CHAPTER FIVE

One Hand Washes the Other: Designing Mutually Beneficial Honors Contracts

Antonina Bambina
Independent Scholar

At their best, honors contracts can be creative, challenging, exceptional learning opportunities for students and faculty. At their worst, they promote busywork that fails to deliver enhanced educational experiences. While I am proud of the many contracts that allowed honors students at my former institution, the University of Southern Indiana, to collaborate on customized learning and deeper relationships with course material and faculty, I also found myself on occasion having to apologize to students or faculty for the stunted, lackluster projects that one party or the other proposed. These conflicting sentiments illustrate why Richard Badenhausen urges the honors community to engage in the "thought exercise" of considering, evaluating, and improving honors contracts (5). One way that directors or deans may begin this work is by supporting

contracts that promise mutual benefits for both students and faculty. Honors can develop a culture of rewarding contracts through guidance, encouragement, and examples that motivate students and faculty to design projects that inspire and excite both parties. This chapter describes over a dozen creative ideas for such contracts in five broad categories: teaching tools, collaborative research, promotional material, grant applications, and community engagement. Contracts that bring shared value to students and their professors enhance the integrity and quality of the learning experiences that are the hallmarks of an honors education.

The University of Southern Indiana (USI) is a public regional university with an undergraduate student population of roughly 10,000. I was hired as the first dedicated honors director in the fall of 2008 to develop and enlarge the program. Although I am no longer in this role, the honors program grew under my direction from about 200 to over 530 students in eight years, and the number of students graduating with honors swelled from 11 in 2007–2008 to 72 in 2014–2015. Because of these increases, the number of honors contracts also quintupled from about 50 in 2007–2008 to over 250 in 2014–2015. Although the program's physical space expanded during this time, its staff and budget remained the same. The program did not have the funding to compensate faculty working with students on honors projects, so some became fatigued and began to refuse contract requests. Moreover, even though the number of students in the program had ballooned, the university did not have the resources or ability to fill additional stand-alone honors classes, making large numbers of contracts necessary for students to complete the program.

Badenhausen rightly argues that a system in which students complete many honors contracts without faculty compensation is unsustainable and unfair. He also states: "Contracts can devolve when employed as a stopgap measure . . . and a crutch for underresourced programs" (5). Nonetheless, when well positioned and managed, contracts can maintain a commitment to providing:

1. enhanced learning experiences;
2. opportunities to build deeper relationships;

3. access to customized, nuanced, discipline-specific knowledge; and
4. firsthand professional and practical experience.

Badenhausen asks whether contracts are "dirty little secrets" or simply taken for granted (4). They are often both, but they should be neither. Directors or deans can facilitate the benefits of honors contracts without overburdening faculty or compromising the honors experience by advocating and making possible contracts that work in everyone's interests. These projects simultaneously relieve the workload of faculty and teach students valuable skills in a creative manner. This arrangement offers faculty non-monetary rewards that compensate them for their time and effort and gives students access to custom-made learning experiences.

BACKGROUND

Although Badenhausen correctly asserts that the National Collegiate Honors Council's (NCHC) "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program" document does not specifically use the term "honors contract," contracts defined as "enriched options within regular courses" have existed as one of four basic course types in the honors curriculum since at least 1989, when Samuel Schuman first published *Beginning in Honors: A Handbook*, now in its fourth edition (33). Schuman describes this curricular model as one in which honors and non-honors students enroll in the same class, with honors students completing an extra project (33). Understood this way, honors contracts can help satisfy six of the sixteen basic characteristics by providing opportunities for

1. independent study;
2. community service;
3. experiential learning;
4. completion of 20% to 25% of total coursework within the honors curriculum;
5. consistently high honors standards and learning outcomes; and

6. pedagogical experimentation and innovation on the part of faculty. (Schuman, *Beginning* 65–67)

