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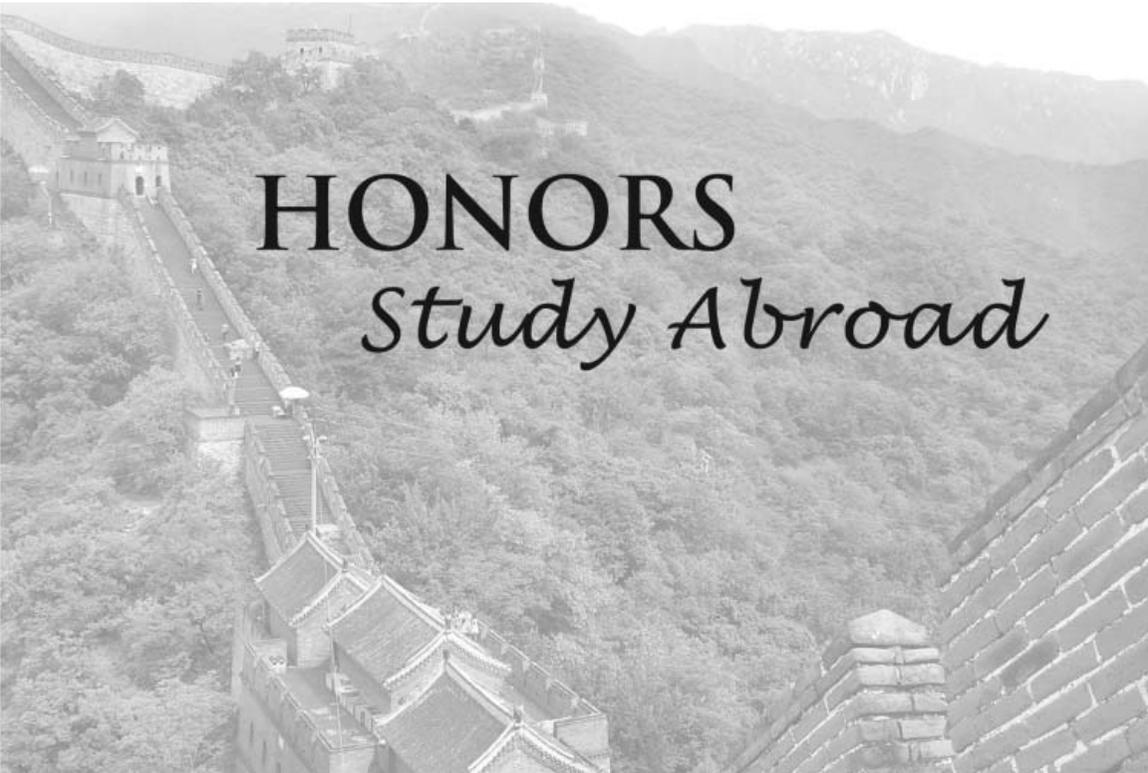
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JNCHC

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council

Spring/Summer 2011

Volume 12, Number 1



HONORS *Study Abroad*

in this issue

Forum on Honors Study Abroad

Forum Articles

Carolyn Haynes

Bernice Braid and
Gladys Palma de Schrynemakers

Leena Karsan, Annie Hakim, and
Janaan Decker

Soncerey L. Montgomery and
Uchenna P. Vasser

Rosalie C. Otero

Neil H. Donahue

Portz-Prize-Winning Essay, 2010

Molly MacLagan

Research Essays

Ray J. Davis and
Soncerey L. Montgomery

Marsha B. Driscoll

Christopher A. Snyder and
Scott Carnicom

Melissa Ladenheim,
Kristen Kuhns, and
Morgan Brockington

JNCHC

**JOURNAL OF THE
NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL**

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

HONORS STUDY ABROAD

JOURNAL EDITORS

ADA LONG

DAIL MULLINS

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

The National Collegiate Honors Council is an association of faculty, students, and others interested in honors education. Executive Committee: Bonnie Irwin, President, Eastern Illinois University; Gregory Lanier, President-Elect, University of West Florida; John Zubizarreta, Immediate Past-President, Columbia College–South Carolina; Rick Scott, Vice-President, University of Central Arkansas; Bob Spurrier, Secretary, Oklahoma State University; Gary Bell, Treasurer, Texas Tech University. Executive Director: Cynthia M. Hill, headquartered at University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Board of Directors: Kyoko Amano, University of Indianapolis; Jamie Beko, University of Indianapolis; Bernice Braid, Long Island University–Brooklyn; Ellen Buckner, University of South Alabama; Elizabeth Callahan, St. Louis University; Lisa Coleman, Southeastern Oklahoma State University; Jerry Herron, Wayne State University; Kim Klein, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania; Jared Knight, Iowa State University; Jon Kotinek, Texas A&M University; Jaskiran Mathur, St. Francis College; Loren McCollom, Hillsborough Community College; Doug Peterson, University of South Dakota; Elaine Torda, State University of New York–Orange; Audrey Van Acker, Ball State University; Patrick Wanninkhof, University of Florida.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

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

DEADLINES

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

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CALL FOR PAPERS

The next issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: September 1, 2011**) invites research essays on any topic of interest to the honors community.

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

The lead essay for the Forum (available on the NCHC website) is by Scott Carnicom, Associate Dean of the Honors College at Middle Tennessee State University. His essay—titled “Honors Education: Innovation or Conservation?”—considers whether honors serves within an institution as an incubator of new ideas and pedagogies or as a treasure chest of old ones. Contributions to the Forum may—but need not—respond to his essay or the issues he addresses.

Other questions to consider might include: Do honors programs and colleges counterbalance or enable the current emphasis on career preparation within most institutions? Do they raise the level of teaching and learning throughout the institution, or do they drain off the best students from the undergraduate population? Does the concentration of high-achieving students within an institution create a source of intellectual and social leadership for the larger institution? Do institutions use their honors programs to promote recruitment, rankings, and numbers of national scholarships, and, if so, is such prestige-seeking necessarily an asset to the institutions and the programs? Does honors make the larger institution look better or, by contrast, worse? Do honors programs have impacts of which institutions are unaware? Are such impacts ever subversive?

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

Please send all submissions to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu.

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



FREDDYE TURNER DAVY

Dr. Freddie Turner Davy has been educating students for over fifty-eight years. She spent the first thirty-four of those years as a public school teacher in Arkansas, Washington, D.C., and Maryland. Along the way, she received degrees from Philander Smith College, the University of Maryland, and Vanderbilt University. After her career in public schools, she then spent seven years at Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina, and served as a visiting lecturer at the University of Nigeria before becoming Director of the Hampton University Honors College in 1994, a position in which she continues to this day. At Hampton, she has developed the honors curriculum, initiated honors seminars, and developed the various rituals for induction and graduation. Her influence has been significant well beyond her campus positions. She is the founder and executive director of the National W. E. B. Du Bois Honor Society, and she has held elected positions in the National Association of African American Honors Programs, the Virginia Collegiate Honors Council, the Southern Regional Honors Council, and the National Collegiate Honors Council. The many of us who have benefited from her wisdom and from the clarity of her words and ideas can appreciate the scope of her influence. I remember many a meeting where loud voices prevailed in heated discussion until Dr. Davy, after patiently hearing all sides, delivered a brief, eloquent, unifying, and unequivocal statement that showed us all exactly what we should have been thinking and saying. Because the NCHC has been on many occasions the beneficiary of her exceptional intellect and spirit, we proudly and gratefully dedicate this issue of *JNCHC* to Dr. Freddie Turner Davy.

Editor's Introduction

ADA LONG

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

In his farewell column for *The New York Times* (12 March 2011), Frank Rich wrote that “the point of opinion writing is less to try to shape events, a presumptuous and foolhardy ambition at best, than to help stimulate debate and, from my particular perspective, try to explain why things got the way they are and what they might mean and where they might lead.” Rich’s remark could serve as the motto for the regular Forum section of the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, in which opinions—both individually and in the aggregate—serve not to “shape events” in honors but to “stimulate debate.” Debate is especially crucial on matters that seem to have gained universal acceptance.

One universally accepted focus of higher education these days seems to be study abroad, an opportunity that was restricted to the affluent throughout much of our history but that has now become an essential offering at almost all colleges and universities, perhaps especially in honors. Some debate about the value of study abroad, its assets and problems, is thus the Forum topic of this issue of *JNCHC*.

In September, a description of the “Forum on Honors Study Abroad” and a call for submissions were sent out to the NCHC membership in the newsletter and on the listserv:

The lead essay for the Forum . . . is by Carolyn Haynes, Director of the Miami University (Ohio) Honors Program. Her essay presents both the benefits and potential drawbacks of study abroad, including suggestions for enhancing the benefits and limiting the drawbacks. Contributions to the Forum may—but need not—respond to her essay or the issues she addresses. Questions to consider might include: What differentiates honors study abroad from other study abroad programs? What strategies succeed in making honors students effective ambassadors rather than ugly Americans? What are—or should be—the goals of honors study abroad? Should honors students be required to learn the language before studying in a non-English-speaking country? Do honors study abroad programs

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

discriminate against students who cannot afford the expense? What should be the essential components of an honors study abroad program? What are the benefits and liabilities of programs that require home residence? Should teachers ideally be from the student's home institution or from the country being visited? Is the whole study abroad movement just another fad in U.S. higher education?

Six essays on the forum topic constitute the first section of this issue of *JNCHC*, followed by a Portz-Prize-winning essay and then by four research essays on various honors-related topics.

In her lead essay, "Overcoming the Hype of Study Abroad," Carolyn Haynes argues that, given the rush during the past decade to multiply international learning experiences, honors programs need now to weigh the advantages against the pitfalls to assure a meaningful education. Ideally, study abroad increases a student's global awareness, cultural understanding, communication skills, love of learning, and personal maturity. Not all programs encourage these ideals, however, and can instead provide opportunities for students to party, skim cultural surfaces, hang out with students just like them, and indulge in self-promotion. Haynes offers six sets of advice on how to make study abroad live up to its ideals.

The other contributions to the Forum address strategies for living up to the ideals Haynes outlines and examples of how honors programs have embodied the values she defines. In "A Case Among Cases," Bernice Braid and Gladys Palma de Schrynemakers offer an eloquent argument in support of Haynes's recommendations for quality study abroad not just for international programs but for all education designed to promote cultural understanding, self-reflection, and deep learning. The authors support their argument with learning models offered by numerous scholars and educational organizations as well as their own experiences at Long Island University Brooklyn, where they have developed and taught a Core Seminar that provides many of the same outcomes as study abroad.

In "Honors in Ghana: How Study Abroad Enriches Students' Lives," Leena Karsan, Annie Hakim, and Janaan Decker focus on two of Haynes's key indicators of a strong study abroad program: meaningful engagement and critical reflection. The authors illustrate these indicators by describing the evolution and implementation of an interdisciplinary and service-oriented study abroad program in Ghana developed by the faculty, staff, and students of Grand Valley State University's Frederik Meijer Honors College. They stress the importance of student initiative, teamwork, and flexibility in creating an educational experience that combines engagement and reflection in a way that changes both the students and the places where they study.

An illustration of Haynes's indicators of quality in international programs can be found in "Taking It Global" by Soncerey L. Montgomery and Uchenna P. Vasser. The authors describe the shift that occurred in the function of study abroad during the twentieth century so that it now serves to educate our students in cultural diversity, communication skills, and global awareness. In line with these goals, the Winston-Salem State University Honors Program has collaborated with the Department of English and Foreign Languages to design a five-week, affordable, summer immersion experience in Mexico. The authors explain the theoretical and practical considerations that have shaped this international honors experience.

While Montgomery and Vasser describe a successful program in which students live with local families, study at local schools, and immerse themselves in the culture, Rosalie C. Otero provides another model in "Faculty-Led International Honors Programs." Otero argues that, while all study abroad is beneficial to a student's education, the best format is international study that is not only sponsored by an honors program but led by honors faculty members. She provides numerous reasons for thinking that this structure is ideal, providing examples from international study programs run by the University of New Mexico Honors Program.

In the final essay of the Forum, "The Honors Differential: At Home and Abroad," Neil H. Donahue suggests a strategy for making study abroad a meaningful and reflective honors experience. The Hofstra University Honors College requires that students write and keep an honors abroad journal during their international study. Donahue describes the contexts, requirements, functions, and values of such a journal in creating the kind of self-reflective and culture-conscious experience advocated by Haynes and by all the other contributors to the Forum on Honors Study Abroad.

An illustration of self-reflection and culture-consciousness in not only honors study abroad but all honors study is Molly MacLagan's essay "Realizing Early English Drama." Each year, the NCHC selects four outstanding student researchers as Portz Scholars, who then present their research at the annual conference. On rare occasions, the editors of *JNCHC* select one of the Portz Scholars' essays for publication. In her outstanding essay, Molly MacLagan describes her experience in mounting a production of *Play 13* from the fifteenth-century *Chester Cycle*. She and her fellow honors students at Kent State University spent over a year studying the literary, dramatic, social, and historical background of the play; doing research on acting styles; learning the appropriate language, setting, and costumes; and putting all their knowledge into practice after practice for their part in a production of the entire twenty-four plays of the *Chester Cycle*, sponsored by the *Poculi Ludique Societas*, at the University of Toronto in 2010. MacLagan's essay, a condensation of her honors thesis, is both a fascinating account of an

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

exciting project and a tribute to the high quality of honors ambition and achievement.

The first of four faculty research essays is an important pioneer study of honors programs and colleges at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The essay is titled "Honors Education at HBCUs: Core Values, Best Practices, and Select Challenges," and the authors are Ray J. Davis of North Carolina A & T State University and Soncerey L. Montgomery of Winston-Salem State University. Based on thirty survey responses (a 37.5% response rate), the authors determined that, in most ways, honors programs and colleges at HBCUs seem to reflect national norms at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) but have some special features that include their emphasis on debate and perhaps also their focus on social justice, economic empowerment, and leadership development, values that connect HBCUs to their historical and social contexts.

Another survey is presented in the essay "National Survey of College and University Honors Programs Assessment Protocols." Marsha Driscoll of Bemidji State University presents the results of a survey on assessment that she distributed to a hundred honors programs that are NCHC members and seventy-three that are nonmembers, with a total of thirty-eight respondents (a 21.3% response rate). She concludes from her survey results that assessment activities are generally inadequate in both member and nonmember honors programs and that the only significant difference between the two groups is that directors of NCHC-member programs have a higher percentage of their time allotted to honors. Her main argument is that honors programs need to do more rigorous and regular standardized assessment.

In a coincidental point/counterpoint argument, Christopher A. Snyder of Marymount University and Scott Carnicom of Middle Tennessee State University present the opposing side in "Assessment, Accountability, and Honors Education." The authors make the argument that the assessment and accountability movement is a symptom of and contributor to the corporatization of higher education, taking away the autonomy and academic freedom of faculty members; subjecting the arts, humanities, and sciences to the tactics of the social sciences; and stifling the innovation and creativity that are hallmarks of honors education. Illustrating Driscoll's point that many honors directors are resistant to assessment, Snyder and Carnicom provide more than a dozen reasons for their resistance and why they think it is appropriate in the context of honors.

This issue of *JNCHC* concludes with an essay called "Ethnogenesis: The Construction and Dynamics of the Honors Classroom Culture" by Melissa Ladenheim, Kristen Kuhns, and Morgan Brockington. The authors describe the emergence of a distinct classroom culture (i.e., ethnogenesis) in the

ADA LONG

University of Maine Honors College. Based on a faculty survey, a survey of students who had taken honors classes the previous year, and classroom observations by upper-class honors students, the essay addresses the question of how a culture of mutual trust, respect, and intellectual engagement evolves in first-year honors classes.

**Forum on
“Honors Study Abroad”**

Overcoming the Study Abroad Hype

CAROLYN HAYNES

MIAMI UNIVERSITY (OHIO)

Within recent years, a remarkable groundswell of support for study abroad has emerged. In 2001, the American Council on Education reported that 75% of the public believe that study abroad should be included in a student's college education (Hayward & Siaya, 21–25). Three years later, the NASULGC (National Association for State Universities and Land Grant Colleges) Task Force issued *A Call to Leadership* urging university presidents to focus on international education as a means of enriching student learning and achievement, and the United States Senate passed Resolution 308 declaring 2006 as the Year of Study Abroad. Even more recently, the Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act, which is designed to leverage governmental resources to expand the number of students studying abroad, received unanimous approval by the House of Representatives and will be heading to the Senate soon.

In many ways, this broad-based support is understandable. American students' understanding of the world is remarkably shallow. As the U.S. Senate noted in its 2006 resolution, "87% of students in the United States between the ages of 18 and 24 cannot locate Iraq on a world map, 83% cannot find Afghanistan, 58% cannot find Japan, and 11% cannot even find the United States" (Vistawide). The Lincoln Commission, which was established by Congress in 2004, also explained, "What nations do not know exacts a heavy toll. The stakes involved in study abroad are that simple, that straightforward, and that important" (3).

As the Lincoln Commission intimates, study abroad offers many benefits, including improving Americans' global understanding. The GLOSSARI project, a ten-year effort to document academic outcomes of study abroad across the entire University System of Georgia, found that students who studied abroad had a higher four-year graduation rate, a higher mean cumulative GPA, and a greater functional knowledge of cultural practices, than non-studying abroad students (Redden). A 2009 survey of 6,391 study abroad participants revealed that study abroad impacted their career paths and capacity for global engagement (e.g., civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, and volunteerism) (Paige et al.). Other

OVERCOMING THE STUDY ABROAD HYPE

studies have reported additional positive outcomes, including a deeper understanding of global issues (Carlson et al.; Carsello and Creaser; Douglas and Jones-Rikkens); more favorable attitudes toward other cultures (Kitsantas); stronger intercultural communication skills (Anderson et al.; Williams); improved self-image (Cushner and Mahon); and better foreign language skills (Freed).

Influenced by these findings, numerous colleges and universities have begun to incorporate study abroad into their strategic planning, curricular requirements, and marketing processes (Bollag; Fischer). The study abroad contagion recently surfaced at my own institution. Four years ago, the president and provost set the lofty goal that at least 50% of our 14,000 students would study abroad at some point during their undergraduate education. To better ensure the success of this goal, the provost and director of international education personally paid a visit to each department across campus issuing strong inducements to incorporate study abroad experiences into its curriculum. At the same time, a new university-wide funding model was instituted requiring that any new international program developed by faculty operate at a profit.

Not surprisingly, within weeks I began receiving numerous urgent email requests from faculty members asking me to advertise their study abroad programs to honors students. Glitzy colored posters began appearing all over campus, some of them promising four-star-hotel-type amenities and long weekends or mid-term breaks to accommodate additional tourist-type travel.

As honors director, I had decidedly mixed feelings about the new aggressive study abroad strategic goal and the resulting marketing efforts. On the one hand, I understood the need for the increased entrepreneurial efforts of my colleagues (particularly given the new funding model) and was in some ways grateful. I was fully aware from the remarks made by many prospective students and family members that some of our competitor honors programs offer and frequently fund luxury international-travel opportunities. Even more importantly, I have witnessed the cognitive, personal, and social maturation that can occur when honors students engage in rigorous and transformative international learning experiences.

On the other hand, I have observed other students return from their study abroad programs with less than stellar results. In fact, some have returned uttering remarks eerily similar to those Ben Feinberg heard when interviewing one of his students who had spent ten weeks in Zimbabwe:

When asked what he had learned from his African experience, Peter used the first-person pronoun seven times . . . : 'I learned that I'm a risk taker, um, that I don't put up with people's bull, uh, what else? That I can do anything that I put my mind to.'

. . . Peter didn't mention that Zimbabweans live in an impoverished dictatorship where 25 percent of the population is HIV positive, and thus they can't do anything that they put their minds to . . . Instead, like so many other traveling young people, he claimed to have learned about himself, and talked about group dynamics; students' transgressive behavior, like drinking too much; and bungee jumping at Victoria Falls.

Jessup-Anger has pointed out that, although evidence exists that students can gain cross-cultural understanding through study abroad, many programs fail to provide students with tools for intercultural understanding. She notes that some programs assume that "the immersion experience alone will be sufficient for students to learn about other cultures. This approach fails to acknowledge that students bring their own socially constructed identities and cultural assumptions to a host country. . . . These identities and assumptions influence and in some cases may distort the ways in which students approach, endure and reflect on their experiences" (360).

These conflicting observations and perspectives about the effects of study abroad gave me pause. Although plenty of evidence for the beneficial effects of study abroad exists, other studies show that study abroad may not fully live up to the considerable hype it has received in recent years. The percentage of U.S. students studying abroad has been relatively small (particularly in relation to students from other highly industrialized countries) and has remained relatively steady (Lewin, 8; Salisbury et al.). In 2005, for example, U.S. students constituted only 1.3% of the total enrollment of all students studying abroad (Institute of International Education 2006). Also notable is the lack of diversity among students who study abroad; most are white women who major in social sciences, hail from affluent families, and travel to English-speaking countries (Institute of International Education 2009). Even though pre-professional students and students majoring in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and math) enter college with the same level of desire to study abroad, they are far less likely to do so (Salisbury et al., 138). Troublingly, Pedersen et al. found that "heavier drinking American college students may self-select into study abroad programs with specific intentions to use alcohol in the foreign environment" (844). Over half of students studying abroad participate in short-term (less than eight weeks) programs led in English by an American faculty member rather than enrolling in a longer-term program for one or more semesters (Institute of International Education 2009). Perhaps more surprisingly, even when students participate in home-stays (which is often seen as the litmus test of a high-quality study abroad program), students may have little meaningful interaction with their host family members. Frank found that home-stay students often spend time

OVERCOMING THE STUDY ABROAD HYPE

at home alone, engage in redundant and simple conversations, or simply sit with the family members around the television. One study found that, although study abroad enhances students' ability to speak orally in a foreign language, students still speak more English than another language while studying abroad (Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey).

Although these findings are dismaying, they do not prompt me to reject the promise of study abroad. They do, however, propel me to ponder ways that honors programs and colleges can foster the best learning that study abroad programs can offer. Toward that end, I have generated a set of key indicators with guiding questions that I plan and encourage others to consider:

LEARNING OUTCOMES OR GOALS

What are the learning goals or outcomes of each study abroad program? Are they aligned with the mission and goals of the honors program or college? What expectations for learning have been articulated for students who study abroad? How are those learning and other behavioral expectations communicated to students and to the leadership involved in the study abroad program? How does one know if these expectations are met? Have some ways of measuring the outcomes or benefits of study abroad been put in place?

DIVERSITY OF PROGRAMS

Does the honors program or college offer a range of different programs of varying length, location, and type? In addition to sponsored programs (led and operated by faculty from the home institution and serving only students from the home institution), are other program types available such as co-sponsored programs (led and operated by faculty of another U.S. university and serving students from a variety of U.S. institutions) or exchange programs (led and operated by faculty from the foreign host university with students enrolling in the foreign institution)? Are there opportunities for students to study in English-speaking as well as non-English speaking countries? Are there opportunities for students to study abroad for short and longer durations? Because some students, for a variety of personal and financial reasons, may not be able to study abroad, are domestic opportunities available that promote intercultural understanding? Sobania and Braskamp have noted the benefits of "study away" opportunities where students are immersed in diverse cultures within a local or regional community.

ACCESSIBILITY

Are quality programs available and accessible to all honors students, including students from STEM disciplines and pre-professional fields? Are

men as well as women encouraged to participate? African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans too infrequently study abroad because of not only “significant expense” but also “cultural fears, family anxieties, and . . . the need for greater pastoral care in preparing students for the experience” (Lewin, 10). Salisbury et al. have found that the “impact of social and cultural capital accumulation before college is influential for all students—no matter their socio-economic status” (137), social and cultural capital being one’s cultural knowledge, educational credentials, language skills, access to resources, and support. Students who come with low levels of pre-college capital are much less likely to study abroad even when they have full financial assistance. Are structures in place to provide the financial assistance as well as the other forms of support needed to make studying abroad truly accessible?

CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

Students can make much more of their experience if they have been introduced to global and cultural issues prior to the study abroad experience and if they can deepen the knowledge gained from the study abroad experience with more advanced internationally-focused courses and engagement opportunities. Lewin argues that curriculum integration does not necessarily need to come in the form of relatively costly pre- or post-departure courses tied explicitly to individual study abroad programs. Instead, he advocates for the “existence and expansion of general coursework that exposes students to global systems, area studies, and world language training” (10). Encouraging faculty to infuse international examples and issues into their honors courses can also aid students in capitalizing on their study abroad experience.

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

Intercultural understanding, including second-language acquisition, can be heightened when students meaningfully engage with members of the host country and particularly when the engagement is sustained over time. Rather than resembling a European grand tour, do the study abroad programs feature research opportunities, internships, community service projects, coursework with host-country students, or other intensive opportunities for engagement with members of the host country?

CRITICAL REFLECTION

When engaged in experiential learning, students learn more deeply by coupling concrete experiences with reflective thought (Kolb). Do students have opportunities to reflect on their academic and non-academic experiences while abroad? Eyster, Giles, & Schmeides have identified four critical factors

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that should be promoted in reflection: (1) continuity (students are encouraged to reflect as an ongoing part of the study abroad experience); (2) connection (students are asked to connect the study abroad experience to course-based learning); (3) challenge (students are prompted to think in a new or more critical way); and (4) contextualization (students are asked to consider contextual factors related to their learning).

CONCLUSION

The list of six ingredients for quality study abroad programs that I have described here is meant to be suggestive rather than prescriptive or exhaustive. My goal for developing this list is simple. As the chorus of calls for study abroad and the numbers of students studying abroad continue to surge, honors educators need to remain vigilant that students make the most of their international learning experiences so that they are prepared to meet the challenges of globalization. Rather than unquestioningly accepting the hype of study abroad, we must critically analyze the value of study abroad and put in place support mechanisms to promote high-quality transformative learning.

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A Case Among Cases

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Clifford Geertz ends his Introduction to *Local Knowledge*, the 1983 collection of his lectures, with an admonition:

To see ourselves as others see us can be eye-opening. To see others as sharing a nature with ourselves is the merest decency. But it is from the far more difficult achievement of seeing ourselves amongst others, as a local example of the forms human life has locally taken, a case among cases, a world among worlds, that the largeness of mind, without which objectivity is self-congratulation and tolerance a sham, comes. (16)

Carolyn Haynes, in “Overcoming the Study Abroad Hype,” reminds us that American higher education has come to expect that “study abroad” will do for our students what we have not accomplished through courses designed to open minds, enrich imaginations, and polish world citizens. She also reminds us that global understanding is far from a guaranteed outcome of foreign study. Often, routine perceptions, stereotypes, and long-standing assumptions about people and places are resistant to change—particularly when they are only implied rather than articulated or challenged—and prevent us from achieving the “largeness of mind” that Geertz advocates.

