CHAPTER SEVEN

Enhancing the Structure and Impact of Honors by Contract Projects with Templates and Research Hubs

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INTRODUCTION

The Honors by Contract (HBC) option is by its nature under-defined. That is to say, there are likely as many versions of the HBC as there are honors programs or colleges that use them. Some HBCs are attached to non-honors courses to augment the course content, whereas others are stand-alone mentored replacements for honors seminars themselves, following more of an independent study model. Some programs use HBCs to initiate students into the nature and scope of undergraduate research, and the deliverables vary widely. Likewise, the challenges and difficulties surrounding HBCs change from institution to institution. Because it appears natural to conclude that we cannot state the necessary and sufficient

conditions of HBCs and the best practices governing their use, it should come as no surprise that the HBC option can be not only a source of frustration and perplexity but also an important opportunity for honors program administrators, faculty, and students to innovate.

Justifying the HBC and exploring best practices are critically important because of both the criticism raised in this volume and a more general cultural skepticism about the value of the liberal arts and honors programs (Keller). Defining and justifying HBCs are especially important tasks because honors programs increasingly use them to supplement or replace honors requirements. This chapter proposes two specific strategies—HBC Templates and HBC Research Hubs—that the Marist College Honors Program recently implemented to increase the likelihood of HBC success. Our work applies some recent research in organizational behavior indicating that more robust pedagogical structures lead to greater innovation and more meaningful projects. Both our templates and research hubs are efforts to build such structures in support of undergraduate research in honors.

Located in the heart of New York's historic Hudson Valley, Marist College is a private comprehensive institution with a liberal arts tradition. Marist enrolls approximately 5,500 undergraduate and 1,000 graduate students. In recent years, enrollment and retention in the honors program have grown significantly, likely because of a new curriculum, a change of program leadership, the development of living-learning communities for first-year and upper-class students, and an infusion of resources and personnel from the Office of Academic Affairs. From 263 honors students in 2014, the honors program grew to around 525 students by fall 2018. In 2019, approximately 120 students graduated from the honors program, whereas only 24 graduated in 2013. In addition to HBCs, Marist offers a wide range of honors seminars that satisfy general education or major/minor requirements, and all students complete a three-credit senior thesis project and a one-credit senior seminar focused on questions about how to live meaningfully after graduation.

The HBC at Marist is essentially a one-credit independent study project completed under the supervision of a faculty mentor. Students typically register for the HBC in the junior year, after completing honors seminar requirements and before beginning the senior thesis project. At our institution, the HBC thus marks a transition between coursework and independent undergraduate research. The honors program does not offer a stand-alone thesis preparation course; instead, the HBC is variously used by faculty to instill habits of scholarship and research in students. No standard way to complete an HBC exists at Marist, and students can propose almost any kind of course-related project on which to collaborate with a faculty mentor. Some contracts are attached to courses students are taking, thereby turning a three-credit course into a four-credit course with additional mentoring and research expectations. Contracts are also completed independently with faculty members for honors credit. In the most general terms, the honors program uses the HBC to build relationships with faculty and to introduce students to the nature, scope, and significance of undergraduate research. This work requires clear, frequent communication between the honors administration and our faculty and students. Faculty are compensated for their work in the amount of a one-credit independent study, and faculty use HBC mentoring in self-evaluations for tenure and promotion in the area of teaching effectiveness. Compensating faculty for HBC and honors thesis supervision was without question an important administrative decision that increased faculty engagement and student retention at Marist.

