

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# Moving Honors Contracts into the Digital Age: Processes, Impacts, and Opinions

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As Richard Badenhausen argues, a foundational quality of honors education is its ability to place gifted students in direct contact with each other and outstanding faculty in honors courses. The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) defines honors education as “characterized by in-class and extracurricular activities that are measurably broader, deeper, or more complex than comparable learning experiences,” built upon a “distinctive learner-directed environment and philosophy” that is “tailored to fit the institution’s culture and mission” and designed to create a “close community of students and faculty” (“Definition”). This premise for honors education seems to spell the downfall of honors contracts, even though many honors programs and colleges rely on them to increase retention, reduce attrition, and raise graduation numbers, all statistics tied to administrative funding. Although honors students are not necessarily in direct contact with one another during

the contract process, we believe that contracts facilitate the high-impact one-on-one faculty interaction that is critical to the learning process. To make this experience possible for the approximately 2,000 honors students at Auburn University, our honors college moved in fall 2015 from paper to digital contracts, streamlining the logistics of the contract process for honors students, faculty, and staff. The benefits and impact of that change are the focus of our argument in this chapter.

In addition to reducing human error in a paper process that allowed contracts to be misplaced or overlooked as they moved through the approval process, even within the honors college office itself, the digital process has created for honors advisors databases of all past digital contracts, searchable by course and faculty mentor's name. This change has led to more proactive advising about innovative approaches to contracts and increased access to examples before students even meet with faculty. This advising includes database searches for advisees interested in exploring previous contract options prior to a one-on-one advising appointment, contracting workshops for faculty and students, and specialized group sessions focused on contracting. During one-on-one appointments, the advisors can then work with students to hone contract ideas in relation to the student's and faculty mentor's interests. Initially built to reduce error and eliminate paperwork, the digital contracting process has thus substantially improved both the functionality and quality of contracts for students and faculty. Honors advisors and faculty agree that this new process has raised the quality as well as the creativity of students' initial contract proposals to faculty. We expect these improvements to continue and grow once we finish installing a searchable database that our students can access through their student portal.

We designed the digital contracting process using an existing university-supported system and its on-campus support staff. This system tracks contracts at each stage of approval, making it easy for all parties involved, including students, to follow up on—and thus to communicate effectively about—individual contracts. In addition, the system generates a report of all contracts started in a

semester so that staff can use a single list to track and process completed contracts. The digital system automatically sends certified contracts to the Registrar's office to be added to the student's transcript, a task that had traditionally been completed manually by honors advisors. This user-friendly, accurate system allows students access to updated official and unofficial transcripts much earlier than previously, facilitating their applications for such opportunities as prestigious scholarships, graduate school, and professional positions.

These changes are critical because most of our students would be unable to complete their honors college requirements without contracts. By moving contracts into the digital space that our students, in particular, enjoy so much, we have fostered greater innovation in contract material as well as deeper mentoring relationships between faculty and students. We are well aware that faculty mentoring is critical to the success of contracting. Although faculty are unpaid for contract work at our institution, the digital process allows for greater faculty involvement in guiding contracts and better experiences for both faculty and students, especially at the beginning and end of the process. These mentoring relationships are of particular value to faculty who see the aptitude of honors students as on par with that of graduate students. Especially for junior faculty, these relationships with talented undergraduates offer valuable experience working one-on-one with talented students on a sustained mini-project. This chapter provides the insights of our honors college, our faculty, and their department chairs on both our previous and current contract processes in order to demonstrate the value of the changes we have made and to offer our case study as a model for other institutions.

## **AUBURN UNIVERSITY HONORS COLLEGE DEMOGRAPHICS**

The Auburn University Honors Program was founded in 1979, became a college in 1998, and currently enrolls just under 2,000 students. During the time period discussed in this chapter (fall 2012–spring 2018), the admissions criteria were an ACT score of 29 (or equivalent SAT) and at least a 3.85 high school GPA. The

majority of students in our honors college major in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields (an average of 73% of students in each cohort within the study period of fall 2012–spring 2018).