At its most recent annual conference on “Global Positioning: **Essential Learning, Student Success, and the Currency of U.S. Degrees**” (January 2011), the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) focused on “globalizing” undergraduate education. The presentations addressed international experiences, but sending students abroad was not, as such, a dominant issue addressed. Rather, presenters concentrated on courses and co-curricular experiences that help students develop ways of seeing and knowing that promote perspectival flexibility, arguing that without appropriate and pertinent ‘mindsets’ students were unlikely to derive the maximum benefit from study abroad.

The focus on mindsets led in turn to an emphasis on what we mean by “global,” on an examination of what—beyond passing through other people’s territories—we can imagine might be catalysts of understanding in any situation, familiar or not. The role of undergraduate learning in preparing

students to see with multiple lenses was one inevitable motif of many sessions, a motif that leads us now to address some important implications of Haynes's essay on globalizing and to recommend yet another role that honors might play in its campus context to further the kinds of thinking required for deeper global understanding.

From years of programming a wide array of immersion experiences, we know the variable impact they can have even on strong academic performers, those who are presumably primed by virtue of their curiosity and motivation to probe and pursue new knowledge. We have seen some of the lackluster results that Haynes cites: even honors students often gain little except self-esteem (important, but not all that is hoped for from study abroad) from an essentially unexamined experience. Haynes's essay cites some of the pitfalls of an experience not grounded in the institution's or program's mission. Without the "curricular integration" that leads students to feel "meaningfully engaged," travel study will certainly be just a nice field trip, and, from an educational standpoint, it is a lost opportunity. An experience that is not grounded in meaningful coursework and does not create an opportunity for students to examine the connection between coursework and experience is essentially an unexamined experience that has little educational merit. The reflective component (critical reflection), when students identify discomfort, analyze its possible sources, and consider their own part in generating it, stands out, David A. Kolb argues, as a powerful engine of insight and change. Catherine Twomey Fosnot outlines the conditions for an individual to construct knowledge as ". . . the conflict between existing personal models of the world and discrepant new insights, constructing new representations and models of reality as a human meaning-making venture with culturally developed tools and symbols, and further negotiating such meaning through cooperative social activity, discourse, and debate" (*ix*). Fosnot's description is reminiscent of Paulo Freire's "dialogical man," who seeks to "create and transform" (79).

Efforts to design courses, whether on campus or off, that are well-grounded in intentional learning and have a self-reflective dimension produce powerful results. Seminars accompanied by field laboratories can be offered in all disciplines, and when they expect students to use their own social setting as though they were "abroad," introduce provocative self-reflection, as all the NCHC Honors Semesters have shown. Campus-based curricula can equally help students develop the antennae required for deep understanding of others' points of view and the capacity to arrive at "intellectual understanding," both of which Haynes desires as outcomes of study abroad. Honors programs feature courses illustrative of the best and most imaginative curricula designed to produce the same outcomes as study abroad, and such

courses can be offered with stunning outcomes to other students, as well. If students subsequently study abroad, preparation in such courses will have prepared them to benefit from their travels, and in any context students will be better prepared for deep learning.

For example, excellent laboratories to engage students in open-ended inquiry can be found in general education courses designed to be interdisciplinary or in thematically organized seminars that raise questions about complex issues or problems that cannot be considered without serious readings from multiple disciplines. Such courses are excellent courses to engage students in open-ended inquiry. Examining topics in such a framework pushes students to acquire skills of integrative thinking and hones both analysis and self-reflection. Honors programs already offering such courses are in a key position to model for their entire campus community the principles of design and the intellectual benefits of a practice that engages students in exactly the mental and emotional activity needed to pave the way for study-away experiences.

If international study is marketed now as widely as Haynes suggests, then perhaps honors programs have an obligation to help disseminate as widely as possible what they have come to do best: link scholarly depth with perspectival breadth in solid cross-disciplinary inquiry that prepares students to be observant, creative, analytical, conscious of nuance, aware of context, and alert to themselves in interaction with others different from them. Perspective is what is needed, and what is elusive.

NCHC models that expand depth and breadth include the organization's Place as Text field component that can prepare for or serve as part of research courses. NCHC members have, at their home institutions, evolved many examples of domestic and international courses of study that might serve as models for site-specific and immersion learning. Studies by the Institute of International Education cited in Haynes's essay alert us to the danger that overseas study, even at its best, is not necessarily accomplishing what it can or might; one possible reason is that the kinds of preparation most students undertake prior to travel are incomplete or non-existent. We are suggesting that what might be called "global skills" need to be developed before overseas study and can be honed, both on campus and off, if shaped deliberately to move students from collectors of information to investigators who pose fresh questions.

Further, we support the notion that study abroad experiences should consciously incorporate Haynes's "six ingredients for quality study abroad programs." Ultimately, the goals for a study abroad program or any program that seeks to prepare students to become part of the global community need to be grounded in elements that a global citizen might require. Howard Gardner

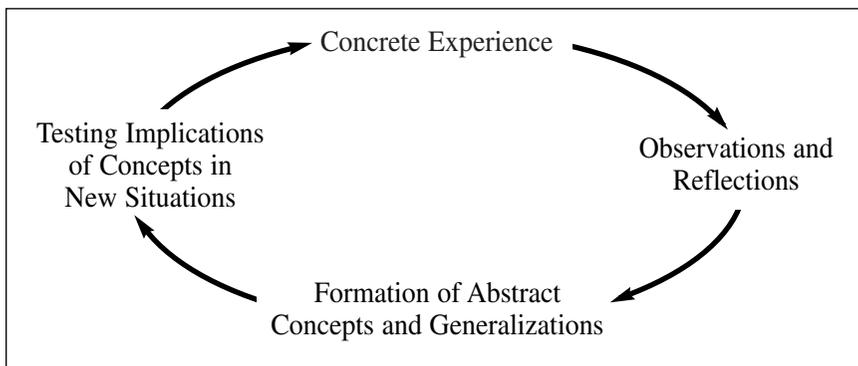
outlined these elements in his book *Five Minds for the Future* and in his later essay by the same name. In both, he describes five qualities that need to be considered if a true global perspective is to be achieved: (1) The Disciplined Mind, (2) The Synthesizing Mind, (3) The Creating Mind, (4) The Respectful Mind, and (5) The Ethical Mind.

One example from personal experience that we can offer to support Gardner's premise is the writing-intensive Core Seminar required of undergraduates at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. The course is based in its structure and multiple learning components on the freshman sequence of LIU University Honors Program courses on this campus and has taken the broadest theme possible: "The Idea of the Human." It incorporates self-guided explorations in the City as Text™ mode, cross-disciplinary sessions that are extended laboratories or workshops, and pairs of instructors from different disciplines who design and facilitate the labs and explorations.

Readings for the course are drawn deliberately from scientific inquiry, social commentary, and artistic expression. The entire experience is organized around questions that have no single answer and sometimes have none, thus helping the course push both inquiry and creativity. A pattern of self-reflection, reiterated throughout the course both in discussion and in lab journals, emphasizes the need to develop perspective on self and other, and the course encourages students to synthesize material from multiple disciplines and from unmediated experience. For two years now, the course has made use of rubrics from AAC&U's VALUE project (Reading, Writing, and Integrative Learning so far), and results suggest that freshmen and sophomores are developing impressive skills of integrative thinking at significant rates in just one semester.

The construction of the learning experience closely models Kolb's continuum of learning in the cycle of course experiences and seeks to create a learning environment where students move from concrete concepts to participatory experiences, from which they begin to abstract and conceptualize complex and conflicting ideas. Honors programs often create intellectual communities that reflect this cycle, as illustrated in Figure 1 (Kolb 235).

When transplanted into general education offerings like Core Seminar, this learning model incorporates direct experience into the cycle of learning and pushes students to become aware of how they design their investigations. The learning model can benefit as well from Gardner's concept of global perspectives to achieve curricular integration and critical reflection, outcomes that Haynes asserts to be essential in building an effective skill set for study abroad. We argue that this learning model is also essential for twenty-first-century students whether they travel abroad or not.

Figure 1. The Experiential Learning Model (Kolb)

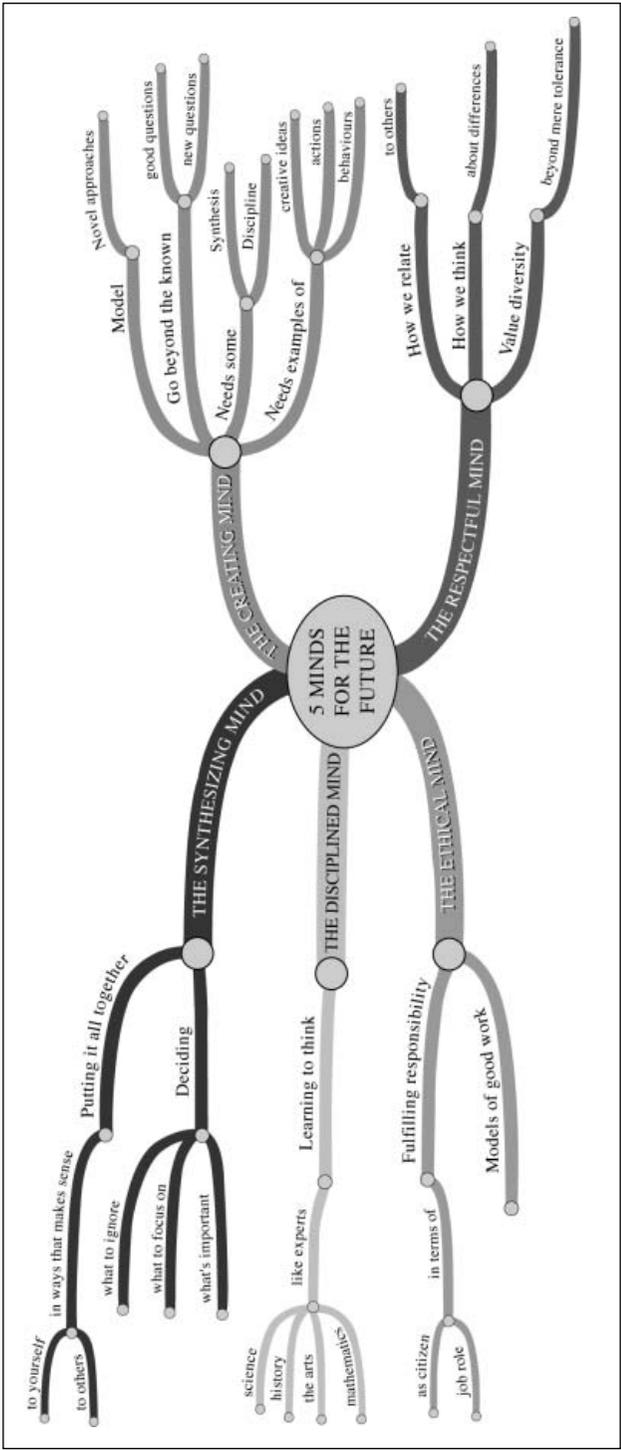
Gardner's argument is that individuals need not travel abroad to acquire global perspective. The five understandings necessary to a global thinker can be developed through early experiences in students' coursework. His five modes of thinking are aptly illustrated in his Figure 2 diagram from the 2008 essay where he illustrates his understanding that there is "... no strict hierarchy among the minds, such that one should be cultivated before the other" (23).

Like Kolb's learning model, Gardner's disciplined mind is more than the construction of knowledge. He posits pathways that carry thinkers from reflecting and conceptualizing to understanding how one might conceive and understand knowledge, and he adds human empathy. He challenges educators and business leaders to include a humane dimension in the pursuit of understanding. Two of his intelligences that deal specifically with how human beings might understand and interact with each other represent the ethical and respectful mind.

When we speak of affording students the opportunity to learn from and experience other cultures, we must move beyond what Carl Grant calls "Heroes and Holidays," wherein educators add foreign culture through a study abroad experience the way they add an author to a course simply to expand the mix; Grant refers to this as "add and stir" (171). Without its being integrated meaningfully into course content or establishing a cross-disciplinary context for study abroad, the overseas experience becomes, as Haynes sees it, a study in ethnocentricity.

For the experience to be grounded, it must be rooted in how disciplines see, think, and analyze. Gardner believes that science, math, history, and art forms are "gateways" and, therefore, underpinnings of a good undergraduate general education. He urges faculty to be models of the empathic and integrative thinking outlined in *Five Minds for the Future*: "The task for

Figure 2. Five Minds for the Future



educators becomes clear: if we are to fashion persons who respect differences, we need to provide models and offer lessons that encourage such a sympathetic stance” (110). As Parker J. Palmer argues in “Community, Conflict, and Ways of Knowing,” “. . . the way we know has powerful implications for the way we live. . . every epistemology tends to become an ethic, and . . . every way of knowing tends to become a way of living” (22). If global thinking, implicit in study abroad imperatives, matters, it does so precisely for shaping how students learn and live.

Beyond preparing students to think about how they see the world and try to understand others, honors curricula and the willingness to experiment in honors programs have a great deal to offer everyone in higher education. In the framework of this specific discussion, evidence suggests that some of what honors already does should be re-examined for use elsewhere. On our own campus, the goals of the LIU University Honors Program are embedded in the general education course, Core Seminar, and are thereby inextricably linked to the campus’s mission. This linkage not only has helped us think about what kinds of competencies we all need for a world more obviously in flux than ever but also to do more with the imperative to “study abroad” than is often achieved. By assessing our progress and thereafter implementing corrective strategies, as Carolyn Haynes suggests, we could begin to make more of a difference than we dreamed.

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Honors in Ghana: How Study Abroad Enriches Students' Lives

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Study abroad programs are taking on a new role in curricula and strategic planning in our colleges and universities today. Carolyn Haynes lists a number of “key indicators” for consideration in developing study abroad programs that set the stage for students’ deep learning and personal development. This essay supports her viewpoint and looks more closely at two of the key indicators, meaningful engagement and critical reflection, and how they are linked with students’ academic learning and personal development in study abroad programs. We will demonstrate this link using the example of a student-initiated and team-oriented study abroad program in Ghana that we have developed at Grand Valley State University.

The theoretical contexts of our Ghana program have both prepared us for our experiences and validated them. In Kuh’s research on the effects of high-impact educational practices, he notes that “student development is a cumulative process shaped by many events and experiences inside and outside the classroom (13). Chickering (as cited in Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt) adds another dimension to student development that he calls “cool passion”: “Cool passion seeks a fulfillment by joining the forces of heart and mind, commitment and critical analysis. Such passion pursues its purposes with ‘tenuous tenacity’” (77). Finally, Vande Berg refers to a new student learning paradigm that influences how we approach study abroad programs: “We no longer believe that our responsibilities to our students, where their learning is concerned, end when they leave the United States” (394). This paradigm, along with Kuh’s cumulative model and Chickering’s “cool passion,” illuminate the high-impact practice of our study abroad program in Ghana.

Students in Grand Valleys’ Frederik Meijer Honors College were the driving force in developing our program. One student traveled with me to Ghana, and in the two subsequent years we had two small contingents of students who got a sense of the culture and the possibilities of study there so they could help us shape the program. Now we have a group of nineteen students, one faculty, and two staff members headed back to Ghana in 2011, where we are offering an interdisciplinary study abroad program that links a three-credit social science course with a service-learning practicum. This study abroad

program is unique in several ways. First, it is a student-led initiative. Second, the program offers a learner-centered education; it provides an environment where students focus not only on what but how they learn in a new culture, integrating student learning and student development to create seamless learning. Third, the program is interdisciplinary and collaborative, with students, faculty, and staff participating across the disciplines.

Our 2009 experience in Ghana provides a glimpse of the kind of experience we provide for our students. Six honors students and I went to Ghana to explore possible partnerships for sustainable projects. We had agreed to work together as a team, which meant that any decisions or concerns would be discussed with everyone. Prior to our departure, a group of missionaries approached us to partner with them to help build a hydroponic farming system for Ghanaians in the Northern region and to build huts at the mission's training center. We decided this would be an opportune time to initiate a sustainable program that would create a tradition of sending Grand Valley students each year to participate in service activities with a goal of helping Ghanaians develop thriving and sustainable communities.

In one of many surprises, detours, and mishaps, we found that our missionaries were not ready for us, so instead we changed diapers, taught math and English, painted the girls' and boys' bedrooms, played soccer with the children, and learned a little Dutch and the Gonja dialect. More importantly, we soon found that the values of this missionary group were not consistent with our own, and so we came to consensus on a new option: we would travel back down to Southern Ghana to spend the remainder of our trip with a Ghanaian run anti-child trafficking organization called Challenging Heights. For two weeks, we worked with children who had been either rescued from slavery or were at high risk of being trafficked. At times, we were overwhelmed with the poverty and overcome with heartache. Through those darkest moments, the children taught us to look beyond the limited tangible world and experience life in a very different form.

We came to realize that the service component of our trip was not necessarily to help "solve" the problem of child trafficking. Rather, we could best help by providing the human capital (volunteerism) to implement solutions already outlined by Ghanaian non-profit leaders like those we were working with at Challenging Heights. When we returned from Ghana, the students became significantly engaged in a number of programs. Examples of their involvement include developing programs to raise awareness about child trafficking in their living centers, sharing their experiences with incoming freshmen and at pre-professional seminars, organizing a campus-wide school supply drive, recruiting students for the following year's trip, and developing an

annotated bibliography of potential readings for the college's service-learning initiative.

The following summer in 2010, two living center directors, seven students, and I traveled to Ghana to take a look at several service-learning sites, meet with faculty at the University of Ghana to discuss a study abroad program, and to work with Challenging Heights to explore service-learning opportunities for students. Members of our group helped develop sustainable methods for women to produce palm oil and grind cassava; initiated a clean water project and organized fund raising programs to purchase thirty water filters and have them shipped to Ghana; partnered with GVSU faculty to research bio-sand filters and how to maintain them; and generated lasting relationships with chiefs, government officials, and non-profit leaders in the region who have continued to sustain and expand the development of the community in which the filters were installed.

One of our goals on this trip was to bring together the final components for a formal program proposal, and the students' involvement was key in developing the coursework at the University of Ghana and linking it to service experiences. At the same time, the students set the precedent for the kind of meaningful engagement and critical reflection that Haynes described and that we affirm as key values. Casey Key, a premed honors student, stated, "I did not learn from books, rather, I learned from a community. I learned that there are places where people and community are valued over individualism and capitalist ideals. I confirmed that America is not always right, and neither is Ghana." Amanda Clark, a women's studies major, said that "being a global citizen means recognizing that the world is larger than your individual reality; it's respecting other ways of life and acknowledging the educational opportunity available to all when you are open to engage in conversations. It's dismissing the claims that your way of life is the only way of life." Annie Hakim remarked, "These experiences will teach me to not only look through the eyes of others, but to recreate the way I see the world through my own eyes." These comments illustrate the "cool passion," the combination of engagement and reflection, that we hope will continue to characterize our study abroad program in Ghana.

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Taking It Global

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In a May 2010 commencement speech to George Washington University graduates, first lady Michelle Obama challenged graduates to “take it global.” She encouraged graduates to continue their personal and professional growth by traveling abroad. She further asserted that if we expand our geographical boundaries, we are strengthened both as individuals and as a nation. The underlying message is that diverse cultural connections enhance the quality of students’ lives, and study abroad programs are critical and unique channels through which students can be prepared for global understanding and interaction.

While travel abroad has been a part of affluent American culture since our country was founded, the purpose of travel abroad as it has informed study abroad programs in the past few decades and as it was expressed by Michelle Obama, is still relatively new. The European Grand Tour, which was incorporated into American education as the Junior Year Abroad in the early and middle decades of the twentieth century, has evolved from an exercise in personal sophistication to a commitment to internationalism. International education recognizes that much of students’ education should occur beyond the walls of the classroom and that their worldviews are shaped by their experiences. Students are thus encouraged to participate in an array of traditional and non-traditional learning that includes travel along with other social, academic, and cultural activities. Unlike the old European Grand Tour, these experiential learning opportunities are designed to challenge students’ assumptions and certainties, resulting in a more engaged and meaningful experience that makes undergraduate education globally relevant and significant. This new kind of study abroad requires a more rigorous preparation for travel so that students have the background and skills they need to strengthen their relations with diverse populations from different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds.

Given these new functions of study abroad, Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) designed a summer Spanish Language Immersion Program (SLIP) in Mexico that provides an enriched educational experience and encourages foreign-language scholarship for undergraduate honors students in this Historically Black University. Designed to be affordable at a cost of \$3,300 for the student (including tuition, fees, class registration, airfare,

and housing), SLIP has provided a five-week immersion experience in Queretaro, Mexico, every summer since 2002. Honors students live with host families, take courses at *El Centro Intercultural de Queretaro*, participate in cultural activities and excursions, and engage in volunteer service projects. A joint effort of the WSSU Honors Program and the Department of English and Foreign Languages, the SLIP program advances the university's mission to internationalize the campus through rigorous academic courses, robust experiential learning opportunities, and meaningful cultural enrichment activities.

In preparation for the program, participants must complete a language assessment at WSSU and demonstrate proficiency at the Intermediate Level (see ACTFL Guidelines.) The Spanish-Proficiency Assessment is designed to evaluate student proficiency in listening, writing, reading, and speaking skills. At *El Centro Intercultural de Queretaro*, students enroll in language and culture courses to earn up to seven credit hours. All courses are taught in Spanish and routinely include Advanced Spanish Conversation, Hispanic Civilization, Advanced Spanish Composition, Special Topics/Readings in Hispanic Civilization, and Junior Honors Colloquium. Junior Honors Colloquium is a mandatory one-credit course that allows students to pursue special projects and has a service learning component that requires students to volunteer at various charitable organizations in Queretaro.

The design of the program supports the "5Cs" articulated by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages: communication, culture, connections, community, and comparisons. Students enhance their **communication** skills primarily by living with Mexican families and interacting with members of the community. Daily living in Queretaro affords them the opportunity to experience and understand another **culture**, which in turn generates a renewed appreciation for their own native culture. Using the Spanish language in meaningful contexts provides the basis for making **connections** with common themes in other subject areas and disciplines so that they learn new ways of approaching subject matters in different disciplines. During the five weeks, students develop a sense of **community** that boasts a local as well as global dimension, engendering an understanding not only of the Mexican communities in Queretaro but of the immigrant Latino communities (and other immigrant groups) in North Carolina. Finally, students who participate in SLIP return with a new perspective on **comparisons**, recognizing that language learning is an important tool to understanding the uniqueness and similarities of languages, cultures, and people.

SLIP not only meets the criteria of the 5Cs, but it nurtures the cross-cultural relations that are a foundational component in WSSU's effort at internationalizing the curricula. SLIP was created in response to WSSU's plans to institute a foreign language requirement and promote study abroad, seen as

important cornerstones in the university's push toward global readiness. WSSU's internationalizing agenda is, in turn, a response to the broader University of North Carolina (UNC) recommendation contained in the UNC Tomorrow Commission's Report to expose students to international-based experiences that support the mastery of soft skills leading to global awareness and understanding. (UNC refers to the University of North Carolina, its seventeen constituent institutions, and its affiliated entities established under Chapter 116 of the North Carolina General Statutes.) The aim of the report is to determine how UNC can respond more directly and proactively to the rapidly changing, knowledge-based global economy of the twenty-first century. The report's findings and suggestions help to shape existing and future programs of individual institutions and have contributed significantly to the growth and sustainability of programs like SLIP.

Perhaps the most important success of SLIP has been its ability to tap into the exceptional pool of students in the university's honors program, who have ensured that the summer program is mutually beneficial to them and their counterparts in Mexico. This type of cultural experience helps students prepare to thrive in a global workforce rich in diversity and gives them a greater appreciation of diverse perspectives. We have come a long way since the old European Tour, now providing our students with an opportunity to engender understanding and strengthen relations with diverse populations by interacting with people from different social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. We are not just taking our students on trips; we are taking them global.

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Faculty-Led International Honors Programs

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We know that one of the major reasons for encouraging our students to study outside of the United States is to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the world. The insights and personal experiences that students gain from living, speaking, and taking part in the culture they are studying are immeasurable. Students also improve their professional potential. An international study program can provide students with cognitive and affective competencies necessary for them to thrive in a global economy, and it can provide the nation with citizens who are economically and politically savvy. Substantive research demonstrates some of the core values and skills of a liberal arts education that are enhanced, including critical thinking skills, the ability to communicate in more than one language, the ability to communicate across cultural and national boundaries, and the ability to make informed judgments on major personal and social issues.

Although much can be gained from any experience of studying in another country, a program that is created and run by honors faculty is better. Honors international programs that have been designed and led by honors faculty tend to be customized both to the students and to the honors program, assuring that field pedagogy will replicate the standards and quality that students can expect in their home classes, seminars, and colloquia. Such programs are well-organized since they have to be arranged and approved well in advance. Furthermore, since the faculty members are aware of resources on campus or can propose and receive grants for international programs, the opportunities for students who cannot afford the expense of studying abroad are greater. For example, an honors faculty member at the University of New Mexico received a National Science Foundation grant for our Honors Biodiversity Program in Australia that allowed her to include qualified students regardless of their economic status.

