless, that with the use of the aggregate reports (which are nationally-normed) and the available individual reports (which are not nationally-normed but provide greater specificity for those students for whom we have reports), meaningful conclusions can be drawn about proficiency among honors students in information and communication technology literacy.

What follows is a discussion of each of the ICT literacy skill areas and how our first-year honors students performed compared to non-honors students at Louisiana Tech and, in best responses, to the national average among four-year college freshmen. Two sets of related data are used to inform this discussion: the numbers of students, according to their individual reports, whose responses earned full credit, partial credit, or no credit; and the percentage of students in each population who gave the best answer, illustrated by bar graphs.

DEFINE

In this skill area, students demonstrated their ability to understand and articulate the scope of an information problem in order to facilitate the electronic search for information. Tasks included:

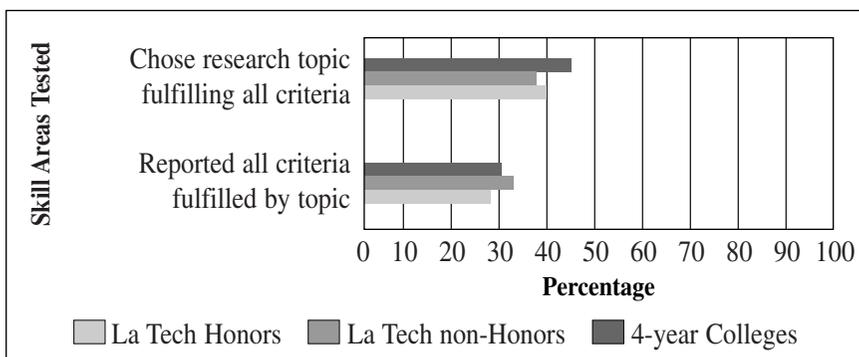
- distinguishing a clear, concise, and topical research question from poorly framed questions that are overly broad or do not otherwise fulfill the information need;
- asking questions of a "professor" that help clarify a vague research assignment;
- conducting effective preliminary information searches to help frame a research statement.

The data suggest that honors freshmen were more proficient at inquiry-guided research than the non-honors students. While a very high percentage (83%) of honors freshmen chose the best research question, only half the non-honors did, and one third chose a question not likely to clarify the research project.

CHOOSE A RESEARCH TOPIC ACCORDING TO SPECIFIC CRITERIA

Based on individual reports, although not many accounted for all criteria, 22 of 35 honors freshmen and 13 of 22 non-honors chose topics fulfilling some criteria while 25 of the 35 and 15 of the 22 reported some of the criteria fulfilled.

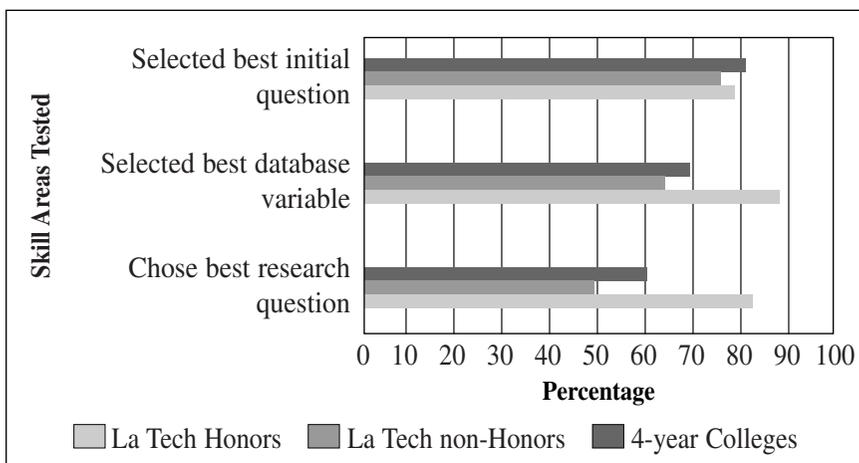
Figure 3: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)



ANSWER THREE QUESTIONS TO CLARIFY A RESEARCH PROJECT

According to our individual reports, whereas 12 of 21 non-honors freshmen selected at least a reasonable research question, if not the best, a third of them chose a question not likely to clarify the project.

Figure 4: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)



ACCESS

In this skill area, students demonstrated their ability to collect and/or retrieve information in digital environments. Information sources might be Web pages, databases, discussion groups, e-mail, or online descriptions of print media. Tasks included:

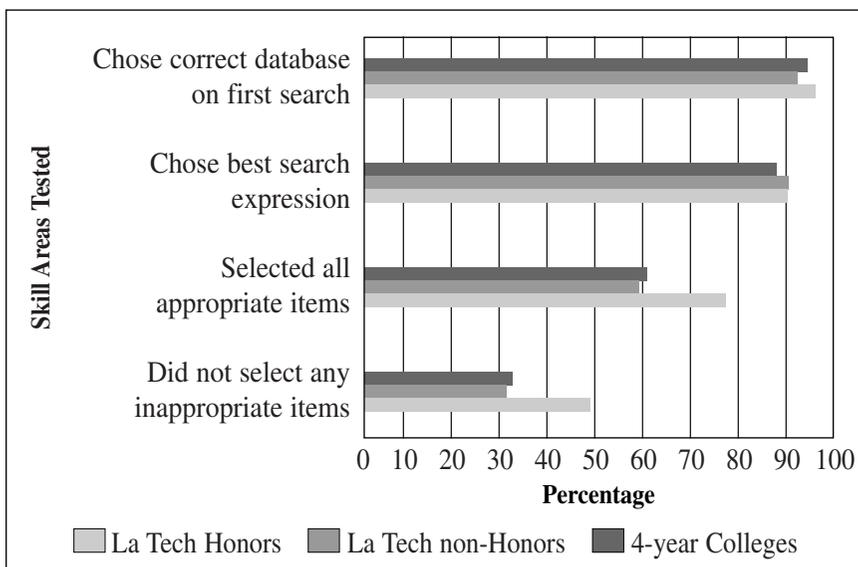
- generating and combining search terms (keywords) to satisfy the requirements of a particular research task;
- browsing one or more resources efficiently to locate pertinent information;
- deciding what types of resources might yield the most useful information for a particular need.