Badenhausen acknowledges the benefits of contracts in situations that limit honors opportunity, but he overlooks the potential of contracts not just to remediate but to expand and enrich the honors experience and environment. Contracts can certainly address the problems of populating stand-alone courses with students or quality faculty (Bolch 49; Schuman, *Beginning* 35); managing students' scheduling conflicts and credits earned before joining the program and/or institution (DiLauro, Meyers, and Guertin 109; Stanford and Shattell 325); and navigating highly structured majors with rigid requirements (Bolch 50; Ossman 3). More positively, however, students also quite clearly benefit from choosing topics they can and want to explore in depth (DiLauro et al. 110–13; Hochel and Wilson 7) and faculty with whom they can develop deep collaborative relationships (Ossman 4). One nursing student from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, for example, commented that contracts offered "a very rewarding experience. My honors projects allowed me to explore areas of personal interest in nursing that were not covered by the standard curriculum" (qtd. in Standford and Shattell 326). Independent study creates space for work that is interdisciplinary, community oriented, experimental, innovative, and experiential (Austin 14). Customized student-designed projects also give students a competitive edge after graduation; as Cundall argues, "The answer to the question about what honors has to offer is that it provides the kind of co-curricular support for an academically rigorous curriculum that enables students to graduate from college with a rich experiential background and to launch a successful career" (31). Personally, the one-on-one time and attention students share with professors in contracts builds independent thought, collaborative ability, and intellectual confidence. Professionally, good contracts can yield impressive resumes, talking points for interviews, detailed letters of recommendation, salient network connections, and valuable preparation for post-secondary education and professional life. These outcomes are not necessarily limited to honors students. Nevertheless, thoughtfully structured

contracts that award honors credit for such work and reflection give our students time and incentive to benefit from such opportunities.

The time and incentive for faculty to engage with contracts, however, can be a real problem, and Badenhausen rightly highlights the pressing, recurring issue of faculty compensation, particularly for programs or colleges with limited budgets. One strength of even uncompensated contracts is their flexibility: outstanding faculty whose department heads or areas of interest do not allow them to teach stand-alone honors courses can still choose to work with honors students on individual projects through contracts (Schuman, *Beginning* 42–43). Collaboration with a student who genuinely enjoys learning, values readings and assignments, and offers novel insights often inspires faculty (Werth 44). As Ossman concludes after surveying engineering faculty who work with honors students only through contracts, "Faculty benefit from interacting closely with talented and motivated students" (7). This caliber of student allows faculty to experiment and innovate with topics and projects that may not be suited to the general student population (Holman, Smith, and Welch 213). The experience may make it possible to tailor a project for regular coursework in the future. Additionally, faculty often appreciate that contracts allow students to earn honors credit in their regular sections because the entire class is enriched and elevated by the presence and energy of these outstanding students.

Nonetheless, the common shortcomings of contracts that Badenhausen describes can certainly lower the reputation of a program or college that relies too heavily on contracts (Bolch 51), fails to define and communicate contract standards and oversight (Bohnlein 154–55), or assumes that under- or unpaid faculty will agree to work that is neither recognized nor prioritized (Schuman, *Beginning* 42–43). Given that 64% of NCHC institutions used contracts in 2016 (Scott, Smith, and Cognard-Black 203) and that their use may increase as students accumulate more Advanced Placement (AP) and College Achievement Program (CAP) credits for general education classes, it is essential that the honors community heed Badenhausen's call to examine this curricular tool intentionally

and thoroughly, set standards for its use, and provide guidance to achieve those standards. The USI Honors Program tried to do this kind of work, which is described in detail below.

MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL HONORS CONTRACTS

In response to Badenhausen's appeal, this section delineates a method of elevating the standard of honors contracts by deliberately inspiring, stimulating, and rewarding faculty so that students gain exceptional learning experiences. Projects intentionally devised for mutual benefit not only help students to achieve their goals but also allow faculty with little time and resources to complete work they aspire to accomplish. Knowing that honors contract work will produce direct, personal, and professional value for both them and their students, faculty can uphold honors standards even as they inspire students with creative, engaging projects.

Honors contracts at USI follow the traditional model of connecting the contract to a cross-listed or non-honors course. For three honors credits, students must complete 15–30 hours of additional work and earn a grade of B or higher in the course; contracts carry no additional tuition cost for students or monetary compensation for faculty. Students may add contracts to any non-honors course with faculty approval. All honors students must complete 21 honors credits to graduate as University Honors Scholars. In addition, all honors students except those participating in the honors Living and Learning Community (LLC), who must take between two and six stand-alone honors classes with the other members of their LLC, can take any combination of stand-alone, cross-listed, and contract courses as long as they complete at least one stand-alone honors course. The standards and expectations of an honors contract are included on the form that students and faculty complete and sign, and, as director of the program, I reviewed and evaluated all proposed projects. When necessary, I would talk to the student and professor to explain the requirements and work with them to bring the project in line with those requirements. Once the student has fulfilled the terms of the honors contract, the professor evaluates the student's performance and submits a grade for the project.