Equally important are the design and execution that can often only be organized by faculty members from the home campus. Faculty-led international programs are designed with awareness of the important components for encountering or engaging with a site:

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The component parts exist in time-space. Organizing them presupposes pace, rhythm, and movement through them. Unlike the presuppositions of campus organization, which (however inaccurately) assumes static structures and immovable objects, every [honors international program] begins with the concept of motion and the dynamic of movement through space over time. [Faculty] construct unique calendars, juxtapose field explorations and classroom discussion, and create arenas in which differing voices lead discussion throughout a term with variable blocks of time allocated to these activities. Further, participants are invited to see themselves as explorers—that is, to move and simultaneously watch themselves moving through uncharted territory. The mapping they undertake is, therefore, of a space, of themselves moving through that space, of themselves transforming that space into a place that has taken on the tangible familiarity of what they, the [students], have measured by their alert movement through it. (Braid 19)

Faculty-led international programs are characterized by a combination of tight structure and planning on the one hand, and serendipity and engagement with the unexpected on the other. On a trip during a UNM Honors *Conexiones* Program in Mexico, for instance, the students were stuck crossing a river. To their surprise, a group of young Tarahumara Indians rushed to their rescue. The students were thus able to engage with young people from a culture very different than their own, benefitting from an opportunity to break with the routines of ordinary life and cross cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Even when excursions are faculty-led, the process still entails student choice, responsibility, and freedom in the process. The end goal is not just showing students the world, i.e. giving them a guided tour, but also facilitating their own explorations. Faculty members leading international programs are likely to create unique outings and trips within the host country whereas students without faculty leadership are more likely to experience generic “tourist” itineraries when traveling within the host country. With faculty support and advice, students less often find themselves in unfortunate or unsafe situations. In an Honors *Conexiones* Program to Mexico, for example, the students were hiking up Basaceachic Mountain when a nearby lightning strike knocked several students to the ground. Because our own faculty members were on site, they were able to calm the students and ensure that no one was hurt.

Further, honors faculty can act as “culture brokers” by explaining the customs and proprieties of the host country. In a majority of cases, they have

traveled to the country themselves, speak the language, and can therefore arrange excursions that will enrich the students' experience. A student who travels alone to Paris or Mexico City or Hong Kong may or may not immerse him- or herself in that culture and language. Sometimes the student is disoriented and can take several weeks to adjust, losing time for exploration of the country. Attending a foreign university can be beneficial, but sometimes students remain on or near the campus and do not venture too far away. Very often they live in residence halls with other American students, and, although they typically attend classes at a local university where courses may be taught in the language of that country, students often find English-taught courses.

In faculty-led international programs, continuity in the student-teacher relationship begins prior to travel with intense and targeted orientations, continues through the field sessions that allow faculty to closely monitor student growth, and provides for an on-going close relationship between faculty and students. Students attending faculty-led programs integrate their learning and experience more closely into their studies and careers subsequent to the program. Faculty "on the ground" are able to inspire students to undertake research projects and can then provide direction and feedback that guarantees a successful research experience. Such faculty can also assure that students have easy access to mentors who have significant experience on the field site and in the situation so that students can be advised on an on-going basis about safety concerns and particular educational and cultural opportunities that they might otherwise miss.

Culture shock—the struggle to make sense of new information—is emotionally unsettling, and students can have difficulty learning when they feel secluded and alone. By going with a faculty member and other students, they feel supported and typically overcome their fears and insecurities more quickly. Engaging crises with humor and equanimity, the instructors indirectly reassure students without "babying" or coddling them. With an explicit means of addressing culture shock, particularly during orientation sessions, it can become a positive rather than disruptive force in the program.

Faculty-led programs include numerous other benefits: they are less expensive than other international programs since prices can be negotiated for a group instead of for an individual; students do not have to deal with transfer credits since their classes are home-university courses even when taught by foreign professors; and excursions arranged and run by a faculty member provide focus for the international study topic. Having a faculty member on site allows flexibility in dealing with unexpected impediments like bad weather and also with positive opportunities. UNM students experienced such an opportunity while participating in the Honors *Conexiones* Program in Nicaragua last summer. They discovered that there was to be a

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celebration of the forty-first anniversary of the revolution in Managua; this turned into an unexpected but invaluable experience during which students learned about the FSLN (*Frente Sandanista Liberación Nacional*) and how important it was to the people.

Field-based, faculty-led programs also allow effective evaluation and direction of student research. If students are on their own, they cannot get feedback on their worksheets and field notes or directions on how to head back into the field to complete the work. They often return to their home institution without having completed a project or with less than the desirable amount of information or concrete data. Since the faculty member is often in the field as both a faculty member running the class and as a researcher collecting his or her own data, students can model themselves on a professional scholar in the field and learn first-hand how to collect information, make choices, use tools, and conduct themselves as scholars. During the *Conexiones* Program in Nicaragua, for example, two of the UNM honors faculty members have been involved in a long-term study of the festivals dedicated to Santiago (St. James) in Latin America, New Mexico, and Spain. Their comparative study is designed to expose the essential and ephemeral aspects of the celebrations and yield valuable insights into the roles of religion and cultures of the saints in the resistance of colonized people. While in Nicaragua, they discovered that a Santiago fiesta was to be held in the small town of Jinotepe. The faculty engaged the students in their research, which included photographs and interviews and which produced numerous hours of audio documentation. Many of the students took on related projects of their own: some students wanted to understand the procession in which a statue of the saint is carried through the streets to the cathedral; others examined the significance and symbolism of the masks and dress of the celebrants; and others studied the music, a mixture of indigenous instruments and modern hip hop refrains. While doing this research, the students learned about research praxis and at the same time expanded their understanding of Nicaraguan folk culture.

Over the years, nearly all students in the UNM study abroad programs have surpassed both our expectations and their own. A few students always do even more, distinguishing themselves through outstanding achievement in all aspects of the program. Since our international faculty-led programs are academically challenging, students must engage the program of study amid the strains and difficulties of travel, cross-cultural contact, and physical exertion. Having our faculty on site and able to provide support, encouragement, information, and contacts, students have achieved deep, original, and productive connections to different cultures and countries.

Faculty-led programs can also include initiatives that are significant to individual honors programs. For example, the UNM honors international programs always place the students with host families during the field session; the families provide room, board, and additional support, preventing the students from becoming completely dependent on the faculty and expanding their ability to connect with residents from the host country. Also, most of our international programs include a service-learning component. During the Honors *Conexiones* Program in Nicaragua, for example, classes were held at a small school, *Casa Xalteva*, that uses proceeds from teaching Spanish to fund educational programs for local children. Our students tutored the children in English, and they practiced their Spanish with the children. With the help of a faculty member, they also learned bicycle repair terminology in Spanish and repaired the school's bicycles, which were then rented to future students in order to generate additional revenue for the school.

Students who study abroad get a well-rounded education that prepares them for our increasingly global world. In my experience, faculty-led programs provide the best education by linking foreign study to the expectations and curricula of the student's honors program, as only faculty-led international programs can do.

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The Honors Differential: At Home and Abroad

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Study abroad constitutes already the kind of enrichment that defines honors education at home. The honors component of instruction at home in the U.S. emerges from the differential between the regular course of instruction and the extension, or rather qualitative enrichment, of the same through various types of added conceptual complexity, scope of detail, depth of inquiry, or level of skill. That honors differential can be tracked visibly and explicitly onto a syllabus in a regular course through highlighted assignments for eligible students; or can be embedded invisibly and implicitly in a designated honors course the syllabus for which makes it distinct from both a regular course on the same or related topic and from an advanced departmental course. In study abroad, the honors differential is, likewise, invisibly and implicitly present already by virtue of the changed cultural context of instruction and daily life. Study abroad galvanizes at the forefront of student consciousness what Lionel Trilling once called a “culture’s hum and buzz of implication” (206) or the dense imbrications of background cultural assumptions that, literally, go without saying in one’s familiar home culture. Study abroad constitutes, in effect, an honors experience for one and all and marks for most students their first and most profound direct encounter with another culture and indirectly with their own. Students experience and gain a new level of comparative cultural consciousness and sophistication.

Honors credit for honors students studying abroad, then, has to capture the honors differential that is already there, make it explicit, and raise it to consciousness in order to reveal its implications. A journal or blog of reflections on cultural differences provides the best opportunity to register the nuances of experience that depart from the familiar. However, the journal cannot remain simply a chronicle of one’s activities abroad; rather, the annotation of experiences comprises the basic structure onto which the student tracks her/his reflections on cultural difference. The day-to-day chronicle is therefore the necessary foundation for the sort of meta-cognition or higher-level reflection that defines honors but is itself not honors work. In order to help the student articulate and maintain that higher level of self-reflection on cultural difference in different contexts, the Hofstra University Honors

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College (HUHC) requires the elaboration in advance (under advisement) of ten categories of culture, adapted to the student's interests, area of study, and planned activities. Generally, the categories are based in part on traditional disciplines at the university that also define, abstractly and inevitably, dimensions of the student's experience such as transportation, food, economics, history, language, art forms, politics, geography, and urban planning. Such categories help the student extend and generalize from a discrete, local, and personal incident or observation to more far-reaching considerations about a culture.

For the HUHC, the only required category is the initial description of the student's situation in the host country—including housing, location, and resources, for example—as the cornerstone of future observations in order to establish the student's self-conscious position and perspective in the host culture. Students may use their experience in a formal course (on whatever topic) as one category: for example, a theater class in London, an archaeology course in Ireland, or a business course in China. Also, discussion of possible categories will sometimes stipulate certain experiences, such as reading a novel set in that city or visiting certain museums. The categories can be altered, if necessary, and made more specific or changed completely during the study abroad as circumstances change. In any case, however, the categories should not contain, limit, or constrain the student's experiences or reflections but rather provide a way of passing beyond personal impression to earnest cultural insight or conjecture, from what first appears as oddity or inconvenience to a reflection on different values in the host culture. For example, students in Germany noted that subway escalators stopped when not in use; that toilets had two flush options; that city recycling collection required five or six different receptacles; and that plastic bags cost money at the supermarket. Students then began to reflect at each new turn on that society's different relation to the use of resources and personal responsibility in society on multiple levels and in terms of individual consumption.

This sort of reflective journal amplifies the students' awareness of their own experiences in larger terms and encourages the student to engage in new experiences beyond the program's regular itinerary. The proliferation of "luxury international-travel opportunities," as noted by Carolyn Haynes, could have the contrary effect of the journal and undercut the benefits of study abroad by isolating the experience in a comfortable class structure or bubble that reduces 'culture shock' and reflection while encouraging facile perceptions and familiar stereotypes or just casual tourism (or worse), as Haynes recounts quoting Ben Feinberg.

The sort of Honors Abroad journal I describe also avoids the situation of a student trying to earn honors credit in a course or content area through

strictly academic work that might entail more time in the laboratory or library but that ignores the culture in which the academic work is being done. The purpose of honors abroad is, on the contrary, to encourage students to experience more fully and broadly their time in a different culture as opposed to just pursuing their discipline or a given academic course content more deeply as they would at home for honors credit. Depth in a discipline is desirable, but academic honors credit abroad should not serve to narrow experience until after the student has attained an advanced level in a discipline as well as cultural familiarity and linguistic proficiency in the host culture; such narrowing might be appropriate in the second semester of a year abroad or with prior experience in that culture.

Ideally, an honors abroad experience and journal would figure as, if not a capstone, then at least a milestone in a cumulative portfolio (usually now electronic) of a student's work both in and outside of the major. Some schools require a cumulative portfolio of all students or of students in specific schools, divisions, or disciplines; other schools require none. In any case, the honors abroad journal stands in reciprocal and mutually enriching relation to academic work done in other areas, and a portfolio makes that relation more evident.

Preliminary discussion and review after the study abroad helps the student prepare to gain depth of experience and reflection, though that cannot be guaranteed. The reviewer of the honors abroad journal and/or (e-)portfolio can question, probe, and ask for amplification and elaboration to press students, after the fact, for further degrees of reflection as part of their learning outcomes. Questions tailored to their circumstances and experiences might include: Is one particular instance/observation representative? In that particular instance, what exactly was different from what you're used to? How? What was your first impression of the rationale or logic of that circumstance? Did it make sense to you? Why or why not? What implications do you see? Did another alternate logic become apparent to you? How does the host culture view the same? Why?

Because of the focus on different cultural contexts, an honors abroad journal, since it is not bound to a particular course, can apply to internships, service programs, or any organized activity abroad, allowing for a greater breadth of possible experiences and funding opportunities. Ideally, the honors differential experienced and articulated abroad will translate afterward back into the student's life, academic and otherwise, at home, ever after.

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Portz-Prize-Winning Essay, 2010

Realizing Early English Drama

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INTRODUCTION

In May of 2010 a group of students from the Kent State University Honors College participated in a rare undertaking: presenting a medieval play as part of an international production of the whole play-cycle from which it originates. The students were five hundred years removed from the original context of that play and cycle. The earliest mention of *The Chester Cycle* comes from a 1422 legal dispute regarding the responsibilities of the guilds that were producing one of the plays in it, the language of which makes clear that the play-cycle was already well-established by that time. This historical remove was a significant challenge as students from 2010 prepared for this ambitious enterprise, one that required them to work with unfamiliar material and little hard evidence in the creation of the episode they were to produce.

The first challenge for student participants was to acquaint themselves with the unique subject matter they would tackle over the next nine months. Naturally, before getting to work, the students needed to learn what early English cycle plays were and when and why they were first performed. The three primary types of popular theatre in early and early modern England can be differentiated by performance venue: parish plays, which depicted the lives of saints and were produced by churches in rural communities; theatre performed by strolling players, whose repertoire would have consisted mainly of Robin Hood plays; and urban theatre, such as the cycle plays discussed here. The play-cycles are called by the name of the cities in which they were performed, and the full texts of only four of the English cycles survive: the *York Cycle*, the *Wakefield* or *Towneley Cycle*, the *N-Town Cycle*, and *The Chester Cycle* out of which came the play that Kent State University Honors College students would produce.

These play-cycles were sometimes called “mystery cycles” because the guilds (or “mysteries”) in the city were responsible for producing the individual episodes making up the entire cycle. They were likely derived from liturgical drama and were intended to teach the scriptures and reinforce faith in the sacraments. The earliest records we have of liturgical drama come from the late tenth century. This liturgical drama is the *Queum quaeritis* (Whom do you seek?), referred to by Alexandra Johnston as a “dialogue,” and although

it is not a theatrical performance as such, it is likely that it lead to what we might consider more “traditional” theatrical performances (CCMET, 3–4; Wasson, 28). By the mid-sixteenth century, the English Reformation was underway, and, as England separated from its Catholic roots, changes in religious and state law resulted in the cessation of such productions. The plays lay dormant and largely untouched for two hundred years. Then in the early nineteenth century, a scholar by the name of Thomas Sharp rediscovered episodes from what may have been a cycle performed at Coventry. His work, *A dissertation on the pageants or dramatic mysteries anciently performed at Coventry*, opened a rich and largely uncharted realm of scholarly research. As scholars engaged the subject of early English theatre and cycle plays in particular, the citizens of York and Chester began to mount performances of their eponymous cycles, which were no longer a thing of the past.

Interest in cycle plays was shared by those outside these specific communities. In 1966 a graduate seminar at the University of Toronto led to a production of the medieval play *Rafe Roister Doister* and eventually to the formation of the *Poculi Ludique Societas*, or the PLS, the oldest and most respected medieval drama society in North America. The PLS, which is dedicated to the realization of medieval and early English dramatic revivals, first revived *The Chester Cycle* in 1983. That tradition continued with the production of all twenty-four plays from the cycle that took place in 2010 as part of a lavish international theatre festival. I was lucky enough to become involved when a faculty member from the English department at Kent State University asked if I would direct the play we were to contribute. I eagerly jumped at the chance, and the documentation of that process eventually became my senior honors thesis and the basis of this paper.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Information can be found about early English cycle plays, but it is not always as complete or as specific as one would like. As with most fields that explore and attempt to reconstruct pre-modern history, the study of early English drama is limited by incomplete historical records. However, early drama faces an additional evidentiary gap: many English medieval plays were systematically destroyed for religious and political purposes in the sixteenth century. Also, these plays were intended to be performed and not read; they would be spoken by actors (and performed for audience members) who were probably largely illiterate and who might not have been able to read the texts had the plays been written. Consequently, the act of creating scripts may have seemed a futile effort to their original authors, actors, and producers (Johnston, CCMET, 7–8). The texts that have survived are probably but a small fraction of the plays that were produced at the time. As a result of the

limited textual evidence, the information available about production comes partly from revivals within the academic community—revivals such as the one that the Kent State University Honors College participated in at the University of Toronto in May of 2010.

The rebirth of these mystery cycles is due in large part to the scholarly attention they have received in the *Records of Early English Drama* (REED) and revivals by the PLS. REED was founded in 1975 and is closely associated with the PLS. The revival of medieval plays by the PLS in the 1960s led to an interest in re-creating original staging conditions, and the REED project was formed at the University of Toronto. Scholarly information was necessary in order to produce early English plays with accuracy, and as scholars were already seeking the kinds of data necessary to do so, the formation of a project that searched for records in unexpected places, such as in financial ledgers, was a logical next step.

We know much more about early English plays in 2010 than we did in 1960. Documents uncovered by the REED project as well as discoveries made during revivals by the PLS have produced a much richer understanding of early drama in spite the centuries separating us from them. The last recorded early modern production of *The Chester Cycle* occurred in 1575. The entire cycle was not revived again until the city of Chester mounted it in 1951 as a part of the Festival of Britain (“Memories of past performances,” online). In 1983, the University of Leeds in association with the *Poculi Ludique Societas* mounted a full production of *The Chester Cycle*. The tradition that began with the 1983 mounting led to the 2010 production by the University of Toronto and the PLS discussed in this paper.

With nearly four hundred years separating the last pre-modern and first modern productions, many of the details we have about the performances and performance conditions in early modern England come from what Alexandra Johnston refers to as “external evidence,” i.e., from sources such as accounting and legal records or correspondence between civic officials (*Contexts*, 3; Wasson, 28). However, little hard evidence has survived to provide much detail. Despite some information regarding the specifics of production (e.g., conventions for the costuming of certain characters), most of what we know concerns the general atmosphere of the performance of cycle plays. Strong evidence indicates that the community within the guilds that produced these plays was like our modern-day bond of competition shared by teammates on a sports team. These productions were not only religious events or church festivals but also municipal productions that evinced the piety, civic pride, and community of the localities that labored to create them. In fact, both Lawrence Clopper and Anne Higgins have asserted that the clergy may not have been deeply involved in the productions, and that they were primarily

civic, as opposed to religious, in nature. Higgins even suggests that the processions through York were a means of demarcating territory for freemen, clergy, and civic officials. These productions were lavish, no-holds-barred events, complete with a carnival-like atmosphere and plentiful food and drink, so much so that accounting records show guilds spending more money on food and drink than on any other aspect of production (Meredith, 54–55). Such contextual information helped students from Kent State in their interpretation of their play. Regardless of how helpful knowledge about the atmosphere and intention of these plays might be, however, and in spite of our understanding of Elizabethan staging, we still had little knowledge about the staging of cycle plays.

THE BANNING OF *THE CHESTER CYCLE* AND OTHER MYSTERY PLAYS

Students working on *Chester 2010* were curious to know why nearly four hundred years elapsed between productions. If these plays were highlights in the life of the communities where they were performed, why stop producing them? There is a school of thought that favors a Darwinian, “survival of the fittest” model regarding the reasons that religious dramas stopped being produced. This point of view was dominant from the 1860s well into the 20th century, and suggests that parish dramas and cycle plays were superseded by secular dramas that were somehow inherently superior. This point of view has been largely abandoned following since F.M. Salter’s *Religious Drama in Medieval Chester*, which began the trend of searching for information regarding these plays in external evidence. (For further information regarding these differing perspectives on medieval and early English drama, see Johnston, CCMET, 1–2). Today, the majority of scholars now agree that mystery plays and other kinds of religious drama were not collectively abandoned in favor of the secular drama that emerged in second half of the sixteenth century. Rather, religious plays were pried out of the hands of the citizens and civic representatives who had watched, created, or played in them year after year. In fact, the city of Chester mounted the cycle twice *after* the Archbishop of York issued a prohibition against their performance in 1572. City officials claimed that the Archbishop’s injunction arrived too late and that the year’s cycle had already been performed. But the 1572 production was not the last one. In 1575, Chester mounted its cycle again. This time, Parliament summoned the Lord Mayor to London to answer charges of the veneration of saints and depiction of Jesus and God (both of which were crimes in Elizabethan England). City officials accepted responsibility for the production, maintaining that they mounted it not only for the moral edification of the citizens of Chester but also for the economic well-being of the city (Mills, 2).

The last known performance of a cycle play (after the absolute prohibition by civil law) was in York in 1580. To situate this final recorded pre-modern performance in time, we should recall that William Shakespeare was born in 1564 and that his earliest plays were probably written in the early 1590s. We can safely conclude that the citizens of Chester were quite happy with their play-cycle and that Marlowe, Kyd, and Shakespeare, although masterful playwrights, did not actually put play-cycles out of business.

Despite Clopper's argument to the contrary, most scholars agree that the termination of cycle plays and other kinds of religious drama was the result of Protestant suppression of a tradition regarded as fundamentally Catholic. Sectarianism within Protestant factions may have contributed to injunctions against this kind of playing, but—based on the fact that beginning in the 1530s English law forbade any representation of God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit and also any portrayal and veneration of saints—it seems more likely that plays were forbidden by changes in English law (Clopper, 102–109; Johnston, CCMET, 20–22). If a two-dimensional depiction of Christ on the wall of a church had to be whitewashed, a three-dimensional, living, breathing characterization of Jesus would have seemed far more blasphemous. Such a portrayal, to an early modern Protestant, had “Antichrist” written all over it.

Fortunately for me and the other students from the Kent State University Honors College, the twentieth-century citizens of York and Chester were not unduly troubled by issues of blasphemy, and they began to re-mount their cycle plays. The progress was slow, happening over a period of approximately a hundred years. A small scale production was held in York in 1909. Both York and Chester mounted large-scale productions in 1951. A graduate seminar at the University of Toronto in the 1960s led to the formation of the PLS. After almost five hundred years of dormancy, revivals of medieval and early English theatrical productions made a full production of *The Chester Cycle* by the PLS, Kent State University Honors College, and dozens of other colleges and universities throughout North America possible.

THE SHOEMAKERS' GUILD

Kent State University became involved in its first PLS production in November of 2008, when the PLS invited a faculty member in Kent State University's English department to produce an episode out of *The Chester Cycle* for the PLS's 2010 production. I had taken several classes from this professor, and he asked whether I would direct the play. Naturally I jumped at the chance. After agreeing to produce *Play 13*, formally called *The Raising of Lazarus; At the House of Simon the Leper; The Triumphal Entry; and Judas's Plot*, the next step was to gather the resources necessary for such a massive undertaking. We were fortunate to enlist the support of the KSU

Honors College, and knew that through it we could assemble the person-power needed for *Play 13*. In early England, a craft guild of a city would be responsible for producing one episode of the cycle, so we set out to create our own guild by forming a year-long honors colloquium called Medieval Drama Boot Camp. *Play 13* was the responsibility of the Shoemakers' Guild in Chester. The formation of the course allowed our colloquium to become the Shoemakers' Guild, getting all the students in one location with a common goal, the means to pursue it, and consequences for not participating (i.e., grades). Had there been world enough and time while I was researching for the thesis that was the basis for this paper, I would have given greater attention to the similarities between the guilds that created cycle plays and modern-day community theatre. As it was, I contented myself with the knowledge that the community we built through the colloquium that had been created was comparable in some ways with early modern guilds. The course was team-taught by the faculty member from the English Department, Dr. Dugas, and a faculty member in the Theatre Department, Professor Richie. Dr. Dugas was the professor of record for the fall semester, and the focus was on laying the foundation for *Play 13*. Students read *The Empty Space* by Peter Brook, the first twelve plays of *The Chester Cycle*, and selected chapters from *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*. These readings created a holistic understanding of the work being done; both the nuts-and-bolts historical information and the more ephemeral artistic background of the play. The other focus during the first semester was building the stamina and lung-capacity necessary for outdoor theatre. The course content in the second semester was to be the production work itself: rehearsal, building sets and costumes, coordinating fundraising events to partly finance our travels to Toronto, and a host of other duties and activities that were necessary to bring our play to life.

Producing *Play 13* was a colossal undertaking. The cast has a total of thirty-seven roles, twenty-nine of which are speaking roles. The class consisted of twenty-seven students, only twenty-five of whom would be onstage and several of whom shied away from speaking roles (many of our students were not studying theatre at all, and some did not feel comfortable in the spotlight). In addition, a full crew would be needed to handle the production elements for such a technically demanding show. To cast and staff the play fully, nearly all the students had to be cast in multiple roles, and nearly all of them fulfilled offstage or backstage responsibilities as well. Both casting and production assignments took into account the students' interests, in both cases asking them to provide information regarding the ways they wished to participate. For example, when it was time for auditions, I assigned students to read for specific roles I felt each of them was best suited for. However,

an actor who had his or her eye on a particular role was able to read for it as well.

Giving actors the opportunity to choose the roles they most wanted to read for allowed for some casting decisions that might not otherwise have been made. Actors may have unrealistic perceptions of their abilities, but they also know which parts they connect to most strongly. The actor who was cast as Judas, for instance, was not asked to read for that role initially. I asked him to read for Thomas, Simon, and the Janitor, but after he read for Judas, the faculty members facilitating the course, my stage managers, and I unanimously agreed that he should play the role. Had he not been given the opportunity to read for the character he wanted, we would have ended up with a very different production of *Play 13*, his performance being one of the highlights of the cycle. Similar care was taken in making production assignments so that students would be creating elements about which they felt enthusiastic.

The exact method of making production assignments and casting decisions is less significant than the necessity of making a medieval or early English play a collaborative effort. *Play 13* was entirely student-created, from costumes to scenery, from research to public relations, from concept to implementation. Faculty took a hand only when it was clear that a student was unable to complete an assignment without help or when we were liaising with senior Kent State University officials, as when we needed permission from the university architect to construct a six-by-twelve-foot scaffold stage outside the honors college. Any artist will tell you that the energy invested in a piece is directly proportional to the outcome. Blending the lines dividing actors, designers, and technical crew created a strong sense of ownership and translated into high-quality production elements and passionate performances.

STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY: THE PROS AND CONS OF MEDIEVAL DRAMA BOOT CAMP

As one might expect, the structure of our Medieval Drama Boot Camp differed significantly from either a traditional rehearsal process or a traditional university course, especially in the length of time spent studying or rehearsing. Whereas a standard course lasts sixteen weeks and a standard rehearsal process lasts from four to eight weeks, students spent nearly nine months on *Play 13* from the time they began their study of *The Chester Cycle* to the time they performed in Toronto. This extended time had definite benefits. For example, we had the good fortune of seeing our students read *Plays 1* through *12* and working with them for nearly an entire semester before auditions, which made our casting choices exceptionally well-informed.

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Student designers also had ample time to meet with other designers and dramaturges and to sit in on the staged readings of earlier pieces, thus gaining a clear sense of the world of these plays and producing a remarkably varied yet cohesive design.

