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# Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges, Third Edition

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# Monograph Series

## Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges

Third Edition

Samuel Schuman

# **HONORS PROGRAMS AT SMALLER COLLEGES**

by

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# FOREWORD

The Small College Honors Committee of the National Collegiate Honors Council will forever be in Sam Schuman's debt. His *Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges* is the small college equivalent of *The New England Primer*.

This is the third edition of a monograph first published twenty-three years ago. Dr. Schuman has taken great care to update the context of the monograph to reflect the reality of honors education in the twenty-first century. His core material and advice—eternally pertinent and wise—remains essentially intact.

I frequently receive queries from new directors facing the many administrative, curricular, and recruiting challenges of small college honors. How much release time should an honors director receive? Who should teach honors program courses? Can you point me to some paradigms of model small college programs? I usually begin my reply to these questions with some reference to my own experiences directing an honors program for over twenty-seven years. Inevitably, however, I always end up citing the wisdom found in this text.

My best advice to a new small college director? Read this book. Better yet, read it several times. You will be tested frequently on the material.

Donna M. Menis

Chair, Small College Honors Committee, NCHC

Director, Honors Program, Saint Francis University





## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The first edition of this monograph appeared in 1988, a year which, depending upon one's perspective, was either just yesterday or eons ago. At the end of the '80s, I could still suggest, with a straight face, that a fully equipped honors office space should have "a computer or a typewriter," a suggestion that today sounds more appropriate for a museum of antique office machinery than an up-to-date academic office. The handbook was revised in 1998, and that second edition has now had a lifetime of well over a decade. It, too, has come to need revision: the first decade of the new millennium has seen significant developments in honors education and in higher learning generally. Honors colleges were still relatively rare at the end of the twentieth century, but they have subsequently become ubiquitous. New curricular foci, such as sustainability studies, have developed, and old ones have evolved. For example, international education has shifted from an emphasis on Western Europe to such rapidly emerging nations as China, India, or Brazil. At the same time, some of the questions and issues that were originally engaged in *Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges* continue to have timely relevance today. Matters of access and elitism, which troubled honors folk in the 1980s, remain contemporary concerns. This revision, like most, preserves what continues to be useful, eliminates the antique, and adds discussions of issues that have moved to the forefront in recent years.

Some of those new issues include curricular developments such as those noted above. Others include shifts in pedagogy, including the increased emphasis on experiential-teaching styles such as service learning. The demographics of undergraduate student populations continue to shift, expanding rapidly in both ethnicity and age. The technologies of instruction have changed dramatically since the turn of the century. And, of course, the funding levels and perceived social standing of American higher education have not remained stable, often moving in directions that have been the cause more of lamentation than celebration.

As an additional feature, the handbook concludes with two appendices. Appendix A is a group of brief descriptions of small college honors programs that have generously allowed themselves to be pictured as samples. Although these descriptions are of real honors programs, the reader should be cautioned that honors programs evolve rapidly, and the institutional programs described will almost certainly shift their particular structures before the handbook is otherwise out of date. The programs described are meant to be helpful not as specific institutional

references, but as samples of various types of small college honors enterprises. The profiles include a wide range of institutional types and, more importantly, a wide range of honors offerings, from the most rudimentary to the most elaborate.

Appendix B is a statement by the national honors organization, the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), describing a cluster of features that tend to characterize “fully developed honors programs.”

That neither of these two appendices should be understood to be definitive or prescriptive is extremely important: they are meant to supplement the text by suggesting possibilities and models from which to pick and choose, to modify, to adopt, or to ignore depending upon institutional need, culture, and history. Just as each college or university is unique, every honors program, while it may share features with others, is finally one of a kind.

Given the low-key nature of this handbook, I have opted to eschew the formal mechanisms of scholarship: rather than footnotes, I simply note individuals and sources within the text.

The NCHC and its Small College Honors Committee and Publications Board have been steady advocates and supporters not just of this monograph but of the value of smaller collegiate institutions and their honors programs within the rich fabric of American higher education. The Small College Honors Committee is an active and helpful division of the NCHC, sponsoring sessions at national meetings, helping to build a network of honors directors, students, and faculty with shared interests and concerns, and providing publications such as this one. They deserve my thanks and the gratitude of all who read and find useful the following pages.

Finally, many friends and colleagues within the NCHC, past and present, have aided and guided the development of my thinking about honors education, and, thus, of this text. These include the late Elizabeth Isaacs, who first introduced me to honors in small colleges four decades ago; John Portz, Grey Austin, and Catherine Cater, who embodied for me the sprightly consciousness of honors administration at its most engaging; my colleagues Ann Raia, Hud Reynolds, Ted Estess, and Anne Ponder with whom I have now worked on too many projects and in too many settings to count. To begin to enumerate others who have helped would only lengthen the list of those neglected. To all, and to my patient and loving family, my thanks.

Samuel Schuman  
Asheville, North Carolina, 2011

# INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been created with the cooperation of the Small College Honors Committee of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) to meet specific needs and fill particular information gaps. Its intended audience includes:

- Newly appointed directors of honors programs (or chairs of honors committees, task forces, and councils) at smaller colleges and universities;
- Institutions and individuals contemplating significant alterations in honors;
- Schools in the process of creating new honors programs or considering doing so;
- Directors of honors programs seeking new ideas or solutions to persistent problems, or at least reassurance that those problems are not unique;
- Faculty, student, or administrative members of honors councils or committees;
- Students, faculty, and staff who participate in honors work;
- Academic administrators with responsibility for oversight of honors programs at smaller colleges.

What do I mean by “smaller colleges?” NCHC’s Small College Honors Committee has traditionally, and wisely, promulgated a loose, flexible, and somewhat informal definition of the term “small college.” The goal is to include any individuals or institutions that might be served by the committee and to exclude no one with a sensible reason to join. Generally, the committee has assumed that most institutions defining themselves as “small” have FTE undergraduate populations of fewer than 4001 or a program size below 76. Some larger institutions, however, that house rather small honors programs have found the meetings and discussions of the group helpful and appropriate. The range of institutions represented is enormous. It includes public and private colleges; institutions with a strong continuing religious heritage, those with only vestiges of sectarian foundations, and wholly secular schools; single-sex and coed colleges; places of high prestige and others of little national reputation; very selective colleges and programs as well as ones with open admission; two-year, four-year, and graduate-level institutions; and colleges and universities from all regions of the nation.

Given this striking diversity, are there any common features of honors programs at smaller colleges that justify and give unity to a handbook such as this? Obviously, I think there are.

We can begin with an important negative definition: honors programs at smaller colleges are most definitely NOT small versions of honor programs at large universities. Sometimes those surveying honors from the perspective of big schools mistakenly assume that such is the case. But, in fact, this assumption is almost never accurate. Indeed, as discussed below, as more and more research universities have adopted the model of honors *colleges*, as opposed to honors *programs*, I believe that the differences between honors at small and large institutions have grown larger. Indeed, many large university honors programs have as an important goal—indeed, sometimes virtually their primary goal—to recreate within the vast mega-university the conditions that prevail at most small colleges: smaller and more discussion-oriented classes, close student-teacher relationships, careful advising by regular faculty members, and informal social contact among students with strong academic interests and between those students and their teachers. Since most of these characteristics define small colleges in general (at least if admissions brochures are to be trusted), honors administrators do not particularly need to worry about creating them in their honors programs. In fact, some small college honors programs offer deliberately different models precisely on the premise that students are already thoroughly exposed to the particular intensities of the small-scale learning experience throughout the rest of the non-honors curriculum. In fact, finding in small college honors programs an emphasis on relatively advanced research, collaborative publication, post-undergraduate-level study in specialized fields, significant exploitation of the Internet and other computer-related instructional technologies, and similar options usually associated with large research universities and their graduate programs is not uncommon.

Honors programs at smaller institutions have unique opportunities, special strengths, and, of course, particular problems. I have tried to locate and address these areas in the following pages. The goal throughout is to suggest possibilities, not to offer narrow prescriptions, because no single model is appropriate for all small college honors programs. Indeed, one of the greatest strengths of such programs is that they are as diverse as the colleges that house them. Moreover, I believe, small colleges, by virtue of their size, are forced to make choices that make them more different from each other than is the case with major research universities. Thus, one guiding principle governing this handbook is that

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honors programs are in many ways institution-specific. They represent specific reactions to the strengths and needs of the colleges creating and perpetuating them. Such honors programs represent a powerful opportunity for schools to fill curricular and extracurricular gaps and/or exploit their particular strengths, to move in new and experimental directions, and to enrich themselves, their students and their faculty. Thus, each honors program is intimately woven into the entire fabric of the institution, often reflecting both the predominant ethos of that institution and offering simultaneously a kind of educational counterpoise within it.

For example, at institutions with rigidly prescriptive curricular requirements, honors programs often provide opportunities to move beyond those required patterns, to be more flexible within the bounds of overall institutional practices (e.g., to meet several distribution requirements in one interdisciplinary seminar). On the other hand, at schools with a wide-open instructional culture, honors sometimes becomes a home for a rather carefully ordered set of curricular requirements (e.g., a mandatory chronological survey of literature or history or both). At colleges with rich extracurricular programming, honors programs often avoid special emphasis on such matters, preferring to piggyback on already existing cultural resources. At schools without much cultural programming or where low attendance is worrisome, honors offices can, and often do, devote much attention to offering a rich panorama of cultural events for students. Honors programs at small colleges thus provide opportunities for balance and choice. This trait is especially valuable since one of the perennial deficiencies of small institutions, especially the non-urban ones, is a certain lack of choice, or variety, at least in comparison to the multiplicity of programs and events at very large institutions.

This monograph focuses upon areas of special concern to those working with honors at smaller colleges and universities: mission, recruitment, facilities, administration, budget, and curriculum. In each area, I make some general suggestions about overall operating principles, note specific issues that can lead to difficulties, and suggest proven solutions and strategies. Needless to say, this volume offers a set of selective suggestions, with no pretensions to encyclopedic comprehension.

Appendix A moves from the theoretical to the concrete. That portion of the handbook contains brief portraits of several different sorts of honors programs at several varied small institutions. These are offered not so much as models to be imitated (although most offer features that may invite imitation), but as demonstrations of the range of possibilities

SAMUEL SCHUMAN

open to honors at small colleges, the sets of choices some institutions have made, and the ways in which a few representative programs have evolved and reacted to the possibilities and problems of their institutional homes.

# THE MISSION OF SMALL COLLEGE HONORS PROGRAMS

A logical place to begin is with a consideration of the purposes of honors programs at smaller colleges. Especially in the current climate of higher education assessment, some clear mission statement needs to precede any effort to create, recreate, or evaluate any program. Indeed, without some clear sense of mission—what it is the honors program wants to DO—ascertaining whether it is a stunning success or an abject failure is impossible.

Honors programs at differing schools inevitably have different goals and objectives. They will be invented and will develop to meet specific institutional needs and, if successful, they will be responsive to the particularities of institutional mission and character. Still, there remain certain broad aspirations that most honors programs at smaller colleges share. A tripartite mission—enrichment for students, for faculty, and for the institution—is at the core of all successful honors programs at small colleges and universities.

First, and most obviously, honors programs cultivate outstanding students by enriching the instructional and co-curricular careers of students of exceptional promise and/or motivation. The section of this handbook that follows defines “honors student,” but regardless of definition, a prime purpose of virtually all honors programs is adding luster to the educational careers of the undergraduate students in them. I would argue that high motivation is often as, or even more, important than high intellect. While scores on the SAT and ACT can be valid predictors of success in college and may well be one useful criterion in recruiting students to the honors program, these scores are limited as prophets of honors program success. They do not tap the strength of students’ desire to join honors. And, they do not necessarily predict student performance in a particular class, perhaps especially in the type of classes characteristic of many honors programs: discussion-oriented courses that require hard work and intellectual risk-taking. Thus, getting a read on student motivation and curiosity through interviews and essays can usefully supplement numerical measures. Many honors directors have found that the strength of students’ desires to join honors can be a better predictor of success than numerical statistics. Indeed, some honors programs have abandoned SAT/ACT requirements. Small colleges brag, usually correctly, that they respond to students as individuals; honors programs at such schools must look carefully both at students’ innate intelligence and at the power of their yearning for honors work.

Second, and perhaps slightly less obviously, honors programs offer faculty members enriched instructional experiences. Honors programs, by definition, engage students who will be more challenging, and more rewarding by far, to teach and offer curricula of greater depth and denser texture than non-honors work. Honors courses give faculty members the chance to experiment with new syllabi and new pedagogies. Honors programs can offer convenient opportunities, which home departments cannot, to try new course topics. Moreover, usually, honors courses are substantially smaller than their non-honors counterparts. In these senses, honors programs provide rewards and development opportunities to faculty.