Louisiana Tech's freshmen searched the simulated database and search engine fairly well, honors somewhat better than non-honors. All or nearly all honors freshmen and high percentages of non-honors used at least reasonable search terms, if not the best; missed no more than one appropriate item in the database; and selected reasonable Web pages, if not the best, from the search engine. At alarming rates, however, two fifths of honors freshmen and more than a quarter of non-honors selected more than one inappropriate item, three fifths of honors and nearly half of non-honors did not retrieve many relevant returns even after multiple database searches, and two fifths of honors and two thirds of non-honors either needed to search the search engine numerous times to find the best Web pages or simply did not select them.

SEARCH A STORE'S DATABASE IN RESPONSE TO A CUSTOMER'S INQUIRY

The individual reports show that all 35 honors freshmen and a total of 19 of 22 non-honors missed no more than one appropriate item. On the other hand, 15 of 35 honors freshmen and 6 of 21 non-honors selected more than one inappropriate item.

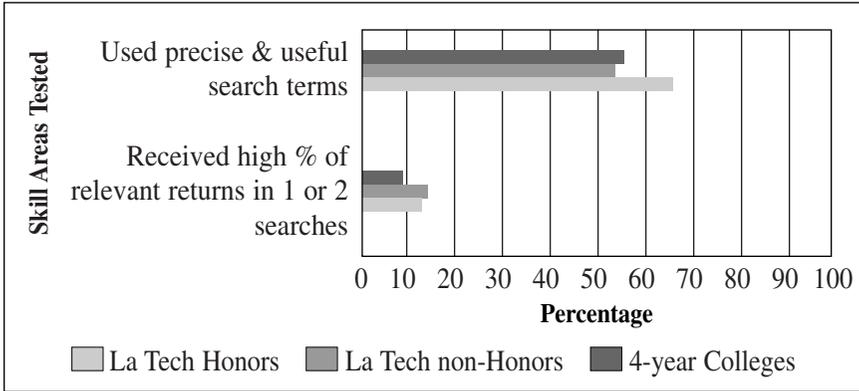
Figure 5: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)



LOCATE TWO WEB PAGES FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT

Our individual reports illustrate that all 35 honors freshmen and 20 of 22 non-honors used reasonable if not optimal search terms. Even after multiple searches, however, 21 honors freshmen and 10 non-honors did not retrieve many relevant returns.

Figure 6: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)



EVALUATE

In this skill area, students demonstrated their ability to judge whether information satisfies an information problem by determining the authority, bias, timeliness, relevance, and other aspects of materials. Tasks included:

- judging the relative usefulness of provided Web pages and online journal articles;
- evaluating whether a database contains appropriately current and pertinent information;
- deciding about the extent to which a collection of resources sufficiently covers a research area.

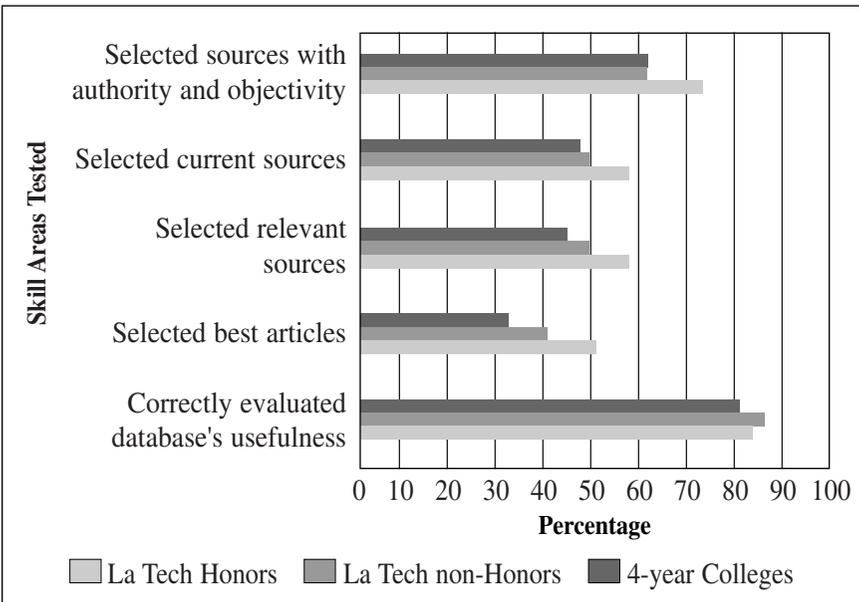
Results varied with respect to critical evaluation of a research topic, database, articles, Web pages, and Web sites. Nearly all of the honors and the non-honors freshmen chose a research topic according to at least some of the criteria, if not all, though majorities accounted only for some criteria. Majorities also correctly evaluated sources from a database according to currency, relevance, authority, and objectivity while freshmen in very high percentages correctly judged the database's usefulness. At alarming rates, however, nearly half of honors freshmen and more than half of non-honors did not select the best articles. In evaluating Web pages, honors freshmen made no major mistakes, mostly just minor mistakes in judging relevance and authority. Most non-honors freshmen made minor mistakes regarding relevance and authority, and nearly half made minor mistakes judging point of view, while nearly half made major mistakes in evaluating currency. Very high percentages of honors freshmen selected the best Web site and made no more than minor mistakes evaluating Web sites for authority, bias, and currency. On the other hand, half of non-honors freshmen did not select the best Web site, and considerable numbers made major mistakes in critical evaluation: nearly half in judging the authority, more than a third in judging bias, and nearly a third in judging currency of Web sites.