One of the most advantageous facets of the two-semester-long period of preparation was the reading of Plays 1 through 12 in *The Chester Cycle*, which allowed students to orient themselves to working within the very small boundaries of the wagon we would be performing on and also to become familiar with the plays' unique language. Students immersed themselves in Middle English, Chester's unique verse structure, and the rich characterization this highly poetic language brings to the plays. A strong understanding of the text meant students could develop deep connections to the characters and events in *Play 13*. Reciting the words of *The Chester Cycle* oneself and hearing one's fellow actors speak the words in our staged readings of them necessarily enhanced understanding in a way that was unlikely to have been achieved otherwise.

The structure of the Medieval Drama Boot Camp nevertheless has shortcomings. The course was an experiment: neither professor had worked on an interdisciplinary venture of this scope before, so neither could be sure what the best structure might be. If the Boot Camp were likened to a traditional rehearsal process, the first semester consisted of the table work, research, and physical warm-ups, and the second semester was active scene work and production work. Only in the second semester did we begin approaching *Play 13* from a production (rather than a research) perspective in earnest. Spending half the rehearsal process doing table work is useful, and I strongly recommend it to directors; sometimes in theatre, research done by performers is rushed, and then not enough time is devoted to it during a rehearsal process. However, our production work should have been integrated more quickly than it was. By dividing the course the way we did, we drew a line in the sand that created separation between thinking about our play and actively creating it. A better approach would have been to blur that line and begin work on *Play 13* much sooner since research and action are in no way mutually exclusive. The students in the course were vocal in their agreement that production work should have been better integrated; by the end of the first semester, they felt burned out by too much theory and not enough application. They wanted to work on our play. Staged readings of Chester Plays 1 through 12 were useful and necessary, but the students felt ownership for and a special attachment to *Play 13*. Students asked for a staged reading of *Play 13*, but we put it off in favor of approaching the plays chronologically. Robert H. Leonard wrote of community-based theatre that "the creative process must feed everyone, artist, community member, and audience alike"

(71). We did not “feed” our students in the way we should have in the first semester.

The desire to engage directly with our play was one we had anticipated, so we asked students to propose a portfolio or paper that answered a question or solved a problem raised by *Play 13*. The goal was to provide them with the opportunity for creative input as well as to gain an understanding of the production assignments that would inspire our students. The assignment did not fulfill our students’ artistic needs, however, because the portfolios were primarily theoretical. Students knew that their ideas were likely to end up in the final production, but ultimately what they turned in as their portfolios were sketches and ideas, not products. A better means of providing a creative outlet for students would have been to make the production assignments before midterms in the first semester rather than waiting until finals to do so; this would have allowed students to create elements of the show rather than merely make suggestions. However, once rehearsals began, students were re-energized by their involvement in creating the characters and the world of the play.

MODERN TECHNIQUES AND THEORIES

Because there are a number of resources that deal with running rehearsals, I have chosen to forego a detailed discussion on our rehearsal processes, and to focus instead on the specific techniques we employed. However, before I discuss those techniques, I should mention that there are three practices that will make rehearsals particularly effective. The first is to record run-through rehearsals at regular intervals, and record parts of rehearsals in between. This allows for more careful watching, and for those involved to see their progress. The second practice is to watch others who are performing early drama, whether they are producing a cycle play, saint play, or morality play, and whether you watch live or not, as you are sure to learn from watching others. The third practice is to have individual rehearsals with principal actors, giving them the chance to make discoveries in an environment where there is less pressure from onlookers.

Logically, the rehearsal process will be determined in part by the methods used in preparation. More than six hundred years have elapsed since *The Chester Cycle* was written, and in that time myriad acting, movement, vocal, and performance techniques have been developed to help actors tell stories. Choosing which methods to employ can be bewildering when so many are useful. Naturally, every director should choose for herself which methodologies are right for a production. The ones I chose to prepare for *Play 13* have, I believe, particular applicability for approaching early drama.

The technique we used the most during the rehearsal process for *Play 13* was the Michael Chekhov acting technique, partly because that was one kind of training provided at Kent State University but primarily because of its use of archetypes and archetypal gestures. I am not certified to teach the Chekhov technique, and as such utilized only the gestural aspects of it, with a particular focus on the archetypal gestures. These aspects of the technique are useful because archetypes are a central theme in these early plays; the characters depicted are not three-dimensional, are not necessarily humanized, and are meant to be clearly good or evil. This is not to say that the characters are undeveloped or caricatures but simply that, stylistically, one should approach these archetypal characters differently than one would approach realistic characters in a realistic play. Archetypes are highly recognizable, and the gestures that Chekhov has categorized as archetypal (*I give, I take, I want, I reject, I yield, and I stand my ground*) will be readily understood by most audiences. As a way of demonstrating to colloquium students how recognizable these gestures are, I asked them to close their eyes and strike a pose that suggested praise, grief, and fear. In all three cases, there were one or two poses that each and every student adopted because each of these concepts is embedded in their consciousness.

This demonstration also helped the students gain a better understanding of how they might use these movements to approach playing archetypal characters, and also helped bring some of the students out of their shells by providing them with a go-to set of gestures they could draw on if they were feeling insecure. In addition to archetypal gestures, others found in the Chekhov method include the psychological gestures: *I wring, I fling, I tear, I open, I close, I lift, I push, I pull, and I strike*. The final set of gestures found in the Chekhov technique, called the Steiner gestures and based on the work of Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner, are also a useful part of Chekhov's method.

Movement is an effective way for actors to build a connection to their characters, and Chekhovian gestures are only one of many springboards for creating movement. Another example of movement as a tool to underscore specific minutiae within an iconic moment is our use of warm-up games outlined in Augusto Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* to create the Raising of Lazarus. The magic of the Raising is so overwhelming that determining how to streamline it without losing the power of that moment initially seemed an insurmountable task. Using Boal's "Colombian hypnosis" game as a starting point, we chose the struggle between good and evil (essentially between Life and Death) as the focus of the Raising. Boal spoke of "dynamizing" an image, that is, of imbuing it with added intensity through viewing it from new and different perspectives. Using a tangible concept, a fight, to

dynamize a simple movement exercise, the actors playing Jesus and Lazarus were able to narrow the scope of this incredibly difficult scene into a compelling event.

Aside from these exercises and some training in Chekhov, I have had some limited training in the Meisner technique, which focuses on reacting spontaneously and which we briefly touched on to help build concentration and listening skills. In addition, the faculty member who acted as vocal coach brought the Linklater and some Rodenburg vocal techniques to our rehearsal process, both of which assign importance to founding vocal work on emotion and instinct to create honest performances.

STEREOTYPES AND ICONS

When we began work on *Play 13*, the familiarity of the characters and stories—all based on the Christian Bible—became a kind of double-edged sword. The virtue of familiarity was that we had a foundation on which to build the characters in our show. Familiarity's limitation was that it tempted us to do only what was "expected" without exploring other possibilities. Although not everyone would recognize all the Biblical episodes in our play, the consensus among those working on it (including the student performers) was that we had to tread lightly to avoid falling into what Peter Brook calls "deadly theatre" (9–41). Although deadly theatre is a complex concept that is difficult to describe, it can be loosely defined as the attempt to re-create a performance for the sake of the superficial effect and/or commercial gain. The facets of our play that could produce deadly theater had to be identified so that they could be prevented. Through in-class conversations with students and out-of-class conversations with my thesis advisor, I determined that two primary forms of "the expected" in *Play 13* could result in deadly theatre: stereotypes and icons.

Stereotypes and icons, it turned out, were a concern for the student performers as well as for their director. The first in-class discussion we had in which the students overcame their timidity and became fully engaged was about Jesus's character and how to prevent him from being deadly. The students unanimously expressed a fear that Jesus's humanity would be erased and that his character would become shorthand for something generically "good" and "divine." Stereotypes can be archetypes (a kind of shorthand), and archetypes can be extremely useful when communicating to a broad audience; however, the risk of using them is that performers can become lazy or imprecise as a result of an assumed mutual understanding. We had to attempt to portray the truth within stereotypes in order to prevent carelessness and generalization. Of course, this approach had the potential to be problematic because there is no universal definition of "truth." Since truth is not a

concrete or objective concept, the best any production can do is to make a decision about which truth (or aspects of it) they wish to portray. For *Play 13*, we chose to focus on the transformations made by each of the characters during their journey from the Raising through the Plot; the truth we searched for, then, was the one that would delineate what changes each character experienced. By choosing to concentrate on the truth found in each character's journey, we also provided specific details that students could work into their characterizations, helping to prevent generalization.

Although stereotypes are often oversimplified and lose truth as they lose detail, iconic characters can easily be overcomplicated, obscuring the truth with an overabundance of information. Icons are magic and mythic; they are familiar yet strange and remote; they are depictions of things and people we have heard about and know well but may have never experienced ourselves. The issue of stereotypes being oversimplified can be addressed by adding detail in order to preserve and respect their origins, but the removal of detail does not serve to clarify the iconic figures. Rather, honoring the wealth of detail while focusing on particular elements creates a balance between the complexity of the myths and the simplicity of the stock characters. Once I had reduced the concepts of stereotypes and icons to a matter of the amount of detail, the task of addressing the issues raised by each became much more manageable.

Director Anne Bogart has many valuable insights regarding stereotypes, and devotes a chapter of her book *A Director Prepares* to it. Specifically, she suggests filling them with memory in order to bring honesty and dimension to otherwise flat concepts. The idea of filling a container with memory is not intended to be a "sense memory" exercise of any kind. Actors will naturally bring their own personal experience to a role, and this will add its own brand of honesty to a performance. However, in the case of *Play 13*, the association of a specific personal memory with an exercise is not necessary. I realize this sounds contrary to the concept under discussion, but "memory" should be thought of as an instinctual or visceral response for the purposes of this discussion. In general, our most complex emotions stem from our very basic—even animalistic—feelings. For example, the basic emotion fear can lead to worry, desperation, helplessness, anxiety, inferiority, and defensiveness (among others). In this case, "memory" means the filling the container of our stereotypes with the verbalization or manifestation of those animal responses and the more complex emotions triggered by them. Experienced performers often find these primordial memories through any number of processes, but in the case of *Play 13*, some students needed more direction. In an effort to prevent the generalization of stereotypes and to clarify icons, students did homework after each rehearsal. Sometimes the homework was as mundane

as picking out their favorite quatrains from a particular scene, other times it involved creating a world in which the characters live by inventing memories their characters might have (the most unforgettable of which was 1 Jew and 2 Jew sneaking a taste of bacon late at night while digging a grave) or deciding on a transformation made during a course of events.

All of the assignments were designed to help students find the memory that would most effectively “fill the container” that their character presented to them. Some of the homework resulted in very detailed responses, creating levels and dimension for the characters. But the goal was not realism. Monet’s *Haystacks* were detailed but impressionistic. Breton’s paintings can hardly be called realistic, and yet they are incredibly intricate. Similarly, the actors in *Play 13* built detail into a world of types and stock characters by bringing specific choices to their work. The homework, written or otherwise, encouraged them to think of their characters in new ways while always emphasizing the function of their role in the play.

Homework has its place but is never enough on its own. Research and bookwork bring answers that are careful, rational, and even meditative, but work in the rehearsal room informs the life of the characters; rehearsal work brings answers that are intuitive, emotional, and spontaneous. We needed to “light a fire under” our stereotypes and icons, to use terminology coined by theatre artist Tadashi Suzuki, and often the way to do this was through movement (quoted in Bogart, 96). I have found that when a performer is asked to move in a certain way, she will relate to the character, to the moment, and to the emotion in a different and often profoundly truthful way. For example, I asked actors to choose lines that struck them, that were long enough to work with but short enough to memorize between rehearsals and to be repeated often. Coupling that line with a type of movement unrelated to the action of the scene (e.g., pushing against a person or a wall for anger, reaching out in desperation) almost always produced a response in both the actor and others in the rehearsal room; it stimulated a memory that could be used to fill the containers provided by stereotypes and icons.

Movement is often the most effective way “in” to a scene, but it is not the only way. The manner of delivering lines also adds clarity and often proves more comfortable for untrained actors. Our prompter and dramaturge discovered that determining where the emphasis falls in a line provides indications about the characters’ personalities and what drives them, which scenes are comedic or dramatic, and what relationships exist between characters. Some of the more cerebral students preferred to approach the text in this way, utilizing the words and the rhythms of *Play 13*. The approach taken to Mary, the sister of Lazarus, is one example of the way hints supplied in the poetry were used to highlight certain qualities of her icon. There are not many mentions

of Mary in the gospels, and the most prominent depicts Martha scolding her for listening to Jesus preach instead of serving him. Jesus responds by telling Martha that Mary has made the better choice, leaving the impression that Mary is more perceptive than her sister. The anecdote reveals several facets of Mary's character that needed to be reconciled for the purposes of *Play 13*. Initially, she is child-like, and then she is wise beyond her years. She is revealed as complex and contradictory. In other words, Mary is made human. This event is not portrayed in *Play 13*, but audience members were likely to be familiar with it, and therefore I felt a responsibility to address the apparent inconsistencies that arise as a result. The complexity of Mary's icon may be truthful, but it does not fit into the world of *Play 13* very well. In order to synthesize the multifarious nature of her character, we paid special attention to Mary's mourning passages. By putting the emphases on specific syllables, the dramaturges (and later the actor playing Mary) were able to pinpoint her personality as the self-absorbed younger sister who makes a transformation into a follower of Jesus. By focusing on certain aspects of the poetry, the actor was able to bring out these qualities of Mary the icon.

A NOTE ON AUDIENCE RECEPTION

Two of the most difficult issues in mounting a production are determining the message one wishes to convey to the audience and the most effective means of doing so. In order to make *Play 13* more accessible to our audience members, I chose to stage this early English play with modern production elements. Middle English text was combined with twenty-first-century trappings to create a world where the boundaries of time disappeared amid the characters and events of the play. Such words as "yode," "dearworth," and "gritch" were spoken by actors wearing Chuck Taylor sneakers sitting on folding plastic benches. The modernity of the design created a sense of immediacy and even intimacy (in spite of the size of the playing-space) by breaking down many of the barriers that could have separated our audience from the meaning of *Play 13* and thus providing the opportunity for our twenty-first-century spectators to invest and engage more fully in the action onstage.

That said, some members of a modern audience will always find pre-modern theatre inaccessible; the historical, linguistic, and cultural remove is too great for them. Try as we might, not every person understood every aspect of *Play 13*, a fact that was as frustrating as it was unavoidable and that was driven home by something that happened during our first local performance outside the honors college. Just before the "Hosanna," a passerby stopped and remarked to me how "unnatural" and "over the top" the performances were. He watched for a time, then left after deciding such artificiality wasn't for him. I later learned that he was a friend of the actor who played Caiaphas and

that he did not understand why the actors were speaking in rhyme; he commented that they “all sounded like Dr. Seuss.” The young man in question was unaware that I was the director when he spoke to me, but that was of no consequence in any event. I was not discouraged by the young man’s words. On the contrary, I took them as a compliment—after all, this isn’t *The Glass Menagerie*. *Play 13* is larger than life, and my actors honored that fact in each “over the top” performance that they gave. Of course there were other instances of disconnect among audience members. For example, one of the actors’ roommates asked why *Play 13* was not written in English. Audience members at our local performances caught some of the jokes, but others seemed to come and go unnoticed. To be sure, the language is unfamiliar and specialized. The culture in these plays is different from modern North American norms, so the confusion was unsurprising in some cases. However, we chose not to “dumb down” *Play 13*, especially since we knew our audience at the University of Toronto would be well-versed in early drama. Indeed, that crowd seemed to appreciate the nuances we included.

Our strong suspicion that much more of our Canadian audience would “get it” comforted us as we headed north. More importantly, the nuances are not central to the themes and story of *Play 13*. My goal was to create a production that would communicate to many people the power of the transformative and the power each of us has to effect change. The rest is icing on the cake. Whether people noticed the use of stuffed pelicans in our temple scene or caught references to the sin of Onan in Judas’s monologue was secondary to whether they witnessed the major moments, like the miracle of Lazarus rising to life again or Mary Magdalene’s acknowledging her wrongdoing and seeking to right her life. I have faith that *Play 13* spoke to our audience members in such a way that they listened.

SOME LESSONS LEARNED

Much of what we accomplished with *Play 13* was achieved through the dedication and commitment of the students who participated in it. They were asked to work outside of class time, to return to campus and continue working after the semester had ended. They worked outside their disciplines and their comfort zones to create a product they had to deliver *very* publicly. Despite some structural shortcomings (the professors were also working outside their comfort zones!), Medieval Drama Boot Camp was about as interdisciplinary a course as I can imagine and certainly more than any I have ever experienced. We had strong representation from the expected disciplines like theatre and English, but making this an honors experience enabled us to attract students from music, psychology, fine arts, photography, fashion, chemistry, physics, and American Sign Language. Every student had distinct,

useful contributions to offer. Among other advantages, having such diverse representation gave the students a chance to view the material and the problems it presented from multiple perspectives. Collaboration, cooperation, imagination, communication, compromise, and thinking and solving problems creatively are all twenty-first-century skills imperative to success in an increasingly complex and competitive world. Many of these skills are fostered in the educational environments of honors colleges across the country, and *Play 13* provided a veritable Petri dish for their growth.

Because the performance of early English theatre necessitates a holistic understanding of not only the language but also the context, culture, and other facets of the material, students had to use cognitive skills that might not be required in other educational settings. Students did not have the option of memorizing the material long enough to take an exam and then relegating it to the part of the brain reserved for information they deem “unnecessary.” All the material was as necessary as it was cumulative and interconnected. Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, if one piece of information was missing, other pieces could not fall into place. If a student missed the piece of the puzzle for which she was responsible, she would be left behind and in turn leave her colleagues hanging; when pieces of a jigsaw puzzle are missing, the big picture does not make sense. In order to comprehend the plays and to make sense of their lines while delivering them, students needed to acquire a basic knowledge of Middle English language and poetry; in order to comprehend the stories and build characters around them, they needed some knowledge of Catholic beliefs and pre- and post-Reformation mindsets; in order to comprehend the physical demands of the plays, they needed some knowledge of the atmosphere surrounding this type of theatre; and in order to meet those demands, they needed a physical commitment in the form of moderate aerobic and vocal workouts. The performance of *Play 13* in Toronto was the tangible demonstration of students’ scholarly and performative mastery of this rich and complex subject, giving them more fulfillment than an “A” on an exam could have provided.

The results of the work done on *Play 13* were extremely diverse, with each participant taking away something unique. Involvement in such an intensely collaborative project was an invaluable experience that every member of the Shoemakers’ Guild shared, from student leaders to faculty to those outside the course who somehow contributed. In the time since our performance in Toronto, I have heard from students who have put their participation in *The Chester Cycle* and *Play 13* to good use, including a student who has gone on to pursue a master’s degree in theatrical costuming. Shortly after beginning her studies she contacted me to say that her deep understanding of early English cycle plays has helped her excel in her theatre history course,

and that she was able share her knowledge with other students in her class. She is one of the many students who have carried their learning with them beyond the classroom and beyond the performance to continue using it in other pursuits.

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Research Essays

Honors Education at HBCUs: Core Values, Best Practices, and Select Challenges

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INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions are fertile environments for shaping, cultivating, and solidifying human development. They are wellsprings for diverse cultures, behaviors, beliefs, and practices. Yet, they face the daunting challenge of fostering the intellectual growth, social enhancement, and professional development of students. Clearly, the tenets of the collegiate environment can directly influence—either facilitate or debilitate—the achievement of its students. This arena is also ripe with shifting paradigms and strategic priorities that often lead to revisioning, redefining, and reassessing. As a result, the educational institution simultaneously becomes a site of struggle and resistance, empowerment and encroachment. Although institutions change, priorities change, and curricula change, students remain the university's most valuable resource and asset.

So colleges and universities must face the difficult questions of how to address the academic, social, and cultural concerns of students; what ought to be the nature and character of the collegiate experience to which students have access; and, more specifically, what can be done to address the needs and unique challenges facing honors students. Successful efforts, whether institution-wide or at the department level, place a strong emphasis on cultivating academically engaging, socially relevant, and culturally inclusive learning environments for honors students. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in particular are increasingly sensitive to the strategic importance of having quality programs for honors students in the context of their current struggle for equity and equality. Even more than Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), HBCUs are confronted with educational issues that are historically and culturally deep.

Although HBCUs play an essential role in fostering intellectual thought and promoting academic, cultural, and social exchanges for its students, the challenges to honors students, staff and faculty are often muted concerns within this domain of academe. With this in mind, the investigators attempted to empirically examine core values, best practices, and select challenges of honors programs and colleges at HBCUs. This essay begins by situating HBCUs in a historical and social context that provides a richer understanding of the collective struggle of this group of educational institutions. Next, the investigators highlight some of the best practices of honors programs and colleges at HBCUs and identify some of the challenges and concerns of honors administrators at HBCUs. Culminating this article is a robust discussion of the major findings of this study.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT OF HBCUS

Regardless of the vicissitudes of life, education seems to be the common denominator for many Americans. “Education has long been recognized as an important—if not the most important—vehicle through which status attainment and upward mobility is achieved” (Deskin 35). Individuals often view education as “the way out,” the key to social mobility, or “the great leveler.” African Americans, realizing the value of education and wishing to maximize their opportunity for upward mobility, demand quality education (Schaefer 5). It is thus necessary to give special attention to the development and role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the historical and social context of educational institutions. As Williams and Ashley note, HBCUs, their graduates, and their educators have played an essential role in defining the cultural and political atmosphere of this country and the world, and even more compelling is the “indispensable role the HBCUs played in the creation of the U.S. public education system and its massive network of institutions of higher learning” (2).

Prior to the Civil War, education was a privilege afforded to wealthy and middle-class White men (Williams and Ashley 3). African American access to formal education was at the discretion of White Americans. Only under the most exceptional circumstances were African Americans able to create learning opportunities. African American students received little consideration in higher education because the numbers were so small—although not insignificant. According to Fleming, between 1850 and 1856 fewer than 5% of Blacks out of a population of 4.5 million could read or write (11). During this time, most Black people were not formally educated in traditional learning environments; they simply passed on the knowledge they acquired to other Black people. Only twenty-eight acknowledged Black students had graduated with baccalaureate degrees from American colleges by 1860

(Harris *et al.* 59). Those privileged few who were formally educated experienced immense discrimination and unequal treatment, yet their ambition reflected their “interest in higher education and . . . determination to obtain it at sacrificial odds” (Bowles and DeCosta 26). Above all, their success in higher education was the vanguard for what would take shape nearly a century later.

As the Civil War approached, African Americans still had many racist issues to hurdle. The period was notably marked by the exclusion of African American students from higher education. “[W]hite students and educational officials conveniently reasoned that the lower quality schooling that [B]lacks needed required less expenses than the higher quality education that was necessary for [W]hite students” (Fleming 13). Many Blacks, realizing that educational opportunities existed on a limited basis for Black students, had reached the conclusion that their best chance for higher education lay in establishing their own educational institutions (Fleming 13). Black colleges soon became the custodians of Black higher education opportunities. Some of the first higher education institutions for African American students include Cheyney University in Pennsylvania (1837), Lincoln University in Pennsylvania (1854), Wilberforce in Ohio (1856), and Fisk University in Tennessee (1866). The establishment of such schools ushered in a new challenge for officials in higher education.

The decision to establish Black higher education institutions, which would eventually become known as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), spurred the rise of more African American students pursuing postsecondary education. It also helped to elevate African American students from social invisibility and became the most viable, promising option for educational advancement for these students. Unlike Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), HBCUs were designed to address the specific needs of African American students as well as the needs of the larger African American community. While history shows that African American students usually thrived socially and academically in these institutions, inadequate facilities, obsolete textbooks, limited resources, and lack of financial support often undermined their educational pursuits. Yet, the students persisted in spite of the meager support and imposed educational restrictions.

“Almost from their inception HBCUs have produced scholars and intellectuals who have shaped public opinion and showcased their cognitive prowess despite the dominant culture’s insistence that such a concept could not exist” (Williams and Ashley 81). The accomplishments of such greats as W.E. B. DuBois (Fisk University), Thurgood Marshall (Howard University), Martin Luther King, Jr. (Morehouse College), Rosa Parks (Alabama State University), Langston Hughes (Lincoln University), Oprah Winfrey

HONORS EDUCATION AT HBCUS

(Tennessee State University), Ed Bradley (Cheyney University), and Tom Joyner (Tuskegee University) bespeak the long-standing commitment of HBCUs to educational excellence. But these prominent individuals are hardly isolated cases; history is replete with countless examples of African Americans who were formally educated at an HBCU and have subsequently parlayed their educational experiences into successful careers.

In the twenty-first century, feelings are mixed inside and outside of academia about the quality of education at HBCUs, but historically many of these schools have had stellar programs. For example, North Carolina A & T State University (Greensboro, NC) is the nation's largest producer of African American bachelor degrees and doctorates in engineering. Xavier University (New Orleans, LA) ranks first in the nation in placing African American students in medical schools. In 2007, Hampton University (Hampton, VA) launched a \$140 million weather satellite from Vandenberg Air Force Base to study noctilucent clouds in the ionosphere; with this feat, Hampton University became the first HBCU to have 100% responsibility and control of a NASA satellite mission (Harvey). When one looks at the breadth and depth of reputable, accredited programs at HBCUs, one can better appreciate the individual and collective value and contributions that HBCUs make. Undeniably, HBCUs contribute significantly to America's professional pool of experts, such as physicians, educators, engineers, scientists, and corporate executives, who impact society in remarkable ways.

METHODOLOGY

The following briefly summarizes the procedures and methodology for conducting the study. It describes the target population, the instrument, and the procedures used in collecting the results.

TARGET POPULATION

Eighty institutions identified as HBCUs comprised the target population for this study. A list of these institutions was provided by the National Association of African American Honors Programs (NAAHP). While some of these institutions were members of NAAHP, others were not. These institutions provide honors education to a large number of the minority population, and there appears to be a scarcity of empirical data describing their profiles, core values, and contributions to the honors education community.