Third, and least obviously but for some most importantly, honors programs enrich the educational profile of the institution as a whole. In many ways, honors programs, especially at smaller institutions, deepen the academic life of everyone at the college, not just honors students and faculty. Thus, honors programs often bring, or help to bring, to campus co-curricular programs of cultural or intellectual note. Honors programs are often a curricular stalking horse, an opportunity to experiment with pedagogy and content. Honors programs improve the ability of the institution to attract and to retain students of top quality. Interestingly, although the recruitment function most often attracts institutional attention, in fact, almost all honors programs are even more effective at institutional retention than recruitment. They can help recruit faculty, too. Honors gives to small colleges important opportunities for positive image-building and public relations based on genuine academic accomplishments.



# RECRUITING HONORS STUDENTS AND FACULTY

If a good small college honors program is not exactly a professor at one end of a log and a student at the other, it is probably as close to that ideal of education as it is possible to find today. More than anything else, honors education brings together outstanding students and outstanding teachers. Accordingly, the issue of recruitment—finding and attracting those exemplary students and professors and convincing them to join the honors program—is one of quintessential importance.

## I.

The task of locating and attracting appropriate students for honors programs can consume as much time as anyone is prepared to give it. Since most small college honors directors do not have abundant time, any more than they have excess money, efforts to recruit students must be carefully conceived with an eye to maximum effectiveness and limited expenditures of effort and hours.

But who are those appropriate students for honors programs? Traditionally, this answer has been students who perform well on quantifiable admissions markers, such as standardized tests and high school rank. For several decades, too, some honors programs have sought the student with high creative abilities: the young composer or poet or sculptor or actor of exceptional promise.

More recently, honors programs have become increasingly conscious of the values of cultivating a more demographically diverse student population. Non-traditional students, such as returning female students, now constitute a significant segment in honors programs. As liberal learning in general and honors in particular have grown more and more weighted towards female students, some honors programs are beginning to think of traditional college-age males as an underserved population. (Statistics vary, but generally seem to show that about 60% of liberal arts undergraduates are women.)

Honors programs at traditionally majority colleges and universities have not, overall, done particularly well at recruiting students of color into honors. Most now recognize the need to do better in this area. It is ironic and disappointing that one can still occasionally hear mutterings about the difficulties of finding minority students of honors quality when several of the most successful, dynamic, proportionally large, and thriving honors programs exist in historically black colleges and

universities. Clearly, many African-American and other minority students are doing honors-level collegiate work, but they are not dispersed evenly among American post-secondary institutions. This situation underscores the need for flexibility in admission criteria for honors programs: for students from weak rural or inner-city high schools, class rank is probably a much better predictor of honors success than numerical scores on nationwide tests for which they have not, perhaps, been well prepared. Not surprisingly, some honors programs are taking a careful second look at factors such as community service and athletic leadership when defining the students they seek to recruit.

## II.

Often honors programs have a direct link to admissions or enrollment management offices, and they should. Directors should cherish and cultivate this connection but with a trace of wariness. When it comes to student recruitment, admissions officers and honors leaders are in a similar business, but it is not exactly the same business. Some admissions programs eagerly bring to campus more above-average students than honors programs really seek to admit, or they define above-average slightly differently, perhaps in the style of Garrison Keillor. Admissions folk are paid to think about quantity; honors folk are rightly obsessive about quality. Although the perspectives differ, it is essential that the honors program work in a coordinated fashion with the college admissions office to attract a pool of highly qualified applicants. Honors directors should be clear in their requests of admissions offices. Probably the most important question involves discovering if a single admissions counselor is charged with honors recruiting or if all counselors are responsible for meeting certain targets. Honors directors should also be very clear with admissions concerning specific goals they might have for number of applicants, an ideal entering class sizes, and the demographic make-up of that class.

The degree of the cooperation between admissions and honors can range from casual to intimate, but the tone should always be as cordial as possible. Most admissions officers are delighted to discover and exploit the cooperation of the honors program in the student recruitment effort. They will usually eagerly accept any honors materials and offers of such aid as speaking with prospective students and families visiting campus, joining the activities of special recruitment days, and writing and sometimes producing recruitment brochures or portions of admissions materials. Honors students make splendid hosts and tour

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guides for prospective students. Indeed, they often serve as excellent young admissions recruiters after they graduate. With their small classes and eager students, honors programs can be an attractive feature in the campus admissions DVD or on the website for prospective students.

In some cases the honors director is asked to travel and to do direct recruiting of prospective high-quality students. This task is more common at larger universities with honors colleges but not uncommon at smaller institutions as well. While probably not an especially productive use of time because one can spend considerable time travelling to such events and meet only a few genuine prospective honors students, this activity can be informative and important and can bring some additional honors students to campus. Having the honors staff know first-hand a bit about the life of the admissions recruitment staff is useful. Certainly, honors directors, faculty, and students should be prepared to offer their informed aid to occasional recruiting expeditions such as college nights or area alumni recruiting programs.

More commonly, the honors program will interact with prospective students when they visit the campus rather than going out to meet them. On such occasions, either informal or structured, individual or group, directors must be well prepared. They should be somewhat familiar with these students and their academic interests. Being able to offer short, clear answers to questions is essential, and having a few good queries to pose will also help. More than anything else, being well prepared to speak clearly and persuasively about *why* students should join the honors program is essential. I usually stress getting the most from the college years, in terms of time and money and learning, as well as enhancing post-graduate educational and vocational opportunities. Being armed with both statistical and anecdotal information about what graduates of the honors program have actually done for the past few years is prudent. Prospects like to know how many recent graduates have applied to and been accepted by a medical or law school. Frequently strong high school students wish to visit a class or meet with a teacher during the campus visit, and the honors program can offer to make such arrangements.

At a number of institutions, most honors-quality prospective students will be seen only by a traveling admissions recruiter. Therefore, it is very important for the honors program to provide these individuals with full information, including printed materials, and with some personal briefing about the program. The wise honors director meets with the recruitment staff annually to introduce/remind them about the program, answer questions, and make sure honors and admissions are on the

same page. Given the rapid turnover of admissions recruiters, as well as the multiple pressures that attend their work, making this event a yearly occurrence is important. Some programs have found it useful to have the admissions counselor most closely associated with honors recruitment sit on the honors council, so that this staff member can become even more conversant in the particular culture of the program and honors council members can receive regular updates from admissions about its recruiting efforts.

Some honors programs have something like an honors interview day when prospective honors students visit campus as a group and meet with program personnel, current honors students, and selected faculty members. Sometimes this event is linked to competition for scholarships, or even entrance into the program itself. Obviously, such an event must be well planned and attractive. Highly qualified high school students are the objects of a frighteningly competitive recruitment process, and a too casual or shoddy honors interview can quickly turn off a strong prospect. Many of the students who visit small colleges will also be looking at large universities, where they can be wooed with substantial resources, but sometimes with correspondingly little personal attention. Directors should promote the genuine strengths of small colleges on these occasions by arranging for the students to attend a lively seminar or to meet an especially impressive teacher. Directors should also provide reliable and attractive information about the honors program: an accurate brochure (see below) and a coherent, low-key talk. Because prospective college students have, rightly, become wary consumers, directors should beware of a hard-sell and overly gaudy or flamboyant commercial approaches. Since no honors program wants to recruit students who misunderstand the nature of the honors experience, demonstrating in clear and compelling ways the character and distinctiveness of the particular honors program is obviously the best option.

Among the most effective recruiters for any honors program are students already enrolled in honors. This dynamic is especially true in an age of electronic social media, through which current honors students can readily contact and converse with potential colleagues. Many programs now maintain a Facebook page and put prospective and current students together through Twitter or Flickr.

Most honors programs have a brochure of some sort, used primarily as a recruitment piece. These need not be spectacular although some publications from competing institutions may be, but they should certainly not be pedestrian or dull either. An attractively designed piece will spell out clearly what the honors program at the college truly is (many

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students will not actually know), who participates in it, what concrete rewards adhere to it (scholarships? graduation recognition? jobs? priority registration? annotated diploma?). Making the point in a brochure that not all honors students are budding Shakespeares or Einsteins is perhaps wise. Sometimes high school students shun honors programs because they suspect, wrongly, that they will be outclassed by other participants. In a similar manner an honors brochure can note what the honors program is *not*: it is not simply an honors society for students with high grades, for example. “Honors” means quite different things at the high school and college levels, and some quite sophisticated students may have serious misperceptions of what the honors program is offering them.

Admissions offices report that, while having a brochure such as that described above remains necessary, most prospective students will not do more than glance at it. Prospective honors students are likely to be besieged with viewbooks and brochures. The students will, instead, look up the program and the college on the web. Therefore, designing a good website, with clear links to all the information suggested above is equally or more important. Honors should be easily found on the college’s main home page. Too often “honors” is listed under an academics link; the fewer links a reader has to navigate to locate honors, the better. Honors directors should work with IT staff to make sure that a general search for “honors” on the college’s website turns up a link to the honors program homepage rather than listings for graduation honors or stories about honored alumni.

Two honors professionals, Jean Loden and Debra Shroeder, have worked with small college honors programs and with IT professionals to clarify what a valuable honors website entails. They concluded that these categories are most important:

- A. Functionality (download times, user friendliness, link integrity);
- B. Design (readable font, visual appeal, effective space usage, reasonable amount of information);
- C. Content (clarity of mission, admissions procedure, graduation criteria, curriculum, student presence, appeal, usefulness of content to students);
- D. Professionalism (high-quality writing, consistent tone, proper grammar, regular updating);
- E. Overall quality (appeal, effectiveness to a variety of audiences).

Meeting with students and parents and offering good written and electronic materials are important recruitment devices. Many small college honors programs, though, rely upon correspondence as the primary means of reaching and attracting students. Usually, initial contact with prospective students is by letter. Directors should remember that most students choose small schools because they need or desire personal attention. Such students will not react favorably to what is obviously a form letter. A shrewd strategy is to include a genuine, personal, individualized message if humanly possible (e.g., "We were impressed to see that you recently were the violin soloist with the State Youth Orchestra."). Often, too, most follow-up communication is by mail or e-mail. Obviously, writing letters that are both clear and inviting is important. Developing a straightforward and effective schedule and protocol for sending these letters is perhaps less obvious but possibly even more important. Here, admissions offices can be particularly helpful in determining which students receive what communication and when; such strategies are their bread and butter. Once directors establish this protocol, they should document it thoroughly and carefully. Directors should monitor this correspondence, however, with an eye towards two potential problems. First, there may be a need to adjust the initial schedule of mailings or to change the content of some letters (e.g., if a group of names derives from a state high school science contest, the date of which changes). Second, if some other office, such as admissions or a correspondence center, is entrusted with the task of physically preparing and sending the message, it is necessary to make sure that this task is being done in a timely manner year after year. Just assuming it is would not be wise.

### III

Many honors programs recruit students beyond the entering semester; a few, in fact, do not begin at all in the first term of the first year. A recruiting program for students already in the midst of their college careers—continuing students and transfers—probably involves two different components: some fairly mechanical scan of student records to spot high achievers who are not yet members of the program, and a solicitation of nominations from faculty members and possibly other staff and even perhaps self-nomination by the prospective students. Sometimes such nominations are an excellent means of securing for the honors program students who do not exactly conform to the standard quantitative measures of high academic potential, but who may become

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valued honors students because of high creativity or exceptional curiosity. Obviously, actual performance should trump potential every time. This is particularly true of transfer students, who have had the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities by completing real college work. Students moving to baccalaureate institutions from two-year schools can be a particularly valuable source of upper-division honors participants. When directors have some familiarity with the institutions from which such students come, examining their performance there makes far more sense than dwelling on quantitative tests that seek to discover their aptitude.

Once such a listing of possible honors students is generated, directors should issue invitations. Usually an interview of some sort is arranged by the director or the faculty honors committee. Since these internal or transfer students may miss early opportunities for honors work, many schools have policies for prorating curricular requirements. For example, some colleges that have a first-year honors seminar allow late admits and transfer students to bypass that course. Other institutions simply reduce the credit hour requirement for graduation with honors.

Recruiting honors students can be a somewhat tricky business. Occasionally honors directors report that they themselves, and faculty members who work in their programs, are not wholly pleased by the character of their student population. One common complaint is that honors students are not as responsive in class as desired, that they tend not to be intellectual risk-takers or especially zealous discussion participants. Many—perhaps most—honors programs choose students on the basis of standardized measures such as good high school class rank and scores on the ACT or SAT tests; of course, these instruments tend to measure relatively passive learning and well-mannered classroom behaviors. High school rank, in particular, is an excellent predictor of college success, but it is *not* a good way to discover creative original intellects and assertive learners. Therefore, the honors recruiter should be alert for the occasional oddball, the nonconformist, or the student with a record of academic trouble-making in high school. Students with 1500 cumulative SAT scores in the Mathematics and Critical Reading sections and straight “D” grades in their senior year in high school can make interesting honors students indeed. Such students are probably much better served by small schools, which can enhance their strengths and help them overcome their weaknesses, than large universities where they will more likely, as in high school, be left to sink or swim. (Of course, many honors programs at larger universities do a splendid job of meeting the special needs of such students, too.)