Auburn University is a large public research and land-grant university with almost 24,000 undergraduates spread across 14 schools and colleges and over 140 majors. Auburn undergraduates may earn one of two distinctions or designations from the honors college: 1) University Honors Scholar, which requires a minimum 3.4 GPA at graduation and the successful completion of 30 honors hours, or 2) Honors Scholar, requiring a 3.2 GPA and 24 honors hours. Both distinctions allow students to take up to 12 graduate hours that will count as honors hours. This option is designed for juniors and seniors who may not wish to pursue a contract or prefer to sample the higher-level learning of a graduate seminar. We should clearly note here that only honors or graduate work done or articulated at Auburn counts toward completion; we do not give honors credit for AP, IB, or any other high school courses or experiences.

Honors contracts enable students to earn honors credit by incorporating an honors component within a regularly offered non-honors class. Students may develop honors contracts in core courses that do not have an honors version or that pose specific scheduling conflicts for particular students; they may also be proposed in courses required to complete a student's college curriculum model. Additionally, no pass/fail (i.e., S/U) course or physical education courses can be contracted. All other undergraduate courses (one-credit minimum; six-credit maximum) are eligible to be contracted; the intensity of the contract requirements is proportional to the number of credits associated with the regular course. Contracts can only be completed for courses for which students are currently registered, and any honors student in good standing is eligible to participate. This good-standing requirement, for the most part, automatically eliminates students in their first semester in honors except under special circumstances when, at the discretion of the honors college and faculty mentor, a first-semester student may be

allowed to contract. Most importantly for us, a major outcome for students in their first semester of honors is to build community through several pathways, including enrollment in small honors seminar courses. In contrast, building honors course offerings in departments/colleges where we have the bulk of our upper-division honors students, including in the College of Engineering and the College of Sciences and Mathematics, is especially difficult because of budget limitations and strict course requirements in those majors. There are no restrictions on the number of courses that students can contract for in either the 30- or the 24-credit track. Thus, contracts are a necessity that we have tried to turn into a virtue.

## **HISTORY OF CONTRACTS**

The Auburn University Honors College adopted course contracting as an option in the late 1990s. The process ran in paper form until fall 2015, when we developed our digital process. From the start, we have framed contracts to our students not as add-ons but rather as precursors, almost prerequisites, to the independent work done with a faculty member during the Honors Research and Thesis courses. Recognizing Auburn's status as a Research I institution, the honors college has strived to use the contract process to provide mini-research experiences for students. Although Badenhausen reminds readers that contracts can hamper the development of honors students, we believe in the value of independent guided work under the tutelage of a faculty member, even if collaborative honors-only classroom environments are ideal and important.

Department chairs typically recognize the value of honors contracts in drawing more and better undergraduate students into their majors and/or minors, but to ensure that department chairs, especially new ones, understand the honors college's expectations about contracts, we provide them with concrete examples of what we would like to see in contracts from their faculty. They appreciate the collaboration between high-caliber undergraduates and their outstanding faculty on complex research and creative works, and they often convey their enthusiasm for this collaboration to

their faculty. We also remind administrators that contracts must be guided by faculty with terminal degrees and that any contract can be denied by the director of the honors college. Furthermore, to encourage high-quality independent work throughout the contracting process, we regularly 1) present at new department chair and faculty orientations, 2) host student information sessions on contracting, and 3) facilitate meetings between students and faculty by the end of the semester before they plan to engage in a contract. Eligible faculty at Auburn are generally elated to be asked to guide a contract because, like faculty anywhere, they recognize the significance of student interest in their areas of teaching and research expertise. The promise of collaboration with these students has historically proven incentive enough to engage first-time faculty in an honors contract, particularly because of the widely recognized quality of honors contract work at our institution. Many of our faculty find these positive mentoring experiences to be rewarding outcomes of guiding honors contracts.