INSTRUMENT

A survey instrument was developed to generate data for this study. The instrument, developed to be used on-line, consisted of thirty-one questions and was divided into two parts. Part I was designed to ascertain the following:

(1) institutional profile (i.e., size, support base, year of program establishment); (2) organizational/leadership structure of the Honors Program/College; (3) professional membership (regional, national, and state); and (4) entrance and retention requirements. The second part addressed “Best Practices and Special Honors Program/College Initiatives.” In this part of the instrument, administrators (i.e., deans and directors) responded to questions pertaining to core values, best practices, and program resources.

PROCEDURES FOR COLLECTING THE DATA

Honors program directors and deans from eighty HBCUs received the on-line instrument and an electronic cover letter that detailed the nature of the study and solicited participation. Because of the sensitivity of some of the requested data, the letter assured respondents of their anonymity. Further, respondents were informed that no institutional names would be used when reporting the data. After six weeks and several correspondences (e.g., telephone and email) with the target population, only 37.5 percent (30 of 80) of the surveys were completed and returned. Both researchers emailed and telephoned program directors and deans to solicit responses to the online survey.

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The survey results that follow are based on responses from thirty of the eighty honors deans or directors who completed the online survey. Results highlight institutional/program profiles, leadership/organizational structure, core values, program resources and challenges.

INSTITUTIONAL/PROGRAM PROFILE

Data generated from this study yielded background information regarding the profile of selected HBCUs that offer honors education. Although a similar study was conducted by Sederberg in 2008, no study has specifically addressed the profile of programs in the targeted institutions. Interestingly, 20% of the respondents in this study reported that their honors program or college was established between 1950 and 1970. The years 1986 through 2000 saw the largest increase with more than 50% of the programs established between these dates.

A review of similar research by Sederberg clearly indicates that many colleges and universities are beginning to transition from honors programs to honors colleges. Among the target group surveyed, only 20% have transitioned to honors colleges while 80% remain programs. However, follow-up conversations with several respondents at national conferences and by telephone have revealed that some institutions are in the planning phases of transitioning to an honors college.

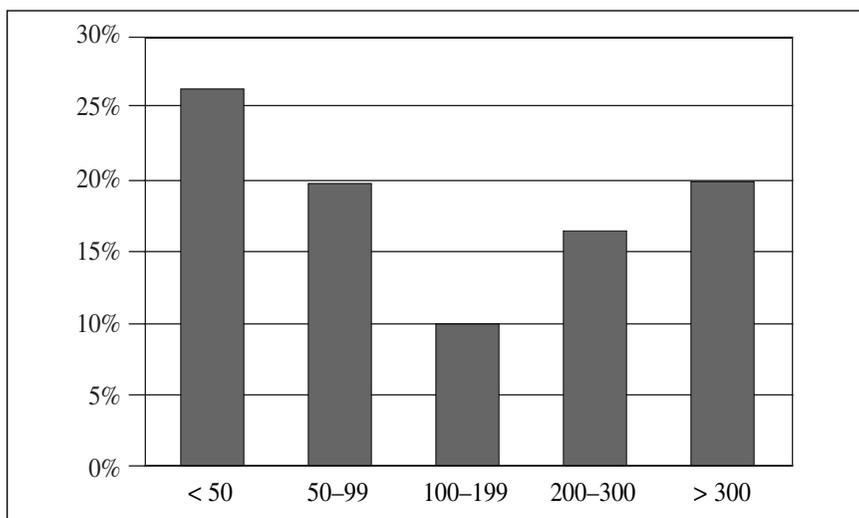
HONORS EDUCATION AT HBCUs

Institutional and program enrollment was also reported by the target population. The data reveal that 50% of the programs are in institutions with student populations between 2000 and 4000. Only two of the honors administrators reported an institutional enrollment of 10,000 or higher. However, there were significant variances in program enrollment among the institutions represented as indicated in Table 1, which shows percentages of program enrollment in each enrollment category (i.e., less than 50, 50–99, etc.). The majority of programs reported enrollments of less than 200, and approximately 26% had fewer than 50 students.

Further, data reported under institutional profile revealed that most programs (57%) were in institutions that were considered public-supported while 39% were privately supported and 4% indicated that they were faith-based institutions.

This study also queried participants regarding their professional organizational affiliations. Data showed that all programs held membership in one or more organizations. Specifically, more than 90% cited membership in the National Association of African American Honors Programs (NAAAHP). Membership in regional honors associations was reported by 80% of the respondents. Those who reported affiliation in the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) and state honors associations were evenly reported at 53% each. The data clearly suggest that students, faculty, and staff in honors programs and colleges at HBCUs are engaged in professional growth and development that extends beyond their campuses.

Table 1. Honors Student Body Enrollment



PROGRAM STRENGTHS AND CORE VALUES

Two questions were designed to identify program strengths and core values. The first question about program strengths provided options for respondent selection: (a) leadership development; (b) international experience; (c) debate teams; (d) mentoring; (e) service learning; (f) community service; (g) political activism; and (h) other. Respondents were asked to rank order their top three selected choices to define program strengths. Among the 30 programs represented, 67% indicated that leadership development was among the top three strengths of their programs. Second and third among the selections were mentoring (33%) and debate team (23%). Although program directors and deans selected community service and service learning as program strengths, these activities were not among the top three. In fact, only 18% selected community service as the first-ranked program strength while service learning was ranked first by only 11%.

It is not surprising that emphasis is placed on debate teams and selected as the third-ranked program strength. The NAAHP, in which 90% of the honors administrators indicated membership, has a debate competition at its annual conference. Therefore, it would seem reasonable that affiliated programs attending the conference would prepare and enter their students in debate competitions.

The second question addressed core values, and most directors and deans indicated that their programs promoted leadership. Critical thinking, service learning, and academic/intellectual excellence, respectively, also reflected the main core values promoted among the HBCU honors participants. Honors administrators selected service learning as a major core value but collectively ranked it lower.

Finally, fewer than four percent of the respondents cited the following as core values: social justice, economic empowerment, globalization, and research. Table 2 summarizes the core values of honors programs/colleges represented in this study.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Based on the data collected, the researchers were unable to determine a predominant line of supervision between honors administrators and their immediate supervisors. The responses were varied and showed that the administrators identified several reporting lines that included assistant/associate provost, dean of arts and sciences, and dean of undergraduate studies. One respondent reported directly to the university president.

Given honors administrators' responsibility for curricula and honors course offerings, the researchers also queried respondents regarding their

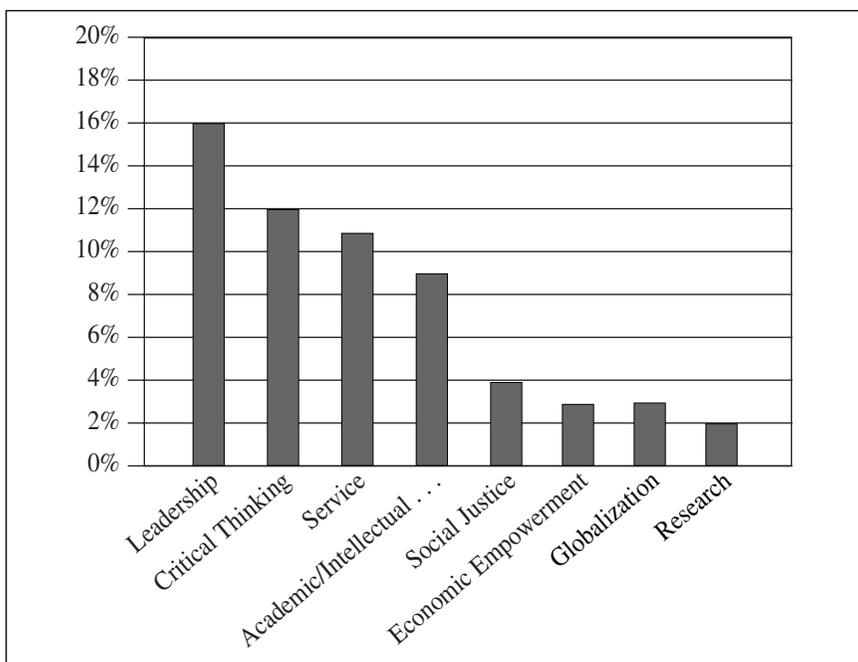
HONORS EDUCATION AT HBCUS

role in selecting and assigning honors faculty. Responses showed that fewer than half (48%) of the administrators indicated that they were directly responsible for the selection of honors faculty. More than half indicated that either a department chair (19%) or other university personnel (33%) made the selection.

The admissions and retention requirements of the HBCU honors programs and colleges were also investigated. It was apparent in this investigation that all programs and colleges represented had clearly delineated standards. Each reported GPA requirements for students entering the program that exceeded 3.0. Specifically, 40% reported that their GPA requirement was between 3.25 and 3.49; another 40% indicated a range of 3.5 and 3.74; fewer than 5% reported a GPA of 3.75 or higher; and approximately 5% required a minimum GPA between 3.0 and 3.24.

Students entering and completing the honors programs/colleges in this investigation appear to complete programs that require 20 or less total semester hours as noted by 45% of the honors administrators. The semester-hour requirement for 50% of the programs was between 21 and 35 hours, a range that is commensurate with most honors programs and colleges. One program administrator in this investigation reported a requirement that exceeded 40 hours; however, in a subsequent conversation, this administrator reported that the program was being revised to require 32 hours or less.

Table 2. Core Values Promoted by Honors Programs



When asked if their programs had a common core, nearly 70% responded “yes” and 30% “no.” Administrators provided the average number of required honors courses by level, and, among those responding, the average at the freshman and sophomore levels was six for each year. During the junior and senior years, only three core hours were required at each level. Most (70%) revealed that their honors program’s general education common core requirements were equivalent to the university’s general education core; however, 30% of the institutions reported a common core designed specifically for honors students. Finally, the study yielded the required common core hours for this population: 50% of the respondents reported between 12 and 15 hours while 4 to 12 hours was the requirement for 22%. With the exception of the one institution that reported a requirement of 40 hours, fewer than 28% ranged between 16 and 32 hours.

Because of budgetary constraints and insufficient honors courses, many administrators indicated that they relied on honors contracts to fulfill program requirements. The data showed that honors contracts were used by 60% of the programs represented in this study. Nearly two-thirds of the latter group reported that their programs imposed restrictions on the use of contracts; approximately one-third had no restrictions.

Most well-established honors programs and colleges have capstone experiences that require an honors thesis or project. In this study, nearly 80% of the administrators reported the requirement of a capstone experience while the remaining institutions reported none. Of the institutions reporting a capstone experience, the average required hours for an honors thesis was 6.1 while the average among honors administrators who required an honors project was 8.1.

Honors education not only engages students in an array of academic and enrichment activities, but also involves their members in the program governance process. Survey results showed that nearly all of the programs provided students a role in the governance process; 89% reported affirmatively while only 11% responded “no” to this question.

PROGRAM RESOURCES FOR MANAGING HONORS

Support for teaching honors courses was one of the resources addressed in the investigation. Respondents were asked to indicate the adequacy of support for teaching by selecting one of the following: funded very well; funding is adequate; funding level is inadequate; or other. The data showed that 35% of the honors administrators reported that their funding for teaching was “adequate” while fewer than 30% cited “inadequate” funding support. Only 10% of the programs chose “funded very well.” No attempt was made to quantify resources, so the results expressed the opinion of each administrator.

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The survey instrument also addressed administrators' perception of their operating budget, but, because of the sensitivity of this information, the investigators chose not to ask for budget figures. Nearly 47% indicated that the funding level for their operating budget was "adequate" while 30% perceived funding as "inadequate"; 3% reported "Funded very well"; and 10% chose not to respond to this question.

Because honors programs and colleges are designed to attract the best and brightest students to the university, scholarships are crucial to recruitment and retention strategies. Thus, the investigators queried honors administrators about their perception regarding the adequacy of scholarship support. Again, no effort was made to quantify the amount of scholarships available to recruit and retain their students. Among the respondents surveyed, 30% perceived that scholarship support was "adequate"; 20% selected "inadequate"; and only 5% felt that their scholarship program was "very well-funded."

Honors housing is another strategy for recruiting and retaining students. Many well-established programs/colleges have designated housing space for their honors students. This research, therefore, posed this question to respondents: Does your program have housing that is restricted to honors students? In responding to this question, only 40% reported "yes" while 60% indicated "no." Among the administrators who had honors housing, nearly 50% reported that the space available to honor students exceeded 200; the other programs reported figures that were far less than 200.

SELECT CHALLENGES OF HONORS ADMINISTRATORS AT HBCUS

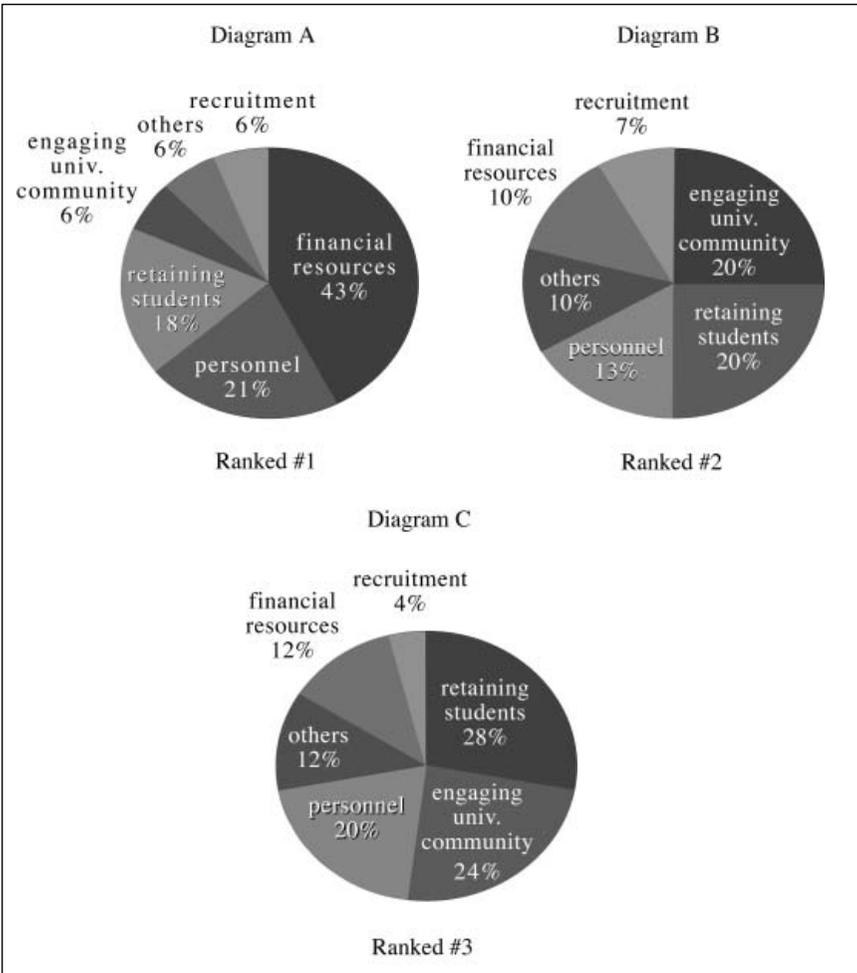
Honors administrators are privileged to engage the best and brightest students on their campuses. The nature of the position is multifaceted; honors administrators are faculty members, advisors, counselors, administrators, managers, recruiters, scholars, residence hall coordinators, and much more. Successful honors administrators must embody a passion for undertaking these many roles. However, given the economic climate and concern about resources, the desire to maintain a vital program can be thwarted by major hurdles. The investigators sought to identify the most salient challenges of honors administrators at HBCUs and designed a question in the online survey that asked administrators to identify the major challenges in managing their programs: "As an administrator (i.e., Dean or Director), rank order your top three challenges in managing your program with 1 being the top challenge." Respondents were given these choices: (a) financial resources; (b) recruitment of honors students; (c) retaining students in the honors program/college; (d) engaging the university community into honors; (e) securing enough

qualified honors faculty or staff; and (f) others. Results to this query are summarized and presented in the three diagrams of Table 3.

Diagram A shows the challenges ranked #1 by the 30 respondents; it indicates that 43% of the administrators felt that the lack of financial resources was the most significant challenge with insufficient personnel coming second in the first-ranked challenges. Diagram B shows the second-ranked challenges with “retaining students” and “engaging university community” tied at 20% each. Finally, Diagram C shows the challenges administrators ranked as their third most significant.

From the data presented in Table 3, one might conclude that financial resources are clearly the most significant challenge facing honors

Table 3. Program Management Challenges (Ranked 1, 2 and 3)



administrators at HBCUs. However, responses to the previous resource question, under *Resources and Program Management*, indicated that few respondents indicated that resources were “inadequate.” The investigators surmise that the manner in which the questions were asked may have influenced the outcome. Therefore, further investigation into the resource question may be warranted. Without quantifying the operating budgets, scholarships, and personnel, the data are subjective at best. However, further investigation into resource questions may be hampered by the sensitivity of such information and the reluctance of administrators to participate. Still, the subject of resource challenges and their impact on honors education is worthy of further investigation.

DISCUSSION

Research on honors education at HBCUs is scarce. In fact, the researchers were unable to identify any related studies that targeted these institutions in honors-related journals. Recent studies conducted on honors education have not focused specifically on these institutions and their programs. Thus, considering the scarcity of empirical research on HBCUs, the profession needs to address the uniqueness of these programs and the contributions they make to the student population being served. This study was an initial attempt to identify their profile, core values, best practices, and special challenges. Because the “n” was small (30), the researchers are cautious in generalizing to all HBCUs with honors programs or colleges. The programs/colleges represented in this study account for 30 (37.5%) of the eighty institutions that received electronic surveys. The researchers were comfortable with selected findings but realize the need for further investigation.

Overwhelmingly, the programs and colleges represented in this study provided an honors experience that was intellectually enriching, socially relevant, and professionally rewarding. The researchers found that this experience extended beyond the campus community. Active membership and affiliation with regional, state, and national honors associations is one measure of this engagement. For example, all represented programs and colleges are members of professional-related honors organizations with 90% citing affiliation with the National Association of African American Honors Programs (NAAHP), affording honors students at HBCUs opportunities to present their research and engage in other professional development activities. A unique feature among NAAHP participants is the debate competition, cited as a program strength by 33% of the administrators represented, so students not only perfect their professional skills locally but also on a national level through NAAHP.

Although honors programs and colleges at HBCUs represented in this study were more active in NAAHP, each also claimed membership in other regional, state, and national organizations. In fact, 80% cited membership in their regional honors associations, and 53% indicated that their programs were active members of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). Still, the researchers were concerned about the inactivity of HBCUs as members in the latter organization given its recognition and status as an umbrella professional organization representing the national interest of all honors programs and colleges in two and four-year institutions. The researchers recommend that future investigations should include an examination of the inactivity among HBCUs as active members of NCHC. Similarly, with only 53% of the programs citing participation in their respective state honors associations, the researchers envision this level of inactivity as another concern that requires further investigation.

At the campus level, HBCUs subscribe to the professional practice of engaging their honors students in program governance. Nearly 90% of the honors administrators cited the existence of a student council or related student organization that was engaged in the governance process. By engaging their student members, honors administrators ensure that their programs/colleges amplify the voices of honors students while providing an honors experience that responds to the needs of its constituent groups.

In addressing core values, the investigators noted unique features of HBCUs that might be different from their majority counterparts. One such feature was the prominence of debate teams. Additionally, many of the honors administrators cited “leadership” as a major core value. Emphasis on “social justice” and “economic empowerment” as core values may also be unique to these institutions. Such core values are fundamentally linked to the origins and historical background of HBCUs. Other core values identified in this study may not necessarily define HBCUs only; these include critical thinking, academic/intellectual excellence, community service, service learning, globalization, and research. The investigators suspect that these core values are prevalent on many campuses regardless of their student body composition.

The results of this study, although focused on honors programs and colleges at HBCUs, suggest commonalities with programs in majority institutions. However, further investigation is needed. For example, it is unlikely that administrators would claim that HBCUs are unique in their challenge for financial resources. Given the current national economic conditions, the researchers surmise that this challenge exists among many honors programs and colleges in many majority institutions as well. Future investigations into resources might focus on institution size, support base, and other factors. As

this investigation suggests, reviewing quantitative data may better capture an understanding of resources as a challenge to both HBCUs and majority institutions.

CONCLUSION

Leafing through the educational literature is sobering for those trying to find research on honors education at HBCUs. This novel research study reflects an initial attempt to provide a deeper understanding of the breadth and depth on this subject, to give greater insight into both facilitators of and barriers to honors education, and to bring into sharper focus the concerns of honors administrators at HBCUs. At the center of this study is an empirical examination of the core values, best practices, and special challenges of this distinct group of educational institutions. Although quite similar to their majority counterparts, HBCUs may also be unique in their selected core values and program design. The researchers hope that this study will be a launching pad for additional research and that it will foster more conversations and publications critical to the success and advancement of high-ability students at HBCUs.

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National Survey of College and University Honors Programs Assessment Protocols

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INTRODUCTION

Educators concerned with the development and maintenance of collegiate honors programs throughout the United States face considerable hurdles in these times of decreased funding, concerns about charges of elitism, and calls for accountability (Campbell 95). In 1990, the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) published a monograph that identified a minimum of five concerns that should be periodically and systematically evaluated within a program: causes of attrition, liberal education goals of the curriculum, participation in cultural and community activities, administrative structure and budget, and advising responsibilities (Reihman, Varhus, & Whipple). Although the NCHC, as well as accrediting bodies, strongly supports the assessment of honors programs, Greg Lanier reports little consistency in the process or the findings of such assessments (84).

In spite of a growing body of literature supporting the benefits of honors programs (Achterberg; Cosgrove; Hartleroad; Park & Maisto; Ross & Roman; Seifert, Pascarella, Colangelo, & Assouline; Shushok), some members of the national community of honors educators remain resistant to the concept of assessing their programs. Lanier cites the spring/summer 2006 volume of the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC)* that included nine essays in its “Forum on Outcomes Assessment, Accountability, and Honors”; he writes that two thirds of them focused on the problem and dangers in program assessment. A common theme in several of the essays opposing assessment was that the unique and qualitative nature of the stated outcomes of honors programs makes assessment difficult or unhelpful (Digby; Freyman; Strong).

My question was whether honors educators in 2009 had regular methods of evaluating honors or were resisting the national movement to require empirical evidence of the success of their programs. This paper reports the results of a national survey of honors program assessment protocols among

both NCHC members and nonmembers to determine whether honors programs are being assessed and, if so, how they are being assessed.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Honors programs were identified through two methods. A current (2009) listing of members of the National Collegiate Honors Council was obtained from the NCHC website <<http://www.nchchonors.org/memberinstitution.shtml>>. Member institutions were numbered, and a hundred participants were randomly selected.

Nonmembers of NCHC were identified through a member list of all Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) institutions available through the AAC&U website at <<http://www.aacu.org/membership/list.cfm>>. The NCHC member list contains over 800 institutions and the AAC&U list contains over 1,200; however, the overlap is considerable. Those AAC&U members which were also members of NCHC were eliminated, as were those listed that were not colleges, community colleges, or universities. The resulting population of non-NCHC member institutions was just over 600. One hundred participants were randomly selected from the AAC&U list, with ineligible names eliminated. Additional random selections occurred until the non-NCHC participants also numbered 100. Of this sample, 27 were eventually eliminated because they did not have an honors program. The remaining non-NCHC sample of 73 reflects about 11% of the total AAC&U institutions that are not members of NCHC while the NCHC sample of 100 reflects approximately 12% of the NCHC member institutions.

The final two groups consisted of 100 members of NCHC and 73 nonmembers of NCHC. Completed responses were returned by 24 NCHC members (24%) and 14 nonmembers (19%) for a total response rate of 38 (22%).

MATERIALS

Materials consisted of a three-page questionnaire, *The National Survey of College and University Honors Programs Assessment Protocols*, which was developed by the primary researcher (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was developed based on five concerns that a 1990 NCHC monograph identified as important for periodic assessment and general liberal education outcomes, and it included both objective and open-ended questions.

PROCEDURE

Honors directors/coordinators/administrators were identified through the sampling procedure described above. Once participants were identified, they

were notified by email that the survey would be mailed to them. The email contained the purpose and methodology of the study (see Appendix B). The surveys were sent via U.S. mail to the office of the honors administrator along with a stamped, addressed envelope. Different colored paper was used for NCHC members and nonmembers in order to differentiate membership without violating confidentiality. Instructions for completing the survey included the statement that consent was assumed with the completion of the survey. Participants were given the author's email and telephone number for contact if they had questions regarding the use of the survey data. The researcher received ten emailed questions from recipients of the questionnaires. Half of the email responses consisted of clarifying questions regarding the use of the data and half included statements of agreement to participate. Two respondents requested that the results be sent directly to them.

A general follow-up email was sent to all participants to improve the return rate of surveys (see Appendix C). Because the surveys were anonymous, the researcher does not have data regarding characteristics of who responded and who did not.

RESULTS

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDERS AND PROGRAMS

A majority of the respondents described themselves as directors ($n = 31$), and the rest were coordinators ($n = 2$), administrators ($n = 3$), faculty ($n = 6$), and chair of the honors committee (1). Five respondents held dual positions.

The programs studied varied in size from a minimum number of 15 students to a maximum of 1150. They also varied in selectivity, with the percentage of the school population that participated in honors ranging from 0.4% to 13%. Tables 1 and 2 show no significant difference in size between the NCHC member and nonmember programs, nor do they show a significant difference in their selectivity. Both NCHC member and nonmember programs primarily rely on high school grade point average (GPA) and testing (ACT or SAT) for admissions, with college GPA and formal applications also commonly used. These descriptors suggest that NCHC member and nonmember programs are relatively similar.

As Table 3 demonstrates, the percentages of schools using each criterion are higher for the NCHC members than for the nonmembers. In fact, NCHC member schools appear to be more likely than nonmembers to gather data on students who are applying to their program prior to making a decision about admission. An independent samples t -test showed that NCHC members used more sources of information about students in making their selections for admissions to their programs ($M=4.96$) compared to the number of sources used by nonmembers ($M = 3.29$); $t(36) = 2.96, p < .01$.