To educate a broad USI campus audience about the value and benefits of honors contracts, I applied for and received an internal institutional grant to fund a luncheon thanking faculty for their work with honors students and presenting ideas about contracts. I asked a group of students and faculty who had collaborated creatively on contracts to talk about their work and experiences at the luncheon. These faculty-student teams showcased their contract work at tables around the room, and we invited attendees to mingle and talk with these teams about their projects following my opening presentation. We also produced a handout with basic information about these contracts. Approximately 55 guests attended, and our budget of $2,000 easily covered lunch, invitations, handouts, and other miscellaneous costs. Everyone enjoyed the luncheon, and we received positive feedback from faculty and deans who were inspired to think differently about honors contracts.

The examples included in this chapter are drawn from that event. A few of these examples recount my own contract experience since I recognized their value before I fully developed and formally introduced the concept of shared benefits to other faculty. In addition to ideas that were successful at USI, I have also included some suggestions for other innovative directions such contract work might take. I have described in some detail each type of contract, along with its benefits for both students and faculty, so that institutions may tailor these projects to their own needs. Just as Schuman eloquently wrote about some of the examples he used in *Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges*, mine in this chapter are meant to suggest "possibilities and multiple models from which to pick and choose, to modify, to adapt, or to ignore depending upon institutional need, culture, and history" (8).

Teaching Tools: Literature Reviews, Class Leadership, and Media Production

USI faculty have successfully engaged honors students in contracts designed to develop valuable teaching tools. When preparing for class, faculty strive to stay up to date on knowledge in their

disciplines and to make that knowledge relevant to the young people they teach. Keeping up with regularly published journals and the changing needs and sentiments of students, however, takes time and attention faculty may not always have. Honors students are well suited to work with faculty on these tasks. One way that honors students can help professors stay current in their disciplines, for example, is by conducting a literature review of recent publications. This activity teaches students key skills, such as how to complete a relevant literature review of contemporary debates in an area of interest, identify and summarize important points in their own words, and define what constitutes good research and professional writing. The professor can review the student's survey of the topic to gain a broad understanding of current debates in the field, choose which articles to read, and decide what to incorporate into a course. These tasks can quite clearly be accomplished in an efficient way by working with a qualified student.

I employed this approach in an honors contract with a student in my Medical Sociology course. The young man was a pre-med student who planned to become a general practitioner. He and I talked about his interests and mine, current topics he was curious about, and those that I might like to research for inclusion in the course. We settled on a literature review that explored the debate surrounding how doctors use technology to communicate with their patients. The student did some preliminary research and decided to focus on three distinct concerns within this broader topic: ways in which doctors could use technology to communicate with patients; questions of compensation and legal liability; and social, cultural, and medical implications of this form of doctor-patient communication. He wrote a review of four articles for each category, including an up-to-date overview of the topic, contentious questions with arguments and evidence on both sides of the debate, and a final summation of the important points to consider.

This exercise proved to be helpful for both of us. My student became familiar with research to consider as he weighed whether to communicate with his patients electronically in the future. Additionally, if he were to join a medical group interested in this

question, he could be a source of valuable, timely knowledge on the topic. His literature review also informed me about the current state of the debate surrounding electronic doctor-patient communications. I selected a few articles to read in their entirety, included some as course readings, and incorporated much of the current information into my lectures. It was a satisfying and fruitful project for both of us, and the letter of recommendation I later wrote for his medical school applications recounted our work together and how much we both learned in the process. This example also demonstrates how these projects can cross disciplinary lines. The literature my student included came from both sociological and medical journals, making it relevant to both my class on medical sociology and his future in the medical field.