## **THE HONORS CONTRACTING PROCESS**

### **Paper**

This process ran successfully for over 15 years. It should be noted, however, that when this process was initiated, the honors college was still an honors program and served only 200 students. After contracts were approved or certified by the faculty member, the student and faculty mentor were responsible for returning the signed bottom of the form to the honors office. At the end of the semester, a collated list of all the certified contracts was sent to the Registrar's office, where staff would then individually assign honors categorization to each student's contracted course for transcript purposes. Because no timeline existed for this work to be completed, honors advisors as well as students were often frustrated. After contracts were sent to the Registrar's office, honors advisors were responsible for entering those contracts into Auburn DegreeWorks, a student recruiting and retention software that is also a degree-auditing and degree-tracking tool. It allows students

to track their academic progress toward their degrees, review the requirements for their academic affiliations, and devise scenarios to explore different ways of meeting all remaining requirements to graduate on schedule. Obviously, DegreeWorks must be updated in a timely manner for honors students to be able to plan properly. Because honors contracts had to be entered individually by honors advisors in DegreeWorks, that task could not be completed before the honors categorization was on the transcript. The problem was that students and honors advisors had to wait for the Registrar's office to process each term's contracts before they could enter those contracts into DegreeWorks. Because most Auburn students plan their degree path in DegreeWorks and never look at their unofficial transcripts online, many honors students who had fulfilled their contracts were coming into the honors college in a panic because they were not finding credit toward their honors requirements in the system.

The major administrative benefits to this paper process included its low cost and the relatively low number of full-time employee (FTE) hours needed to initiate and execute contracts. Drawbacks, however, included:

1. often unreliable routing of paper from office to office, usually via campus mail;
2. a substantial burden on students to ensure delivery of contracts to the honors office by set deadlines;
3. barriers to contract initiation, such as the requirement for students to meet with and obtain signatures from the faculty mentor and the appropriate department chair; and
4. problems with undocumented load or overload teaching since departments were not required to track contracts, especially since honors does not pay faculty for this work.

## Digital

Since the early 2000s, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) has promoted the need to go paperless in student

services to increase compliance with FERPA requirements. To align our approach with that of the other colleges on campus, we transitioned to electronic folders for our honors students in summer 2016 in preparation for a fall 2016 launch. This moment invited a transition to digital honors contracts as well so that we could further reduce the amount of sensitive student information moving across campus in paper form. To create a workflow process for honors contracts, Auburn University's Office of Informational Technology, Registrar's office, and Honors College talked for over a year prior to the fall 2015 roll-out. The talks among these three units structured the change; we discussed:

1. the needs of both the Registrar's office and the honors college in this process;
2. the timeline to beta testing;
3. the key personnel who would lead the project;
4. training for the employees who would be integral to the new process; and
5. procedures to get help from the Office of Informational Technology and Registrar's office once the system went live in fall 2015.

Based on the meetings of these three offices, and in conjunction with the decision in the Provost's office to make heightened security for student files a key issue, Auburn allocated staff assistance in external offices at no cost to help make this change for the honors college.

The key to our digital contract process is Banner's WorkFlow, which is an add-on to Banner, the popular and ubiquitous student information system. Banner is the central information system for faculty and student services staff at Auburn, and WorkFlow is housed in the main faculty/staff and student portals, giving everyone easy access. WorkFlow operates precisely in accordance with the dictionary definition of "workflow," offering a "sequence of industrial, administrative, or other processes through which a piece of work passes from initiation to completion."



The process is relatively simple. Once the contract has been designed and proposed by the student, in collaboration with the mentor, an honors advisor initiates the WorkFlow process, moving the contract by automatically generated email to the specific people who need to approve it. The professor is the first to receive the contract via email; of course the student is copied. At this point, the professor reviews the contract for accuracy and agreed-upon content, with the choices of denying the contract, approving the contract, or adding contract details to the contract and then approving it. Once the faculty member modifies and/or approves the contract, it moves directly to the student. Students are able to review the contract details and approve or deny the contract. Denial from either party at this early stage will generate an email that informs the honors advisor. Contracts approved by both parties move on to the department chair, whose approval triggers messages to the honors director, professor, student, and honors advisor, with the approved contract attached as a pdf. The system generates a denial message if the department chair does not approve the contract.