Table 1. Size of Surveyed Honors Programs

Membership Status	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
NCHC (<i>n</i> =24)	20	1150	345	379
Non-NCHC (<i>n</i> =14)	15	600	154	165
Total (<i>N</i> =38)	15	1150	264	327

Note. No significant differences between NCHC members and nonNCHC members

Table 2. Selectivity of Surveyed Honors Programs: Percent of Student Body in Honors

Membership Status	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
NCHC (<i>n</i> =20)	0.4%	12%	4.8%	.037
NonNCHC (<i>n</i> =13)	0.9%	15%	7.4%	.046
Total (<i>N</i> =33)	0.4%	15%	5.8%	.042

Note. No significant differences between NCHC members and nonNCHC members

Table 3. Honors Student Selection Methods of Surveyed Programs

Processes	Used by NCHC Members	%	Rank Order	Used by Nonmembers	%	Rank Order
High School GPA	22	95.65	1	8	61.54	1.0
ACT/SAT Scores	21	91.30	2	7	54.00	2.5
Letters of Recommendation	11	47.83	6	3	23.08	6.5
College GPA	18	78.26	3	5	38.46	4.5
Application	16	69.57	4	7	54.00	2.5
Essay	15	65.22	5	5	38.46	4.5
Interview	7	30.43	7	3	23.08	6.5
Other ^a	5	21.74	8	2	15.38	8.0

Note. Respondents were requested to identify all processes used.

^aSpecific responses included other academic work, writing samples, and high school class rank

This preference for more data on prospective students may reflect the fact that NCHC member programs may be more likely to compensate their honors directors by allocating more of their time to honors. An independent samples *t*-test indicated that NCHC member respondents reported devoting a significantly greater percentage of full-time employment to honors ($M = 54.70$) than nonmembers ($M = 27.93$); $t(35) = 2.46, p < .05$.

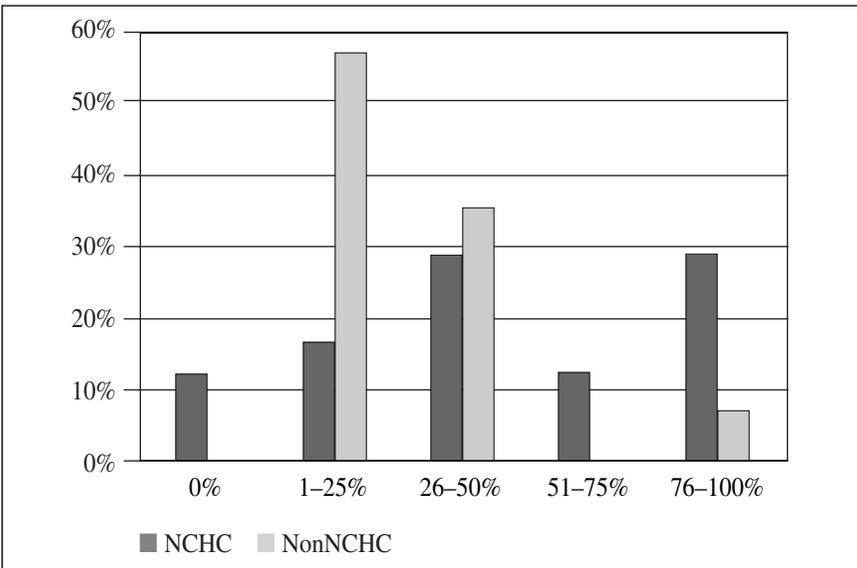
DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENT PROTOCOLS

A total of twenty respondents reported some assessment of the honors program. Most honors program assessments are the responsibility of the program director/coordinator ($n=18$) although some rely on honors faculty and committees ($n = 5$) and a few on administrators such as deans or provosts ($n = 3$). Several programs are assessed by more than one agent.

In answer to the question “Do you conduct any assessment of your honors program?” 61% ($n=14$) of NCHC members responded “yes” and 50% ($n=6$) of nonmembers reported yes. A chi-square comparison showed no significant difference in these response rates. Combining the responses showed that a total of 57% responded affirmatively that they conduct some assessment of the honors program. Thus nearly 43% of participants report that there is no assessment of their honors program.

Participants were asked a follow-up question to explain their lack of assessment, and these results show that some possible differentiation between

Figure 1. Percentages of NCHC and NonNCHC Samples Grouped by Allotment of Their FTE to the Honors Program.

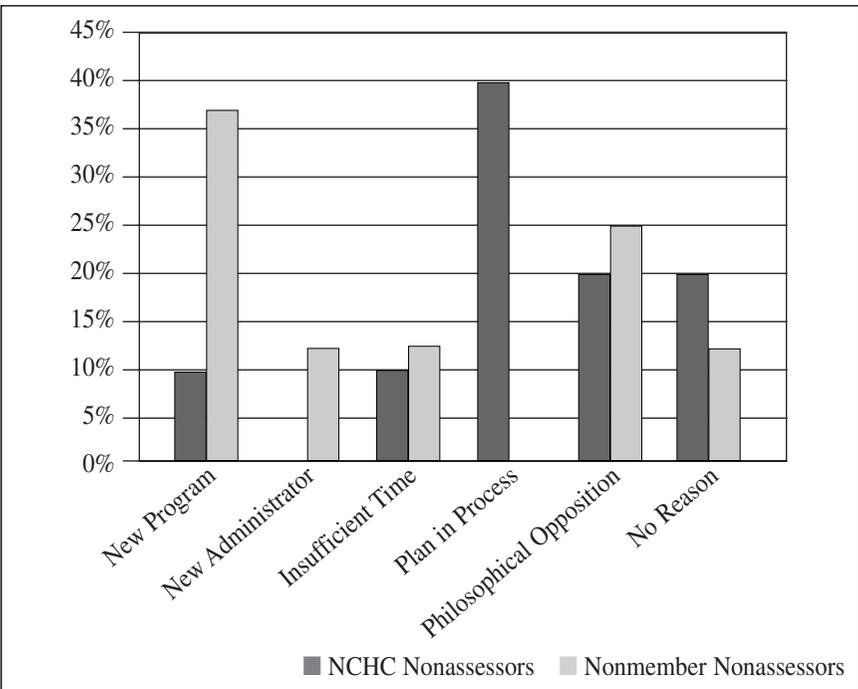


NCHC members and nonmembers. Explanations for no assessment clustered as newness of program, newness of administrator, insufficient time, philosophical opposition to assessment, and an assessment plan in process but not in place. One member and one nonmember respondent gave no explanation for their lack of assessment. Despite some possible differences between the member and nonmember explanations for no assessment, the numbers are too small to perform a meaningful inferential analysis.

Of the twenty programs that are doing some assessment, fifteen reported conducting regular assessments. The frequency of assessments of all respondents is shown in Figure 3. As the figure suggests, most programs that do assessment conduct it on a yearly basis.

Respondents were asked, “What population do you use to assess your honors program?” NCHC members and nonmembers responded in similar fashion. As shown in Figure 4, honors students are assessed most frequently, with honors faculty a close second. Administrators and alumni were assessed less frequently, and general faculty were the least likely to be questioned about the honors program. One respondent (not shown on the graph) reported using honors committee members for assessment purposes.

Figure 2. Reasons Given for Lack of Assessment of Honors Programs Showing Some Clustering by NCHC Membership Status



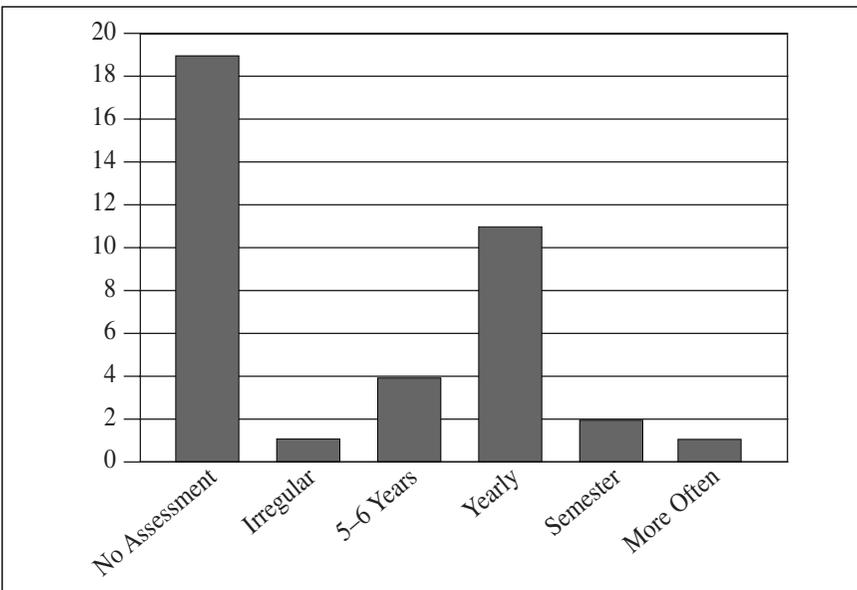
Methods of Assessment

The methods of assessment range from informal discussion among honors committees to detailed rubrics evaluating honors theses. Only four respondents reported using a formal, standardized, and normed assessment instrument. Of those “standardized” instruments, two were teacher evaluations, one was a campus-wide general education evaluation, and only one was a substantive instrument (an “info-lit. survey devised by an Australian institution”) that was neither named nor clearly described. Although respondents identified these as normed measures, it is possible that the questions are standard without the responses being normed. None of the reported standardized instruments was named although the follow-up question was “If yes, which standardized tests do you use?”.

Six additional programs reported using formal, non-standardized instruments such as course and teacher evaluations. Two programs used formal rubrics for evaluating student work, and two programs used exit surveys. One program used focus groups of honors students, one relied on the university external review process, and one used institutional effectiveness studies.

Of the programs that conducted some form of assessment, five reported using a comparison group. Four of these described their comparison groups as non-honors students in the institution, and one did not specify the comparison group. None reported identifying a matched comparison group of honors-eligible, non-honors students.

Figure 3. Frequency of Assessments Conducted by Honors Programs



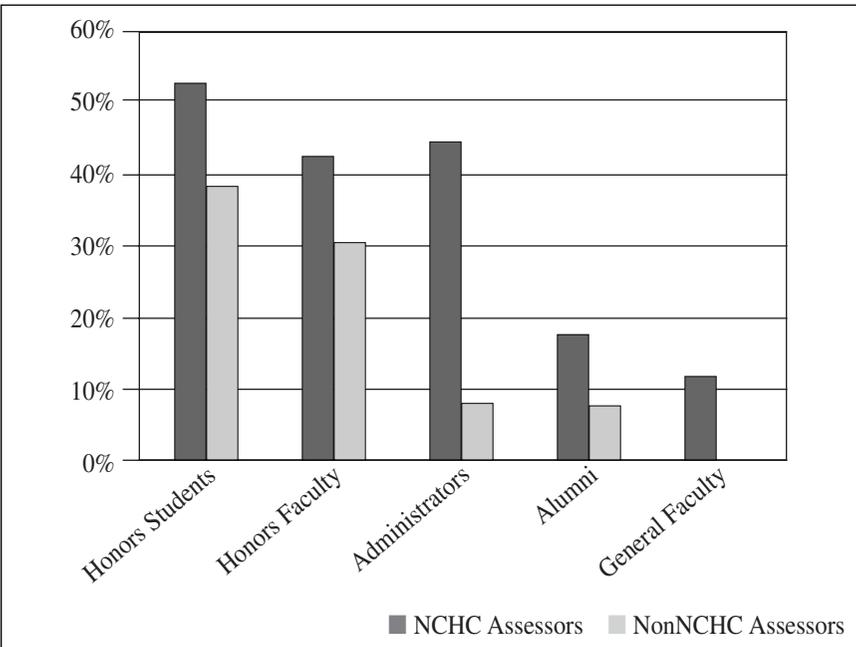
Focus of Assessments

Responders were asked to identify all sources of data used to assess their honors program. The programs that assessed were likely to conduct multiple assessments. Only one program reported using only satisfaction surveys. The average number of types of data sources was 6.2 and ranged from 1 to 12 sources with a mode of 7.

Student Satisfaction

The most common sources of data can be seen in Figure 5. In general, these sources consisted of student satisfaction surveys and attrition rates. For all respondents, the most common data collected were student ratings of satisfaction with honors courses ($n = 18$), and the second most common was student satisfaction with the honors program ($n = 17$). The third most common information used was the attrition rate from the honors program ($n = 16$) followed by causes of attrition from the honors program ($n = 13$). The fifth piece of information most likely to be gathered was attrition from the university ($n = 10$).

Figure 4. Populations Used for Program Assessment by NCHC Members and Nonmembers



Note. No significant differences were found between NCHC members and nonmembers in the rank order or percentages of using these assessment sources.

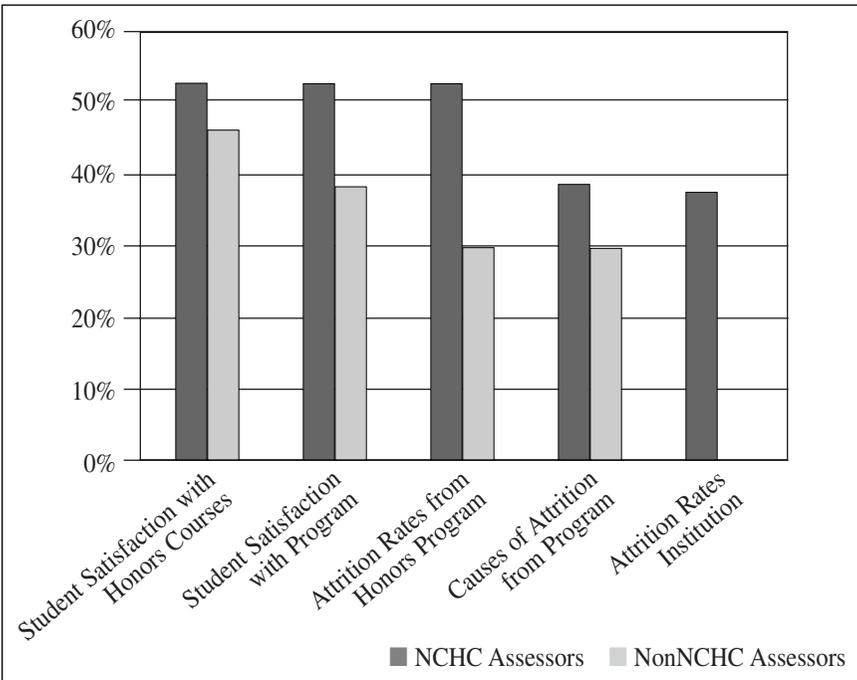
Student Outcomes

Course content, critical thinking, and accomplishment of the liberal education goals might be interpreted as Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). These areas were assessed at a moderate level by the programs that did some assessment. However, there was no clear evidence of honors programs generally assessing SLOs. Successful behavioral outcomes such as admission to graduate schools (25%) and job placement (10%) fell fairly low in frequency of assessment.

NCHC-Recommended Assessment

The evidence thus far suggests that some NCHC members are assessing two of the areas recommended by the organization in 1990: reasons for attrition from the program and accomplishment of the liberal education goals (Reihman, Varhus, & Whipple). The remaining areas recommended for assessment receive limited support from the entire assessing population: participation in cultural (15%) and community (30%) activities, administrative structure and budget (40%), and advising satisfaction (15%).

Figure 5. Assessment Data Most Frequently Collected by NCHC Members and Nonmembers



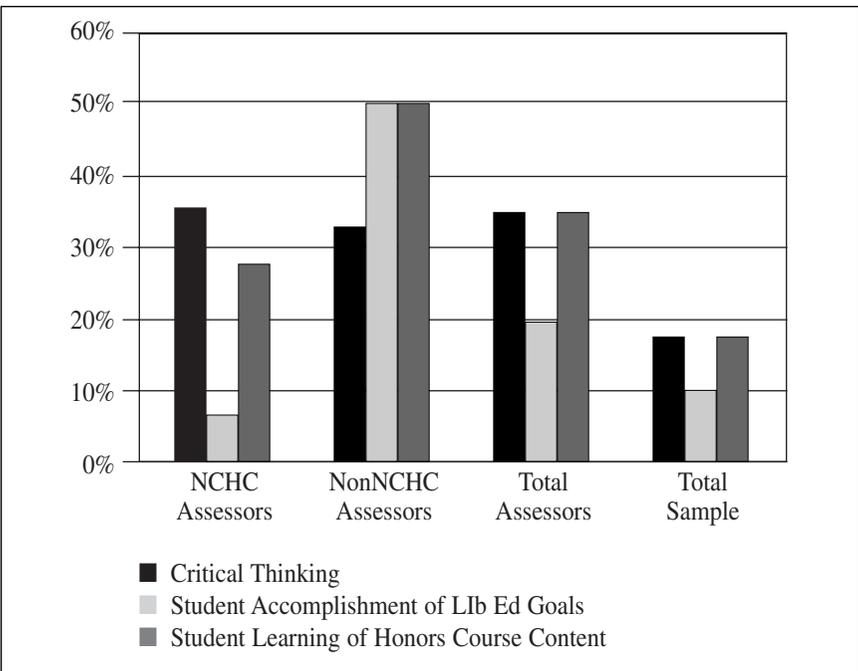
Other Areas Assessed

Additional sources of data supplied by the open-ended “other” question were: the percentage of students who completed lower- and upper-division honors courses; personal statements and portfolios; student writing and study abroad; quality of senior honors theses; research accomplishments, service accomplishments, and conference presentations; and “nitty gritty things like how forms and papers are distributed and turned in.”

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Seventeen participants responded to the question “Briefly describe any findings of your assessments during the past three years.” As one would expect, the findings reflect the nature of the data collected. Only three participants reported findings about the general satisfaction of students; however, seven others reported learning of specific areas in which students were not completely satisfied with such issues as course offerings, advising, the physical location of honors, and availability of scholarships. Eight programs found high retention rates in the institution although two found fairly low retention in the honors program. Two schools found higher acceptance rates in graduate and professional schools among honors than non-honors students.

Figure 6. Rates of Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes by NCHC Members and Nonmembers



One program found high levels of student participation in study abroad, and one found that honors service volunteers “maintain and expand quantity and quality of service” over time.

In less positive findings, two participants reported a lack of diversity and a need for recruiting underrepresented students. One school found that students demonstrated “confusion regarding liberal education.” An additional two reported finding academic deficits (writing, math, and general) in their honors students that needed to be addressed.

A total of nineteen responders answered the question “How have you used the assessment results?” and only one replied “not used.” Two responders reported a recent decrease in the effectiveness of honors assessment because their institutions were moving to more quantitative and less formative types of assessments. With the exception of the one “not used” response, all of the responders gave examples of how their assessment results are used; however, three programs reported using assessment for planning without further defining that activity.

ASSESSMENT APPLICATIONS

The most frequently mentioned general use of honors program assessment was to provide a basis for changes internal to the honors program. These changes included curricular changes, admission requirements, and programmatic changes. Seven schools reported using assessment to support the addition or change of offered courses, and three schools used their data to support specific course content changes such as additional critical thinking skills, writing skills, and service requirements. Three schools reported changes in their admission processes either to increase academic credentials ($n=2$) or to increase diversity ($n=1$). Four programs reported using their data to make changes that would lead to a more cohesive identity among students in the honors program.

The second most frequent general use of honors assessment was to gain and/or maintain institutional support for the program. Eight of the programs reported using their data specifically for the purpose of increasing their resources, including scholarship funds, faculty assignments, or space. Two additional programs reported that they conduct assessment in order to fulfill an institutional requirement, which might be construed as a method for maintaining institutional support.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings suggest a paucity of adequate assessment of honors programs in community colleges, colleges, and universities throughout the country. The connection of program assessment to specific learning outcomes

remains thin. On the other hand, the directors who are assessing their programs generally appear to be using multiple sources of data and report benefits from using the information they gather. Finally, although in 1990 the NCHC specifically encouraged its members to conduct regular assessments of causes of attrition, liberal education goals of the curriculum, participation in cultural and community activities, administrative structure and budget, and advising responsibilities (Reihman, Varhus, & Whipple 3–4), I found no clear indications that membership in NCHC increases the likelihood that a program follows these assessment guidelines.

Based on the findings of this study, a little more than half of honors programs conduct some sort of assessment. Although these data must be interpreted with caution due to the very small numbers, the general representativeness of the sample—in terms of size, selectivity, and time allotment for honors director—may add some strength to the generalizability of the results. There is no way to determine the extent to which these findings are biased; however, one could make the argument that those sampled who are least concerned with assessment are the ones most likely to ignore a research request regarding assessment practices

Most of the assessments reported are not directly connected to learning outcomes, but there is evidence of some outcome assessment. Attrition rates, which reflect the positive outcome of completion of the program and the degree, do provide a gross outcome measure and were used fairly frequently in comparisons of honors students to non-honors students. Course content and critical thinking were reportedly assessed by only 35% of the programs that conduct some assessment (18% of the entire sample), yet one might assume that instructors assess these outcomes in nearly every course as the basis for assigning a grade. The simple application of a rubric for use across courses would supply adequate standardization to begin programmatic assessment of learning outcomes. Other outcome measures, such as acceptance to graduate schools and job placement, also suggest positive results from participation in honors. Such data are extremely easy to collect, and the low rates of collection beg the question of why programs do not do so more frequently.

The widespread assessment of students' satisfaction with courses and honors programs suggests that data collection alone is not the problem. Student satisfaction surveys require at least some time to administer, score, and enter as data, and their widespread use suggests a willingness of at least half of the honors programs to invest in collecting this information. Unfortunately, student satisfaction is notoriously unreliable in assessing the quality of a program (Schuck, Gordon, & Buchanan; Shevlin, Banyard, & Griffiths; Zabeleta). Fortunately, only one assessing program reported relying on student satisfaction surveys alone.

The combination of student satisfaction with other sources of information apparently provides enough data that most of these institutions that conduct some assessment report benefitting from it. This study suggests that assessment information is useful in guiding changes and planning within an honors program as well as providing strong arguments for continued and increased support from administrators.

At this time there is no clear evidence that membership in the NCHC increases the likelihood that an honors program will conduct assessment or that the quality of the assessment will be substantially different from those honors programs that are not in the NCHC. The data show a higher percentage of the director's FTE devoted to the honors program for NCHC members, but these data do not translate into a greater likelihood that NCHC members conduct assessment nor not that they conduct assessment more frequently. The study revealed no real differences between NCHC members and non-members in the methods of assessment used, the sources of data, and the uses to which assessment data are put.

DISCUSSION

This paper began with a question: Are honors educators resisting the national movement to require empirical evidence of the success of their programs, or are they developing effective methods of evaluating honors? The results of this study suggest that the national community of honors programs does not reflect a consensus that assessment is a valuable tool for insuring high program quality. In spite of the organization's support for assessment, the results of this survey suggest that we are not taking assessment and evaluation seriously when it comes to our own programs.

Rather than arguing about the inadequacy of assessment or insisting that honors provides some mystical benefit that cannot be measured, I believe we should be doing research to determine effective and reliable program measures and assisting each other in applying them. I agree with Lanier when he described our current situation: "the issue of creating effective and reliable program assessment measures is far more overarching than the natural academic denunciation of legislative threats to impose standardized testing or to create an educational equivalent to automotive assembly lines" (81). As Cheryl Achtenberg wrote, "We teach our honors students to question; we should not shirk when questions are also asked of us . . . [W]e need to recognize that assessment and evaluation are essential in honors education" (38-39).

Until honors programs begin using some form of appropriately standardized assessments, we will not be able to address concerns about the value of our programs, especially in comparison with comparable student groups. In

the meantime, others are also working on creating these tools for excellent assessment. An example of exemplary assessment is found in the 2005 study by Klein *et al.* Their approach to measuring cognitive outcomes produced a complex, open-ended critical thinking assessment tool that can be computer-scored with extraordinarily high reliability. Their assessment is specifically appropriate for measuring student learning outcomes at the program level rather than at the individual student level. Although these assessment tools are not necessarily easily available to all institutions at this time, they demonstrate the type of learning outcome assessment that honors programs could develop collaboratively, making use of the shared values of those educators who are dedicated to providing excellent education for our most gifted students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was supported in part by the Department of Psychology at Bemidji State University. Judy Negard, Administrative Assistant for the Honors Program, assisted in developing the questionnaire, and Collin Sainio, graduate student in psychology, gave formatting assistance. Some of the data were presented at the 45th Annual Conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council in Kansas City, MO, on November 22, 2010.

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The author may be contacted at

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APPENDIX A

NATIONAL SURVEY OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAMS ASSESSMENT PROTOCOLS

Survey Information:

Thank you in advance for your participation in this survey. The data we are gathering will be used to provide normative information regarding assessment practices among honors programs throughout the United States. Responses to this survey will be analyzed only in groups. No individual schools or individual respondents will be identified. Of course, you may opt out of completing this survey at any time without prejudice. If you have any questions or concerns about the survey, please contact me at the address provided.

When answering the following questions, please consider the average practice of your program during the past three years. If you have qualifying statements for your answers, please feel free to write them in the space provided.

Respondent Information:

1. What is your connection to the Honors Program at your institution?
____ Director
____ Faculty
____ Administrative Assistant
____ Other (please specify) _____
2. What percentage of your full time employment is allocated to the Honors Program? ____%

Honors Program Information:

3. How many new students are admitted to your Honors Program each a year? ____
4. How many total students participate in your Honors Program each year? ____
5. What percentage of your undergraduate population participates in your Honors Program? ____%
6. What process of selection do you use to identify students to participate in your Honors Program? (Please check all that apply)
____ High school GPA
____ ACT/SAT scores

- Letters of recommendation
- College GPA
- Application
- Essay
- Interview
- Other (please specify) _____

Assessment Information:

7. Do you conduct any assessment of your Honors Program?

Yes (please continue to question # 8)

No

If no, please briefly explain why you don't.

If no, thank you for your time and the information you have provided.

8. Do you conduct a regularly scheduled, formal assessment of your honors program?

Yes No

9. How frequently do you assess your honors program? _____

(Please specify years, semesters, etc.)

10. What population do you use to assess your honors program? (Please check all that apply)

Honors students

Honors faculty

General faculty

Administrators

Alumni

Other (please specify) _____

11. What data do you measure? (Please check all that apply)

Administrative structure and budget of honors program

Admission rates of honors students to graduate schools

Advising satisfaction

Attitudes toward liberal education

Attrition rates of honors students from the honors program

Attrition rates of honors students from the institution

Causes of attrition of students from the honors program

Causes of attrition of honors students from the institution

Critical thinking

Job placement

NATIONAL SURVEY OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAMS

- _____ Student accomplishment of Liberal Education goals
- _____ Student learning of honors course content
- _____ Student participation in community activities
- _____ Student participation in cultural activities
- _____ Student satisfaction with honors courses
- _____ Student satisfaction with the honors program
- _____ Student overall satisfaction with the institution
- _____ Other (please specify) _____

12. Do you assess faculty satisfaction with your honors program?
Yes _____ No _____

13. Do you assess any other group's satisfaction with your honors program?
Yes _____ No _____

13a. If yes, please specify the group. _____

14. Do you use any standardized (normed) tests in assessing your honors program?
Yes _____ No _____

14a. If yes, which standardized tests do you use? _____

15. Do you use any formal, but non-standardized, instruments in assessing your honors program?
Yes _____ No _____

15a. If yes, briefly describe the instrument(s)

16. Do you use any comparison (control) groups in your assessment of your honors program?
Yes _____ No _____

16a. If yes, what group do you use as a comparison (control) group?