Offering students the opportunity to be responsible for planning and leading a class is a more performative way to design productive contracts. For example, an honors student majoring in criminal justice studies wanted to complete an honors contract in my Sociology of Aging course. I knew her well and was confident in her ability to accomplish the task. We discussed her topics of interest as well as those I felt were not already covered in the course, and we agreed to focus the contract on the pronounced, yet overlooked issue of aging in prison. Large numbers of Americans are incarcerated, and habitual-offender laws (otherwise known as "three-strikes laws") lead to life sentences and aging prisoners. The problem of aging inmates is a timely and relevant topic for a sociology of aging class but not one for which I was prepared or inclined to create my own lecture.

My student submitted four potential readings weeks in advance, from which I selected two to assign. She delivered her lecture and PowerPoint presentation to me twice, modifying and refining it each time before finally presenting it to the class. We also reviewed her in-class assignment to ensure that it was understandable and would accomplish her learning objectives. She led an excellent class: the students were engaged and, in some cases, actually incensed by her presentation. She handled all of the questions as a well-informed academic would, bringing calm to the room

and conducting an extensive and lively discussion that left no time for the in-class activity she had planned. She also created a cross-disciplinary learning opportunity for students majoring primarily in areas related to health professions. Later, I composed a detailed, glowing letter of recommendation for her graduate school application, reflecting on her exemplary and impressive execution of this personally meaningful assignment. Another sociology professor successfully worked with his honors student on a similar assignment: that student led one period of a class discussion about the difference between how social movements are perceived by the public, treated by the state, and reported by the media in the United States and in her native country of Ukraine.

Media production can also benefit both parties: honors students can research and produce electronic content that faculty can then use in traditional or online courses. Two USI honors nursing students, for example, went on a faculty-led trip to England and created a video contrasting nursing in the United Kingdom with nursing in the United States. The students paid for part of the trip, and the honors program assisted them with study abroad scholarships. They identified three aspects of nursing that differed between the countries and secured permission to visit two hospitals where they could record interviews with nurses, doctors, and staff about these issues. The finished product was an informative and educational video exploring these differences through the students' field research. Because the video was made by two students, it was also fun, lighthearted, and fresh. Nursing faculty were then free to include it in traditional and online classes about international nursing experiences.

The kind and content of media produced for such an honors contract can, of course, vary and might include podcasts, public service pieces, or even audio walking tours relevant to a particular major or topic (DiLauro et al. 110). Using diverse media to deliver lessons, examples, or directions makes the content more accessible to different learning styles and allows faculty to connect with wider audiences. The possibilities are endless and span disciplines: chemistry majors can record lab work demonstrations for future

assignments; engineering students can film building methods to teach or challenge high school students to construct something similar; and business students can compile podcasts interviewing local business leaders and directors of organizations about their professional relationships in the community. Each of these approaches offers a template for honors students to learn about their interests and create a product of value and use to faculty.

Collaborative Research: Presentations and Publications

The obligation to produce conference presentations and publications is central to a faculty member's role. The support and momentum to accomplish this work can come in part from honors students completing contracts that span one or more semesters and take the form of laboratory, library, or field research. At USI, two honors students on another faculty-led trip to England worked with their professor to compare obesity rates in the United Kingdom and the United States. They examined research and collected data on obesity rates in both countries before the trip, completed more research at the host university's library in the UK, interviewed local health care professionals there, and conducted similar interviews upon returning to the US. The honors students and their professor presented their results at a conference together. The students enjoyed both a focused learning experience on their trip and the opportunity to share their findings at the conference; their professor benefited from their contributions to this conference presentation.

Beyond presentations, students in a variety of disciplines have also worked with faculty at USI on research that was eventually published. Faculty in geology, biology, health professions, and criminal justice studies have conducted and published research with the assistance of honors students working on contracts. Students can be involved in the publication process in many ways: collecting articles for a literature review, assisting with experiments, collecting and/or analyzing specimens or data, and drafting or editing parts of the text. A few students have even co-authored papers with their professors during their time as undergraduates. For example,

a gerontology professor partnered with her student and other colleagues to construct an attitude scale that is now used to evaluate efficacy of classroom activities designed to "address and challenge students' attitudes toward older adults and the aging process." The group created an online diagnostic scale that is publicly available for use (Ligon et al.). The honors student also co-authored a paper in *Educational Gerontology* about building that scale.