Near the end of the semester, WorkFlow generates an instructional email to the professor, indicating how to certify or deny contract completion. Once the professor chooses one of those two options, the system generates another email to the honors director, the honors advisor, the professor, and the student, informing all parties whether or not the contract was certified. If the contract is certified as complete, a separate and more detailed email is sent to the Registrar's office. This notification also starts the automatic, real-time update of the honors categorization of the course on the student's transcript, a process no longer completed manually by staff in the Registrar's office. Furthermore, because honors advisors are connected to the process in real time, they can add the honors categorization in DegreeWorks much earlier than they could in the past. In addition to these benefits, we know that our students' academic records are considerably more secure and protected now than with the paper system that routed sensitive information through campus mail.

The substantial benefits of this process include the following:

1. Students, through their honors advisors, understand at all times where their contracts are in the approval process.
2. Students can cancel a contract, knowing that faculty will be notified, rather than simply not completing a paper contract at the end of the semester.
3. Honors advisors can pull reports throughout the semester (but most crucially during the first and final days of each semester) to determine which students, faculty, and/or department chairs need encouragement to continue the process.
4. Honors collects digital records of all contracts, which we use as examples in advising students about contracts that have earned approval in the past.
5. Honors staff can assist individual faculty with WorkFlow problems since we can see timestamps indicating where and why approval is delayed.
6. Honors can easily send interested or new faculty anonymized examples of successful contracts, strengthening the quality of proposed work and enriching the collaboration between faculty members and students.
7. Honors administrators are able to provide data to departments on contracting productivity and courses that are frequently contracted to initiate talks about creating honors versions of popular courses. Department chairs appreciate having this information to add to their internal impact reports for their respective deans.

The digital process quite clearly allows for a higher level of communication and interaction among honors advisors, students, faculty, and department chairs than the paper process ever could. One result has been more collaboration in the early stages of designing contracts, which is producing honors contracts that are likely to earn approval by both the department chair and honors director.

Another is that because all parties can see where the contract is in the process at all times, contract approvals tend to move more efficiently; when they stall, direct communication is both expected and simple.

The decision to move toward a digital process was motivated by both pedagogical needs and the following key administrative reasons:

1. New budget model adopted by Auburn University;
2. Institutional move to paperless student files and record keeping; and
3. Limited available resources, including FTE hours, in essential units.

The new budget model has also incentivized departments to create more courses, especially core/general education courses, which in turn increase departmental teaching responsibilities for current faculty. Because this change jeopardized both the development of new honors courses and the willingness of faculty to do more work with honors contracts, we clearly needed to institutionalize an easier process to minimize the workload for faculty and department chairs if we hoped to maintain existing partnerships. This need was especially clear since faculty who taught honors courses or guided at least one honors contract per term previously earned the title of “Honors Faculty,” but that practice was discontinued in 1996 by a new provost. This title has never been reinstated, leaving the honors college with little leverage to engage departments and faculty vis-à-vis honors contracts. The eagerness of faculty to engage in honors contracts, despite the lack of institutional recognition or monetary support, underscores the value they find in contracts.

Despite the clear benefits of the new digital process, particularly for students and honors college staff, not all faculty and department chairs agreed with our decision to change. Overwhelmingly, honors students have loved the ease of routing contracts through approvers and the capacity to keep everyone in this approval loop. Their biggest challenge remains at the front end: coming up with ideas for contracts before taking any related classes or creating contracts

with professors from whom they have never taken courses. Honors attempted to provide more sample contracts in STEM and non-STEM fields online beginning in fall 2016, along with information about how to approach professors concerning contracts. With the new process, we decided to overhaul our contracting webpage to include specific information for both students and faculty. The webpage shows how we have simplified the process for students through timed steps, access to sample contracts, and templates for email to faculty. These changes have led to better prepared students and more productive appointments with honors advisors as students prepare to contract. Similarly, faculty can familiarize themselves with the WorkFlow process before engaging in a contract and use the webpage to review those steps as needed. (For more information, see <[honors.auburn.edu/contracts](http://honors.auburn.edu/contracts)>.)