A number of perks typically heighten the appeal of honors programs and aid in attracting the desired students. Honors scholarships remain one of the most obvious and successful. Some institutions have committed large sums of money to merit awards and allocated all or some of those funds to the honors program. Others have used such awards symbolically, hoping that students will be attracted as much by the glory of an honors scholarship as by big bucks. As family and higher education budgets tighten, the latter approach will probably fade in effectiveness. Some small college honors programs have taken a different tack; they have consciously turned over scholarship decisions to the admissions and financial aid offices because they found that some students were attracted to the money offered by the program rather than to the distinctiveness of the honors learning experience, as discussed below in the section on budgets.

Other, non-fiscal enticements can also be alluring. At some schools, honors students receive special priority treatment in the registration process. (See the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program” in Appendix B.) The rationale commonly offered for such a perk is that honors students, like athletes and nursing students, have special scheduling needs. This benefit often works best when honors students earn that special treatment by volunteering to work at regular registrations. Sometimes certain graduation requirements, which might seem tedious to advanced students, are waived or altered. Most schools recognize honors graduates at commencement through annotations in the graduation program, special garb, or a special honors graduation ceremony. Honors residential options, which are discussed later, are in some cases a desirable feature. Many students and parents are attracted by impressive data regarding the success, in graduate and professional school and in careers, of graduates of the honors program. As noted above, directors would be wise to collect and publicize such information on the website. The strongest attraction of a collegiate honors program, however, remains its most essential one: the value of an unusually rewarding learning experience, with a challenging curriculum, bright and amiable student colleagues, and outstanding professors.

#### IV.

Often, administrators perceive retention and admission in honors programs (and more widely throughout institutions) as deeply connected: there seems little point in attracting students if the institution cannot keep them. Honors programs have often proven an even more effective means of institutional retention than recruitment although



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that result has rarely been anticipated beforehand. Many colleges have launched honors programs in an effort to attract more bright students, only to discover that honors actually is even more helpful in retaining those students than recruiting them in the first place. Honors programs offer opportunities, such as independent research or opportunities to present at scholarly meetings, that can keep very good students motivated to stay through their junior and senior years. Programs will find their retention rates further enhanced if they talk honestly and openly during the recruiting process about what students can expect—both the benefits and the challenges—from an honors experience.

Curiously, several honors programs have reported that while the programs themselves do not have particularly stellar retention records (that is, students who begin the honors programs tend to drop out of honors at about the same rate that students in general drop out of the college), the students who begin in the honors program have a very high retention rate in the institution as a whole. In other words, even if they leave the honors program, they stay on at the college in very high percentages (often over 90% graduating within five years). This finding is sufficiently common, albeit odd, that it is probably worthwhile for directors to ask their Institutional Research office or officer if such information can be retrieved fairly easily.

If the honors program proves, as most do, a powerful device for institutional retention, especially the retention of the college's most desirable students, this fact is not one that the politic honors director will keep well hidden.

### V.

Once students have been wooed and won by the promise of those brilliant classes, honors directors must recruit the outstanding professors to teach them. Many of the same issues that surface in the area of student recruitment are also relevant in the search for fine honors faculty.

For example, just as with students, the most obvious faculty members do not always make the best honors instructors. It pays to be as exact as possible in envisioning the qualities being sought in honors teaching. Thus, the top-performing lecturer on campus might not do so well with seven aggressive discussants in an honors seminar. That lecturer might be better utilized giving a guest lecture or talk in an honors lecture series. Sometimes, the most articulate speakers are not the best listeners. Conversely, occasionally professors without especially high overall

campus reputations can be exceptional honors instructors. Often, honors students can overlook or even embrace trivial stylistic quirks, and they usually have a higher tolerance for rigor than their non-honors counterparts. They have been known to delight in professorial idiosyncrasies that other students find irritating or distracting, for example.

In any event, authorizing the honors program to pick the instructors it seeks to enlist is always better than having it be the passive recipients of independent departmental staffing largesse. It is not unheard-of that departments of dubious ethics wait to dump some of their weaker, less popular teachers into honors assignments when their regular classes fail to attract a sufficient number of students. Needless to say, such impulses must be nipped way before budding. Establishing open, positive relations with departments and department chairs should prevent such abuse.

Indeed, perhaps no relationship is more crucial to the small college honors director than that with department chairs. A good strategic move for a new honors director is to make a point of meeting individually with each chair within the college as soon after appointment as possible. For established honors administrators, tracking departmental leadership remains equally important, and meeting with newly appointed chairs quickly is advisable. Working too hard to cultivate this relationship is probably impossible.

One particularly effective way to recruit good teachers into teaching honors is to encourage students to invite them to teach a course. Professors rarely turn down pleas from good students to offer some course that they want to take with them. Even the most curmudgeonly faculty member might melt when confronted with imploring students.

Again, as is the case with students, some small college honors programs offer certain rewards as an incentive for faculty members. These might include financial rewards to be used for professional development or to enrich the course with field trips or a guest speaker. They might be improved instructional conditions: easier access to DVDs and guest speakers or perhaps an attractive seminar room in which to hold class.

Cultivating a campus atmosphere in which instruction in the honors program is perceived as an honor for the faculty is wise. Work in honors gives faculty members an attractive opportunity to interact on serious academic matters with colleagues and with students from across campus. Honors directors should notify faculty personnel committees, tenure review boards, and deans of the selection of honors faculty and remind them of the valuable and good work that they are doing for the program. Departmental and institutional review groups need to recognize and validate the value and importance of honors instruction. Public relations

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offices may consider these selections newsworthy. A “thank you” dinner at the end of the year provides a venue to heap gratitude and praise on teachers. On the other hand, avoiding the appearance of developing some sort of elite, closed cadre of honors instruction is important. Directors should urge new instructors to consider joining the program. Rotation rather than permanence should be the staffing rule.

Orienting new honors instructors is important. Honors pedagogy and curricula are different from that normally encountered in departmental work. So, too, are student expectations and culture. It is best if new honors teachers do not have to discover these significant differences by hit or miss. A one-on-one meeting between the new instructor and the honors director at least a few weeks before the class begins is a worthwhile investment of time for both. Touching base informally once or twice during the term to make sure things are going well is also a good idea.

That honors instructors be evaluated as honors instructors is also important. Some schools use regular institutional class evaluation formats for this purpose, perhaps adding an optional question or two about honors. Others devise their own evaluation forms for honors. Some do both. In either case, directors should prepare instructors for the fact that honors students often grade professors on a slightly more rigorous standard than do their non-honors peers.

Difficult economic times can make departments reluctant to allocate faculty to the honors program. Some honors directors have responded by increasing the use of adjunct faculty or local experts, such as retired foreign-service officers, who have valuable experience but no or few academic credentials. While this tactic might be useful if used in a limited way, it will inevitably raise questions about the scholarly legitimacy of honors instruction among some traditional professors.

Finally, the paramount attraction for honors faculty is the same as for the students: the enriched educational opportunities afforded by honors. Most professors eagerly embrace bright students; small classes; undergraduate research collaborators; the opportunity to devise interesting, innovative, and challenging syllabi; and the opportunity to experiment with new and imaginative pedagogical practices. The honors program should be where this kind of action is to be found and, consequently, attracting teachers to it should not be difficult.



# FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

At a growing number of midsized and large universities, honors programs are physically as well as titularly colleges. They may have their own suite of offices; classrooms; and residential, study, or even recreational areas designated wholly for their use. Small colleges are still much more likely to make do with a file cabinet and a closet somewhere near the faculty office of the part-time honors director despite such Spartan accommodations being less than wholly desirable. To that end, directors should always have at the ready a case statement that argues for honors-specific space in case a donor or administrator comes knocking. Where space is available, however, honors programs can make it attractive in several ways.

## I.

Having some sort of honors office certainly helps and, indeed, is necessary if the honors director has clerical assistance, even part-time professional or student secretarial aid. Even the most electronically sophisticated honors programs generate records, need to store and duplicate syllabi, and construct lists of prospective students. Tasks accumulate; telephone calls come in; meetings need to be held. All these functions can, and often do, happen without a specific designated place, but an official honors office makes them easier, more efficient, and more comfortable to handle. If possible, equipping such an office for advising, counseling, and interviewing will be of measurable assistance. The machinery that makes an office work needs to be housed somewhere: a computer and printer, file cabinet, copy machine, and office supplies. Honors having a room of its own is best; sharing a space and sometimes clerical staff with some related program is acceptable; having to beg these things from already fiscally besieged academic departments is the worst scenario. If humanly possible, administrators should avoid making the Physics or English Department Office into the honors office because the honors director happens to be in physics or English. Burdening some other academic area with honors is not a good idea, nor is it good for the program to be perceived across campus as allied to a particular academic discipline.

Having some sort of gathering place or lounge adjacent to an office space provides a real boost for an honors program. This area can be a fine place for small, informal discussions; meeting with a prospective student and parents; or talking to the officers of an honors student organization. A bulletin board or flat screen monitor in such a lounge can

be helpful in announcing special events, program deadlines, and course offerings for the coming term. A bookshelf holding honors theses can be an impressive addition to such a lounge, and a small collection of major reference books can be helpful. Depending upon available space and program requirements, sometimes an honors office, suite, or lounge contains a coffee machine or modest kitchen facilities. It may include a quiet nook where students can study (or, if occasionally over-come, sleep!).

Programs that enroll a significant number of non-traditional and/or non-residential students, and an increasing number do, will find an honors lounge especially important in giving these people a campus home. Commuter students need a place on campus they feel is their own to study, to grab a sandwich between classes, or just to hang out.

An additional potential bonus of honors space is that it provides some opportunities for honors students to have campus work/study-type jobs that are connected to their participation in the program.

A number of honors programs have their own seminar room, or at least one on which they have first claim. This can be a surprisingly important perk, to students and to faculty alike, especially if prime classroom space is rare on campus. It is sometimes surprising how a good seminar room can create the atmosphere for a good seminar. Often, when honors students become accustomed to having honors classes in particular spaces, their expectations for their own classroom behavior and for the class as a whole become linked to that space: they come in the door prepared for a probing discussion and for serious academic work.

More than one honors program has found itself comfortably and appropriately housed in the library. If the library can provide office and seminar room space, there is probably no better spot on campus for honors: it avoids particular departmental or administrative affiliation and offers a splendid symbolic resonance by housing honors in the campus repository of scholarly materials. Another popular option is a small house adjacent to campus. An honors house can be an attractive possibility, and sometimes a naming donor can be found to retrofit it for honors purposes. A location in an off-campus house has two potential drawbacks. First, it can make honors seem removed from the core of campus operations. Second, old houses need maintenance and upkeep, which can either be expensive or postponed, thus resulting in somewhat shabby surroundings.

While most small college honors programs are unlikely to enjoy the luxury of a large, well-developed space, having a recognizable campus locale for the program is important. A physical location gives an

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academic program credibility with students and faculty alike. In addition, it serves as the focal point during the recruiting process and helps prospects and their families visualize honors in a material way. Having dedicated space on campus signals the administration's support of honors, which is a message any director would like to convey to potential students.

### II.

Honors residence halls arouse strong feelings, both pro and con. (My personal leaning is the latter.) Supporters of honors residences argue that the opportunity of living and learning in an integrated environment with a group of compatible, serious students is a valuable experience. On many campuses the atmosphere in some residences does little to stimulate and facilitate intellectual work. When honors students live together, they develop an identity and a self-image as honors students, which aids retention and can give a program momentum and esprit, qualities that are valuable and can be hard to build. When honors students live together, they are much easier to gather for meetings or special events, and transportation and communication are greatly facilitated.

The contrary argument holds that, especially at small colleges, honors residences segregate honors students excessively from the campus at large. Such residences remove from the general pool of residence life quieting, mature, and scholarly influences, and they may taint the honors program with an unwanted aura of elitism.

What to do about non-traditional and commuting students can be a problem if most undergraduate honors students share campus housing. At the very least, an honors residence should provide some common space for recreation, studying, or meeting that is comfortably welcoming to honors students who do not live there.

Some institutions merge the best of both worlds by creating honors floors in regular dorms, designating honors suites, or assigning or giving the option of picking honors roommates for incoming honors students.

The issue of honors residence halls is one to be approached carefully, with the advantages and disadvantages weighed with a sharp eye towards the particularities of each specific institutional setting. An honors dorm may be just the thing at one school and a catastrophic mistake at another. Honors residences are perhaps the clearest illustration of the importance of the principle of designing an honors program customized to the specific needs and culture of a particular institution.