At times, students' contributions were too limited to earn the status of co-author, but they nonetheless benefited both personally and professionally by learning the research process and the content of publishable work in their disciplines. An interesting hybrid of research and publication was one honors contract in which a health professions professor asked his honors student to find and summarize a group of case studies to be included in a textbook he was writing. The student was ultimately credited as the author of the case studies in this textbook. In every instance, faculty gained precious assistance and support in accomplishing essential academic and professional goals while students built concrete, meaningful research and professional experience.

Promotional Material

Creating promotional material such as a newsletter, brochure, presentation, or web video is another kind of mutually beneficial project for students and faculty. Honors students can design and produce promotional materials both to gain deeper understanding of a topic and to have the experience of assisting professors in presenting topics to the public or in fine-tuning these products to appeal to student audiences. These projects build upon the use of media as a teaching tool by tying promotional skills to educational initiatives that connect with the contracted course. Topics can range from academics (e.g., a website featuring research resources) to professional issues (a blog featuring research on professions connected with the course subject) to recruiting (a presentation to high school students about the real-life value of that class). Although these kinds of contracts have yet to be implemented at USI, one opportunity could be using a contract to showcase a popular marine biology

trip to Belize led by a biology professor every other summer. Many honors students join this trip, and a group could potentially create a video showcasing their activites and what they learned. This video could be shown to USI's Board of Trustees, shared with prospective students and their parents, and posted on the biology website to illustrate a unique and exciting learning opportunity for students. This kind of project teaches students how to present an overview of a subject in a way that will catch people's attention. Faculty benefit from the experience and effort of honors students in creating relatable, timely promotional materials, especially for a college-age audience.

Grant Applications

Writing grants for internal and external funding is another venture that can result in shared value for students and faculty. The grant can focus on research that will be done on campus or in the field, possibly involving community partners. Students can be enlisted to work on conceptual components and to help write applications. They can perform preliminary searches for promising grants, complete literature reviews, compile topic histories, locate supporting documents, collect and analyze preliminary data, and contribute to budget drafts. Working through the entire process gives students valuable experience in how to identify and apply for a grant, experience that they can use in their future careers.

At USI, an engineering professor wanted to take a group of students to compete in the National Concrete Canoe Competition. The students needed supplies to build the canoe and funds to travel to the competition, so an honors student in the group wrote two grant applications for internal university funding: a student research proposal for the supplies and a student presentation proposal for the cost of travel and participation in the competition. When applying for these grants, students work with a faculty supervisor, but they must complete the application and apply for the grant themselves. These internal undergraduate grants are designed to expose students to the process of writing grants and give them a way to secure funding for projects that are important to them. All those

who apply receive from the review committee detailed feedback designed to teach them how to improve their grant-writing skills. For each of these proposals, the student wrote an abstract, literature review and justification, proposal, and budget narrative and summary. The students received their funding, built the concrete canoe, and participated in the competition. Students who work through this process gain valuable grant-writing experience, an impressive skill on a resume and in an interview; faculty benefit from assistance in procuring funding for their research or other projects in which they are invested.

Community Engagement

Educational community outreach has been the aim of some mutually beneficial honors contracts. A variety of majors in the college of Nursing and Health Professions at USI partnered with the Evansville School Corporation (EVSC) and other organizations to create three community health centers. Before the start of flu season one year, two honors students contracting in a nursing class designed a brochure for young school children about proper handwashing techniques. With the guidance of their instructor, they distributed that brochure to EVSC elementary schools and visited the schools to provide demonstrations and answer questions about handwashing and the prevention of germ transmission. Beyond their course content, these students learned about working with and educating a young population in the community. Their instructor hoped to decrease the number of flu cases at the health centers because children learned how to reduce the chance of spreading illness.

Such contracts can help faculty to pursue not only professional obligations but also personal research interests in the community. For example, a psychology professor who oversees USI's Safe Zone training on LGBTQ+ issues worked with an honors student in her Community Psychology course to create an educational video for first-year orientation, community events, and the Safe Zone website. In this case, the professor had assistance with an educational program that is important to her, and the student learned about

issues regarding the LGBTQ+ community. These projects can also directly benefit off-campus local organizations. A professor who works with the Spanish-speaking community, for example, devised a project that sent a group of honors students in a Spanish language course into that community to inquire about services they received, their level of satisfaction with them, and services that were lacking. After conducting these interviews in Spanish, the students compiled a report for local agencies working with the Spanish-speaking population to evaluate the extent and effectiveness of their services from their patrons' perspectives. The students practiced their language skills in a real-world setting, while the professor was able to help a community he cares about passionately.