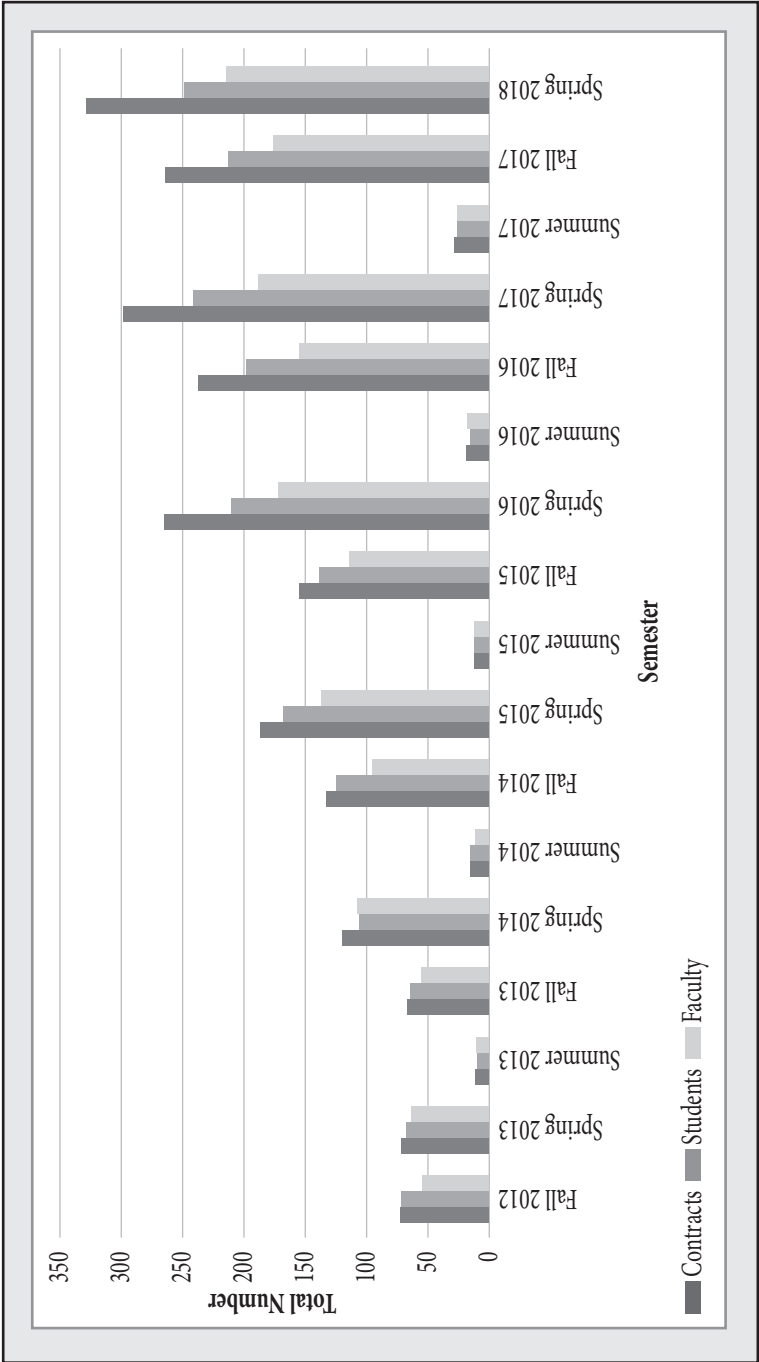
## CONTRACTS BY THE NUMBERS

Because of the many iterations of the paper form and the curriculum since the late 1990s, we have decided to compare only the final three years of paper contracts (fall 2012 through summer 2015) to the first three years of digital contracts that have been completed to date (fall 2015 through spring 2018). The forms and curricula in both periods have remained constant.