The flexible, relatively undefined nature of HBCs at Marist is both a strength and a weakness. On the one hand, HBCs are readily adaptable to a wide range of student interests and fields of study; they lend themselves especially well to interdisciplinary work. They also foster faculty-student mentoring relationships that are critical to the long-term success and happiness of both students and faculty members. On the other hand, despite our best efforts at advising, some students and even faculty remain confused about the nature and purpose of the HBC. Our use of both contract templates and

research hubs has helped to guide faculty and students in the HBC process while still maintaining individual academic autonomy and creativity. Templates provide students with a common structure and roadmap for completing the HBC. They increase communication between students and faculty while articulating problems, resources, and the skills necessary for doing sound academic research in a particular field of study. (See the Appendix for an example of the template model in the interdisciplinary field of Applied Ethics.) More broadly, HBC research hubs give students the opportunity to join an ongoing research project at a center or institute on or off campus. Templates and research hubs thus provide structure and direction to students who may otherwise fail to understand and appreciate the valuable opportunity provided by the HBC and to faculty who are new to or confused by HBCs. Both of these tools communicate standards and purpose in a way that improves the outcomes of our HBCs.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR HBC AT MARIST

The central values of our honors program are faculty-student mentoring, undergraduate research, and the classical Greek concept of *eudaimonia*, loosely translated as happiness, but more precisely defined as well-being, flourishing, or thriving. We have also been intentional in adopting a pluralistic approach to what counts as sound undergraduate research. Our values framework is supported by our program's use of HBC experiences. HBC work at Marist does not replace general honors requirements in our curriculum; instead, contracts are used primarily to expose students to the nature and scope of undergraduate research in order to prepare them for the honors thesis project in the senior year. These projects, we argue below, are central to student success both in college and after graduation.

HBC work engages students with research to help them build faculty-mentoring relationships that are central to their success both now and over the long term. It is hard to overstate the importance of faculty mentoring for academic success and retention in

college, and even for professional engagement and personal happiness long after degree completion. Today, however, an insufficient number of students find adequate mentoring while in college, certainly a missed opportunity for both students and faculty (Johnson 4–6). Students who report having a mentor are also more likely to develop important skills, gain confidence, practice networking, prepare for future workplace engagement, earn higher salaries, and even approach more elusive, yet equally important states like *eudaimonia* (*Great Jobs*, *Great Lives*). Students with mentors also report higher levels of satisfaction with academic programs and institutions, and they are more likely to be engaged as alumni. Faculty, too, benefit from mentoring relationships with students, which studies correlate with higher workplace satisfaction, career development, and even greater research output (Anderson, Lyons, and Weiner 9–10). Perhaps unsurprisingly, mentoring has been referred to as the "fourth leg" of the academic stool—as important for faculty as scholarship, teaching, and service, even if it is generally not formally or adequately recognized in the tenure and promotion processes of our institutions (Jacob 486). These measurable impacts make a strong case for the centrality of undergraduate research, and thus HBC work as described in this chapter, in building the kinds of academic relationships that directly impact the happiness and well-being of both students and faculty.

Some significant barriers, however, can impede faculty mentorship of undergraduates, despite the clear benefits of such work (Johnson 138), making honors mentoring opportunities increasingly important. Since undergraduates typically spend less time in college than graduate students, change majors or declare them well into their sophomore years, and sometimes come to college lacking understanding of the critical importance of faculty mentors, the undergraduate mentoring that does occur is often informal and unstructured. Honors programs and colleges, especially those that include research requirements in their curricula, have an advantage when it comes to encouraging mentoring because they create a formal framework for fostering these relationships (Johnson 139). The HBC provides such structure for honors students and faculty

conducting research and building these critical relationships. For students in our program, the HBC is a formal first step toward completing credit-bearing undergraduate research. Because HBC experiences occur earlier in a student's education than theses, they have the distinct advantage of forging foundational mentoring relationships. Furthermore, these relationships are not limited to faculty who regularly teach in honors, thereby increasing the scope and impact of honors enrichment to all departments and majors by including a wider cross-section of faculty. When successful, the HBC option provides students with a distinctive academic experience in their major or an interdisciplinary field of interest. As Anne Dotter argues in Chapter Three of this volume, honors contracts empower students to initiate important mentoring relationships, learn about the nature and scope of independent research projects, and embrace the flexibility and freedom to pursue their own academic interests beyond the content of their classes. By allowing students to complete their honors requirements, even as they build important research skills that set them up for success in their theses and future professions, the HBC part of our curriculum ultimately increases retention and leads to more robust honors graduation rates.