Increasingly popular service-learning projects are also well suited to mutually beneficial contracts for students and faculty. Fighting childhood poverty is important to me, so I devised a service-learning requirement for my Honors 101 course, a requirement that could easily be adapted as a course contract in a variety of disciplines. Faculty can assign readings about poverty in America and require students to assist with youth activities at a local organization that serves low-income people. Before going into the community, students receive reflection questions assessing their expectations for the experience, with specific directions to cite in their answers what they learned from the readings. Following each visit, students then respond to similar questions documenting their actual experiences. Finally, they create presentations for the class and the organization, summarizing the experience and reflecting on its lessons. With this work, the students gain valuable real-world experience, the local organization benefits from the assistance and insight of the students, and the professor gets the students to lead a class and support an important cause.

Students might also compile reports on academic research for local organizations or community partners. Students can interview the group members of an organization to determine the focus of the report and then research agreed-upon topics by studying both relevant academic literature and the experiences of similar groups around the state, nation, or world. The final product can be

designed to help the organization with the specific topics; faculty members benefit when the organizations are important to them, their department, or the university. As these examples illustrate, community projects can be designed to help local organizations that faculty work with or value, while teaching students about these groups, their processes, and the value of civic engagement. (For an extensive list of projects that can be completed with community partners, please see Holman et al. 214.)

CONCLUSION

Contracts can play an essential part in the honors experience for many reasons, and the need for innovative approaches increases as colleges and universities face a changing educational landscape. Many schools, especially those that rely on tax dollars for funding, face the dilemma of shrinking budgets coupled with a greater expectation that honors programs will attract high-achieving students. At such institutions, faculty can often be overburdened by the needs of their departments and university service, creating a situation where honors directors or deans must negotiate with limited resources and a fatigued faculty. Asking for more work without more pay is unsustainable and, as Badenhausen points out, makes faculty or department administrators feel as if "they are doing honors yet another favor" (14). Adding the workload of honors contracts can be a strain that many cannot bear. In other cases, faculty simply do not have the time to spare for the work, even when compensation is available.

Another pressure point on honors curricula is the increasing number of credits awarded to incoming honors students through the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), CAP, and AP testing, which make it harder to require stand-alone honors courses and frequently change students' paths to completion. Often, stand-alone honors courses are offered within or alongside the introductory general education curriculum because higher level major-specific courses do not have a large enough population of honors students to fill entire sections. Programs may start to face a

similar problem with introductory courses in the major because of the large numbers of credits that honors students bring to college, many of which meet core course requirements. (See in particular Kelleher et al. 69–70; see also Bolch 50 and Guzy). Honors contracts may offer students who cannot take many or any stand-alone classes a chance to earn the credits they need to graduate with honors. As the number of students starting college with externally earned credit continues to grow, the reliance on contracts as part of the honors curriculum may increase, leading to greater dependence on faculty to oversee these contracts.

Although this chapter offers examples of honors contracts that can help faculty complete meaningful projects with the help of exceptional students, I caution against viewing such contracts as merely a means to an end. Faculty and students are not only up to the challenge and inspiration these contracts offer, but they often need it. The demands placed on faculty today can leave them overwhelmed and uninspired. Creating a space for experimentation and innovation can foster faculty development and have a transformative effect on the relationship between faculty and their students. These projects can lead to an environment that cultivates intellectual conversations and collegiality with young people who bring fresh ideas and insights and are eager to expand their minds and understanding (Braid and de Schrynemakers 81–82).

Honors students, too, often crave the benefits that come with the kind of experiential learning offered by honors contracts. In his article about motivating academically exceptional students, Clark cites studies demonstrating that students of above average ability are motivated by the desires to complete a task, to be creative, and to learn for the sake of learning (66). These students, Clark adds, seek opportunities to produce excellent work that validates their aptitude (72), and they benefit from verbal feedback that can come from close mentor relationships (71). One professor in Ossman's survey describes the potential benefits of honors contracts quite clearly:

> Completing the honors contracts—besides being a necessity for getting the "With Honors" distinction at graduation—should provide the students with the satisfaction of completing a challenge that was designed to truly test their ability. Some students may thrive on the challenge. Others may gain confidence knowing that they can do top shelf work; that they are ready for industry. And others may enjoy the extra interaction with their professors. Surely, it is a unique combination of these (and other benefits) that drives the students. (5)

A well-executed honors contract can satisfy all of these important needs, and increasing faculty self-interest in an honors project can guarantee greater investment in the quality of the experience for both parties.