Figure 1 illustrates the total number of contracts, students, and faculty members involved in both paper and digital formats for this study's period. These comparisons were made on a per capita basis to normalize the data for variations such as first-year class sizes and numbers of graduates. Figure 1 demonstrates a clear increase in the number of contracts, students, and faculty involved when we transitioned from paper to the digital WorkFlow format. To prove statistically the relationship between the switch to the digital process and increases in contract numbers, student engagement, and faculty involvement in the contracting process, we completed paired t-tests with results of  $p = 0.004$ , strong evidence of the impact that this digital process has made.

Figure 1 shows that during the last years of the paper system, the rate of growth of the number of faculty members participating in

FIGURE 1. PAPER (FALL 2012–SUMMER 2015) AND DIGITAL (FALL 2015–SPRING 2018) CONTRACT COMPARISON



contracts decreased from semester to semester, despite the increase in the number of students engaged in contract work. We again used hypothesis testing to determine whether or not the digital contracting process actually deterred faculty from agreeing to contracts that they might have accepted with the paper process. We found statistical significance ( $p = 0.002$ ) in the hypothesis that the digital process deterred some faculty from adopting and executing honors contracts. Interestingly, our metadata suggest that although the total number of faculty grew at a slower rate with the digital than with the paper process, a larger number of faculty were now willing to engage in multiple contracts per semester, especially when they had never before mentored an honors contract. Those data also indicate that more honors students were willing to complete at least two contracts in one semester in the digital semesters than the paper semesters: the average increase in the number of students engaged in two contracts is 41%. This outcome is a positive one because students are making better progress toward completing their honors curriculum. The data do not reveal any statistically significant harm to students' performance in the contracts or reported quality of the contract work of students when completing two or more contracts in one semester. Thus, regardless of the slower growth in faculty numbers, the synergy between faculty willingness to offer more contracts and student willingness to undertake more honors contracts during the digital semesters has definitely helped to retain our juniors and seniors.

The data for both paper and digital contracts were extremely noisy when broken down by college per capita per semester, nullifying all statistical analyses of the impact of the process by college. Nevertheless, one major revelation was that the digital process led to an average increase of 38% in the number of faculty allowing contracts in STEM courses in comparison to the paper process. This finding is of absolute significance to us since the majority of our honors students are in STEM fields. Furthermore, the new faculty who became engaged in leading contracts once the digital process was in place were predominantly junior faculty at the assistant professor rank (87%). We see this finding as a positive outcome

of the digital process: assistant professors are likely to continue working with honors as they advance in their careers, and they also tend to be quite focused on their research, which can lead to honors contracts that provide students with transformative research-based experiences. In many cases, assistant professors have asked certain honors students to join their research teams after completing contracts with these strong undergraduate researchers.

Contracts are not, and have never been, a requirement of the Auburn University Honors College curriculum. Nevertheless, they are critical to the completion of honors hours and graduation with honors for many Auburn students, as they are for honors students at many institutions. Because both nursing and education students, for example, have strict curricula that send students away from campus for professional training, relatively few of them accept a place in the honors college; for those who do, their retention in honors has been historically low. Table 1 summarizes the impact of the contracting processes on nursing and education students. That every nursing and education student who has graduated from fall 2012 to spring 2018 completed at least two contracts during their junior and/or

**TABLE 1. HONORS CONTRACTS AND GRADUATION RATES IN SCHOOL OF NURSING AND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

	Nursing	Education
<i>Fall 2012–Summer 2015 (Paper)</i>		
Average % completed contracts	37.6	53.1
Average graduation rate	13.9	21.7
% of graduating class at higher honors distinction	0.425	1.36
<i>Fall 2015–Spring 2018 (Digital)</i>		
Average % completed contracts	89.7	94.3
Average graduation rate	44.2	71.4
% of graduating class at higher honors distinction	3.81	11.8
<i>Percent Change</i>		
Average % completed contracts	52.1	41.2
Average graduation rate	30.3	49.7
% of graduating class at higher honors distinction	3.4	10.4

senior years is worth noting. The data in Table 1 indicate a strong correlation for nursing and education students between the digital format and the chances of completing those contracts, retention in the honors college, and graduation with the higher honors distinction. T-testing confirms the significance of the digital contracting process in the success of nursing and education students persisting through the honors college curriculum ( $p = 0.001$ ).