In addition to the focus on research and mentoring, our honors program has adopted a pluralistic approach to undergraduate research, an approach that includes HBC work. This choice is in part based on the difficulties—and benefits—of the flexibility built into HBC experiences. Our pluralistic approach is perhaps best explained by borrowing an insight from Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*: rejecting general descriptions, he instead appeals to family resemblances as an analogy to capture the variability of meaning and its application, a variability that we find key to the HBC experience. Wittgenstein recommends that we drop the search for universal definitions and instead travel through "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing" (66). The following section describes several distinct pathways our honors program has created to help students and faculty complete successful HBC work.

HBC OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND SOLUTIONS

HBC work was first introduced to the Marist College Honors Program curriculum in 2013 after a wholesale revision of program requirements. We have, admittedly, experienced some growing pains as we have increasingly relied on HBC experiences to establish research expectations in the junior year. The primary challenge has been to maintain focus on core student learning outcomes in light of the varied nature of HBCs at Marist. We understand that our approach to HBC work may initially seem to validate Richard Badenhausen's concerns about eroding requirements and degrading the overall standing of honors on campus. With the formalization of HBC requirements, our revised honors curriculum did indeed decrease the required number of seminars honors students take, even as it introduced a credit-bearing thesis requirement. Yet since that revision, HBC work has become an increasingly important and successful component of honors enrichment at Marist. Despite our own and this volume's initial concerns, the HBC at Marist does not represent a compromise that honors must make on account of curricular, budgetary, or staffing pressures. Instead, Marist has embraced the HBC as an important and instrumental academic step that solidifies the fundamental values of our honors program.

The Marist HBC is a one-credit project typically completed during the junior year when students have completed all other honors requirements except the senior thesis. The HBC is meant to initiate students into the research process, and students will sometimes complete the contract earlier if they enter college with significant AP or IB credits or if they arrive with a robust research idea. HBC work at Marist is typically attached to a non-honors course in which a student is enrolled, allowing students to build a relationship with a faculty mentor while gaining a deeper appreciation for course material. Beyond the classroom, our HBC research hubs allow students to join existing, ongoing research projects run through various centers of excellence at our institution rather than only through a course. Such flexibility can extend beyond our courses or hubs to a student's choice of mentor. For example, a junior's HBC

mentor may be a professor whose class the student took in the first year; in an effort to facilitate such long-term mentoring relationships, we permit students to apply for an HBC experience with a faculty member independently of a course. Such applications obviously require faculty consent, and this non-standard approach to HBCs does not have any negative implications for faculty compensation or the HBC factoring into tenure and promotion cases.

Students, in particular, value the flexibility of our HBC curriculum. Since 2013, they have completed approximately 475 HBC projects with over 100 different faculty, a number that has steadily increased alongside the overall enrollment in the honors program. These projects are often outstanding: students have presented their HBCs at conferences and integrated them into applications for competitive scholarships and awards, including Research Experiences for Undergraduates and Goldwater Scholarships, achieving levels of success that faculty mentors appreciate and enjoy. As relatively recent HBC innovations in our honors program, templates and hubs, in particular, have helped honors stakeholders to succeed by clarifying and standardizing HBC learning outcomes for both honors students and faculty.