More broadly, honors colleges or programs at all different kinds and sizes of institutions can benefit from creating a culture of collaborative honors contracts. Two-year institutions often have a curriculum that is focused on specific skills and specialized areas. Faculty can develop deeper mentoring relationships with students by introducing them early to their own work and to specific skills that they use in their specialized areas. Such work with faculty enhances student learning with authentic, collegial collaboration, even as it prepares them for the more advanced work they will encounter if and when they transfer to four-year institutions. Engaging honors students in literature reviews or other prelimary research helps faculty to focus on the more creative and challenging parts of their research, even as it allows students to build theorical and practical tools that prepare them for the next steps in their educational paths. For smaller institutions that feature close faculty-student relationships but may suffer from a lack of curricular variety, this kind of honors contract can allow faculty to share specialized knowledge in areas that may not warrant an entire class. Faculty can deepen their relationships with students by drawing them into a higher level of collegial specialization. At large universities, projects designed for mutual faculty-student benefit can strengthen the sense of honors community by allowing faculty to

pursue innovative work, often across disciplines, with talented students. In every case, these projects demonstrate to deans, senior administrators, governing bodies, the community, and prospective students and their parents how an honors program or college can elevate an institution and add exceptional value to students' and faculty's lives.

To implement a functioning, healthy honors contract system of this kind at an institution, honors directors and deans must promote the concrete benefits of this work while actively acknowledging the problem of contracts that rely simply on busy work. Badenhausen warns of the tendency to view contracts as merely adding one more thing, rather than developing a focused approach to learning (8). At times, changing a culture that tends just to require an extra paper in a contracted course may be difficult since some students and faculty prefer the path of least resistance. Directors and deans may face objections or distinterest from honors students who need to spend time engaging in internships, preparing graduate or medical school applications, or completing clinicals, and who thus may spend too little time developing a thoughtful approach to the one remaining class that they need to complete for honors graduation. University administrators want an annual increase in the number of students graduating with honors, and they may have little time for qualitative arguments about the impact of honors contracts. Similarly, faculty may voice opposition and assert their autonomy over the kind of work they assign, especially if they are not compensated financially for that work. The threat of a faculty member who may altogether refuse honors contracts can be very real.

Honors educators can combat these issues, however, by creating a culture that values and implements mutually beneficial honors contracts. To do so, directors and deans can employ a threefold approach: articulating the motivating ethos behind those contracts, formalizing guidelines and procedures, and educating and enlisting stakeholders. With the assistance of honors staff, faculty, and student councils, honors programs or colleges can formulate the rationale, guiding principles, benefits, and justification of this kind of contract, with particular attention to the distinguishing characteristics

of honors at the institution and the specific value that honors education brings. (*JNCHC*'s "Forum on 'Honors Culture'" is particularly useful in this regard.) Pertinent literature should be reviewed, such as Slavin's article, "Creating Honors Culture," which makes the case that the most distinctive aspect of honors is the practice of taking intellectual risks (16–17). Ford's essay, "Creating an Honors Culture," builds on this idea by emphasizing motivation and innovation and adding a passion for learning (28). Collaborative faculty-student honors contracts offer one way to celebrate, preserve, and renew these values in honors education. Such contracts create an environment where students and faculty thrive together with the expectation that honors will offer them something special. In meeting that expectation, honors programs or colleges not only improve their participant experiences, but they also engage the entire university by modeling the possibilities for outstanding faculty-student collaboration.