EVALUATE A DATABASE IN ORDER TO DETERMINE ITS USEFULNESS FOR A PROJECT

Based on the individual reports, while most of Tech’s freshmen correctly evaluated the database’s usefulness without the benefit of explicit criteria, 16 of 35 honors freshmen and 12 of 22 non-honors either incorrectly determined its usefulness or did not select the best articles.

In evaluating databases and selecting sources 16 of 35 honors freshmen and 9 of 22 non-honors incorrectly judged currency, 15 honors and 10 non-honors misjudged relevance, and only 10 honors and 8 non-honors incorrectly assessed authority and objectivity.

Figure 7: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)

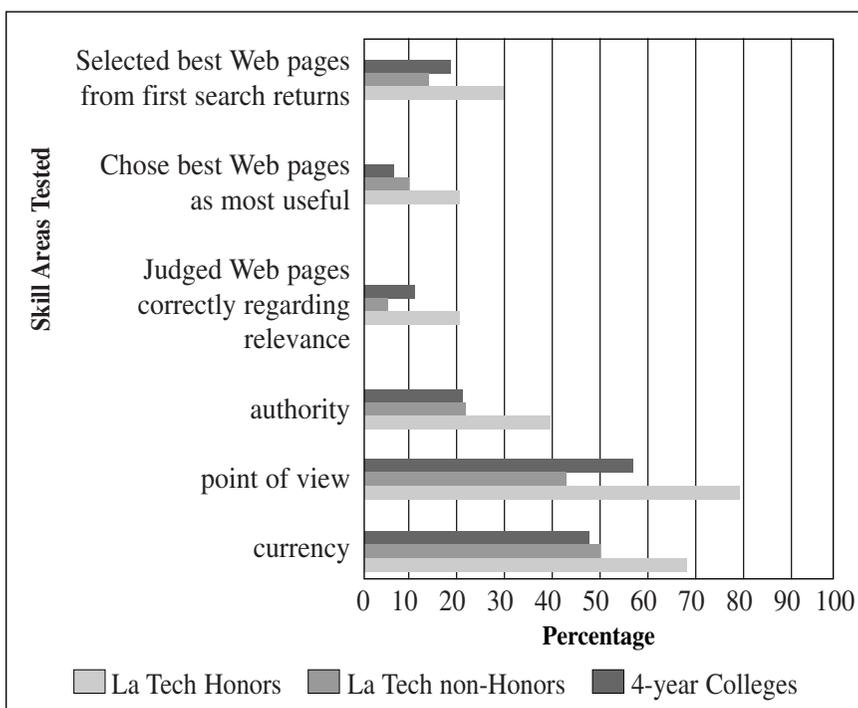


JUDGE USEFULNESS OF WEB PAGES FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT

According to our individual reports, whereas for 15 of 34 honors freshmen it took only one search to find the best Web pages, as many either needed numerous searches or did not select the best Web pages. Likewise 9 of the 13 non-honors freshmen for whom a response was reported were inefficient or unsuccessful. While all but one of the 35 honors freshmen chose Web pages that were at least reasonable if not best, 5 of 21 non-honors selected inappropriate Web pages.

In evaluating Web pages, the 35 honors freshmen made no major mistakes. Minor mistakes were committed by 25 regarding relevance, 19 regarding authority, 4 regarding point of view, and 6 regarding currency. Among the 21 non-honors freshmen, mistakes were more often minor than major regarding relevance [13 minor vs. 6 major], authority [13 minor vs. 2 major], and currency [10 minor vs. 3 major]. In their evaluation of Web pages regarding point of view, however, 2 made minor mistakes and 10 made major mistakes.

Figure 8: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)

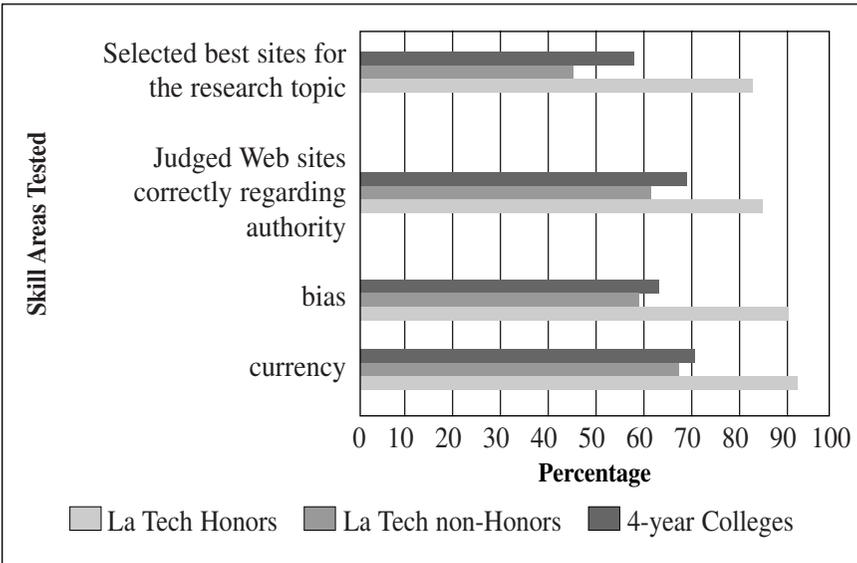


JUDGE THE PROBABLE USEFULNESS OF SITES RETURNED IN A WEB SEARCH

Our individual reports show that half of the 20 non-honors freshmen did not select the best Web site.