In theory, the idea of an individual HBC project appeals to most Marist honors students, but in practice, the act of defining one is often intimidating and confusing. Originally, our program attempted to solve this problem through proactive advising, HBC information sessions, and examples of successful HBC projects from various disciplines. Acknowledging that HBC projects can fail for lack of time or communication on the part of students, faculty, and even the honors program itself, our honors program has committed to taking responsibility for managing this communication, a choice that is resource-intensive and demanding for our honors staff. The success of our HBC projects depends upon active advising to ensure that students understand both what the HBC is and how it works. Every semester we host four or five HBC advising sessions, during which we discuss the nature of the HBC, the use of HBC templates, and the options for completing an HBC as part of a research hub. Such group and individual advising takes time

and requires annual repetition with each new cohort of students ready to pursue HBC work. In addition, processing the HBC applications is onerous and time-sensitive since they must be submitted to the registrar by the end of the semester's third week in order for students to register and faculty to receive compensation. Because of the potential value of these research introductions, however, we have sought ways to streamline and clarify the HBC process for students, faculty, and staff.

These programmatic solutions, however, did not always address the underlying problem: although most students reported leaving advising sessions and HBC events understanding the HBC in theory, they remained confused about what a contract might actually mean *for them* in practice. This confusion has led to uneven quality; HBC projects suffer most when the proposal lacks sufficient detail, often due to the absence of concrete understanding. The default student approach to HBC work is to write a longer, more substantial paper that satisfies both course and HBC requirements. While this choice is predictable, it fails to maximize the HBC experience. Ideally, the HBC should represent creative use of critical reasoning skills to bring greater depth and precision to any subject. Such an HBC experience builds critical and imaginative thinking skills that are developmental as well as instrumental to successful undergraduate research or creative work in any discipline. Marist's honors program developed the template and research hub models in an attempt to solve some of these challenges with HBC work.

STRUCTURING UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH WITH HBC TEMPLATES

HBCs can serve as a valuable bridge to and foundation for an honors thesis project when a program does not have a thesis preparation course. Ideally, the contract process allows the student flexibility and encourages the exploration of topics in preparation for a deeper dive into thesis research or creative work. Developing a flexible template for the HBC encourages students to identify subjects of potential interest for their theses by asking them to think systematically and structurally about a past or present research

paper; the advantage is that they have help as they get an early start on this large-scale project. The template model encourages honors students to focus on quality research through an exploratory study of literature selected by focus groups of students and faculty. The HBC process always encourages self-examination and personal responsibility through self-identification of interests, motivating students to engage in further examination and research. Honors-constructed templates on a variety of subjects typically include the following content and requirements:

1. suggested research projects that are either discipline-specific or interdisciplinary,
2. an annotated bibliography to guide student reading,
3. a reflective assignment that focuses on the research process itself,
4. information on IRB approval and the use of human subjects when appropriate, and
5. broad-based resources for beginning research.

Templates are adaptable to discipline-specific or interdisciplinary material, and they often focus on developing specific skills that students in STEM, humanities, arts, and social sciences fields need as they develop academically and professionally. The interdisciplinary contract in Applied Ethics, which appears below in the Appendix, is one concrete example of how the honors program has created a flexible structure that builds specific kinds of student research expertise on the way to a thesis project.

Our template system has its theoretical grounding in recent organizational behavior research, which makes a strong case for how flexible structures—like templates—improve innovation and meaningful work. Research on organic and open-systems organizational structures by scholars like Tomislav Hernaus, for example, has shown that a systems approach results in both efficiency and meaningful work (6). A recent review of theoretical and empirical literature supports this idea by showing that innovation requires a dichotomous structure, while more monolithic structures promote

stagnation (Tushman et al. 1332). Research suggests that the value of work structure extends across generations: Mecca M. Salahuddin has found enhanced performance among inexperienced millennials employed in structured workplaces (3). Salahuddin also cites a study of generational differences by the Ethics Resource Center, which found that the younger generational cohorts, the "Nexters," exhibited work ethics similar to those of the WWII veteran generation (3). These "Nexters" not only trust centralized authority, but they also need more supervision and structure to balance their entry-level knowledge and skills. A comprehensive review of generational literature also found that millennials categorized as "Generation Y," those born between 1981 and 2000, work best in environments with clarity of direction, structure, and immediate feedback (Hillman 248). Jan Ferri-Reed, a professional consultant whose focus is nurturing and retaining talent, summarizes this situation by advising employers to be clear and precise with millennials: "The sink or swim approach simply doesn't work today" (32).