As later chapters in this volume suggest, contract forms and processes can foreground guidelines, criteria, and examples that embody this ethos, and honors must take the lead in educating both students and faculty about contracts and then in monitoring their progress. Once faculty and students begin to flourish together in this work, they become outstanding ambassadors for such collaborative honors contracts. At orientations, luncheons, meetings, and retreats, students and faculty can share their experiences with peers, describing how honors contracts have enhanced their personal, academic, and professional lives. Badenhausen laments that he is "troubled when contracts become a replacement for an intentional, well-developed curriculum or when they emerge as a necessary compromise" (7). Acknowledging that we are all troubled by these problems, we must accept responsibility for creating contracts that enhance rather than concede the honors experience. This volume offers a timely and valuable opportunity for the NCHC to begin thinking deeply and collaboratively about contracts. Only through such coordinated work can we meet Badenhausen's challenge of building contracts in the true aspirational spirit of honors education.

WORKS CITED

Austin, C. Grey. *Honors Programs: Development, Review, and Revitalization*. National Collegiate Honors Council, 1991. Monographs in Honors Education.

Badenhausen, Richard. "Curriculum Gone Bad: The Case against Honors Contracts." *Building Honors Contracts: Insights and Oversights*, edited by Kristine A. Miller, National Collegiate Honors Council, 2020, pp. 3–19. National Collegiate Honors Council Monograph Series.

Bohnlein, Ivy Briana. *Honoring Our Promise: Honors College Practice and the Student Experience*. PhD dissertation, Arizona State University, 2008.

Bolch, Kambra. "Contracting in Honors." *Honors in Practice*, vol. 1, 2005, pp. 49–61.

Braid, Bernice, and Gladys Palma de Schrynemakers. "Conservation, Experimentation, Innovation, and Model Honors Programs." *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2011, pp. 79–84.

Clark, Larry. "Motivational Issues in the Education of Academically Talented College Students." *Inspiring Exemplary Teaching and Learning: Perspectives on Teaching Academically Talented College Students*, edited by Larry Clark and John Zubizarreta, National Collegiate Honors Council, 2008, pp. 65–106. National Collegiate Honors Council Monograph Series.

Cundall, Michael K., Jr. "Admissions, Retention, and Reframing the Question 'Isn't It Just More Work?'" *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2013, pp. 31–34.

DiLauro, Alyce, et al. "The Value of Extending the Honors Contract Beyond One Semester: A Case Study with Smithsonian Dinosaurs." *Honors in Practice*, vol. 6, 2010, pp. 109–15.

Ford, Jim. "Creating an Honors Culture." *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2008, pp. 27–29.

"Forum on 'Honors Culture.'" *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2008, pp. 13–44.

Guzy, Annmarie. "AP, Dual Enrollment, and the Survival of Honors Education." *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2016, pp. 3–11.

Hochel, Sandy, and Charmaine E. Wilson. "Challenging the Superior Student Using Honors Contracts." Unpublished conference paper. Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association, San Diego, CA, Nov. 1996.

Holman, Debra K., et al. "Honoring Experiential Education." *Honors in Practice*, vol. 5, 2009, pp. 211–18.

Kelleher, Maureen E., et al. "The Role of Advanced Placement Credit in Honors Education." *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2008, pp. 61–79.

Ligon, Mary, et al. "At-O-A—Aging Attitude Scale." *Center for Healthy Aging and Wellness*, 2013, <https://www.usi.edu/health/healthyaging/at-o-a-aging-attitude-scale>. Accessed 16 June 2018.

Ossman, Kathleen A. K. "Enhancing the Education of Engineering Technology Students Through an Honors Program." Unpublished conference paper. American Society for Engineering Education Annual Conference and Exposition Conference, Portland, OR, June 2005.

Schuman, Samuel. *Beginning in Honors: A Handbook*. 4th edition. National Collegiate Honors Council, 2006. National Collegiate Honors Council Monograph Series.

—. *Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges*. 3rd ed. National Collegiate Honors Council, 2011. National Collegiate Honors Council Monograph Series.

Scott, Richard I., et al. "Demography of Honors: The Census of U.S. Honors Programs and Colleges." *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2017, pp. 189–224.

Slavin, Charles. "Defining Honors Culture." *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2008, pp. 15–18.

Stanford, Deb, and Mona Shattell. "Using an Honors Program to Engage Undergraduate Students in Research." *Nursing Education Perspectives*, vol. 31, no. 5, 2010, pp. 325–26.

Werth, Alexander. "On the Benefits of Teaching Honors." *Honors in Practice*, vol. 1, 2005, pp. 43–48.

Address correspondence to Antonina Bambina at ninabambinabuck@gmail.com.