## **FACULTY VIEWS ON PAPER AND DIGITAL CONTRACTING PROCESSES**

In order to gauge the views of the faculty and department chairs on the honors contracting process, 313 active faculty members and department chairs who have been involved in the digital contracts process were asked to participate in a brief survey. (Readers interested in more detail should contact the authors for a copy of this internal survey instrument.) The anonymous survey was administered electronically through Qualtrics® in summer 2018. There were 62 respondents: 52 faculty members and 10 department chairs (~20% response rate). Of those 62 respondents, 28 had also completed paper contracts prior to fall 2015. Of those 28, only 4 (14%) were critical of the paper contract process. Two of those four offered reasons for dissatisfaction: 1) department chair: "Not being available when forms needed to be signed"; 2) faculty member: "I would forget to do them—the email reminder is nice." On average, all 28 of the respondents who worked with paper and digital contracts rated the ease of the paper contracting process at 71.29 on a scale of 0 (extremely difficult) to 100 (extremely easy). When all 62 respondents were asked about problems with the digital process, 13 (20%) were critical of the process. Despite these issues, all respondents, on average, rated the digital (WorkFlow) contracting process at 81.02 on the 0-to-100 ease-of-use scale. Appendices A and B include all comments, positive and negative, of faculty and department chairs on this digital contracting process.

While only 10 department chairs responded to the survey, none of them left a positive comment. Several, in fact, made negative comments that demand honors college attention, including topics such as the following:



1. **revision:** “Would be good to have an option for revision so that the contract can be re-routed [to the originators] and then back to head/chair”;
2. **deadlines:** “There should be strict deadlines the first few weeks of the semester for submission of the contracts”; and
3. **process clarity:** “No[t] knowing where request originates, who fills out various parts. Not clear why it comes through the grade-change Workflow.”

Department chairs play a critical role in the contracting process since they decide whether their faculty can mentor honors contracts. The honors college is therefore committed to resolving these concerns in the near future by updating the information sent through the Workflow system to faculty, students, and department chairs.

Of the faculty who left positive comments, 75% of them who completed paper contracts before fall 2015 prefer the digital mode, despite the fact that 24 of 27 expressed no problems with the paper contracting process. Some clear examples of positive faculty comments included the following: 1) “I prefer the digital contract. It works great”; 2) “Easy. Efficient”; and 3) “This process has been relatively easy to manage—much easier [than] via paperwork.” Most of the negative comments can be categorized into two areas: software and training. Since little can be done about the actual software that we use for the process, our efforts will focus on developing more detailed and intuitive training materials for faculty members and department chairs in the hope of creating better faculty experiences with honors contracts in the future.

## CONCLUSIONS

The digital contracting process has been embraced enthusiastically by honors students and staff but not so positively by department chairs and faculty. As suggested earlier, honors advisors now have digital databases of past contracts to access when helping students develop their contract ideas prior to meetings with potential faculty mentors. Students really enjoy this preparatory information as

well as the ease and transparency of the digital system. Moreover, our advisors have found that contracting discussions with students are now much deeper and more clearly focused because the intimidation factor of having to approach a faculty member without any contract ideas is now greatly diminished. Advisors are often amazed by the novel and innovative contract ideas of students who have studied past contracts from a particular course or with a specific faculty mentor. Advisors have found that the digital process transforms students' dislike of paperwork into the thrill of imagining new contract ideas. We believe that preparing students more effectively to present innovative contract ideas to faculty will continue to result in more eager mentors leading more productive contracts for more students.