The template model allows a student to apply structure to a current or former research paper and then to explore further development of the topic through an extended annotated bibliography. This focus makes the paper not bigger but richer, thus setting the stage for growth of a big idea and research question worthy of an honors thesis. When the HBC is attached to a seminar, this extension allows the student to engage in deeper examination while also building research skills. First, the student develops an introduction that includes reasons for the study (e.g., examining topics leading to the thesis, particular interests in the subject, a research question, and proposed hypotheses). We often then ask students to enhance the basic annotated bibliography by employing a sampling of best practices used in evidence-based research to validate the rigor of the articles (e.g., methodology, sample size, and author expertise). In addition to developing research skills related to the formation of an annotated bibliography, including identifying, validating, and citing appropriate research, students are encouraged to complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certification required by the Marist Institutional Research Board to conduct

primary research. While honors students do not always engage in primary research for their thesis projects, we encourage them to take the opportunity to register for the course at no extra cost as they are completing their HBC projects. Participants have reported a sense of accomplishment and pride after receiving their CITI certification. Finally, the template HBC paper concludes with the student's evaluation of findings as well as a plan for proceeding to the honors thesis. The student includes goals, action steps, and a timeline for successful completion of the thesis in the senior year. The resulting HBC is without a doubt significant, but the work is well within the scope of credit hours defined by New York State (15 hours of instruction and 30 hours of additional work per credit). Further, the honors program instructs faculty about a mindful approach to workload, and the program pays close attention to HBC evaluations to ensure that we strike the right balance between reasonable and rigorous expectations for students.

The process of completing the HBC is almost as important as the final product, which is the argument that Anderson, Lyons, and Weiner make about the senior thesis project (xi–xii). It is therefore worth providing honors students space to reflect on the research process of the HBC. We ask students to write reflections on the nature of the research process itself, describing both their successes and failures. They are also invited to discuss how the project connects with future academic goals. The template thus gives students the opportunity to focus on both their own personal development and on their research process, creating a clear path of academic work on the way to a successful senior thesis project. Our model addresses the barrier of limited time in the final stages of students' college careers by moving the decision and planning period from the beginning of the final thesis semester to the junior year. This schedule ensures that the majority of honors students' thesis time as seniors is devoted to completing the project itself. The process of the focused contract supports the development of the students' decision-making and critical-thinking skills as they engage in self-discovery through review of extant literature. Furthermore, it prepares students for a wide range of thesis projects in the absence

of a thesis preparation course. The exposure to quality research and results and the development of research questions give the students the knowledge and confidence they need to choose a subject and methodology for a meaningful honors thesis project.

In fact, the most demonstrable outcome we have witnessed is the successful completion of theses and the submission of documents to the library for publication within the agreed-upon timeline. The structured HBC has been useful in reducing the number of students requesting an additional semester for thesis completion. Students who participated in developing a structure for their HBC based upon the template were able to develop research questions, request IRB approval, engage in primary research, and include creative additions to their theses. Such additions have enhanced both the thesis and HBC experiences. One thesis student, for example, participated in a college-wide panel discussion, demonstrating the value of her research publicly, while another led an independent seminar on her thesis topic in collaboration with a partner who was only in the HBC stage of similar research. Both the panel discussion and the independent seminar resulted from HBCs in the School of Management, and both concerned women and leadership. The relationships between HBCs and theses thus create meaningful relationships between honors students and with faculty and other members of the campus community.