17. Who is responsible for assessment of your honors program?

17a. Please describe that person's connection to the honors program or position within the institution.

MARSHA B. DRISCOLL

18. Briefly describe any findings of your assessments during the past three years.

19. How have you used the assessment results?

Please use the remaining space to include any information that you think will give a clearer description of the assessment procedures you use at your institution.

Please return the survey to:

Marsha B. Driscoll, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
205 Hagg-Sauer #23
Bemidji State University
Bemidji, MN 56601

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this survey, please contact me through this email address:

mdriscoll@bemidjistate.edu

APPENDIX B

PRE-SURVEY EMAIL FOR PARTICIPANTS IN NATIONAL SURVEY OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAMS ASSESSMENT PROTOCOLS

Dear Honors Program Administrator:

I am sending you this email to inform you that within the next few weeks you will be receiving a survey instrument requesting information regarding the assessment protocol you use with your honors program. Your program was selected from a national database through a randomized selection process. The purpose of this survey is to identify assessment practices for honors programs across the country. The surveys are intended to be anonymous. There will be no identifying information attached to any responses and all responses will be analyzed in groups. Results will be made available through public presentations at honors conferences and through appropriate publications. Your completion of the survey will act as your informed consent to participate. Of course, you may opt out of completing this survey at any time without prejudice. If you have any questions or concerns about the survey, please contact me at the address provided at the end of this email.

It is my sincere hope that you and all the other selected participants will take the 20–30 minutes necessary to complete the survey. Assessment of honors programs is frequently described as a difficult, if not impossible, process; yet such assessment has become more and more necessary in this age of accountability. It is my hope that the results of this survey will provide honors programs with valuable information about the national practice as well as ideas for improving assessment.

If you have any questions regarding the nature of the survey or the results, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to your participation in this important research.

Sincerely,

Marsha B. Driscoll, Ph.D.
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APPENDIX C

POST-SURVEY EMAIL FOR PARTICIPANTS IN NATIONAL SURVEY OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAMS ASSESSMENT PROTOCOLS

Dear Honors Program Administrator,

You recently received a copy of the National Survey of College and University Honors Programs Assessment Protocols. If you have already completed this survey and returned it, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your contribution to this research.

If you have received the survey but have not yet completed it, I would like to ask you to please consider sending it in with information about your honors program. Each response will give us a more accurate picture of the current practice of honors program assessment. As I am sure you know, each unreturned survey reduces the accuracy of the results, and I am hoping to provide as accurate a picture as possible of current practices. Of course, you may opt out of completing this survey at any time without prejudice. If you have any questions or concerns about the survey, please contact me at the address provided at the end of the survey.

Because there is no identifying information on the survey forms themselves, I am unable to know who has or has not responded at this point. If for some reason you have not received the survey, or if you received it and have lost it, I would be happy to send another. Please simply reply to this email, identify your college or university, and request that I send you another copy.

Again, thank each and every one of you for your participation. I look forward to being able to share the results with you through a publication. If you have any questions regarding the nature of the survey or the results, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

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Assessment, Accountability, and Honors Education

CHRISTOPHER A. SNYDER

MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

Honors programs thrive in an environment of pedagogic freedom. This freedom extends to our honors students as they explore topics for projects and theses and engage in much more independent research than the average undergraduate. Honors programs should also be havens for faculty to experiment with new ideas for courses and co-curricular activities. Freed from large lecture halls and department politics, faculty who teach in an honors program often find themselves wandering over to the honors facilities to hang out with students or going off on honors-sponsored adventures. Thus academic freedom also often leads to a stronger sense of community. However, as the corporate, managerial model encroaches on the modern university, both academic freedom and the community of scholars are under threat, and honors administrators must find a way to preserve what makes their programs unique.

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, 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, university administrators have exerted pressure upon deans, department chairs, and individual faculty members to “embrace the culture of assessment.” In our previous

article for *JNCHC*, we questioned the validity of assessment as an accurate measurement of student learning in honors. We will argue in this essay that the “culture” of assessment and accountability is not what honors faculty should choose to embrace.

ASSESSMENT IMPLIES A LACK OF TRUST

At the root of this accountability and assessment movement is a fundamental and pervasive lack of trust. Politicians no longer trust universities to spend their money wisely. Many parents of students may share this feeling. Increasingly, university administrators do not trust faculty to go about their business without a regular accounting of their productivity, both in research and in the classroom. As an administrator once told me, “Faculty now have to *earn* the trust.” What exactly did we do to lose it?

JNCHC editor Ada Long introduced a recent issue of the journal with this observation:

What seems to have gained momentum in recent years is distrust of higher education and, more specifically, of college and university teachers. The various commentators on higher education—from journalists to parents, legislators to college presidents—seem to agree that teachers need to prove that they are doing their jobs. . . . My question is, what is the basis for this distrust? (Long 11)

Of course, the majority of the professoriate *has* earned trust through the long and rigorous tenure and promotion process, but the distrust has now gone way beyond tenure and promotion reviews since assessment is blind to rank and tenure. *All* faculty should be involved in course-based assessment, say its proponents. Meanwhile most faculty, who feel that they have been doing assessment of student learning through quizzes, exams, and papers, see this new trend as a bother and an imposition. The truth is that it is even worse.

ASSESSMENT IS AN INFRINGEMENT ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Most of us see academic freedom as the right, earned through the long and rigorous tenure review process, of a professor to present potentially unpopular or controversial material and arguments in our classes and research without censure from university authorities. In the United States, academic freedom was first formally defined in 1915 by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in its *Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure*. The definition was revised and issued in

1940 by the AAUP and the Association of American Colleges as the *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*:

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. . . .

Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.

College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations.

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 reading and writing 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 employ certain types of assignments, to devise rubrics for evaluating these assignments, and then to use the data to measure student learning. As we argue below, rubrics and data-gathering are meaningless for most courses in the arts and humanities, and they ask faculty to do what the vast majority have not been educated—or rather trained—to do. Even if faculty members believe in the value of such assessment for their courses, they should be the ones to make this determination, not an administrator or faculty committee. Imposition of educational philosophy

from outside—whether from a politician, an administrator, or a faculty colleague—is an infringement of academic freedom. (For current debate on academic freedom, including the controversial “Academic Bill of Rights,” see commentaries by Aby; Fish; Post and Finkin; and Horowitz.)

According to the 1915 *Declaration*, university faculties are “appointees” of the legal governing authority “but not in any proper sense” its “employees.” “[O]nce appointed, the scholar has professional functions to perform in which the appointing authorities have neither competency nor moral right to intervene” (AAUP, *Protecting*, 69). These professional functions, it is reasonable to assume, include defining the parameters of individual courses, in both content and method of instruction. While content is usually (though not always) left in the hands of the faculty member or the department, however, pedagogic method and course assignments are now assumed to be part of the purview of provosts, deans, and non-teaching staff members. These individuals often intervene in the name of accountability to government and accrediting bodies. Such intervention reflects an expansion of executive power in the modern university at the expense of the faculty. Liberties once surrendered are difficult, if not impossible, to regain.

ASSESSMENT IS A WASTE OF TIME

For most of us who have had to do programmatic assessment reports, they have been a drudgery with the result that we are, in the end, simply checking off boxes. “I’ve finished my report so I can now check ‘Done,’ as can my supervisors and *their* supervisors, and then the university can inform the accreditation agency, which can in turn inform the Department of Education, which can then inform Congress.” In the end, is anybody reading all of these assessment reports or are they a waste of time that betrays the original intent of the assessment and accountability movement?

Course-based assessment is even worse, keeping faculty from teaching and doing required research while those who demand it of us do little if any teaching or research. Ironically, assessment thus runs counter to the demands for productivity. If faculty are constantly engaged in assessment exercises (or even, as here, fighting against assessment), they are as a result spending less time preparing for class and doing research (“Assessment Projects from Hell”). If we are truthfully advertising our institutions to prospective students and their families, on our brochures and web sites we should list all the hours that faculty spend in committee meetings and replace the pictures of professors lecturing to their students with ones showing weary and disgruntled PhDs peering over stacks of forms. “I worry,” writes Jeffrey Portnoy, “that the future of teaching is a race to retirement against the accelerating forces of

standardization and business practices” (47). Comments we hear from veteran colleagues suggest that the future is *now*.

WHO IS ASSESSING THE ASSESSORS?

When we are told that faculty members have to earn trust, prove that we are doing our jobs, or explain our relevance to various constituencies, we should ask our administrative colleagues to share the burden. They should be subject to equal scrutiny by faculty and required to provide summative evaluations of their performance, but such demands are viewed as ridiculous within the business model of today’s universities. Employees have no right to scrutinize the activities of their managers, apart from water-cooler gossip. The transparency and accountability model does not work both ways. Long points out the growing number of assessment professionals in university administrations and the increasing influence they are having on the policies and procedures of undergraduate education across the country (11). “Who are they,” she asks, “and why do they garner the trust that is with increasing meagerness afforded to college and university faculties?” While most are intelligent and well-intentioned professionals, they are nonetheless being used the way managerial consultants are used so often in the corporate world: to increase the productivity of the workers.

Philosophers from Aristotle to Avicenna to Aquinas have been intrigued by the Prime Mover theory. Simply stated, by tracing backwards the source that causes a body to go in motion and the source of *that* moving body and so on, one can find the ultimate source of all movement—the Prime Mover. In the case of assessment and accountability, the Prime Mover is hard to find, much less to assess. True transparency and accountability should be mutual and reciprocal, a sort of “checks and balances,” but in higher education the process is one-way only and seems to be just new jargon masking old management tactics.

ASSESSMENT IS NOT STUDENT-CENTERED

Among all the new jargon that has entered the modern university is the seemingly innocuous phrase “student-centered learning.” It is hard to imagine any learning that is *not* student-centered, but it should be obvious that assessment is not student-centered. Students are not being held accountable for their learning but rather faculty members for their teaching. Assessment provides convenient but simplistic institutional data meant to demonstrate average learning and to fuel improvements in future teaching; in this sense, the data are gathered to inform the instructor, department, or institution but not to provide feedback to the student. If we are trying to find out how well we are helping students learn, assessment is a pseudo-measurement of

accountability and productivity; our best and most reliable measure of learning remains the professional judgment of faculty members who spend countless hours grading papers, providing feedback, talking with individual students, and honing their original thinking. This traditional approach is much more student-centered than a regulated industry of education, churning out well-trained students with maximum efficiency.

ASSESSMENT BETRAYS THE ORIGINAL INTENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

The first universities in medieval Europe were founded as partnerships between faculty and students. Students submitted to the rules and evaluation of the faculty in order to apprentice their way into the membership in the guild of free and learned men. Popes and kings protected the freedoms of the universities because of their prestige and because they needed university-trained men to fill their staffs. At places like Oxford and Paris, faculty and students made significant sacrifices and even gave their lives on occasion to protect their liberties from outside interests (Baldwin). While the first American colleges and universities were founded by many different entities—including British monarchs, state governments, and various churches—nearly all were devoted to the liberal arts ideal of Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge. Free pursuit of truth was essential, it was thought, for producing skilled professionals and, more importantly, virtuous citizens.

These principles were tested in both medieval and American universities following the respective growth of their administrative “managers.” 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 come to characterize the relationship between administrators and faculty. The concept of “shared governance” took shape gradually, and its fullest iteration can be found in the AAUP’s 1994 statement *On the Relationship of Faculty Governance to Academic Freedom* (AAUP, *Policy*). This statement is endorsed by most professional bodies and institutions. However, shared-governance violations have now reached the level of national epidemic, according to the AAUP. The AAUP’s Committee on College and University Governance, which issued its first report in 1920, investigates alleged violations of shared governance. Cary Nelson, president of the AAUP, discusses several recent violations in his new book on academic freedom—*No University is an Island: Saving Academic Freedom*—and distills sixteen types of threat to academic freedom. While autocratic administrators grab the headlines, the first threat on Nelson’s list is *instrumentalization*, which “concentrates pedagogy and research alike on narrowly

defined goals and outcomes” and “fuel[s] the movement for more testing and accountability” (51ff).

ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY ARE PART OF A BUSINESS MODEL

Related to instrumentalization is the general growth of *managerial ideology* in the modern university. In Nelson’s opinion, “the managerial model that now dominates the corporate university” is a threat to both academic freedom and shared governance (32). “The rise of a separate class of career administrators and the substantial increase in their sheer numbers has helped fuel the belief that faculty are not full partners in the educational enterprise but rather resources to be controlled and managed” (56). The strictly hierarchical “power pyramid” inherent in this model runs contrary, argues Nelson, to the AAUP’s 1966 “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities.” In addressing Stanley Fish’s argument that faculty naively expect democracy to govern the modern university, Nelson offers a reasonable definition of shared governance:

Shared governance cannot install full democracy in a university. It is a negotiated strategy for sharing and adjudicating power and its application and effects. Shared governance exists when boards of trustees agree to cede authority over areas—such as curriculum development and faculty hiring—where the faculty have greater expertise. It has nothing to do with democracy. Rather, it recognizes that governing boards do not have the requisite competence to make these decisions (37).

Most faculty members would agree that true democracy cannot govern every move of the institution, whether it be a small private college or a large land-grant university. Executive decisions must be made by our administrators, who work long and hard hours in part to free faculty to pursue teaching and research interests. But surely the best model is the collegial rather than the corporate, based on trust among members of a community. Administrators who view faculty members as their colleagues rather than their employees are less likely to violate the principles that make scholarly investigation and learning possible.

FACULTY SHARE THE BLAME

While the governing of our institutions slips from our hands and while administrators talk freely of changing curricula, course content, and pedagogy, we faculty remain in our silos, unwilling or unable to influence these

affairs. If our silos were the closed quarters of the classroom it would be one thing, but increasingly they are silos of overspecialization. Research interests dominate the minds of most faculty members and consume their time and talents—not just at so-called research institutions, and not just on the tenure track. Noble as is the pursuit of truth in our disciplines, while we travel ever more quickly toward the small end of the telescope we perhaps lose sight of the bigger picture. For some, research is a welcome escape from tedious and less interesting institutional duties; for others, books and conferences are perhaps consolation for the declining status of the professoriate at both the institutional and societal level. While we senior faculty may survive the storm, however, we are passing the problem on to our successors and thus do a disservice both to them and to their students.

Moreover, faculty who assume leadership positions, whether on committees or in the administration, need themselves to remember the principles of academic freedom and collegiality. Good intent and majority vote are not ever sufficient reasons to violate the rights and freedoms of the professoriate. Department chairs and senior faculty should, of course, offer advice and encouragement on content and pedagogy, but phrases such as “faculty development” and “improving student learning” should not be allowed to mask power plays. We are all invested in these processes, but only in an environment of freedom and trust can we grow as scholars and teachers.

ASSESSMENT IS ANTI-HUMANISTIC

Much of the complaint against assessment has come from the humanities, which is not surprising. Subjecting Shakespeare to a rubric seems an obvious blasphemy. The study of philosophy and theology at the highest levels is unlikely to generate “learning outcomes.” Assessment does not inspire poetry, music, love, or appreciation of the past.

The discipline of history, for example, encompasses and ultimately judges all human institutions and ideologies. Its origins are as old as writing itself and render it inconsistent with subjection to educational theories and practices that have been around for less than a generation. Assessment was generated by the social sciences and is alien to those of us who teach in the humanities and who view the human as a unique, creative, and complex creature. Wrong we may be, but to force the creative arts, the humanities, and indeed the natural sciences into a social science paradigm is to privilege one view in the university and do disservice to the others. Those of us outside the social sciences are likely to be skeptical of what the ideally assessed and accountable university would look like, doubting that it would bring the happiness of which the ancient philosophers spoke. Some would say Kafka, Huxley, and Orwell gave us adequate warnings regarding such efficient

systems: “Art, science—you seem to have paid a high price for your happiness,” said the Savage to the World Controller (Huxley 177). Brave new world indeed!

We believe that our faculty colleagues in psychology and education whose expertise is in undergraduate student learning can and should share their research with us, but they must recognize that individual faculty members should ultimately judge how or if this research can improve teaching and learning in their classrooms. Imposing a “one size fits all” pedagogy can undermine the intellectual diversity that distinguishes higher education from primary and secondary schooling and will certainly lead honors education to lose its distinctiveness in an increasingly homogenized undergraduate experience.

STANDARDIZATION

Many critics of assessment direct their antipathy toward the standardization that they see it bringing to American higher education. Standardized tests and Standards of Learning (SOLs) have come under attack by academics since the 1980s as an oversimplification of learning and a way of sneaking ideology into the curriculum in primary and secondary schooling, and much greater suspicion is justified about standardization of undergraduate curricula.

Such suspicion is especially appropriate with regard to honors education in America, which in its seventy-five year history has never been static or uniform. Honors programs have long served as “laboratories” to test new education theories and pedagogy or to resurrect old ones. This aspect of honors education is certainly threatened by the assessment and accountability movement. “There is considerable disagreement, as there should be, about more general issues of assessment and evaluation,” Long writes about the nine essays in a *JNCHC* Forum on “Outcomes Assessment and Accountability in Honors,” “but there is unanimous agreement that requiring standardized measurement of student learning outcomes is inimical to the very nature of honors education” (12). Furthermore, many would argue that teaching is more art than science. Our best teachers are not defined by—nor identified by—any rubric.

ASSESSMENT MODELS ARE SIMPLISTIC AND NON-SCIENTIFIC

While assessment ultimately derives from the social sciences, it is seldom practiced with scientific rigor or proper method. As we previously argued in our article on assessment in honors, most measures of learning outcomes are at best redundant and at worst tend simply to gauge remedial forms

of learning, failing to completely reflect the full spectrum of creative thinking aspired to in an honors education (Carnicom and Snyder). When viewed in this light, such simplistic assessment provides not only very limited data concerning actual student learning but also insidiously lowers standards over time. Outcomes assessment becomes a flawed yardstick, merely measuring a department's or professor's ability to motivate students to memorize the "important" facts.

Additionally, when measurements are designed by the assessor who also evaluates the results, unfavorable measurements may be ignored in favor of more favorable results. After all, tenure, promotion, and budgets now hang in the balance. Indeed, the very survival of honors programs can become dependent on showing tangible results to those outside—often far outside—honors education. For instance, one important study that showed honors participation to have "a significant, if modest, net influence on cognitive measures of student learning" included the assertion that "the assessment and accountability movements" should force "institutional actors" to prove continually that honors is "a sound investment" (Seiffert et al., 70). However, if we care about student learning, we shouldn't prematurely adopt flawed or untested measures that belittle learning to nothing more than rote repetition of trivia. Additionally, the pro-assessment camp inappropriately and perhaps even unethically asks non-social scientists not only to use specific pedagogical approaches but also to convert their classrooms into laboratories collecting flawed learning data. Anyone who has experienced the joy of an IRB review understands the hoops one must jump through to collect even the most innocuous, harmless data, yet we are asking non-social scientists to do just that. Additionally, we are not only asking all disciplines to engage in pedagogical research but all professors to change their teaching approaches to satisfy external demands for data that are not necessarily valid or helpful.

ASSESSMENT IS DRIVEN BY POLITICIANS

Most of us are aware that higher education in America is coming under increasing pressure from federal and state governing bodies and accreditation associations. With the creation of the U.S. Department of Education, congressional reauthorizations of the Higher Education Act, increasingly powerful regional accreditation associations, intrusive state legislatures, state higher education commissions—truly a dizzying array of governors besets the modern university. Mariz has shown that state legislatures' calls for assessment of higher education often arise from re-election campaigns and "hero bills," i.e. legislation resulting from campaign promises (43–45). While state schools may be the most susceptible to politicians' rods, private institutions are hardly safe. The creation of new schools and programs, as well as

accreditation and reaccreditation of schools (normally on a five- or ten-year cycle), is controlled by external governing bodies. As long as a school receives federal or state funds (including tuition scholarships and faculty grants), it is subject to these governors.

Under the pretext of guarding American higher education from spurious or fraudulent online universities as well as explaining soaring tuitions to taxpayers, state commissions and regional accreditors have gained greater authority over America's colleges and universities. They have adopted the corporate accountability model and have been advised by higher education experts to push assessment as the proper tool for measuring the success of individual schools.

The most recent example at the federal level is the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and its implementation by the U.S. Department of Education and the recognized accreditation agencies. The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA), last reauthorized in 1998, was extended for several years and reemerged as H.R. 4137, the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), sponsored by Rep. George Miller (D-Cal.) with twenty-six Democrat co-sponsors. HEOA was passed by the House on Feb. 7, 2008, and by the Senate on July 29 and was signed by President Obama on August 14. This 1158-page bill, while showing evidence of congressional concern over the rising costs of tuition and textbooks, does not include an overall assessment and accountability mandate for institutions of higher learning. In the past two years, however, the Department of Education has entered into the Federal Register broader implementation procedures that show the influence of the assessment lobby. See, for example, an entry for October 27, 2009: "Direct assessment program means an instructional program that, in lieu of credit hours or clock hours as a measure of student learning, utilizes direct assessment of student learning, or recognizes the direct assessment of student learning by others . . ." (Federal Register).

While the HEOA was a Democrat-led initiative, the U.S. Department of Education under the George W. Bush administration also took steps toward insuring accountability in higher education. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings created the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education in September of 2005. The final report of the Spellings Commission is titled *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*. The Commission proposed mandatory measurement of student learning and that made the results of such measurements readily available to prospective students and their parents. "The report's recurrent theme was *accountability*," write Hacker and Dreifus, adding their hope that "the measurement would be less mechanistic than the mindless testing that characterized Ms. Spellings' 'No Child Left Behind' initiative" (207).

The AAUP has expressed its concerns about the Spellings Commission Report, stating: “[T]he final report neglected the role of the faculty, had a narrow economic focus, and viewed higher education as a single system rather than appreciating its institutional diversity. The report formulated a sense of crisis in almost purely financial and economic terms” (AAUP, *Response*). However, apart from the soaring costs of higher education—a very real issue but little related to what actually goes on between professor and student—there is no evidence that American higher education *is* in crisis. On the contrary, our universities continue to be leaders in global education and the destination for foreign students in ever-increasing numbers.

ASSESSMENT ASSUMES THAT SOMETHING IS “BROKEN” IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Even the critical Spellings Commission Report admits 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 that emerge from them, and the number of Nobel Prizes and Rhodes Scholarships won by Americans.

What exactly is it that is so “broken” about American higher education and in need of an accountability fix? Here there is no consensus, but there is growing complaint coming from many quarters. The culture wars of the late 1980s and 90s gave rise to criticism—mostly from conservatives—about the lack of rigor and coherence in the college curriculum, the dominance of political correctness and political ideology on college campuses, and the need for SOLs (Standards of Learning). The left responded with charges of continuing elitism in American higher education, especially in college admissions. Now debate has given way to alarm. The last two years alone, for example, saw the publication of more than a dozen serious books alleging that we are in the middle of a crisis in higher education (e.g. Fritschler, Smith, and Mayer; Hacker and Dreifus; Menand; and Taylor). While such argument is stimulating and healthy, we find no agreement among this latest cadre of critics about what exactly the problem is with our universities or how we can fix it.

Faculty can easily retort that politicians are the real problem, but, while politicians may be partly to blame for assaults on academic freedom, the blame cannot be pinned on one side of the aisle. Both the political right and the political left have extended or abused their political authority when it comes to education, and at both the state and the federal levels.

Accountability and assessment have been embraced by both conservatives, who feel that grades are inflated and that our students are not really learning anything, and by liberals, who believe that overspending is resulting in rising tuitions that exclude students from lower-income families. But the accountability and assessment measures employed by many universities are about maintaining the status quo and funding, not about change. More government and more regulation result, however, in *more* spending—on new administrators, on consultants, and on lengthy reaccreditation efforts—while failing to preserve what is and always has been the best outcome of higher education: the liberty that comes from learning.

ASSESSMENT IS DRIVEN BY JARGON AND EUPHEMISMS

The assessment movement is characterized by a distinctive jargon and rhetoric. The terms and phrases used in assessment workshops and conferences come from a specific area of modern educational theory. Phrases like *student-centered learning*, *learning outcomes*, and *value-added education* were generated to reform primary and secondary education and have been employed in our public schools (with little success) for decades.

The advantage that this jargon has for leaders in higher education is that the phrases *sound* beneficial. While most educators want to improve teaching and learning, the danger is that fine-sounding terms can become euphemisms that mask not so harmless managerial practices. For example while *faculty engagement* may sound valuable in an unproblematic way, some read it as *how I can get my faculty to do what I want them to do*. Often-heard phrases like *creating a culture of assessment* and *improving the student learning experience* sound like advertising and campaign slogans; they come from a rhetoric that purposely hides the power dynamic. What is most frightening, however, is that such slogans are rarely topics open for discussion and debate; they simply become policy.

WHO WILL TEACH OUR COURSES?

Honors programs, for the most part, rely on faculty volunteers who are looking to try something new, creative, and challenging with undergraduate students. Nothing can dampen the enthusiasm of such faculty quicker than to explain that their courses must go through additional committee review and include an assessment plan. “If faculty members lose their autonomy,” asks Long, “what will become of the good will that is essential to honors education?” (12). Most faculty see inconveniences and punishments in the accountability and assessment movement but few rewards. Extra work to prove that you are competent in your job is hardly satisfying motivation.

Even its proponents would probably not argue that assessment promotes spontaneity and creativity, yet most of us have found our greatest classroom successes arising from unplanned inspiration, often in reaction to something a student has said or written. True student-centered learning has nothing to do with templates and rubrics and measurement of outcomes: it comes from our students, who surprise us in often wondrous ways and who make connections with the material that are unpredictable and often unrepeatable. In such situations, our best response is to give thanks, compliment the student, and not take the credit.