In evaluating Web sites, only 1 of 34 honors students made major mistakes. Minor mistakes were committed only by 4 in judging authority. Among 20 non-honors to perform the task, major mistakes were committed by 9 in judging authority, 7 in judging bias, and 6 in judging currency.

Figure 9: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)



MANAGE

In this skill area, students demonstrated their ability to organize information to facilitate later retrieval. Tasks included:

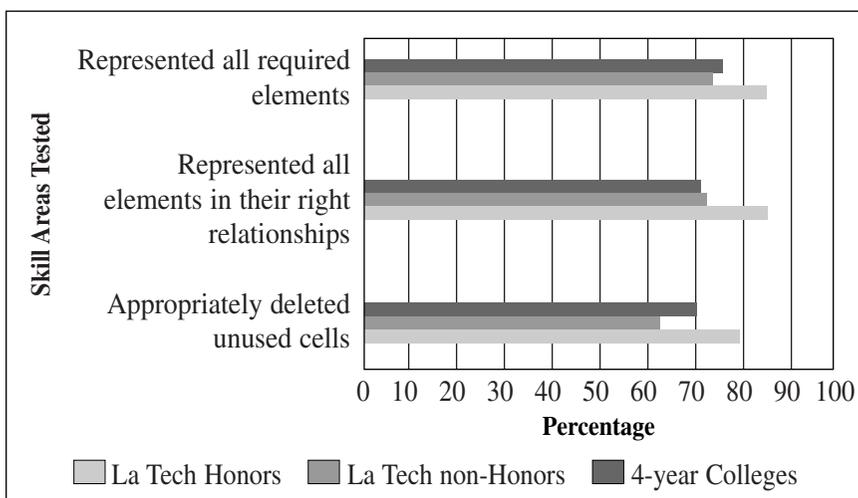
- categorizing e-mails into appropriate folders based on a critical view of the e-mails' contents;
- arranging personnel information into an organizational chart;
- sorting files, e-mails, or database returns to clarify clusters of related information.

Louisiana Tech freshmen were proficient in completing the task of filling in an organizational chart, though some honors and two fifths of non-honors students failed to delete unused cells. A very high percentage of honors freshmen and two thirds of the non-honors moved at least most if not all the e-mail files into their proper folders; nearly half of each group moved most files. Two fifths of both groups deleted all unnecessary folders while more than half of honors and two fifths of non-honors deleted only some of those folders.

FILL IN AN ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Based on individual reports, Louisiana Tech freshmen completed the organizational chart with little difficulty. Only 3 of 22 non-honors freshmen did not include all required elements and misrepresented several reporting relationships. Unused cells were not deleted, however, by 4 of 35 honors freshmen and 9 non-honors.

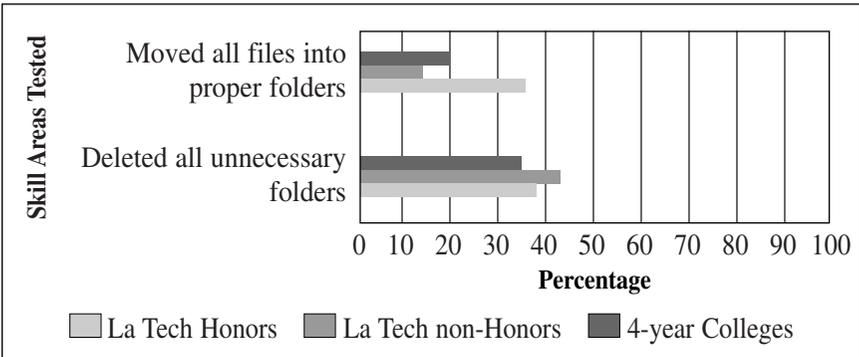
Figure 10: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)



ORGANIZE FILES INTO PROPER FOLDERS ON A HARD DRIVE

As our individual reports illustrate, whereas 14 of 35 honors freshmen and 4 of 21 non-honors moved all files into their proper folders, 17 honors and 10 non-honors moved most but not all files, and 4 honors and 6 non-honors did not move a number of them. Whereas 14 of 35 honors freshmen and 8 of 20 non-honors deleted all unnecessary folders, 18 honors and 8 non-honors made combinations of appropriate and inappropriate deletions while all deletions by 3 honors and 4 non-honors were inappropriate.

Figure 11: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)



INTEGRATE

In this skill area, students demonstrated the ability to interpret and represent information by using digital tools to synthesize, summarize, compare and contrast information from multiple sources. Tasks included:

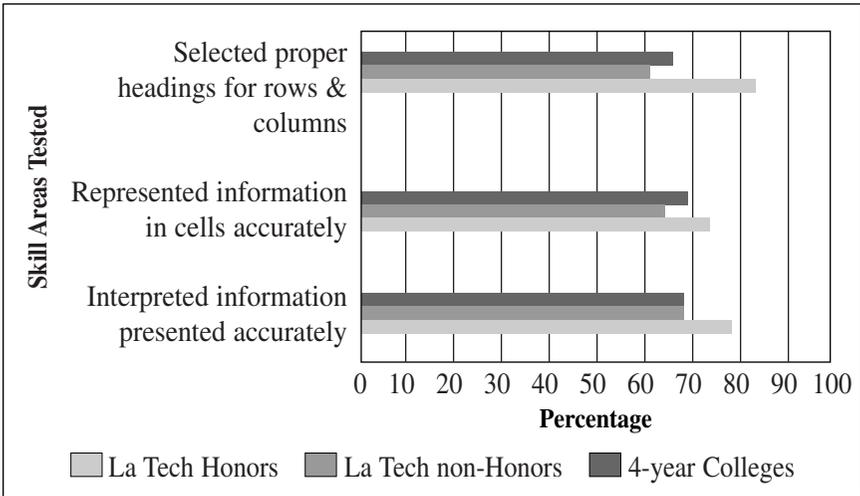
- comparing advertisements, e-mails, or Web sites from competing vendors by summarizing information into a table;
- summarizing and synthesizing information from a variety of types of sources according to specific criteria in order to compare information and make a decision;
- copying results from an academic or sports tournament into a spreadsheet to clarify standings and decide the need for playoffs.

Non-honors freshmen demonstrated deficiencies in their ability to compile a spreadsheet and a table. While honors freshmen had no trouble formatting the spreadsheet and both they and non-honors freshmen interpreted it accurately for the most part, considerable numbers of non-honors made major mistakes, nearly half in selecting proper headings and more than a quarter in representing information in the cells. Honors freshmen had little trouble formatting the table. A very high percentage of them and two thirds of the non-honors subsequently ranked the checking accounts accurately. At alarming rates, however, nearly a third of honors and more than half of non-honors made mistakes selecting column headings, and two fifths of non-honors committed numerous errors in representing information.

FILL OUT A SPREADSHEET TO DETERMINE SEASON RECORDS OF VOLLEYBALL TEAMS

The individual reports highlight that our non-honors students had some difficulty with the spreadsheet: 10 of 22 non-honors freshmen did not select proper headings, 3 made minor mistakes, and 6 were inaccurate in representing information in cells. Whereas all 35 honors freshmen and 18 of 22 non-honors were at least partially accurate in their interpretation of the information presented, 3 non-honors did not accurately interpret and 1 did not respond.

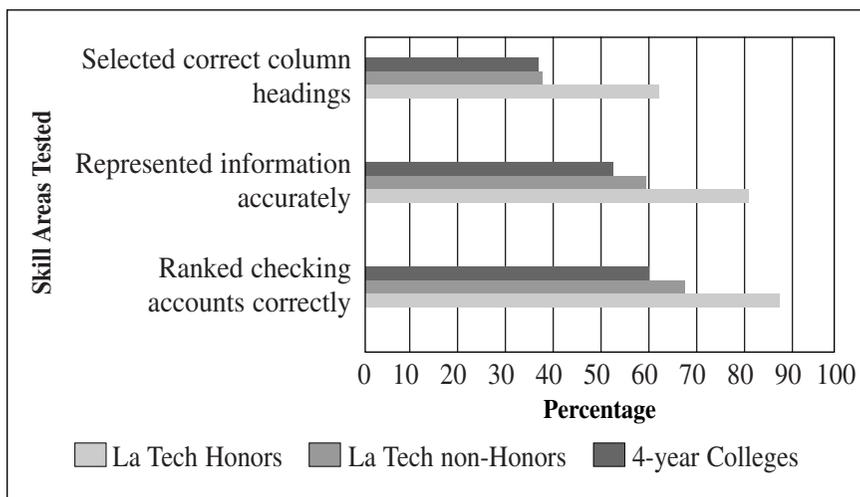
Figure 12: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)



COMPLETE A TABLE COMPARING CHECKING ACCOUNTS ACCORDING TO SPECIFIC CRITERIA

According to individual reports, in selecting column headings, 11 of 34 honors freshmen and 12 of 21 non-honors made a number of mistakes. Whereas 4 honors freshmen and 3 non-honors made minor mistakes representing information in the table, 9 non-honors committed numerous errors, and 5 non-honors ranked the checking accounts incorrectly.

Figure 13: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)



CREATE

In this skill area, students demonstrated the ability to adapt, apply, design, or construct information in digital environments. Tasks included:

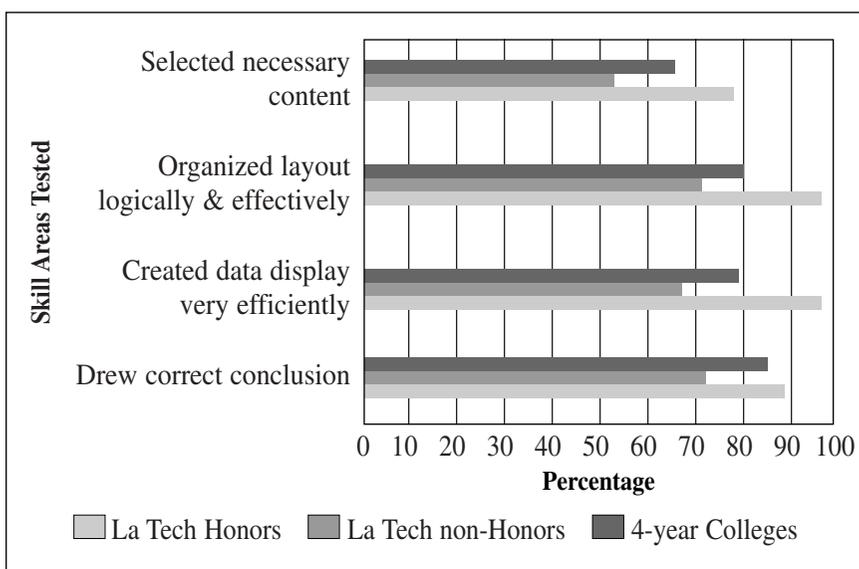
- editing and formatting a document according to a set of editorial specifications;
- creating a presentation slide to support a position on a controversial topic;
- creating a data display to clarify the relationship between academic and economic variables.