Like most technology-driven processes, our system needs ongoing improvement to facilitate the engagement of users, particularly faculty and department chairs in this case. Their buy-in is crucial since honors contracts depend upon faculty and department chair support. Faculty members who have experienced both paper and digital contracts prefer the digital process, suggesting that more training and direction might make this digital process even more appealing to all. Over time, particularly as we continue to gather assessment data, administrators will see clear benefits to this system. Most significantly, this new digital WorkFlow process has helped with what matters most: retention of honors students through to completion.

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## APPENDIX A

### Positive Comments: Department Chairs and Faculty on Paper and Digital Contracts

Role in Process	Free Response Comment
<i>Paper and Digital Involvement</i>	
Faculty	I prefer the digital contract. It works great.
Faculty	I like the WorkFlow procedure much better.
Faculty	Both worked fine. I like the digital version for the course description, because it is easier to type rather than handwrite.
Faculty	I prefer the digital contracting in WorkFlow.
Faculty	Easy. Efficient.
Faculty	This process has been relatively easy to manage—much easier [than] via paperwork.
<i>Digital Involvement Only</i>	
Faculty	It is great. Thanks!
Faculty	Definitely keep the digital contract process and web site!

## APPENDIX B

### Negative Comments: Department Chairs and Faculty on Paper and Digital Contracts

Role in Process	Free Response Comment
<i>Paper and Digital Involvement</i>	
Faculty	I was not able to provide feedback—just a grade, if I remember correctly.
Faculty	WorkFlow wouldn't open.
Department Chair	There should be strict deadline the first few weeks of the semester for submission of the contracts. The contracts come through the WorkFlow for many weeks into the semester.
<i>Digital Involvement Only</i>	
Faculty	I am likely not to offer honors contracting again for CHEM 1030. CHEM 1030 differs greatly from 1117 in classroom environment, material, and responsibilities. I'm not sure there can be one project in CHEM 1030 that can replicate [having] the honors cohort-environment present, and unfortunately, I can't cover the more advanced material that students see in 1117.
Faculty	I was not aware there was a course contract web page. Perhaps a short online tutorial for new professors working with the process.
Department Chair	Would be good to have an option for revision so that the contract can be re-routed for revision and then back to head/chair.
Faculty	It wasn't clear to me when a form had been submitted. I actually had to do it twice.
Faculty	I have some confusion about the fact that I needed to submit to approve. The wording seemed confusing.
Faculty	The format of the assignments after entered were difficult to read for the student. Not sure if this was the system or my fault.

Faculty	I was not very familiar with the WorkFlow process—this was the third time I had to use WorkFlow, but the first time for honors. Although I can get through WorkFlow with the instructions, the WorkFlow process is not very intuitive, and I have to work through the instructions each time. In this case, I thought I had completed the WorkFlow, but it apparently had not saved, and I was late completing the contract because it never “completed.”
Faculty	The student was not clear on the process.
Department Chair	The problem I had was there was no way to send the contract back for revision (to the faculty member who initiated it). Your only options are [to] approve or deny. So, if you determine that revisions need to be made, your only option is to reject, which causes alarm to the student and faculty member.
Faculty	The digital WorkFlow process is too confusing. There is nothing intuitive about it, and instructions are hard to find.
Faculty	Could not edit once submitted. Had to cancel and start over again. Students were confused and panicked. Edit was required based on chair feedback. Would be nice to have that feature.
Department Chair	No[t] knowing where request originates, who fills out various parts. Not clear why it comes through the grade-change WorkFlow. Still no clarity from honors about whom they want contracting for honors courses. Not clear at all that students receive any advice on appropriate honors instructors (or courses).
Faculty	Needs a better notification process and more intuitive user interface.
Faculty	At first, it was hard to tell if something went through. I seem to remember having to retype submissions before they “took” in the system.
Faculty	Final submission process was somewhat ambiguous. I thought I had made final submission, when in fact I had not.