HBC templates are different from other instructional support materials, such as the HBC application forms, learning outcomes, and outcomes assessments, that are distributed to honors faculty. Templates are in actuality both broader and deeper: they include resources and a range of potential projects for students to complete. Templates are not a panacea for the challenges associated with HBCs, but they are part of a broader effort to engage students through proactive advising, HBC events, and exhibits and celebrations of undergraduate research that highlight contract projects themselves. In the future, the program will explore how to catalog and archive HBC work in order to recognize exceptional undergraduate research, as well as to provide a window into the research process for students aspiring to complete undergraduate research in honors.

For a variety of reasons, the Marist Honors Program first created templates in the areas of Applied Ethics, Leadership Studies, and Organizational Behavior. Since Applied Ethics and Leadership Studies are both interdisciplinary areas of study, students and faculty benefit from direction in how to connect and explore a range of ideas. We added templates for Organizational Behavior next because an analysis of our enrollment showed that a high volume of students complete HBC projects in this field. We will use Applied Ethics as a case study to explain the template model here since the concept of ethics is central to both our honors course and HBC offerings. The Marist College core curriculum requires that all students take an ethics or applied ethics course. The honors program itself runs approximately six sections of ethics courses in any given academic year. These courses generally approach ethics from an applied direction, and we have recently offered seminars on the following topics: Ethics of Food, Moral Cognition, Medical Ethics, Ethics and Journalism, and Ethics and Technology.

In addition to their desire to meet the specific demands of our core, honors students are drawn to ethics for a number of external reasons. Training in ethics is becoming increasingly important for students applying to medical school and physician assistant programs. Aside from professional preparation, ethical explorations also provide students with the context and framework to ask big questions about the right and the good, human well-being, and happiness or thriving. Furthermore, we have found that every year a significant number of students from various departments address questions of ethics and values in their thesis projects. Investing time in developing an applied ethics template therefore made considerable sense for our honors program. The value of the template lies in our effort to bring together students from a range of majors and faculty from different departments in articulating a consistent set of academic standards and problems in this interdisciplinary field. This work provides students with a solid foundation in both ethical theory and application, whether or not they continue to research ethics for their theses.

The Applied Ethics template, which is in the Appendix, provides students with a range of projects for HBC consideration. Students can select from 1) a traditional applied ethics research project, 2) a case study analysis, or 3) a case study composition. The template also explains the specific assessments used for completing the HBC and integrates the research skills described above. In the end, the template provides students with a sufficient amount of guidance in ethical theory to analyze a problem in their major or an interdisciplinary field of interest. It also encourages them to reflect on the research process itself and to consider how they might expand the HBC work into a thesis project.

HBC RESEARCH HUBS

In addition to templates, our honors program has created strategic partnerships with campus institutes and centers to manage an increasing volume of HBC proposals. The rationale for these research hubs is essentially the same as for the template: to provide direction while allowing students research autonomy. Furthermore, hubs differentiate the HBC from other undergraduate academic work and encourage students to see undergraduate research as part of a process that entails a wide range of problems and the theoretical tools to solve them. To this end, we have even in some cases partnered with outside organizations and corporations. Like many mid-size campuses, Marist has a wide range of research centers and institutes housed in different schools and programs, including the Marist Institute for Public Opinion, the Center for Ethics, the Center for Sports Communication, the IBM-Marist Joint Study, and the Raymond A. Rich Institute for Leadership Development. HBC hubs are built around partnerships that create ongoing opportunities for honors students to work on HBC-related research projects. We currently sponsor hub-based research at five campus centers and institutes. These relationships have grown organically on our campus, with honors students applying their critical knowledge and skills to the production of concrete deliverables for a particular center or institute. While we have not yet formally developed hubs

in the natural sciences, students have completed a variety of HBCs with faculty in our genetics labs.