### III.

Making whatever facilities an honors program can create for itself useful to the campus as a whole demonstrates good academic citizenship, good stewardship, and good public relations. If the honors program has a lounge where students can study, directors should consider letting honors students staff it on a 24-hours-a-day basis as an open study lounge during the final exam period. The honors seminar room can be used for special open round-table discussions with visiting artists or dignitaries. The honors program could invite the Art Department to use the honors area as a venue for displaying the work of outstanding students or offer the lounge to the writing program or literary magazine for poetry readings.

Any way to share the physical facilities designated for the honors program in a manner that will make others on campus appreciate the contributions of honors to collegiate well-being is worth trying. Of course, the space for honors and honors students should not be seriously compromised, but short of that, any maneuver to create an open door policy is wise. Campus colleagues should perceive the honors program as an eager collaborator in community enrichment, not the protected domain of a select few: sharing facilities can reinforce this stance.

### IV.

Most honors programs are primarily curricular, instructional ventures. They center on students and teachers working in classrooms or laboratories or doing independent, credit-bearing work. Few programs, however, are without some co-curricular or extracurricular activities as well, and none should be.

Co-curricular activities are those directly linked to instructional work: for example, an optional trip to see a play or movie related to an honors class syllabus. Extracurricular events are ones, like pizza parties or 5-K races, without an obvious instructional link.

An honors student club or organization is an important venue for proposing and planning activities and for providing effective and coherent student participation in program development and structure overall. An honors student organization can help to propose new honors courses, suggest and even recruit new faculty, or offer insightful commentary on current offerings. It can also plan or help to plan and execute those trips to movies, plays, concerts, and lectures as well as social gatherings that add texture to the honors experience. Since many honors students are imaginative, hard-working, and conscientious young



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adults, the honors student organization is often an effective group. Like all student organizations, honors student groups will have periodic vacillations: some years will be particularly good, others will be disappointing. Honors directors should make sure that their student groups continue with some vigor and continuity over the long haul. Sometimes, but certainly not always, this effort involves pretty direct intervention and support. The honors student organization should have an official governance structure that is clearly articulated in a charter or constitution. Not surprisingly, honors students can sometimes become a bit compulsive about devising and revising constitutions and bylaws, to the exclusion of actually *doing* anything. The organization should be deliberately inclusive of honors students throughout the range of the program, from neophytes to those completing their requirements and degrees.

Funding for out-of-class honors student activities can sometimes be problematic: hence the car washes to send students to national or regional honors conferences or the bake sales to finance a trip to an undergraduate research symposium. Some activities are remarkably cheap, though, and remarkably productive. For example, scheduling a discussion seminar with honors students when a speaker or artist visits campus is often possible. Such sessions can be a great opportunity for the students to meet significant individuals in the worlds of academe, art, or politics in an informal and interactive setting.

Social events, travel, and special honors opportunities bond students to each other, to the honors program, and to the college as a whole. Research has demonstrated convincingly that such informal connections are powerful mechanisms for student retention. Honors student organizations and activities enliven and deepen the program. While the core of honors work should remain in the curricular domain of collegiate life, honors programs can also play a role in enriching the students' entire undergraduate experience.



## ADMINISTRIVIA

Honors programs at small colleges often (but not always) tend to be administered on a shoestring. By contrast, many major university honors programs and honors colleges have full-time directors or deans, full-time associate directors, full-time secretaries, and a few graduate and student assistants for good measure. The more common pattern in small institutions is part-time reassigned time for one faculty member, possibly with some shared secretarial assistance. Some small college honors programs (although a diminishing number, I believe) are overseen by an honors committee of the faculty, in which case the faculty chair of that committee often becomes the *de facto* honors director. In some small institutions, an administrator with other responsibilities, perhaps as an instructional dean or associate dean, heads the program. Rarely will small college honors programs be directed by a full-time academic administrator, one with no or few additional major assignments in the classroom or the administration.

Dr. Rew Godow, a former honors administrator, has described the characteristics of an archetypical honors director. It is a dauntingly impressive model: an honors director should be a person of unambiguous academic integrity, whose teaching and scholarship within her or his own field merits the respect of faculty colleagues. Frequently, honors directors are the most faculty-like member of the administration, and consequently the most trusted and valued by the faculty. Directors need to be skilled diplomats and sensitive counselors. They should exhibit lively curiosity and understand the discourse among academic disciplines. This model is most certainly Olympian, but it does offer an ideal to keep in mind while slogging through the forest of daily administrative busy-work.

Many aspects of the nuts-and-bolts managing of small honors programs have already come up in this discussion, and some will follow this chapter. Here are a few points that seem specifically administrative in nature.

### I.

While it is usually unrealistic, and probably also undesirable, for small colleges to have an entire administrative position devoted to directing the honors program, it is equally unrealistic and even more undesirable to oversee such a program as an add-on to a full-time teaching load. Unless the honors program is of the most rudimentary sort, with no aspirations to become something more, directing honors will call for a

serious commitment of time and energy—more, probably, than either a prospective director or the appointing administrator assumes. This is even truer if expert, full-time clerical support is not going to be available. Students need to be counseled; faculty members need to be consulted and recruited, oriented and evaluated; department chairs have to be seen, often repeatedly; budgets prepared; oral exam committees formed and convened; rooms scheduled; guest lecturers arranged and cared for; and movies ordered. These small but vital tasks, which make any academic program work well, require reasonable time to be done carefully, thoughtfully, and with focus. Institutions beginning new honors programs and new honors directors should weigh carefully the institutional commitment to honors, and if it is sufficiently serious to launch a program, that level of seriousness requires creating some time for the individual directing the program to organize and administer it thoroughly and well. Usually this arrangement will involve at least a one course reassigned time reduction in teaching load per term. For a fully developed program serving, say, 50–100 students, a half-time assignment to honors management is realistic. Individuals considering accepting the assignment to be a small college honors director should recognize that this task will be time consuming and should negotiate a realistic accord with their colleges. The time for negotiating is prior to beginning one's term of service, not after it is well launched. Obviously standards and possibilities will vary from school to school and individual to individual, but without doubt a major problem for more than a few small college honors programs is seriously underestimating the amount of time required to manage such a program thoughtfully.

At most small colleges, the clearest route to institutional respect is through teaching. Most small college honors directors teach, often in the honors program itself; however, teaching both honors and non-honors courses is probably wise and politic.

An individual or institution starting or revamping an honors program should note realistically the volume of paper and electronic communications generated by a thriving operation and pay serious attention to the need for secretarial help. At the very least, some designated part-time professional clerical aid will make a significant difference. If the honors director is expected to do much recruiting, then the honors office will find itself generating scores of letters annually, which will be much more effective if somewhat personalized. If the program publishes a newsletter, someone must draft and distribute it; scheduling large and even small meetings with busy academics can be a headache; and honors programs require many meetings. These and similar tasks

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all argue strongly for an honors secretary or at least a clear agreement about honors program use of institutional clerical resources.

Honors directors, like all collegiate employees, should work under reasonably clear contractual conditions, but often they do not. This post is unlike any other within the university or college, and models for contractual relationships are unlikely to exist. This problem is somewhat vexing even on unionized campuses, where honors directors often uncomfortably straddle the labor/management divide, a scholarly mirror of the Colossus of Rhodes. Some important issues to resolve include these: How long is the term of service? What are the mechanism and schedule for evaluation? How will honors leadership affect such career developments as promotion, sabbaticals, and salary increases? What is the summer commitment? Do honors publications and presentations count as scholarship for purposes of faculty reviews? Institutions should grapple with these questions in an overt manner as early as possible.

One major quasi-administrative function of the honors program is frequently public relations, in one form or another. As previously noted, an honors brochure is often developed as part of the recruitment process. Thriving honors programs tend to be visible to their own members, the rest of the campus community, and off campus. Maintaining this presence means that someone, usually the honors director, is generating internal communications regularly: often a newsletter, today commonly an electronic newsletter, but also letters, memos, reports, and emails. The director should be on the lookout for opportunities to insert the honors program into college publications, especially admissions publications, and local media as well. Regional and national honors media, such as NCHC's listserv and electronic newsletter, should receive regular news of program activities, special accomplishments, unusual features, student awards, and accomplishments. (The honors website is discussed above.)

Another important document to which honors contributes is the college catalog or bulletin. Most institutions with honors programs include a general description in the catalog, usually towards the beginning of the document, and a listing of honors courses among those of other departments, divisions, and programs in the main body of the catalog. Sometimes the sections on honors in college bulletins looks like a rather casual afterthought. It should not. Catalogs are important reference documents for students, faculty, and staff alike, and acute prospective students and teachers frequently consult them during the recruiting process. Moreover, they often repeat, like dictionaries, from edition to edition, both their felicities and their errors. Thus, the sections on

honors should be carefully polished, clear, accurate, easily understood by a wide variety of readers, and attractive. That many college and university catalogs are exclusively electronic documents means that they are fluid and easily emended.

In addition, honors administrators concerned with public relations might expect to do at least a modest amount of external public speaking. The broadcast and print media are constantly on the lookout for expert commentators on educational subjects, and honors directors can bring an impressive title and credentials to that task. They should not be modest about offering their own expertise and experience or encouraging their students and their faculty to do so. Honors persons are also in some demand as speakers at high school awards banquets or assemblies, graduation ceremonies, and similar occasions.

An important administrative task is orientation. New honors students and new honors faculty will probably not understand as well as they could the program's requirements, nature, history, expectations, opportunities, and operations. Directors should gather new students for an honors orientation as soon thereafter as possible to explain the workings of the program. Hosting some follow-up meetings is probably a good idea. Also, honors faculty should be oriented to the program individually: a short, friendly conference with each new faculty member is a good investment of time and energy although a more formal meeting of new and experienced honors faculty to discuss the special nature of honors teaching can also be powerful. Finally, under the rubric of orientation, honors directors should brief important new collegiate administrators early in their tenure about the honors program. Honors directors should not be shy about introducing themselves and their programs to new admissions and public relations personnel, directors, deans, presidents, and chancellors. Indeed, it is an excellent and worthwhile strategy for the honors director to seek a place on the search committee for administrators who will be important to honors, so as to make connections and begin the communications process even before the new administrator is hired.

## II.

That honors directors establish and maintain a positive and supportive relationship with the upper tiers of the college's administration is incredibly important. Honors programs tend to flourish when they are noticed and valued by college presidents, vice presidents, provosts, and deans (and, of course, students and faculty, too). If, for example, the

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institution's faculty, students, and trustees as well as the community frequently hear a president bragging about the achievements of the honors program and honors students, they will more easily recognize the importance of the program to the institution. If, conversely, they never hear an upper-level administrator speak of honors, they might rightly wonder just how high on the collegiate priority list it really is. Since college presidents, vice presidents, provosts, and deans are constantly looking for positive and optimistic grist for their rhetorical mills, wise honors directors make sure that their program provides ample material of this sort. Where have graduates gone on to graduate or professional schools . . . with impressive fellowships? Into what careers have they been recruited . . . at astronomical salaries? What academic awards have they received within and beyond the school? What recognition has the program received (e.g., winning the "Newsletter of the Year" award from the NCHC)? Administrators will gladly receive such information, assuming it arrives in appropriate volume and not in avalanches. And they will use it.

For similar political reasons, honors directors should make a point of injecting honors contributions into the faculty reappointment, promotion, and tenure review mechanism of the small college. Honors directors can and should certainly take the initiative to send to the faculty personnel committee or appropriate administrative office timely letters commending honors teaching. Honors faculty work can become a factor in promotion and tenure deliberations simply through the agency of an alert honors director. Efforts such as this one will be surprisingly appreciated by faculty beneficiaries.

Pathways of administrative reporting are a frequent issue for honors programs and directors. This issue can be even more vexing at large universities where sometimes legions of deans, associate vice presidents, and assistant provosts might claim the honors program. Generally, honors programs have been most stable and secure when they were under the direct administrative supervision of the institution's chief academic officer: a dean of the college, or provost, or vice president for academic affairs. (See Appendix B for this recommendation in the "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program"). It is perhaps better, though, for the honors director to report to an understanding, sympathetic, and attentive lower-tier administrator, such as an associate dean, than to an indifferent, overly busy, or even slightly hostile provost or vice president. Most honors programs wisely see themselves as serving the entire small college, not just a particular school, division, or College of Liberal Arts segment of the community. Thus, it is valuable

for the honors director to report to an officer with responsibilities that extend across the entire institution.

Periodic assessment of honors programs, either individually as a free-standing collegiate unit or as part of the larger ongoing college-wide enterprise is another important administrative task. Such assessment is increasingly mandated by regional accrediting bodies. Planning ahead for assessment by collecting relevant data is wise. Useful information includes: statistical profiles of entering students, graduation rates (both the rate of graduation from the honors program and, perhaps even more importantly, the rate at which students who come to the college as honors students subsequently graduate from the institution, whether as honors students or not), acceptance rates into graduate and professional schools, and student evaluations of honors classes. Some honors programs annually calculate what the entering quantitative scores (ACT/SAT) of first-year students would be if the honors students were subtracted from the total, thus demonstrating the contribution those students actually make to the statistical profile of the entering class.

