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Penn State Schreyer Honors College

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SHORT PIECES

PENN STATE SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

CHERYL ACHTERBERG

Penn State's Schreyer Honors College utilizes technology to enhance its key learning, assessment, communications, outreach, and operations efforts.

In terms of learning, honors students learn more than just course schedules, policies, and due dates for their annual academic plans from the SHC website. Our most important learning assist comes from our thesis website with annotated examples, faculty and student tips, and a calendar planning tool. Honors faculty are also encouraged to use ANGEL, a course management tool that allows for on-line syllabi, course chat rooms, posted readings, grading records, and various email options. Some honors courses also participate in shared assignments with international student counterparts abroad using web technologies. We hope this expands greatly in the future as it brings a global perspective to the students' key pads with force and immediacy while maintaining the professional context.

A web-based honors advising assessment tool will be released this spring along with a research interest database for students and faculty to facilitate thesis match-up's. All in-coming first-year students and seniors will also complete a thorough electronic survey assessment about interest and career expectations beginning fall '03. The results will be used to plan co-curricular programs.

In terms of communication, our webpage is critical to our college recruitment efforts; we could never afford to provide the color, richness of detail, number of student profiles or quality of information in any other media. Our listserv is equally crucial to on-campus communication with students, advisors, and faculty. Nearly all SHC forms are available electronically. We are also converting paper student records to electronic images this year. Technology frees staff to become more student-centered in the delivery of services (our highest value), spares paper and time, increases efficiency, and extends our reach dramatically. In past years we relied on student wage payroll for our technology support; this year we created a full-time staff position.

We are eager for the new opportunities technology will create for us, both inside our classrooms and beyond. Without communications technology, many of our special programs and support services would wither, co-curricular program attendance would deflate, and mentoring programs would disappear. Technology in itself holds no magic, but technology applied to our mission and strategic plan leverages our ability to make good things happen.

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