Louisiana Tech freshmen demonstrated competence in composing a data display and a slide, with some notable exceptions. Very high percentages of honors freshmen and majorities of non-honors created the data display with at least reasonable efficiency, selecting all or nearly all the necessary content and using a logical and effective layout. A very high percentage of honors freshmen and a majority of non-honors also drew the correct conclusion from the display. Likewise, very high percentages of honors and majorities of non-honors chose the best layout, title, and image for the slide. At alarming rates, however, nearly half of the honors and more than a quarter of the non-honors selected some inappropriate text; over a third of the honors and two fifths of the non-honors did not choose appropriate text; nearly half of the non-honors did not choose any text at all; and two fifths of the honors and more than two thirds of the non-honors formatted the slide ineffectively.

CREATE A DATA DISPLAY

As our individual reports show, whereas all 35 honors freshmen selected all or nearly all the necessary content, 9 of 22 non-honors selected all, 8 selected nearly all, and 5 selected none. Only 1 honors student and 3 non-honors organized the layout with less than optimal logic and effectiveness while 3 other non-honors did not organize logically or effectively. All 35 honors freshmen and 18 non-honors created the display with at least reasonable efficiency. No honors freshmen and 4 non-honors drew an incorrect conclusion from the data display while 3 honors and 2 non-honors did not indicate a conclusion.

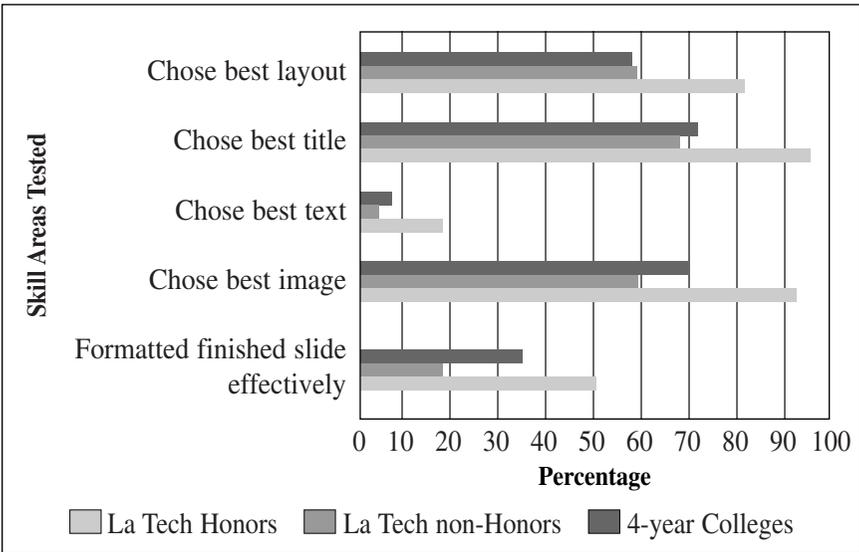
Figure 14: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)



CREATE A SLIDE FOR A GROUP PRESENTATION

Based on the individual reports, in creating a slide 4 of 35 honors freshmen and 6 of 20 non-honors did not choose the best layout, 2 honors and 2 of 21 non-honors chose an inappropriate title, and 5 non-honors did not choose a title. Only 7 honors and none of the non-honors chose the best text, 16 honors and 6 non-honors resorted to some inappropriate text, 12 honors and 9 non-honors did not choose appropriate text, and 6 non-honors did not choose text at all. Only 4 honors and 10 non-honors did not choose an image, as many non-honors as chose the best image. As many as 15 of the 35 honors and 11 of the 16 non-honors freshmen who created a slide formatted it ineffectively.

Figure 15: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)



COMMUNICATE

In this skill area, students demonstrated the ability to disseminate information tailored to a particular audience in an effective digital format. Tasks included:

- formatting a document to make it more useful to a particular group;
- transforming an e-mail into a succinct presentation to meet an audience's needs;
- selecting and organizing of slides for distinct presentations to different audiences;
- designing of a flyer to advertise to a distinct group of users.

Louisiana Tech freshmen struggled with the selection and organization of slides for two distinct presentations to different audiences. At alarming rates, more than a quarter of the honors and more than half of the non-honors made incorrect selections of slides and titles for the first presentation, which two thirds of the honors and half of the non-honors sequenced incorrectly. A third of non-honors selected incorrect slides and titles for the second presentation while another third did nothing, and over a third of the honors and two fifths of the non-honors sequenced the second presentation incorrectly. Furthermore, more than two fifths of the honors freshmen and of the non-honors made an incorrect decision as to delivery mode. Most remarkably, four fifths of the honors and more than two thirds of the non-honors did not indicate any awareness of the two audiences' different needs.