The evaluation of honors programs can be enhanced by using site visitors approved by the NCHC. A list of these individuals appears on the NCHC website. NCHC-approved site visitors have undergone training in that role, are experienced in this endeavor, and list their consulting credentials on the website.

### III.

An important support resource for the small college honors program and director is the honors committee or council. Most schools will have some such group, usually with a policy advisory function, although sometimes with significant operational duties, such as admitting students into the program or approving proposed honors courses. If no such group exists, forming one is worth considering. Having the council appointed by a dean, provost, or vice president/vice chancellor who carefully heeds the advice from the honors director is probably ideal if it can be arranged. Often, the direct administrative supervisor of the honors director sits on the honors council, frequently chairing it.

The honors council or committee can and should include faculty, students, and administrators as full-fledged voting members. Student input is especially important in honors programs and tends to be first rate. Student membership on such a council is an excellent way of soliciting and using student participation. Generally, having at least two student members works best; this structure avoids having a solitary student



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representative who might feel outvoted or overwhelmed. The ideal relationship between an honors council and the honors director seems analogous to that between a college president and a board of trustees. The group should be well informed, independent, and helpful. The council should not intrude upon the day-to-day decisions and actions of the responsible honors administrator; its function should be providing aid for the program, not sitting in judgment on it. Occasionally an individual with a bone to pick with honors will seek and secure a place on the honors council. This circumstance might become an opportunity to convert such an individual into a supporter of honors. More often she or he just needs to be honestly heeded, openly tolerated, and outvoted. The most effective honors councils are large enough to be fairly representative but small enough to be workable: perhaps in the range of five to a dozen members.

The honors council should meet sufficiently often so that its sessions are genuine working meetings, not merely ceremonial occasions, but not so often as to become a burden to members or the director. Perhaps once a month is reasonable during tumultuous or busy times, but many councils find that gathering once a semester is sufficient. Membership in the council should rotate so that the same cadre of faculty members is not seen as running the honors program year after year. Despite the rotating membership, maintaining some continuity will guarantee ongoing consistency.

### IV.

The small college honors program should affiliate itself with appropriate honors organizations. The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) is an important and useful resource to neophyte and experienced honors persons alike. The NCHC meets annually, usually in late October, for several days of worthwhile and varied sessions, including programs aimed specifically at new honors directors and those beginning new programs at smaller institutions. NCHC's Small College Honors Committee is devoted specifically to serving the needs of smaller institutions, and generates several programs and sessions within each NCHC meeting for this purpose. Consultation on a variety of issues facing small college honors programs is available, both formally and casually, at the NCHC annual meeting. Directors are likely to find richer resources for administrative support and advice at the national conference than at the regional and state conferences. (For additional information, visit the NCHC website at [NCHCHonors.org](http://NCHCHonors.org).)

The country is also divided into six regional honors associations. These organizations are somewhat less expensive to join than NCHC, and their meetings usually occur in the spring, closer to home. It is frequently attractive and realistic to take larger groups of students and faculty to the regional honors meeting rather than to the larger national NCHC conference.

Most of the regional groups also generate some sort of newsletter, often electronic. Some states, such as North Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, Florida, and Wisconsin, also have statewide honors groups, although these tend to drift into and out of existence rather rapidly. They provide informal, friendly, and helpful networks of information and support. Finally, several special interest groups, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, major research universities, and faith-based institutions, have also formed honors alliances.

The NCHC publishes two refereed periodicals and a monograph series that produces one to three new works each year, like this one, on topics of concern to those involved in honors education. Recent titles include *Partners in the Parks: Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks* and *Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning*. NCHC's scholarly periodical is called the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC)*; its nuts-and-bolts journal is *Honors in Practice (HIP)*. (A complete list of publications and information about placing orders appear at the end of this monograph.)

## V.

The advising of honors students is a task that often falls to the small college honors director, either directly or in some sort of oversight capacity. Here are two models and some common variants.

In some small colleges, the honors program, especially if it is fully developed and multidimensional, provides the primary focus for academic advising for its students. An advisor from the program, commonly the director, actually guides all course selection each term, approves schedule changes, and discusses post-graduate plans and possibilities. This job is a big one; in the case of a program with twenty or more students, it is a major drain on the director's resources.

The other type of honors advising, and probably the more common model, presupposes that each student is receiving regular academic advice within the usual advising framework of the institution: from a faculty member within the major department or from a professional advising center. Advice particular to honors work typically comes from the

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honors program, often the director. Thus, the physics major might be helped to select a logical progression of courses to meet that department's requirements by a member of the physics faculty and simultaneously be advised by the honors program concerning the selection and timing of honors seminars and independent projects. Clearly this approach to honors advising is less time-consuming for the honors administrator than the total advising responsibilities of the first option. It also requires more diplomacy, communication, and coordination. A common problem in small college honors work is that of the student receiving incompatible advice from an academic advisor within the major and from the honors program. Even with the risk of that incompatibility, though, keeping the students connected through the advising process with the departmental majors and thus the college as a whole is probably better.

One compromise solution that has worked well at some schools is to select a special honors advisor within each, or most, academic disciplines or divisions. Thus, a physics student would have a physicist as an academic advisor, but a physicist who is conversant with the honors program. With this arrangement, the major responsibility of the honors director shifts to making sure that departments stay on top of the task of bringing the right students and faculty members together and that those faculty members selected as honors advisors know and can communicate effectively the opportunities and requirements of the honors program. This structure, of course, demands careful briefing of the honors advisors and keeping in touch with them on a regular basis.

Honors students usually benefit from sharp and timely advice about graduate and professional school possibilities, fellowships, graduate assistantships, and post-graduate educational options. Many are also keenly interested in career opportunities. The honors director should be prepared to respond to questions regarding educational and vocational next steps. Since no honors director can speak with authority on all the academic and career options students may wish to explore, being well informed about the specific referral network within one's own institution is necessary so that students with questions can be promptly and efficiently sent in the right directions. Some introductory familiarity with Internet resources in the realm of vocational choice and strategy will also be helpful to the students.

One important point to keep in mind regarding honors advising is that honors students have at least as many, and as complicated, problems as other students. These problems can be of an academic or personal nature. Sometimes envisioning honors students as well-rounded,

balanced, thoughtful, mature, self-possessed, and self-directed is tempting. This vision is neither particularly accurate nor helpful however attractive it may be. Honors students, just like their non-honors peers, are sometimes plagued with doubts about their academic careers and their futures; they will have problems in their amorous relations, fights with roommates, scheduling conflicts, family issues, and health problems. In fact, because their academic expectations and goals are often higher than those of their non-honors colleagues and because they are sometimes younger or less experienced in worldly matters, honors students will often have more academic and personal counseling needs than other students. The honors director in a small college setting, which the students have often selected because it promises close personal attention, must, like all good advisors, strive to be sensitive, patient, informed, and helpful. Sometimes, the most helpful strategy academic advisors can adopt in working with student problems is remembering the limits of our own expertise: a PhD in English Renaissance Drama does not make one a qualified psychological counselor, even to a student with Hamlet-like issues. Directors must know where to refer troubled students, and, more importantly, when to send them to more appropriate professionals. (See the Forum on “Helping Honors Students in Trouble” in *JNCHC* 11.2.)

# BUDGET

All honors programs, including even the smallest programs at the smallest colleges, need fiscal resources to operate effectively. Although a few small college honors programs are generously funded, most honors programs, especially those at smaller institutions, never have enough money. Indeed, the worst of possibilities, which is far from hypothetical, is that some small college honors directors might skip this section since they have no budget whatsoever to manage. Alas, this booklet can propose no surefire cure for financial woes. There follow, though, a few suggestions on how to mitigate chronic program poverty and how to get better return from whatever meager funds are available.

## I.

One important suggestion has to do with the budget-making process. Whether an honors program's funds run to five or even six figures, or if it is more like three or four, it is almost always much better to secure an independent annual budget line for the program itself. The much less happy alternative, which seems fairly common, is relying upon a source of funds which is, on an annual basis, dependent upon the largesse of some other office. Too often, honors programs derive their money from the dean's budget, from some general arts and sciences fund, or from the president's discretionary purse. These arrangements, while often generous, sincere, and wholehearted, almost inevitably lead to problems, frequently serious problems. Senior academic administrators (of whom the author was one) often come and go rapidly. As a consequence honors programs' budgets can flourish and then wither. Perhaps more importantly, such discretionary annual funds are always the subject of desperate appeals from across campus and are usually the first to be cut in moments of real, threatened, or imagined exigency. The honors program that depends upon annual renewal of some extra-honors administrative support is likely to be viewed as frosting on the fiscal cake; conversely, the program with a budget of its own has a slice, no matter how small, of the core pastry itself.

In contemporary academic culture, having an independent budgetary center confers upon an enterprise a certain legitimacy. In addition, at most schools any department or program with a separate budget account or number will be solicited on an annual basis concerning funding renewal and priorities for the coming year. Being included in this process will enable the enterprising honors director or honors council to make a strong case for expanded support or new endeavors.

Rather than seeking primary funding from the office of the dean, the honors director should make the dean an advocate in the budgetary councils of the college as a whole.

## II.

Once an honors program establishes an independent budget, directors should administer it scrupulously. Money should never be wasted, but especially in today's tight academic marketplace, this general ethical maxim becomes a functional imperative. Obviously, directors must monitor expenses, keep up with monthly budget statements, and notice where expenditures surface over-budget. If funds remain toward the end of the year, they should probably be expended, but on a conspicuously worthwhile project (taking a sophomore honors seminar to a Shakespearean performance or publishing outstanding papers from a freshman honors section) or acquisition (a printer for student use or a reference book for the honors library). Contrary to popular lore, responsible administrators do not look with favor upon frivolous efforts to expend, at the last possible moment, every single penny of an annual budget to justify continuation or enlargement of that budget in the next fiscal year.

One of the best ways to stretch an honors program's tight budget is sharing some expenses with other campus organizations. Often a program with limited resources for, say, outside speakers, can join with two or three other similarly strapped departments or offices to come up with a significant amount for a special event or two. Co-sponsoring alliances may be forged with the dean of students, the campus diversity office, an academic department or several, or another general program such as women's studies or interdisciplinary studies. This opportunity transcends merely pooling money because it is a chance to build important links on campus and to increase the visibility of the honors program at what is often a surprisingly low cost. Moreover, such joint ventures clarify and solidify the important role of honors as a valuable all-campus resource, making academic enrichment opportunities available for a wide and open collegiate audience.

## III.

One important budgetary issue facing small college honors administrators is the matter of paying honors faculty. In most cases, faculty members teaching honors courses at small colleges do so as part of their normal teaching load, a load that can vary from fewer than five to more

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than eight courses per year. In many cases, there is neither particular material benefit nor any fiscal penalty for this arrangement. Occasionally faculty members actually teach honors courses, especially team-taught courses, as an unpaid overload. Clearly, this situation should be avoided vigorously; many excellent faculty members will refuse (probably rightly) to undertake demanding additional work for no additional compensation beyond the sheer joy of teaching one more stimulating class. Even more pernicious is asking faculty members to undertake honors instruction as an extra assignment that they then treat as one of secondary importance, which is exactly the opposite of the attitude honors programs seek to cultivate.

In some colleges, but more commonly in large institutions, the honors program budget is responsible for actually paying the fraction of the faculty member's salary corresponding to the portion of that individual's load devoted to honors instruction. Although this arrangement is, obviously, the most expensive option for an honors instructional budget, it also offers the greatest discretionary freedom to the honors director or program when selecting and recruiting instructors. In effect, some honors programs are granted sufficient funds to hire their own faculty and thus are free to negotiate relatively independently with faculty.

Sometimes small college honors programs independently recruit and pay for part-time instructors to handle an honors course or section. Rarely do smaller programs have the option that some larger honors colleges enjoy of actually filling tenure-track faculty lines with full-time professorial staff in honors although the rarity of this situation should not stop directors from exploring such an option with administrators involved in apportioning faculty lines.

Commonly, honors program budgets include funds to compensate departments for professors' time devoted to honors instruction, usually through funding sufficient to hire replacement part-time instructors. This system requires a relatively small honors budget. Its drawback is asking academic departments to replace excellent, usually full-time, tenure-track professors with part-time teachers. At this moment in American higher education history when the trend is moving towards increasing the proportion of temporary and part-time instructors, honors programs need to ask carefully if they want to contribute to this trend. Certainly, if the honors program budget is used to secure part-time replacements for full-time teachers, every effort should be made to keep the level of funding at a sufficiently high rate to attract top-quality replacements. Sometimes departments can be attracted by the idea of

hiring special individuals to teach special courses, not otherwise feasible with regular staffing, such as an occasional course in the history of photography in the art department in exchange for a more conventional art historian for the honors program. Since most part-time teachers usually work for near-starvation wages anyway, the difference between affording a handsome part-time salary and a niggardly one is usually embarrassingly minuscule.