Like traditional HBC projects, hub work occurs under the supervision of a faculty mentor, and the hubs have been created with an apprenticeship model of faculty-student mentoring in mind. This model generally takes place in a team setting, with labs and fieldwork being the most traditional context for hub research. Steven Engel finds no evidence that structured curricula like thesis seminars support honors student research, at least when measured across the following six learning dimensions: knowledge synthesis, information and literacy skills, interaction and communication skills, professional development, professional advancement, and personal development (120). An apprenticeship model for undergraduate research, Engel argues, demonstrates stronger learning gains than either a structured curriculum or a complete lack of structure (121). By choosing a hub over an open HBC or template, students relinquish some flexibility and autonomy to determine the scope of their projects since hub projects are all pre-existing. Nonetheless, students often benefit from the clear scope of these projects, and they build knowledge and skillsets similar to those of students engaged in more traditional or template HBC experiences. In fact, hubs are an increasingly important part of our HBC offerings: 15% of HBC projects completed in fall 2018 alone were part of our hubs. Similarly, our consistent requirements and outcomes for all HBC work—students register for credit, faculty are compensated, and all contracts adhere to credit-hour guidelines—guarantee an authentic honors experience for both students and faculty.

Three examples will help to illustrate the use of hubs on our campus. Whether engaged in hubs at the Center for Sports Communication, the Raymond A. Rich Institute for Leadership Development, or the Abaarso School of Science and Technology in Somaliland, students from different majors, including mathematics, education, and business, work together on team solutions to address specific problems. We have found that both on- and off-campus organizations are interested in including honors students in their projects. For example, our colleague Leander Schaerlaeckens,

Assistant Director of the Center for Sports Communication at Marist, has indicated that HBC experiences through research hubs "provide a baseline of accountability and academic rigor that we've had good results with." Schaerlaeckens hopes to "incorporate more honors students into our work to tackle anything from crafting a social media strategy for the Center to doing a deep-dive podcast series on a relevant subject in the industry we serve." Daniella Sesto (all students' names are used with their permission), a junior majoring in political science who completed her HBC with the Raymond A. Rich Institute for Leadership Development, reports that her HBC "has been one of the most enriching experiences of my academic career." The HBC had special value for her because it was "established without the restriction of a class topic," and she was therefore "allowed . . . fluidity in revising and refocusing my research based on the information gathered throughout the semester." Sofia Santos, a business major who served as the project manager for the Abaarso School HBC Research Hub in fall 2018, similarly explains that she, as project manager,

> was tasked with organizing and arranging meeting times, as well as facilitating communication within the group and with our advisors; I oversaw quality control and the completion of group tasks and kept both the group [and] the advisors overseeing the project updated on progress and goals that needed to be accomplished.

Through this HBC focused on the production of Somali-language educational videos, Santos "learned important communication, organization, and time management skills that allowed this project to be successful." In the end, our HBC research hubs provide both direction and a rigorous academic experience to students who otherwise might not know how to complete the HBC requirement. We believe that these hubs will become an increasingly important part of our HBC curriculum moving forward.

CONCLUSION

The HBC appears to be here to stay. It is also unlikely, at least at Marist, that the HBC experience will ever be perfectly defined in its nature and scope of requirements. Templates and research hubs, however, clarify the process by inviting students to tackle important research problems in a developmental manner. They also create the opportunity for students to build relationships that will be critical to their success during and after college. In the end, this type of academic work is connected with the short- and long-term success of our honors students. The Marist College Honors Program is therefore committed to supporting a wide range of potential HBC projects for its students, and templates and research hubs have in a short time become important ways of flexibly structuring our HBC offerings.

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APPENDIX

Marist College Honors Program Template Model for Applied Ethics

HONORS BY CONTRACT IN APPLIED ETHICS

All academic majors and fields of study—from biochemistry to political science—raise important ethical problems and questions. Ethical theories are used to analyze questions and problems about what is right and good. Today there are three dominant ethical theories: Deontology, Consequentialism, and Virtue Ethics. Deontology emphasizes the rightness and wrongness of certain intentions and actions, no matter what the consequences. Consequentialism claims that values depend on producing certain consequences and avoiding others, for example, pleasure and pain. Virtue Ethics focuses instead on big questions related to happiness and the well-being of one's character. Each theory will answer questions or solve ethical problems differently.