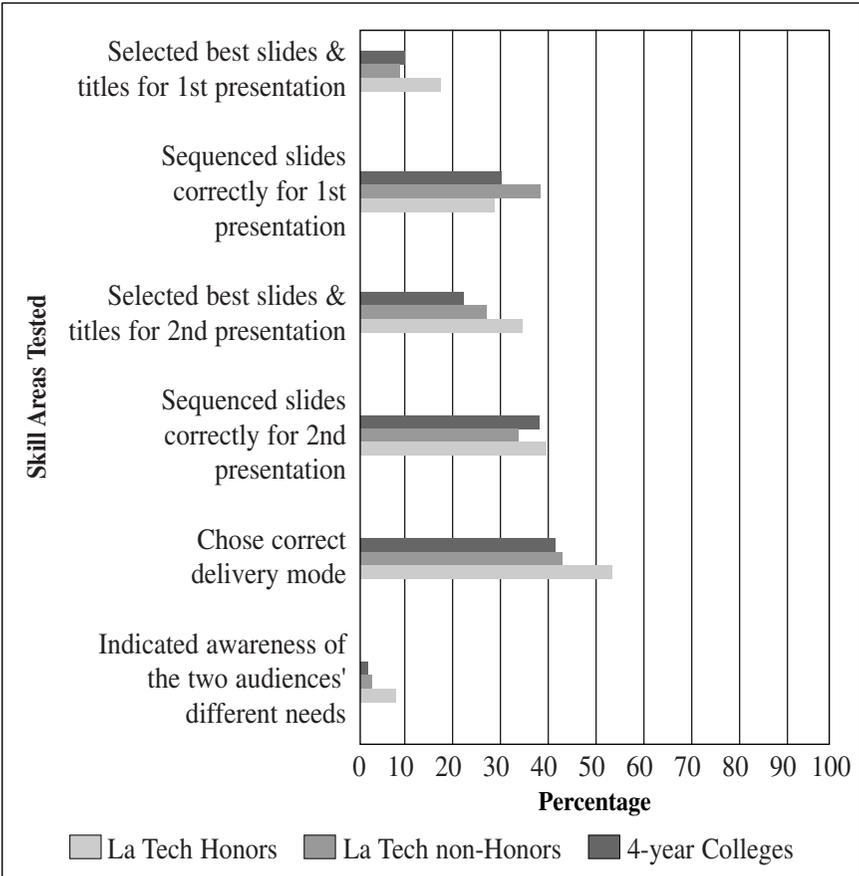
The honors freshmen outperformed the non-honors in the selection of the advertisement. Nearly all the freshmen made no more than one or two mistakes in analyzing the key details and applying the electronic mailing list policy. Whereas nearly every honors freshman chose the best advertisement, suitable to the audience in language and tone, nearly a third of the non-honors selected a no better than reasonable advertisement, more than a quarter chose an inappropriate advertisement, and nearly half opted for an advertisement not suited to the audience in language and tone.

SELECT AND ORGANIZE SLIDES FOR TWO PRESENTATIONS TO DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

According to the individual reports, for the first presentation half of 34 honors freshmen and 6 of 21 non-honors selected some of the best slides and titles; 9 honors and 12 non-honors made incorrect selections; and 23 honors and 10 non-honors sequenced the slides incorrectly. For the second presentation, 14 of 34 honors freshmen selected the best slides and titles, and 15

selected some of the best but not all while a third of 21 non-honors freshmen either did not select correct slides and titles, and another third did nothing. Half of 32 honors freshmen and 6 of 14 non-honors sequenced the slides for the second presentation correctly; sequencing by 5 honors and 2 non-honors was adequate but not optimal; and 11 honors and 6 non-honors sequenced the slides incorrectly. Regarding the delivery mode, 14 of 34 honors freshmen and 9 of 21 non-honors decided incorrectly. Only 3 of 31 honors freshmen and 1 of 13 non-honors indicated an awareness of the two audiences' different needs; another 3 honors and 3 non-honors indicated some awareness; but 25 honors and 9 non-honors did not indicate any awareness.

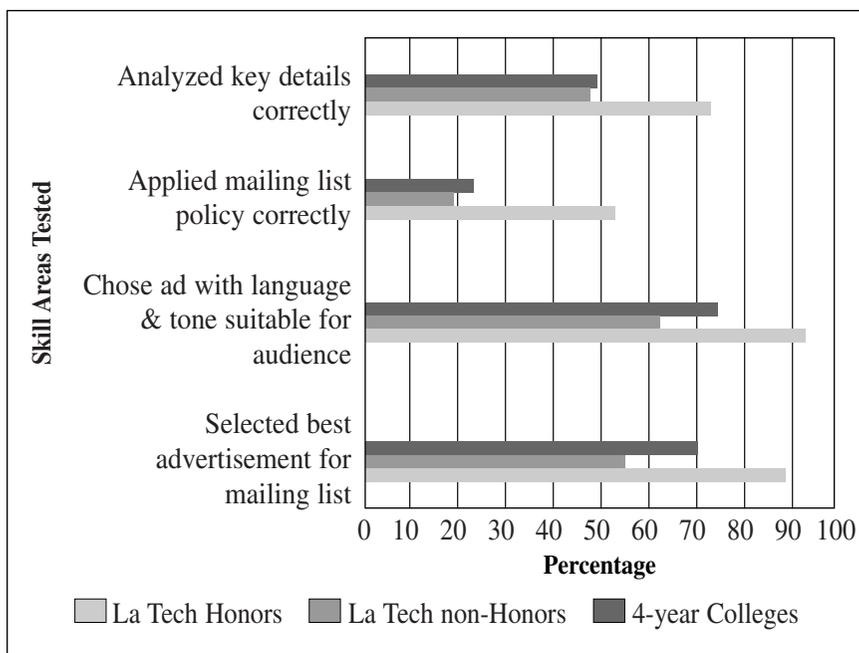
Figure 16: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)



SELECT BEST ADVERTISEMENT TO USERS OF AN ELECTRONIC MAILING LIST

Based on the individual reports, the analysis of key details by 27 of 35 honors freshmen and 11 of 22 non-honors was correct while 7 honors and 9 non-honors made one or two mistakes. The application of the mailing list policy by 18 honors and 4 of 20 non-honors was correct while 17 honors and 14 non-honors made one or two mistakes. Only 1 of 35 honors freshmen chose an advertisement not suitable to the audience in language and tone while 10 of 22 non-honors made an inappropriate choice. Whereas 33 of 35 honors freshmen selected the best advertisement for the mailing list, only 1 made a reasonable but not optimal choice, and another 1 selected an inappropriate advertisement, just 9 of 22 non-honors selected the best, 7 made a reasonable but not optimal choice, and 6 selected an inappropriate advertisement.