SOLUTIONS

Some within the academy argue that, since assessment is here to stay, the best thing we can do as faculty is to make sure that we control it: a “manage the damage” approach. Perhaps some will be able to waylay the Leviathan; perhaps some will even succeed in educating the beast to see how complex the process of undergraduate education really is; nevertheless, acquiescing is an admission by faculty that they ultimately lack authority even in their own classrooms. Replacing one governor with another does not alter the distrust from above, and it does not help faculty express their role in American higher education to the so-called “stakeholders.” If the battle is lost, it is cold comfort to help shape the terms of surrender.

Others, however, cling to the concept of academic freedom and spend their remaining energies defending it. One traditional way for faculty to guard academic freedom is to form unions or to use existing unions to address the administration as an adversary. While this strategy may be the only effective solution for some egregious cases, the union model does not fit well with all colleges and universities, and particularly when the labor-management dichotomy is not clear. Honors often falls into this latter category because, while most of us hold faculty rank and teach honors courses, many are also directors or deans with significant administrative duties. Honors directors are advocates for students and thus need to work in a non-adversarial way with the upper administration to increase resources and opportunities for students. This role may diminish our ability to be advocates for faculty and to safeguard their academic liberties.

Nevertheless, we believe that honors must be vigilant regarding faculty freedoms because they affect us and our students. The battles for such freedoms can and perhaps should be fought by the disciplines. National conferences of the disciplinary bodies should and often do regularly devote sessions to the protection of faculty in the climate of accountability and assessment. The AAUP can provide guidance here, but the professional associations should also be rallied to issue statements questioning or resisting the

accountability movement and mandatory assessment as detrimental to our quest for knowledge in the disciplines and to our mentoring of students. At the very least, departments should insist on their prerogative and expertise in evaluating their faculty and students rather than ceding their authority to external reviewers.

Rather than defending the managerial practices of the corporate university, we honors administrators can also try a different tactic: fellowship and trust. The western university began as a community of scholars in the Middle Ages, literally a *collegium*. We can return to that model. Nearly all presidents, provosts, and deans were once members of such a community, in graduate school and perhaps early in their professional careers. If teaching and research are the primary functions of the university, all administrators should occasionally engage in these activities. If they did so, not only would they understand students better, but they would also relate better to their faculty *colleagues*. While true democracy cannot exist in higher education, collegiality can and must.

As for faculty, we must occasionally leave our research silos and engage in the responsibilities of the college or university as a whole; this means not only departmental committees, on which all tenure-track faculty members must participate, but also search committees for deans, provosts, and presidents; faculty councils and senates; and student affairs committees. Members of the upper administration are entrusted with a stewardship, and it behooves faculty to get to know them and understand what their duties and pressures are. We faculty should also endeavor to explain the principles of academic freedom and collegiality to students, parents, and board members. If we continue to allow the university to mimic the for-profit corporation without open dissent, we should not be surprised when students, administrators, and others see us as simply low-paid workers with outdated views.

In conclusion, let us return to an earlier theme, the assumption that there is something in the university that is broken and in need of being fixed by assessment. If there is any truth in the alarms about “the university in crisis,” it is that soaring tuitions have increased scrutiny from outside the academy and that the “solution”—accountability and assessment—has been defined by outsiders (corporations and public school administrators) and is being imposed by outsiders (accreditation agencies and assessment officers). We in the honors community can embrace this “solution” and put it before our mission to provide creative and rigorous courses for our most gifted students, or we can do what we ask our students to do: challenge assumptions and be willing to subject all theory to discussion and debate. We propose that liberally educated students are not produced by standardized tests and rubrics, nor are they educated and mentored by professors who are themselves either

apathetic or acquiescent. We like to think that honors educators will be in the front ranks in defense of intellectual diversity and academic freedom.

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Ethnogenesis: The Construction and Dynamics of the Honors Classroom Culture

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UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

INTRODUCTION

In 2008 the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* published a series of essays which editor Ada Long described as a “rich and varied conversation about the culture of honors” (10). The contributors, mostly honors administrators, included Charlie Slavin, Dean of the University of Maine Honors College, whose lead article provided “one cornerstone . . . that is common to the culture of honors: taking intellectual risks” (15). George Mariz echoed Slavin in his claim that honors “is, above all, a culture of intellectual effort” (24). He posits that, “while [it] is catholic and inclusive, it is also discriminating and critical” (24). Jim Ford writes that another cornerstone of honors culture includes students with “a passion for knowledge and for wisdom” (28) while Paul Strong stresses the importance of shared identities, camaraderie, and a healthy dose of humor complementing the serious nature of the honors endeavor.

How this culture is actually created in the classroom was the starting point of research undertaken at the behest of our dean by a group of students and faculty in the honors college at the University of Maine. While the administrators of honors programs have a sense of what they think characterizes an honors culture, our questions were how faculty and students understand and implement this culture in a classroom; how honors models and pedagogies play out; and what factors exert more influence than others in achieving the honors culture to which we aspire. In a program such as ours, with faculty coming from a number of disciplinary homes and schools of thought, we wanted to know how the culture of honors is cultivated in practice. As Charlie Slavin is fond of saying, “some people get honors and some don’t.”

Our study is a preliminary one only, a point to keep in mind throughout the discussion. A much larger research project would be necessary to draw broad conclusions, but this study sheds some light on the nature of honors

culture from the perspective of faculty and students and, as such, is a worthwhile contribution to that “rich and varied conversation” described by Long. Our research focused on the first course that incoming students take in honors (HON 111) and included observations of only the first five weeks in two of the sixteen sections of the course offered in the fall 2009 semester. Using non-participant observation in the classrooms and surveys of students and faculty, we sought to understand how a random group of individuals brought together in a section of HON 111 emerges as a class with a shared identity and purpose.

Classroom culture is informed by several interest groups: in this case, the honors college itself in terms of course structure and curricula; the faculty; and the students. All three stakeholders bring an understanding and set of experiences that shape their notion of what it means to be a participant in education, albeit from different roles and perspectives. The college’s objectives are defined in its statement of purpose while those of the faculty are formally articulated orally and/or in their written course outlines. Occasionally students participate in this process; more typically, they are the passive recipients of an imposed structure and curriculum. Our research was aimed at discerning how these constituencies contributed to the creation of classroom culture within the context of the University of Maine Honors College.

The concept of ethnogenesis—“a way of looking at culture as a historical and complex process of cultural and group formation” (Skoggard)—was the organizing theoretical framework for the research as it describes the process whereby groups deliberately create or are defined by a common identity. Although etymologically rooted in identities forged from ethnic or national relationships, ethnogenesis is a term relevant to a study of honors culture, where stakeholders work to create a shared culture and identity in relation to the surrounding physical, intellectual, and interpersonal environments. Ethnogenesis was a pivotal concept in our research and analysis because it acknowledges the often fluid and temporal nature of the emergent culture.

BACKGROUND

All University of Maine Honors College students, regardless of their majors, are enrolled in the four-course sequence *Civilizations: Past, Present, and Future* during their first two years in the program. The course sequence is a modified “great books” curriculum, organized chronologically, in which the texts—primarily books but also selections of music, art, and architecture—explore the “development of civilizations, cultures, and intellectual achievements through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives” (Honors College General Information 1).

The courses use a seminar model, encouraging collaborative exploration of material even at the first-year level. Each section of twelve to fifteen students meets for two hours a week in addition to a ninety-minute general lecture on the week's reading. The courses are reading- and writing-intensive, generally covering one text a week, with multiple writing assignments. Specific assignments and their assessment are left to the discretion of the individual instructor, but the Civilizations sequence is a fixed curriculum; the instructors all teach the same texts although they are free to assign supplemental material.

A distinguishing feature of our honors program is the disciplinary diversity of faculty teaching in the Civilizations sequence. Those disciplines include or have included English, history, classics, political science, sociology, folklore, geography, religion, chemistry, music, modern language, economics, math, and law. Students are strongly encouraged to take the four courses in the sequence from different faculty members in order to experience a variety of disciplinary approaches and perspectives.

The first course in the Civilizations sequence begins with what we call an "Honors Read" text, typically a contemporary book dealing with salient social and cultural concerns. All incoming students read this text the summer before beginning at the university and thus enter the program with a common experience and shared point of reference that facilitate community building. The other HON 111 course materials date before the common era and generally include selections from the Torah, *The Odyssey*, Sappho, Plato, *Dao de Jing*, Aristotle, and *The Aeneid*, among others. The incoming students have not yet formed close associations with others in their cohort or created deeply rooted identities as members of the honors college, so they provide researchers an opportunity to observe the dynamics of creating and negotiating an honors culture that a later cohort could not.

A culture arises in any classroom setting regardless of the college or course, so our concern was to discover what makes an honors classroom culture discernibly different and to identify traditions or pedagogies that set honors apart. Slavin and others identified the emphasis of honors on "intellectual effort" and "passion for knowledge and wisdom." Honors at the University of Maine, like most honors colleges and programs, is also distinguished by its commitment to small classes, where the pedagogical model is a collaboration between faculty and students in the exploration of ideas and interpretation of texts. Students are active learners engaged in critical discussions, with faculty acting as facilitators rather than lecturers. The challenge is how to take a group of first-year students—new to university, new to the honors college, unfamiliar with our pedagogies and expectations—and transform them into a cohesive unit with a shared investment in our intellectual endeavor. Many

students must first figure out how to take the personal risks that will then enable them to take intellectual risks.

Other factors contributing to the formation of an honors culture and identity at the University of Maine include dedicated honors housing, social events geared toward building community, annual trips to Washington, D.C. and the NCHC conference. Most of these activities take place later in a student's career, however, and not all honors students live in honors housing; many live in other dorms, some are commuters, and others, particularly upper-class students, live off-campus. Honors classes consist of students from all disciplines, and it is not unusual to have engineering, English, biology, history, and French majors, to name a few, sitting side by side. Also, while the majority of our students come from Maine, we also enroll students from other states and abroad. While these other experiences play a role in supporting an honors culture, not all are shared equally or at all among the students. What they do share is enrollment in HON 111, so we focused our attention on this experience in an attempt to elucidate the factors significant to creating classroom culture.

METHODOLOGY

The research took a three-pronged approach: (1) a survey of faculty, (2) a survey of second-year students who had completed HON 111 the previous fall, and (3) in-class observations of two sections of HON 111 taught by different faculty members.

A one-page survey was distributed to 18 honors faculty currently teaching HON 111 or who had taught the course recently. Participation was voluntary, and the surveys were anonymous. We received 10 responses. Faculty were specifically asked to:

1. state their teaching philosophy;
2. articulate expectations of themselves and of students;
3. describe how their classroom vision is implemented; and
4. discuss how intentional they are in developing classroom norms.

A two-page survey was distributed to second-year students asking a series of questions about their educational background and honors experience in general followed by specific questions about HON 111. For the latter section, students were asked, among other questions, how classroom expectations were communicated, if they came to class prepared, whether the class was primarily discussion-based, who led discussion, how comfortable they were in participating, and if they were encouraged to participate. This survey was anonymous and voluntary, and 58 students, just over 25% of the class, participated.

Finally, two student researchers spent the first five weeks of the fall 2009 semester attending two different sections of HON 111 as non-participant observers to see first-hand how classroom culture was created and negotiated in these specific settings. A study observing more faculty for a longer duration would be ideal, but factors limited us to a more modest undertaking. However, the data sets indicate a remarkable correspondence between faculty aspirations for their classrooms, students' reports of their experiences, and the observations of classroom culture in the making. These results, while only preliminary, are promising.

THE FACULTY SURVEY

The results described below are based on responses from ten of the faculty members. In terms of their teaching philosophies, faculty respondents identified four basic components:

1. **Critical thinking:** Faculty reported encouraging careful, critical engagement with the material. Expanding perspectives, being open, and pondering the “big” questions were also important.
2. **Critical expression:** The emphasis was on developing students' skills in the oral and written expression of ideas and interpretations.
3. **Confidence:** Several noted an emphasis on empowering students by inspiring confidence in their intellectual abilities as being an important component in their teaching.
4. **Collaboration:** Faculty indicated a concerted effort to confront the inherently hierarchical relationship between faculty and students and to create partnerships by encouraging collaborative exploration and interpretation of the curriculum.

In describing their classroom vision and their expectations of themselves and their students, faculty members were consistent in the use of terms such as *engagement*, *preparation*, and *respect*. All participants (faculty and students alike) were expected to come to class prepared and willing to engage the texts and each others' ideas in a considerate manner. The majority of faculty respondents reported being purposeful in communicating classroom norms and expectations; they used words such as *explaining*, *outlining*, *modeling*, *respecting*, *inquiring*, *encouraging*, and *listening* when describing these expectations. Teachers communicated orally, in writing (through the syllabus and other handouts), and in online postings to class-designated folders throughout the term. Several faculty specifically noted the importance of forming a community in the classroom (one specifically said “an intellectual community”) and by extension a culture that fosters respectful, critical

engagement with the material and each other. Gary Bell especially emphasizes the importance of this last factor in his essay “The New Model Education,” where he lists as the fifth “premise of excellent pedagogy” that “we must always telegraph respect for our students as individuals regardless of how weak or strong they may be academically” (56).

THE STUDENT SURVEY

This survey was completed by second-year students who had taken HON 111 in the fall of 2008. Approximately one fourth (58 students) of this cohort participated in the survey; thus we must be cautious in the conclusions we draw from this data set. Had a far more representative sample responded, our results might look very different. One could claim the data reflect a bias toward conscientious students since these 58 made the effort to respond, with 49 of them reporting that they went to class prepared most or all of the time. But one could also argue, as Ford (2008) does, that honors students are by nature conscientious. Given the overall positive tenor of their comments, we may also conclude that our sample reflects students who are satisfied with their honors experience. Not surprisingly, then, 54 of the students thought both the assignments and their final grades were fair.

Caveats aside, the reports of what students perceived to be happening in the classroom corresponded to faculty’s stated objectives, even using the same language to describe the classroom culture. Students reported that all the faculty members communicated their expectations and that 75% did so both verbally and in handouts. Significantly, 53 students claim those expectations were *clearly* articulated, which speaks to the value placed on communication and understanding. Along these lines, 50 of the students participating in the survey said their classes were primarily discussion-based or a combination of discussion and lecture. Almost all the students reported feeling comfortable speaking in class at least some of the time, and 51 students reported feeling comfortable expressing their own opinion and feeling encouraged to do so by their instructor, their fellow students, the classroom environment, or various combinations of the three. A number of the students also described a classroom culture characterized by intellectual risk-taking—the kind that Slavin identifies in his article on honors culture.

When asked specifically to comment on what encouraged them to express their opinion in the classroom, students used language remarkably similar to that used by the faculty when articulating their goals. They identified the following factors as positively contributing to their participation in the class: a non-judgmental and inviting small-class environment that promoted open flow of ideas, respect, friendliness, comfort, and equal opportunity. The responses suggest the stakeholders were successful in creating

classroom cultures where students could gain confidence in their critical-thinking skills and abilities to articulate ideas in a supportive and collaborative environment.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

The third component of this project entailed observing two first-year classes engage in the process of developing cultural norms and practices in the classroom. We felt that watching the participants negotiate roles and expectations would add valuable insights to our understanding of the processes themselves while providing the kind of insights that self-reflective surveys would not. In this section, the two student researchers describe the dynamics and cultures of the classes they observed.

MORGAN'S CLASSROOM (BY MORGAN BROCKINGTON)

This class met Tuesday and Thursday mornings for fifty minutes and was taught by a female instructor. Although the instructor's teaching methods might have been altered by the presence of an observer, she seemed comfortable in her pattern of teaching, which appeared to be her natural way of conducting class. On Tuesdays, the instructor and students discussed the weekly text, picking out themes to investigate and analyze further. On Thursdays, students discussed points raised in the general lecture—what they liked, disliked, or found interesting—that had been posted to the open online class folder. These weekly discussions provided common ground for the students and opportunities for all to offer their viewpoints. The instructor worked to develop an open, intellectual community among the participants, which played a critical role in creating the classroom culture.

The classroom's comfortable feel, which the instructor established at the outset, was gradually reinforced by the students, who engaged each other in amiable conversation about their outside lives at the beginning of class. As students got to know one another, this banter not only supported the relaxed environment of the class but also fostered personal relationships, which grew over time as the students got to know each other better. On the first day of class, the instructor attempted to establish a comfort level by playing a get-to-know-you game. In this activity students answered questions: What about you is like all of us? What about you is like most of us? What about you is like some of us? What about you is unique to you? This activity got students, few of whom knew each other at the outset, to find similarities even among their differences, thus turning a group of individuals into a community with common experiences and interests. This game allowed for the participation of every student and inspired confidence by asking questions that all could

answer, alleviating first-day nerves. The instructor intentionally focused on building a sense of comfort and community from the first day of class.

During my five weeks of observation, the students began to take on certain roles that were still evolving when the observations ended. For example, one female and one male student led the discussions while a few others assumed roles of shy observers. One student took on the role of jokester, and another became an instigator of thought-provoking questions and arguments. As time progressed, students grew comfortable with the roles they had adopted. Similarly, the professor played her own role in the classroom as an unbiased judge, promoting a safe and trusting environment where students could openly express their opinions.

The physical environment of the classroom also influenced the development of a classroom culture. For the first couple of weeks, students always sat in the same seats, but after a few classes they began changing seats, perhaps indicating a growing sense of comfort in the classroom as the students and instructor got to know each other. The researcher sat in different areas of the room each class, and the instructor changed her seat almost every class as well. By contrast, only two students, the ones who typically led class discussions and happened to be from the same hometown, consistently sat in the same seats. These specific seats may have assisted in creating and upholding their established identities in the classroom.

The topic of the weekly text was a primary determinant of the classroom dynamic. When discussing Wolkstein and Kramer's *Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth*, mostly female students spoke and the males seemed nervous when they did speak. The sexual tone of the work created a discomfort in the classroom that was apparent when the female student who had taken on the role as the reader and, despite having always volunteered to read in the past, was hesitant to read aloud a passage with explicit sexual references; both sexes participated equally. Clearly, the subject matter of the texts informed the nature of and participation in class discussion, but engagement with the material was also a factor.

Within their established roles in a comfortable environment, students developed a sense of trust and social cohesion. Although students in the class were usually polite, caring and interested in the others, it was typically the instructor who recognized when students had not spoken much during discussion and either called on the quiet students or brought up a topic of particular interest to them. The instructor also created trust through her ability to relate to her students on a personal level, making herself vulnerable and trustworthy through personal anecdotes. She told a story about a horrible college experience of hers: she had chosen her college because of the English program and was completely shocked when she received a B- on her first paper.

When she asked the professor how she could improve, he told her, “We [teachers] joke about what you wrote about.” With this story, the instructor comforted the students by indicating that she had been through what they were experiencing, thus suggesting that she was sympathetic to their situation. After hearing this story, students were more comfortable asking about their work and seeking guidance outside the classroom. Students became more trusting of the instructor because they saw her more as a helpful ally than as a critical evaluator.

Over the five weeks of my observation, students became more willing to engage in intellectual discussion and appeared more comfortable doing so. With their different backgrounds and experiences, the students united in their common goal of discussing and finding meaning in the honors texts. Through their discussions and the accessibility of the instructor, a sense of community evolved that allowed students to identify themselves as intellectual individuals capable of questioning and examining the weekly material.

By forming personal relationships, the students were able to create a safe environment where they could take shared ownership in the exploration of philosophical, political, religious, and artistic ideas. This particular culture positively enabled all the honors students to form bonds with their peers, find trust in and guidance from their instructor, rise above their vulnerability, and expand their knowledge through the discussion and absorption of others’ opinions of the honors material.

KRISTEN’S CLASSROOM **(BY KRISTEN KUHNS)**

This class met once a week for two hours in the evening and was taught by a male professor. Having had this instructor twice before during the honors Civilizations sequence, I was familiar with his style of teaching despite noticeable differences in the way he ran this class. Consistent with my own experience, the students were explicitly charged with sharing responsibility for creating the classroom culture. What appeared different was the instructor’s intentional effort to further engage students in the discussion either through games, wherein students were challenged to get to know each other, or through group activities that encouraged students to learn to work together.

On the first day of class, students participated in teamwork activities that required them to communicate effectively in order to accomplish a designated goal so that this group of strangers in a very short time became a cultural community. These kinds of activities facilitated the processes of ethnogenesis, where groups purposefully participate in their own identity creation. Since no student appeared to have previously known any other in the classroom, the activities required them not only to learn each other’s names but

also to take responsibility as participants. I was particularly interested in seeing if the initial roles assumed by students in these early interactions would be maintained over the five weeks of observation, and they were. The roles students adopted and maintained contributed to a comfortable and cohesive environment in which they could interact, creating not only a classroom community but a sense of shared identity.

Part of establishing an identity within a class involves understanding what roles to play. Over time, students developed identities such as dominant male or female, the quiet one, the entitled one, and the jokester, to name a few. The quiet one seemed to speak only when she had something profound to say, which would leave the other students both surprised and stunned. The entitled one became an outcast because students tired of hearing frequent personal and off-topic contributions. Finally, the jokester acted almost as a buffer for handling difficult topics in a more socially comfortable way by using humor to defuse tension.

The instructor worked to create a trustworthy environment in which students could learn. Students were encouraged to bring snacks and talk with each other at the beginning of class about how they were doing. In order to facilitate in-class discussion, students needed to interact and trust each other enough to be open about how they felt. The instructor made sure students knew that they were allowed to express their beliefs and opinions, stating, “You don’t have to inherit my beliefs.” He also established trust by making it clear that students could modify and alter his assignments, thus giving students control of their academic environment and engendering trust in the instructor.

The nature of the discourse about texts also influenced the classroom culture. The texts challenged students to evaluate their beliefs and, as a result, to confront their sense of identity. For example, *Zimbardo’s The Lucifer Effect* caused social discomfort that students relieved through jokes that created a sense of social cohesion. Students were uncomfortable in a different way when talking about religion and saw the *Torah* as a text that “tells you what to do,” so the instructor led that discussion. Later, students found *The Pre-Socratics Reader* intellectually challenging, so the instructor divided the students into smaller groups, presumably a tactic that facilitated engagement with the text in a way the larger group did not.

As in all communities, the creation of culture is linked to the creation of identity. As the students discovered their own roles, they were better able to relate to the texts. When a topic arose that students felt unsure of, such as the *Torah*, the students turned to the professor for guidance. He in turn encouraged students to work together and open their minds to the thoughts of others through group work and open discussions. This push toward collaboration

and tolerance emphasized a culture of cooperation and inclusion despite challenges such as the tension created by the “entitled” student. The reality of all communities and cultures, with the different roles played by the participants, is that even the best practices of shared purpose and cooperation cannot always thwart marginalization; the “entitled” student’s role in this case morphed into “the outcast.”

CONCLUSION

This research set out to explore the creation of an honors classroom culture at the University of Maine from the perspective of the participants themselves and to see how the pedagogical model was realized in two honors classes. Although the sample size was small and the conclusions thus tentative, we hope to have added to the body of knowledge about honors culture. We knew going in that the culture would be shaped by the interactions of faculty, students, curriculum, and environment, but we did not know how these factors acted synergistically in real situations. Likewise, we had a sense of our faculty’s teaching philosophies, but we did not know how effective they were in communicating and bringing to fruition those aspirations in their classrooms. We also did not know how students perceived their HON 111 classroom experience academically, socially, and culturally or the language they used to describe it. In many ways, the student survey was the most valuable component of the exercise, because students strongly indicated that their teachers were successful in realizing their teaching objectives of critical thinking and writing and of fostering confidence in a collaborative academic environment.

The University of Maine Honors College is informed by commitment to academic and intellectual rigor “based on active learning and critical engagement” where students are encouraged “to ask good questions and to find [their] own answers” (“Frequently Asked Questions”). Such a collegiate culture, like honors cultures everywhere, is best achieved by open and trusting relationships of the students with each other and the instructor, discussions and analysis of multifaceted works where student input is valued, and comfort in expressing ideas and opinions with confidence within an intellectually rigorous setting.

NOTE

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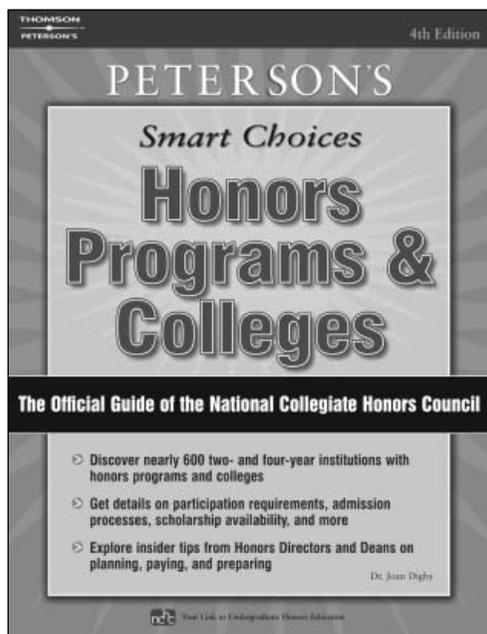
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NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL MONOGRAPHS & JOURNALS

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

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

Fundraising for Honor\$: A Handbook by Larry R. Andrews (2009, 160pp). Offers information and advice on raising money for honors, beginning with easy first steps and progressing to more sophisticated and ambitious fundraising activities.

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

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

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

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.

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

Inspiring Exemplary Teaching and Learning: Perspectives on Teaching Academically Talented College Students edited by Larry Clark and John Zubizarreta (2008, 216pp). This rich collection of essays offers valuable insights into innovative teaching and significant learning in the context of academically challenging classrooms and programs. The volume provides theoretical, descriptive, and practical resources, including models of effective instructional practices, examples of successful courses designed for enhanced learning, and a list of online links to teaching and learning centers and educational databases worldwide.

Partners in the Parks: Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks by Joan Digby with reflective essays on theory and practice by student and faculty participants and National Park Service personnel (2010, 272pp). This monograph explores an experiential-learning program that fosters immersion in and stewardship of the national parks. The topics include program designs, group dynamics, philosophical and political issues, photography, wilderness exploration, and assessment.

Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning edited by Bernice Braid and Ada Long (Second Edition, 2010, 128pp). Updated theory, information, and advice on experiential pedagogies developed within NCHC during the past 35 years, including Honors Semesters and City as Text™, along with suggested adaptations to multiple educational contexts.

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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