One attractive and inexpensive option is utilizing some portion of the honors program budget as a bonus for honors instructors. If faculty members teach in honors as part of their normal class load and are paid for doing so as part of their regular salary, the honors program can recognize and reward the special challenges and preparation they are required to devote to this task with such a bonus. Especially for instructors teaching a class for the first time, some attractive supplemental faculty development funds or a pure salary bonus may be most welcome. Developmental funds can take many forms: an enhancement of the annual travel allocation; supplemental book-purchase funding; money to be applied to research or equipment needs; or special resources for enhancing the class work itself, such as field trips, speakers, or refreshments. This system has the attraction of making honors teaching a bit more materially rewarding than normal instructional duties, thus making the faculty recruiting task a bit easier. Supplementing a course instructional or enrichment budget is considerably less politically risky and less likely to provoke jealousy than to flat-out pay honors teachers a salary bonus.

#### IV.

The issue of honors scholarships was mentioned above in the section on student recruiting. Here, noting that most small colleges do have some institutional merit money available for academically gifted students is sufficient. Sometimes this money is dispensed, wholly or in part, through the honors program. This situation has advantages and disadvantages. Perhaps the chief advantage is that it can reinforce the position of the honors program as an important institutional resource for attracting outstanding students. It clarifies the centrality of the role of honors in the recruitment and retention of such students, and it gives the program an important voice in the strategies and mechanisms of attracting and selecting them. One of the disadvantages of linking academic scholarships to the honors program is that sometimes such a system can result in students taking honors classes not because they are



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attracted to them, but because they are required to do so in order to retain their scholarships. Such a feeling runs counter to thriving learning communities. The whole area of financial aid is one that has seen enormous cost increases in recent years, and this situation will likely continue as bidding for exceptional students becomes more overt and more competitive. This can lead to the awarding of honors scholarships as a disproportionate expenditure of limited funds. If scholarships keep pace with tuition increases, this budget line must increase dramatically each year. Thus, any honors program that plays a major role in the awarding and dispensing of merit scholarships out of its own budget should expect to be playing in the financial big leagues of the institution. Some directors and honors committees have chosen not to burden themselves with this additional responsibility; others have found that the benefits outweigh the costs. In either case, a close and productive relationship with the admissions and financial aid offices is vital.

### V.

In addition to instruction and scholarship expenses, honors program budgets can pay for a host of activities and items, such as guest speakers, social events, field trips to cultural events, and travel to honors or undergraduate research conferences. Indeed, probably most honors budgets at most small institutions consist largely of these sorts of expenditures. Although not especially dramatic fiscally, such items can often make a major difference in student and faculty perceptions of the honors program; they should not be taken lightly. Even a few hundred dollars spent judiciously can win important recognition and appreciation for honors at a small institution. A dinner to which honors students bring their favorite professors; a trip to a major cultural event in a nearby city; a modest research grant to enable a struggling honors student to complete a research project; or the opportunity for a teacher of an honors class to recruit a special guest lecturer, rent an extra DVD, or take the class out for pizza: none of these cost an inordinate amount of money or require excessive time or energy to organize.

One important budget category, especially at small institutions, is travel. That the honors director, members of an honors committee, students, and faculty attend some national, regional, and local meetings of honors organizations such as the NCHC and related groups such as the National Council for Undergraduate Research can be extremely valuable. While nearby meetings at the state and local level are usually not expensive, most national conferences will cost each

attendee approximately \$1,000. It is money well spent. Often students and faculty return from a regional or national meeting full of new ideas to improve their honors work and full of appreciation for how good their own program actually is. For the honors administrator, these meetings, and especially the annual national meeting of the NCHC, provide a rare and needed opportunity to converse with colleagues who deal on a daily basis with similar academic and managerial challenges.

Having an honors program budget and spending it on such activities can be the difference between having a thriving program that is well known and well regarded on campus by students, faculty, and administrators and one that merely hangs on from year to year. Most academics are not conspicuously clever with money, and skill with budgetary manipulation is rarely a top qualification when an honors director is hired, but financial issues turn out to be unavoidable for small college honors programs. Careful and successful budget creation and wise, well-thought-out spending may be among the top priorities in organizing and operating a small college honors program.

# CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

The best has surely been saved for last because curriculum and pedagogy, the structure of what happens between learners and teachers in the classroom, lab, and office, are at the core of a collegiate experience. The curricular arrangements possible in small college honors programs are nearly limitless. That infinite variety, however, turns out in most cases to be some choice, combination, or variation on four basic course types:

1. **Honors sections of regular courses.** This option is especially popular in institutions with fairly prescribed general education curricula; thus they offer several multi-sectioned courses such as first-year writing courses, introductory biology sections, or beginning calculus. For obvious reasons, this option is more common at large public schools than at small colleges. Honors sections usually cover most of the same material as their non-honors counterparts, but they may involve different or extra reading or writing assignments, more challenging material, higher or different classroom expectations, or smaller sections. This sort of course is attractive in situations in which very bright or exceptionally well-prepared students find themselves undertaking coursework that threatens to be repetitious or unchallenging.
2. **Enriched options within regular courses or contracts.** This curricular model differs from honors sections in that honors students and non-honors students attend or are enrolled in the same sections of the same classes. Honors students, however, are expected to complete some extra project or assignment. Often this work involves doing an additional or a more ambitious paper. Sometimes it means separate discussion sections of large lecture classes. Needless to say, this path is one of the easiest to follow since it involves no additional instructional costs whatsoever; usually the teachers of such sections are expected to undertake the slight burden of assigning and reacting to the additional work *gratis*. A compensating liability, however, is that it is probable that honors options within regular classes are often the least rewarding curricular option for honors students. This arrangement can work well, though, and sometimes it seems to be the only realistic opportunity to offer students a range of honors courses in different disciplines.
3. **Special honors courses.** Perhaps the most popular curricular option in small college honors programs is the honors seminar. Such courses are often interdisciplinary although certainly not always so. They are

sometimes team-taught, sometimes even by teams of more than a pair of instructors. Frequently these honors courses are conducted on the graduate-seminar model, or some variant thereof, in which the goal is much high-level, well-prepared give-and-take among students and between students and professor. These courses are in some ways the most inviting curricular choice for small college honors programs, but they are also the most expensive and by far the most time-consuming for the honors director, especially when the courses are perpetually reinvented, with different options each term or year, and the staffing must be perpetually re-brokered. An honors director at a small college attempting to generate only one new team-taught interdisciplinary course every term or even every year will quickly discover that as soon as one course is arranged, it is way past time to begin work on the next. Particularly at the smallest school, with the smallest instructional staffs, the amount of negotiation necessary to put such a course together can be intimidating. For the part-time honors director especially, special honors seminars can be a high-risk, high-gain venture.

4. **Honors projects.** A capstone project or thesis is one of the most pervasive characteristics of honors education although certainly not universally present. Usually this work is accomplished on a more-or-less independent tutorial basis. Increasingly, it is linked to an institutional program of undergraduate research, sometimes in a fashion that invites students to participate in extra-institutional programs such as the annual conference of the Council for Undergraduate Research or to publish in one of several journals devoted to papers of this sort. The majority of honors projects are undertaken in the final year of undergraduate study although some institutions have had good success with permitting or encouraging students to get started in the latter part of the third year. In many cases, a quasi-doctoral final exercise featuring an oral exam, outside readers, or public presentation concludes the honors project. In many cases the project is connected to the student's major, often substituting for a required departmental senior thesis or project. Some schools encourage cross-disciplinary projects. Formal requirements of honors projects also vary widely: some are quite flexible and informal, permitting creative and experimental work, while others are rather strictly structured on the model of the graduate thesis.

Obviously, combinations and variations of these four curricular types exist. Some institutions have directed studies options that do not lead necessarily to a project or thesis; some have special honors classes with

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a very few students—three or four, for example—per instructor; some have student-initiated or even student-led seminars.

A few ambitious small college honors programs offer all four types of honors courses. Many offer only one. Probably the majority combine two or three elements: for example, special honors courses and a thesis. Obviously, the type and quantity of honors work should depend upon a hardheaded assessment of institutional ability to populate courses, both with teachers and with students. An institution with relatively few instructors, large classes, high teaching loads, and little fiscal flexibility will find creating an extra honors course every term, especially a team-taught seminar, exceptionally difficult. An institution with a thriving college-wide senior thesis requirement might not want to reinvent an honors variant of that program. The point, once again, is that no single curricular standard fits the individual needs and possibilities of every institution.

## II.

Noting the distinction between general and departmental honors is important although dual systems are probably more prevalent in larger institutions than smaller ones. Even in small colleges, however, honors programs often allow students to earn honors in the major department, exclusive of any college-wide requirements or program, by having a high graduating grade point average and writing a senior thesis. A general honors program, on the other hand, is one with college-wide or at least extra-departmental features that is open to students from a variety of disciplines and operates under an institutional or collegiate rather than a departmental aegis.

In some small colleges, confusingly, both types of honors programs exist. A student can receive general honors or departmental honors or both. In most small colleges, one or the other model prevails. There are also small colleges in which only *some* departments have independent honors options, either concatenated with an institution-wide honors program or as the only honors option.

Confusing the issue even more, many institutions award grade point honors, commonly the Latinate *cum laude* designations to students achieving a certain GPA. Some colleges celebrate all three types of graduation honors: GPA, department honors, and college-wide honors. Trying to keep these things straight for everyone concerned is probably worthwhile, especially at commencement time, perhaps by some distinction in nomenclature. Of course, that endeavor is likely doomed to be futile.

### III.

The form of honors courses more than their content has been the subject thus far. The subject matter of honors curricula seems an especially institution-specific area. In some cases, honors courses focus upon rigorously traditional masterpiece reading lists; in many small colleges an honors course is the only place where a student, especially a chemistry or computer science or studio art or economics major, might encounter Homer, Virgil, or Aquinas. In other settings, honors courses operate at the cutting edge of curricular innovation. Encountering honors seminars on topics that engage timely academic movements and trends is certainly not uncommon. (I checked the course catalog for the next term at one institution familiar to me and discovered honors seminars on, among other things, Queer Film, Readings in Postmodern Literature, Neuropsychology and Savantism, and The Case for Vegetarianism.)

Many colleges and universities have moved in honors courses to experiential modes of learning, including, importantly and increasingly commonly, service learning. This experiential pedagogy seems especially engaging for honors programs and students both from an altruistic instructional perspective and a crasser political one: it is a splendid antidote to grumblings about honors as elitist or smug. Some colleges are requiring at least one service-learning course for honors graduation. Others are making service projects, not overtly connected with the curriculum, a universal part of the honors experience.

Both the experimental and the conservative curricular approaches are relative to institutional context. Probably most small colleges lean one way or the other although many use some experimental pedagogy to teach an essentially classical curriculum or include some innovative materials within a traditionally taught seminar. Some institutions offer both the traditional and the experimental types of courses. Certainly the question of appropriate subject matter for honors courses should be one for serious, thoughtful, and explicit consideration by the director and the honors council. There is, of course, no more justification for a calcified curriculum in honors than anywhere else. Students, faculty, and administration should share an understanding of and a sympathy for whatever curricular stance is adopted.

Just as honors programs have become increasingly concerned about multiculturalism and diversity in their student and faculty populations, they have also turned their attention to incorporating global issues and historically underrepresented intellectual fields, such as African-American Studies, Women's Studies, and GLBT Studies into the

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curriculum. While relatively few honors programs offer a significant number of complete courses in these areas (Women's Studies perhaps being the exception), many have worked diligently and with success to include previously unheard voices and neglected perspectives into honors courses.

Few small college honors programs have the resources to develop independent international programs. But some are collaborating with the international programs offices on their campuses to make international experiences available to honors students. In a few cases, programs are requiring such an experience for graduation; in more, international experiences are encouraged and facilitated, often with honors credit being extended for academic work undertaken overseas. Frequently, honors students are sufficiently bright to realize that they will spend their adulthoods in an increasingly global culture and eagerly pursue opportunities to seriously engage with other cultures and peoples.

The explosive growth of options in instructional technology poses some interesting issues for honors teaching. Clearly, some of the tools now available to aid college teaching promote efficiency and can make instruction more effective. Many colleges and universities make class management software available universally to the faculty, and increasingly faculty members are taking advantage of it. Often, these innovations replace relatively unproductive and tedious tasks. Often, they supplement instructional possibilities, enabling students to enjoy an individualized learning experience that is rich with possibilities for independent exploration. Teachers can communicate with students quickly and easily, and vice versa. On the other hand, honors has always prided itself on close, humanized learning relationships, and honors administrators need to be wary of technological options that might weaken those bonds. Recently, for example, I encountered a mechanism for evaluating honors independent projects that involved a grid with seven horizontal categories, including organization, diction, and sources, each of which had five vertical assessment options. The instructor need only mark one option in each category to generate a grade for the project. Although in this case the evaluation grid was thoughtfully constructed and accompanied by personal conferences between student and project advisor, one does wonder if such a mechanical evaluation instrument is a step forward in best honors practice.