Figure 17: Best Responses (from aggregate reports)



DISCUSSION

Our assessment suggests that our honors students are equipped to handle the digital age better than both our non-honors freshmen and the typical four-year freshman in the United States. Eighty-nine percent of our first-year honors students passed the cut score as compared to 44% of our non-honors and 39% of four-year college freshmen nationwide.

More specifically, both honors and non-honors freshmen at Louisiana Tech outperformed four-year college freshmen nationwide in selecting best answers to 18 of the 56 responses. The honors freshmen outperformed the non-honors in all but two of these responses: evaluating a database for usefulness to a research project (Evaluate) and deleting all unnecessary folders in the organization of files (Manage).

Honors freshmen outperformed the four-year college freshmen nationwide while non-honors freshmen did not in selecting 34 of the 56 responses, but in selecting two of these responses non-honors matched the national average: evaluating the database correctly and selecting sources with authority and objectivity (Evaluate), and accurately interpreting the information presented on the spreadsheet (Integrate).

The evidence shows that in many crucial areas, however, honors students did not perform substantially better than the other cohorts. Particularly when the assessment tested their mastery of detail and fine-grained analysis, honors freshmen did not significantly outperform other students, as evident, for example, in the students' abilities to evaluate Web resources correctly. In general, honors freshmen performed well in assessing the utility, bias, and relevance of a Web site, often at a significantly higher rate than the national four-year-college average, but when it came to judging and evaluating specific Web pages, they did not distinguish themselves.

A similar pattern holds true for the other areas. Honors students did better than their cohorts in the general use of databases and search engines, but they did not prove to be that much more efficient in using them. In managing information and organizing information for presentations (spreadsheets and slides), honors students did not outpace their non-honors peers. In using applications for accessing, managing, and presenting information, honors students demonstrated facility but not mastery.

Overall, the data suggest that we should feel confident engaging digital media more explicitly in our honors courses but that we need to do a better job of guiding students in the process. Based on our research, honors students enter our institution better prepared to work with information, but we should not infer that they have already achieved mastery over these skills. Honors students seem significantly better than their non-honors peers in finding relevant and useful information, but they still appear to have problems

critically evaluating specific information and using that information to communicate effectively to a target audience. Moreover, they distinguished themselves in identifying relevant material, but they did not outperform their peers in weeding out irrelevant information, a skill which is absolutely essential in an information-saturated society.

Based on this assessment, our honors program is working on curriculum designs that mentor students more explicitly in engaging digital media in their coursework and research projects. Broadly speaking, we are seeking to promote the use of more class time to work with students in a “guide-by-side” advisory approach to help them access, evaluate, understand, and use digital material in their assignments and research projects. More specifically, our ideas have included the following: as part of instruction, encouraging students to find and judge relevant sources on their own and then bring those sources to class for evaluation by peers; and as part of their research presentations, asking students to organize and present information in multiple digital formats, including wikis, blogs, and videos. Based on the data generated by our assessment with *iSkills*, an endeavor made possible with generous funding from the Louisiana Board of Regents, we believe such curricular enhancements will better position our students to compete and succeed in the increasingly information-rich environment of the twenty-first century.

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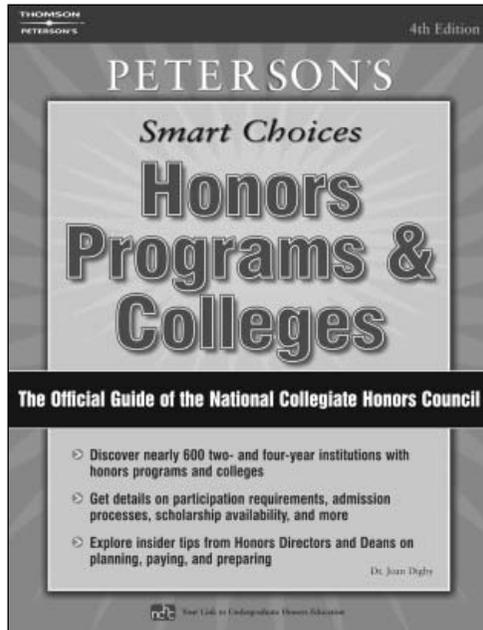
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NOTES

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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.

Honors Composition: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Practices by Annmarie Guzy (2003, 182pp). 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.

Setting the Table for Diversity edited by Lisa L. Coleman and Jonathan D. Kotinek (2010, 288pp). This collection of essays provides definitions of diversity in honors, explores the challenges and opportunities diversity brings to honors education, and depicts the transformative nature of diversity when coupled with equity and inclusion. These essays discuss African American, Latina/o, international, and first-generation students as well as students with disabilities. Other issues include experiential and service learning, the politics of diversity, and the psychological resistance to it. Appendices relating to NCHC member institutions contain diversity statements and a structural diversity survey.

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, 128pp). Presents a variety of perspectives on teaching and learning useful to anyone developing new or renovating established honors curricula.

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC) is a semi-annual periodical featuring scholarly articles on honors education. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education.

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

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