For the Applied Ethics Honors by Contract project, students are required to first select a *primary field of study*. The chosen field of study will be the focus of the applied ethics project or the case study work.

Honors by Contract Applied Ethics Projects

For the Honors by Contract in Applied Ethics, students are directed to three potential HBC projects. Students are expected to select one of the following projects:

1. **Applied Ethics Project:** For this contract students must research a topic, problem, or question in the primary field of study. The topic, problem, or question will be analyzed using at least one of the following theories: (a) Deontology, (b) Utilitarianism, and (c) Virtue Ethics.
2. **Case Study Analysis:** For this contract project students will select a case study in their primary field of study. Students will then compose their own analysis of the case using each of the following theories: (a) Deontology, (b) Utilitarianism, and (c) Virtue Ethics.
3. **Case Study Composition:** For this contract project students will write their own ethical case study and provide an analysis using at least one of the following ethical theories: (a) Deontology, (b) Utilitarianism, and (c) Virtue Ethics.

Honors by Contract Assessment

Applied Ethics Honors by Contract students are required to complete and submit the following assessments:

1. **Honors by Contract Project:** Students are required to submit a final project for the Honors by Contract Applied Ethics project. The final project must include the following:
   a. Applied Ethics Project, Case Study Analysis, or Case Study Composition
   b. Annotated Bibliography
2. **Public Presentation:** All Honors by Contract students are expected to present their research to their peers. This presentation can take place either in the classroom or in an Honors-sponsored event, like the Honors Research Forum.
3. **Research Journal:** All Applied Ethics Contract students are required to keep a journal that reflects upon the research process itself. The journal should focus on the process of discovery, identifying topics, arguments, and positions of interest, as well as time management.

Resources

Ethical Theory

- Consequentialism: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism>
- Deontological Ethics: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-deontological>
- Virtue Ethics: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue>

Finding Research

- <http://libguides.marist.edu/c.php?g=87332&p=2545179>

Annotated Bibliographies

- <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/annotatedbibliography>
- <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/03>

CITI Certification

- <https://about.citiprogram.org/en/homepage>
- <https://www.citiprogram.org/?pageID=668>

Evaluating Research

- Triangulation: <http://www.jeffbloom.net/docs/RigorInQuantQual-Triangulation.pdf>
- <http://www.umuc.edu/current-students/learning-resources/writing-center/online-guide-to-writing/tutorial/chapter4/ch4-05.html>
- <https://www.vtpi.org/resqual.pdf>

HONORS BY CONTRACT IN APPLIED ETHICS FORM

This form must be completed and submitted to the Honors Program Director by the end of the third week of the semester.

Name_____

Professor_____

Semester/Year_____

HBC Project Abstract (250–500 words)_____

_____

_____

What are the learning outcomes expected from this contract?

_____

_____

Will your project require the use of human subjects? If so, explain:

_____

_____

Please provide a timeline for completion of the project:

_____

_____

I agree to *(student initials before each statement to indicate understanding and agreement with the terms)*:

_____ Complete an exploratory study that includes the elements discussed with my HBC mentor: 1) completed applied ethics project, case study analysis, or case study composition; 2) annotated bibliography that demonstrates knowledge of and competency in best practices of annotated bib development, as well as validating the rigor of the literature reviewed; and 3) development of conclusion with findings, goals, action steps, and a timeline for work moving toward my honors thesis.

_____ Complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certification in research ethics and compliance.

_____ Keep a reflective journal in order to document the process and identify topics of interest, as well as to evaluate my time-management skills.

_____ Communicate with my HBC mentor via iLearn messaging/email and periodic meetings (in-person, WebEx) as agreed to in my HBC contract with the Honors Program Director.

Student signature_____ Date _____

Professor signature_____ Date _____