A relatively new curricular emphasis, increasingly appearing in the twenty-first century, is environmental sustainability. Honors students have shown a sharply rising interest in learning about issues such as alternative energy, local foods, or recycling, and have shown, as well, an

interest in taking concrete action in these areas. This seems an encouraging development.

#### IV.

One incredibly attractive set of honors courses available to all small college honors students may be found within programs sponsored by the NCHC's Honors Semesters Committee. Offered generally once or twice a year, these programs have ranged in locale from major urban sites to wilderness areas to foreign countries and have been jointly sponsored by the NCHC and a specific institution. Each Honors Semester offers a full package of site-appropriate honors-level courses, which usually have been accepted *in toto* by the students' home institutions. They are open to students from around the country and are, in effect, off-campus seminars for honors students. These programs are particularly inviting for smaller colleges since they often provide an experience that contrasts productively with the potential insularity that upper-division students sometimes worry about at small colleges. A semester in New York City or Washington, D.C., can be a heady experience to an honors student from Morris, Minnesota. Conversely, several weeks in Appalachia or the desert Southwest will be an eye opener for urban or suburban honors undergraduates from California or Connecticut. NCHC Honors Semesters have focused upon topics such as sustainable development in Chile and the culture and ecology of the Grand Canyon.

A more recent undertaking, in which the NCHC and the National Park Service have joined, is called "Partners in the Parks." This program is of much shorter duration than the Honors Semesters, usually lasting one week. The students study the particular characteristics, nature, and culture of a national park and engage as well in a service project within the park housing the program. This opportunity has proven to be a popular option, and programs have been offered in a wide range of settings from coast to coast.

Honors directors should investigate these exciting offerings and consider actively promoting them to the students in their programs.

#### V.

Clarifying the manner in which honors courses, of whatever form or content, fit into the college curriculum as a whole is important. Do honors courses meet core graduation requirements, most commonly in general education? Can they substitute for other required courses, such



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as an introductory honors course replacing a required first-year writing course? Can they count towards the major? How will such coursework be designated on the term schedule, on transcripts, and on diplomas? How will the institution and the program treat honors courses that students bring from another college? How will such coursework be designated on the term schedule, on transcripts, and on diplomas? Is the campus online registration system programmed to allow entry to honors courses? While these questions are not particularly difficult, they do need to be answered, and the best time to do so is before problems arise. Being absolutely clear about how honors work is credited in students' schedules is particularly important. Will meeting the requirements of the honors program, in addition to all-college requirements and those of a major, mean that honors students have fewer electives and a more prescribed curricular experience than others? Will adhering to the honors regimen mean adding a semester to the undergraduate career? Such an arrangement is not a good idea and should be avoided if at all possible. In any case, requirements, especially extra ones, need to be explained clearly and with a convincing rationale.

Many small colleges feel constrained when contemplating curricular issues. Pressures to increase cost efficiency, to boost faculty productivity, and to respond to heightened interest in vocational relevance often create an atmosphere that has not been conducive to curricular boldness and initiative. Honors programs in small colleges have an especially important role to play in restoring room for movement and contemplation in such an environment. Honors courses can open curricular doors otherwise barred; they can suggest curricular and pedagogical directions that might otherwise be ruled out as too costly or too risky. This opportunity is one that honors directors should feel lucky—indeed honored—to have before them.



## CONCLUSION

Compared to earlier eras, small colleges today educate a lower proportion of undergraduates. As recently as 1950, small institutions educated a quarter of America's students; a quarter century later, that figure had shrunk to 10%. Today, some scholars of higher education set that number at less than 5%. David Brenneman, former President at Kalamazoo College (Michigan), found fewer than 200 colleges that he would call liberal arts schools at the end of the twentieth century. But for many educators who learned or who work at such places, this demographic shift has made small institutions more valuable and precious, not less. At such places, professors can continue to offer a humane-scaled, interactive, attentive, integrated style of learning impossible at gigantic multiversities. And honors at small schools can play a unique and valuable role in preserving and cultivating these values.

Honors programs at small colleges foster close student-faculty learning relationships that commonly last for the entire undergraduate career, not just for a course or two. They build self-starting, independent students, who can be, for the rest of their lives, their own best teachers. Without a doubt, honors programs at small colleges make an important contribution to their institutions.

As large research and comprehensive universities and two-year schools with populations in the five-figure range have evolved, the model of the honors college has become increasingly popular, indeed, is now perhaps the norm. Small institutions have generally retained honors programs rather than morphing into colleges. This distinction has more than semantic consequence. A glance at the NCHC list of characteristics of fully developed honors *colleges* reveals an emphasis on autonomy. The honors college should have a dean who is the equal of other collegiate deans, an independent staff, and control over admissions and financial aid. Honors *programs*, on the other hand, exist to serve the whole college. Where the honors college strives to create an independent, separate identity, the honors program strives to integrate itself fully into the fabric of the entire institution of which it is a part. Small college honors programs, at their best, enrich the educational experiences of students across all departments. They provide services and programs that benefit students and faculty whether or not they are honors students or honors faculty. In a sense, small college honors programs are like the landscaping of small college campuses: not everyone plants the flowers, trims the trees, or cuts the grass, but everyone enjoys a more beautiful working, living, and learning environment thanks to

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those who do. Cultivating honors is valuable and important; doing it well is a high calling.

## **APPENDIX A:**

### **ILLUSTRATIVE PROGRAMS**

It cannot be reiterated too often that the program descriptions that follow are illustrative, not prescriptive. Each of the samples has strengths, weaknesses, and idiosyncrasies. Since honors programs often change fairly rapidly, these samples may not be entirely accurate depictions of the particular institutions within a few years. That drift from the real world to the Platonic should have little effect upon their utility for those contemplating possible models of small college honors.

Profiled are five small colleges: a private, non-sectarian institution; two religiously oriented schools, one of which is in the Evangelical Protestant tradition and the other Roman Catholic; a public liberal arts college; and a small two-year institution. This sampling is certainly not all inclusive, but it aims to be fairly broad and to offer some helpful insights for most small college honors programs.

I am most grateful to each of these schools for their willingness to contribute to this handbook by allowing their programs to be described.

## Westminster College

Location: Salt Lake City, Utah

Size: 2200 undergraduates; 800 graduate students; 130 honors program

Affiliation: Non-sectarian, private liberal arts

Degrees: BA in 38 majors; MA in 12 areas

Founded: 1875, Presbyterian heritage

Students: ACT average (college wide) 24.8; honors program 30+

Faculty: 136 full-time; 191 part-time

Cost: \$25,980 tuition and fees

Website: <<http://www.westminstercollege.edu/honors>>

Westminster is the only liberal arts college in Utah, and one of very few in the Rocky Mountain region. The core of its honors program is seven 4-credit honors seminars, each of which is interdisciplinary and team-taught by professors from different academic fields. The seminars emphasize primary texts, focus on communication and writing skills, and cultivate intensive student-centered approaches to learning. They take the place of the college's core Liberal Education requirement of 43–49 credit hours. The seminars are Humanities I and II (focusing upon primary texts mainly in literature, history, and philosophy); History and Philosophy of Science; Science, Power, and Diversity (the social construction of science/power relationships in the twentieth century); The Political Economy of Conflict (conservative, liberal, and radical perspectives); The Arts in Performance (the relationship between the theory and practice of artistic performance); and Human Culture and Behavior (the intersection of human culture and behavior from a social science perspective). In addition to the seven core seminars, students may enroll in upper-level honors classes.

An international honors option is available through a cooperative arrangement with the University of Glasgow, Scotland. This features an honors seminar on the Scottish Enlightenment from the 18th to the 21st centuries in addition to offering students access to the university's upper-level courses.

In addition to curricular offerings, Westminster College's Honors Program includes a number of leadership opportunities for students, a speakers series, and a number of extracurricular options such as "Pizza with Profs," an honors orientation program, peer mentoring, an annual student/faculty softball game, funding for student research, and a yearly spring honors banquet.

## HONORS PROGRAMS AT SMALLER COLLEGES

Comment: The Westminster College Honors Program is a fully developed one for an institution of its size. Rarely can a small college sustain an annual offering of seven interdisciplinary, team-taught honors seminars. That its curriculum replaces the entire required liberal education core requirement for undergraduates is notable; moreover, it offers a study abroad option. Its range of extracurricular activities is also quite broad.

## Trinity Christian College

Location: Palos Heights (Chicago Suburban)

Size: 1450 undergraduates

Affiliation: Independent

Degrees: BA in 32 majors

Founded: 1959

Students: 23.1 ACT college wide

Faculty: 82 full-time; 89 part-time

Cost: \$21,398 tuition; \$7,964 room and board

Website: <<http://www.trnty.edu/Academics/honors.html>>

The mission statement of the Trinity Christian College Honors Program affirms, in part, that it “provides a community of intellectual challenge and support for academically gifted students who take delight in learning and discovery both inside and outside the classroom. The Honors Program exists to provide opportunities for those with particular academic and cultural gifts, and the ambition for intentionally putting those gifts to use in the service of God’s kingdom.” The College is independent but follows in the Reformed tradition of Christianity.

Minimum requirements for admission are an ACT composite score of at least 28 and either top 10% rank in the high school class or a GPA of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale. Transfer students and students who have completed the first year may join as well. The college admits about 15 new honors students per year. Currently about 65 are enrolled.

First-year students take a 3-credit hour honors writing course followed by a philosophy honors course in the sophomore year. Both substitute for required general education courses. They also take at least two 2-hour interim honors courses and at least one honors seminar. Seminar topics have included The Castaway Figure in Western Culture (team-taught), Traversing the Digital Divide, and Native American Literature. During the final two undergraduate years, students complete at least two additional semester hours of honors work in their major discipline. The program is flexible in permitting transfer, late-admits, and Advanced Placement students to meet the requirements. Students must maintain at least a 3.3 cumulative GPA to remain in the program and a 3.5 to graduate with distinction from the honors program. About 54% of students who enter the program have completed it.

The extracurricular activities focus upon helping honors students encounter some of the cultural resources of the Chicago area. In addi-



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tion, the honors program offers weekly Honors Teas as well as off-campus excursions about once a month.

The honors program is administered by a director who is a full-time faculty member with about a three-course reassigned-time accommodation. A faculty member chairs the student/faculty Honors Committee. The honors program at Trinity Christian College has recently stepped-up its assessment activities, including a survey of current and former members. The program is seeking to strengthen its links to appropriate campus offices, such as admissions and marketing, and to boost its on-campus visibility.

Comment: The Trinity Christian College Honors Program has deliberately kept its size relatively small. Its curriculum is quite varied and flexible. It has offered a new interdisciplinary seminar just about every semester. The program has carefully linked its mission to that of the faith-based college it serves.

## Grayson County College

Location: Dennison, Texas, with a branch in Van Alstyne and an extension site in Bonham

Size: 6,200 undergraduates; 2,320 fte

Affiliation: Texas public junior college

Degrees: Associates in a range of technical, vocational, and arts and sciences areas

Founded: 1960s

Cost: In district, \$37 per credit hour; out of district, \$64 per credit hour; out of state, \$113 per credit hour.

Fees \$10 per semester hour

Website: <<http://www.grayson.edu>>

Grayson is a public two-year college serving primarily its county with vocational, technical, and liberal arts offerings. The college as a whole has an open admissions policy for eligible students. Grayson offers its honors curriculum through its honors college. The honors curriculum consists primarily of honors sections of core courses. These sections are open to all students, whether or not they are enrolled in the honors college. The courses are labeled as honors on the students' transcripts. Honors sections are offered in areas such as English, government, history, philosophy, and computer science. In addition, the honors college requires students to devote at least one hour per week on average during all four semesters at Grayson to service work, either on campus or in the community: this is called the Greater Participation in Learning program. Students can choose their projects, but the honors director has available a list of service possibilities.

Admission to the honors college is by two routes. It is automatically offered to applicants who have been accepted at Grayson County College and present a high school GPA of at least 3.4 on a 4 point scale and an ACT of 23 or SAT of 1070. Students may also be admitted on the basis of two letters of recommendation by teachers or employers who testify to academic talent and motivation. To remain in the honors college, students must take one honors section per regular term, maintain a 3.2 GPA, and maintain a record of service. To graduate requires at least 4 honors courses, one per term, with a grade of A or B in each and a continuous record of weekly community service.

The honors college has periodically published a newsletter. It administers a scholarship program that begins in the second year and offers a

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\$700 scholarship to students who plan to continue their education and who are committed to completing the honors requirements.

Comment: Several features of honors at Grayson County College are noteworthy. It is increasingly common but still atypical for honors at a small institution, particularly a two-year school, to be denominated as a college rather than a program. Also interesting is the formalized dual track for admissions, recognizing either high performance in high school and on quantitative tests or high recommendations. The requirement that students perform service on a weekly basis throughout the entire collegiate career is uncommon. The academic curriculum for the Grayson County Honors College is relatively modest, consisting solely of honors sections of core courses, but appropriate for the institution. That all the honors sections are open to all students is, again, worthy of note.

## The University of Virginia College at Wise

Location: Wise, Virginia

Size: 1911 undergraduates

Affiliation: Public liberal arts college

Degree: BA in 29 majors

Founded: 1954, state affiliated

Students: SAT 900 combined; honors program, at least 3.5 high school GPA and 1200 combined SAT

Faculty: 140

Cost: Instate: tuition, \$7,194 + fee \$15 per credit; out of state, \$20,266 + fee \$532 per year; room, \$4,394–5,064; board, \$3,142–3,495

Website: <<http://www.wise.virginia.edu>>

The University of Virginia College at Wise is the only branch location of the state university. It is a public liberal arts college and is located in a rural area in Southwest Virginia

The Peake Honors Program has roughly 30–35 members. Its curriculum consists of honors seminars, usually interdisciplinary, including such topics as “Plants that Changed the World,” “Newsreal [sic]: the forces and factors that shape news and media production,” “The Year 1968,” and “Race, Class, and Gender in Latin America.” Students take at least three honors seminars, only one of which can be in the area of the major. Additionally, each honors student does independent work, either a senior capstone project, in which two faculty members act as supervisors and the student presents the results of the work in a public forum, or two smaller independent projects.

The program also offers both social events and periodic excursions to places of considerable national interest, such as Jamestown, the Biltmore Estate in North Carolina, or Charleston, South Carolina. Students are required to participate in at least two extracurricular events each year, for a total of eight to graduate with college honors. These may include excursions or approved on-campus events such as lectures, plays, or concerts. Social events such as cookouts are less formal and also offered regularly.

To remain in the program, students must maintain a 3.5 GPA. That is also the requirement for admission beyond the first term of the first year for both transfer students and those already enrolled at the college. Some financial assistance is available to students in the Peake Honors Program.

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Comment: The UVA-Wise Peake Honors Program is a relatively straightforward, but full program. Admission requirements, both for first-time, first-year entering students and those seeking to join the program later, are consistent: a 3.5 GPA requirement for admission, retention, and graduation. The ambitious program of extracurricular events, especially the regularly scheduled excursions, is somewhat out of the ordinary and seems particularly appropriate for an institution that is relatively isolated.

## The College of Saint Scholastica

Location: Duluth, MN; branches in Brainerd, St. Paul, Rochester, and St. Cloud

Size: undergraduate—2,197 (main campus); 2,858 (total); graduate—1042; honors program—160 students

Affiliation: Roman Catholic; Benedictine

Degrees: 41 undergraduate majors; 11 masters programs; 3 doctoral programs

Founded: 1912

Students: ACT average 23

Faculty: 177 full-time; 5 part-time; 198 adjunct

Cost: tuition = \$27,114 per year; room and board from \$7,498

Website: <<http://www.css.edu/Academics/HonorsProgram.html>>

The College of St. Scholastica has expanded significantly beyond its roots as a traditional undergraduate Catholic women's college. Undergraduate enrollment has nearly doubled over the past decade in arts, sciences, health sciences, and in pre-professional areas. Masters and doctoral programs are also offered. The college has five branch campuses within Minnesota that offer non-traditional programs and online options.

Students are invited to apply for admission to the honors program automatically if they meet any two of the following three standards: graduation in the top 15% of their high school class; ACT of 26 (or SAT combined score of 1100); GPA of 3.5. Others may be admitted on the basis of individual application and qualifications. An interview is required of all students for entrance into the program.

To graduate from the program, students must maintain a GPA of 3.5 with a minimum grade of B in 20 credits of honors work (12–16 credits for transfer students). At least 8 credits of honors work must be at the upper-division level. Graduates are denominated as “Webster Scholars,” named for a deceased former faculty member.

Honors courses meet core general education requirements. Many are listed as Interdisciplinary courses; the student and advisor determine which of the general education area requirements the honors course will fulfill. The program's mission is “to cultivate individuals consciously committed to gaining a rigorous understanding of the world and applying the best ideas and methods from multiple disciplines to solving world problems.” About eight honors courses are taught every semester,

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including sections of the all-college required first-year course “Dignitas.” Classes are offered at the levels of all four undergraduate years on topics such as “Great Ideas in Science,” “The Art of Recycling,” “The Russian Revolution,” “The Gospel of John,” “The Pre-Raphaelites,” and “Global Issues since 9/11.” Most courses are 4 credits; however, some are 2 credits. Students not enrolled in the honors program may enroll in honors courses with permission of the instructor or the honors director. Honors credit can also be obtained through independent projects or a thesis, but these are not required.

Extracurricular opportunities include one excursion annually, usually to a cultural event in the Twin Cities; an honors newsletter; travel to the regional honors conference; and at least one community service event per year.

Comment: The honors program at the College of Saint Scholastica offers quite a wide range of honors courses annually for an institution of its size. This seems appropriate since the emphasis of the program is clearly on in-class intellectual challenge. There is correspondingly less emphasis on extracurricular activities or on solitary independent work.





## **APPENDIX B:**

### **BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF A FULLY DEVELOPED HONORS PROGRAM**

Although no single or definitive honors program model can or should be superimposed on all types of institutions, the National Collegiate Honors Council has identified a number of best practices that are common to successful and fully developed honors programs.

1. The honors program offers carefully designed educational experiences that meet the needs and abilities of the undergraduate students it serves. A clearly articulated set of admission criteria (e.g., GPA, SAT score, a written essay, satisfactory progress, etc.) identifies the targeted student population served by the honors program. The program clearly specifies the requirements needed for retention and satisfactory completion.
2. The program has a clear mandate from the institution's administration in the form of a mission statement or charter document that includes the objectives and responsibilities of honors and defines the place of honors in the administrative and academic structure of the institution. The statement ensures the permanence and stability of honors by guaranteeing that adequate infrastructure resources, including an appropriate budget as well as appropriate faculty, staff, and administrative support when necessary, are allocated to honors so that the program avoids dependence on the good will and energy of particular faculty members or administrators for survival. In other words, the program is fully institutionalized (like comparable units on campus) so that it can build a lasting tradition of excellence.
3. The honors director reports to the chief academic officer of the institution.
4. The honors curriculum, established in harmony with the mission statement, meets the needs of the students in the program and features special courses, seminars, colloquia, experiential-learning opportunities, undergraduate research opportunities, or other independent-study options.
5. The program requirements constitute a substantial portion of the participants' undergraduate work, typically 20% to 25% of the total course work and certainly no less than 15%.

6. The curriculum of the program is designed so that honors requirements can, when appropriate, also satisfy general education requirements, major or disciplinary requirements, and preprofessional or professional training requirements.
7. The program provides a locus of visible and highly reputed standards and models of excellence for students and faculty across the campus.
8. The criteria for selection of honors faculty include exceptional teaching skills, the ability to provide intellectual leadership and mentoring for able students, and support for the mission of honors education.
9. The program is located in suitable, preferably prominent, quarters on campus that provide both access for the students and a focal point for honors activity. Those accommodations include space for honors administrative, faculty, and support staff functions as appropriate. They may include space for an honors lounge, library, reading rooms, and computer facilities. If the honors program has a significant residential component, the honors housing and residential life functions are designed to meet the academic and social needs of honors students.
10. The program has a standing committee or council of faculty members that works with the director or other administrative officer and is involved in honors curriculum, governance, policy, development, and evaluation deliberations. The composition of that group represents the colleges and/or departments served by the program and also elicits support for the program from across the campus.
11. Honors students are assured a voice in the governance and direction of the honors program. This can be achieved through a student committee that conducts its business with as much autonomy as possible but works in collaboration with the administration and faculty to maintain excellence in the program. Honors students are included in governance, serving on the advisory/policy committee as well as constituting the group that governs the student association.
12. Honors students receive honors-related academic advising from qualified faculty and/or staff.
13. The program serves as a laboratory within which faculty feel welcome to experiment with new subjects, approaches, and pedagogies. When proven successful, such efforts in curriculum and pedagogical development can serve as prototypes for initiatives that can become institutionalized across the campus.

## HONORS PROGRAMS AT SMALLER COLLEGES

14. The program engages in continuous assessment and evaluation and is open to the need for change in order to maintain its distinctive position of offering exceptional and enhanced educational opportunities to honors students.
15. The program emphasizes active learning and participatory education by offering opportunities for students to participate in regional and national conferences, Honors Semesters, international programs, community service, internships, undergraduate research, and other types of experiential education.
16. When appropriate, two-year and four-year programs have articulation agreements by which honors graduates from two-year programs who meet previously agreed-upon requirements are accepted into four-year honors programs.
17. The program provides priority enrollment for active honors students in recognition of scheduling difficulties caused by the need to satisfy both honors and major program(s) requirements.

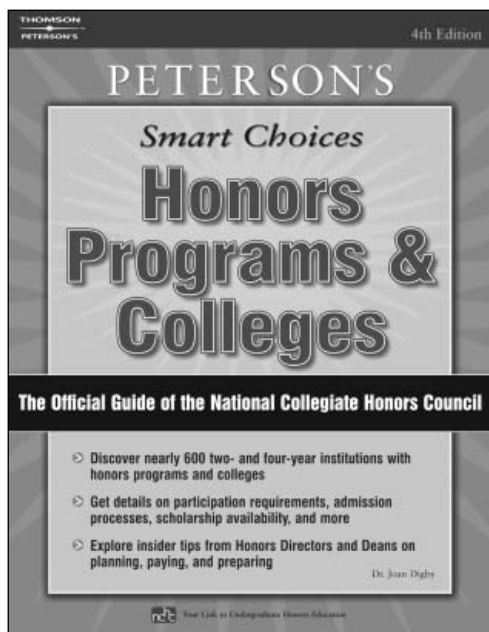
Approved by the NCHC Executive Committee on March 4, 1994; amended by the NCHC Board of Directors on November 23, 2007; further amended by the NCHC Board of Directors on February 19, 2010

## NOTES

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The official guide to NCHC member institutions has a new name, a new look, and expanded information!

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These and all the other helpful essays on scholarships, community, Honors Semesters, parenting, and partnerships make the 4th edition a must in your collection of current honors reference works. *This book is STILL the only honors guide on the market*, and it is your best tool for networking with local high schools and community colleges as well as for keeping your administration up to date on what your program offers.

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**Contact the NCHC office to access these out-of-print titles online:**

- Assessing and Evaluating Honors Programs and Honors Colleges: A Practical Handbook
- A Handbook for Honors Programs at Two-Year Colleges
- The Honors College Phenomenon
- Inspiring Exemplary Teaching and Learning: Perspectives on Teaching Academically Talented College Students
- Teaching and Learning in Honors

# 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 (Third Edition, 2011, 80pp). Practical and comprehensive advice on creating and managing honors programs with particular emphasis on colleges with fewer than 4000 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.

# The Author



Dr. Samuel Schuman created the "Beginning in Honors" workshop of the National Collegiate Honors Council in 1984, and served as its first director. His work in honors and academic administration has included service as Chair of the Honors Committee at Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa; Director of the Honors Program at the University of Maine; Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean at Guilford College in Greensboro, NC; Chancellor and Professor of English at the University of North Carolina,

Asheville; Chancellor and Professor of English at the University of Minnesota, Morris; and the Garrey Carruthers Distinguished Visiting Professor in Honors at the University of New Mexico.

Dr. Schuman has been a member of the Executive Committee of NCHC, and he served as well on its Honors Semesters Committee, Publications Board, Portz Grant Committee, and as Chair of the Committee on Small Colleges, the Beginning in Honors Committee, and the Program Planning Committee. He was elected Vice President and President of the NCHC. He directed the Maine Coast Honors Semester and was for several years editor of the *National Collegiate Honors Council - Northeast Regional Newsletter*. He has written for the *National Honors Report (NHR)*, *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC)*, and *Forum for Honors*. He co-hosted the first National Honors Forum. He is the author of another NCHC monograph: *Beginning in Honors: A Handbook*. Dr. Schuman was active in the creation of the North Carolina Honors Association and served as its first President. He has been a consultant on honors at over two dozen colleges and universities.

In addition to honors work, Sam Schuman is the author of seven books, most recently *Seeing the Light: Religious Colleges in Twenty-First Century America* (Johns Hopkins University Press) and *Leading America's Branch Campuses (ACE)*, and numerous scholarly articles, mostly on non-Shakespearean English Renaissance Drama (John Webster and Cyril Tourneur) and modern literature (especially Vladimir Nabokov). He served as President of the Vladimir Nabokov Society.