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## Editor's Introduction

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# Editor's Introduction

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This issue of *JNCHC* begins by focusing with a wide-angle lens on the panorama of honors programs that stretch across the globe from Chile to China and from Qatar to Australia. The focus then shifts to a close-up shot of honors in one European country, the Netherlands, which has produced multiple programs and an abundance of research about them. This issue on "Honors Around the Globe" also provides insight into the history of honors, with its origins in the British educational system, its importation into the United States less than a century ago, and its exportation within the last couple of decades to institutions of higher education in numerous other countries.

Honors started out in the U.S. as a replication of the honors system in the UK, located primarily in the academic disciplines with a specialized focus on directed research. In response to Sputnik, though, a group of U.S. honors directors coalesced into a national organization that became the NCHC (see "The Wisdom of Our Elders: Honors Discussions in *The Superior Student*, 1958–65" by Larry Andrews, *JNCHC* 12.2); honors then evolved and expanded into institution-wide curricula and activities that have largely been the model for honors programs throughout the world. The organization of this journal issue reflects that history, starting with the British system, providing essays on the wide array of honors programs around the world that have adapted all or parts of the UK and U.S. models, and concluding with a lengthy and detailed look at honors in the Netherlands, which has perhaps the most unified, consistent, and self-conscious array of honors programs and research projects about honors based on the U.S. model.

Margaret Lamb has provided an excellent lead-in to our look at honors around the world in her essay "Honours' in the United Kingdom: More Than a Difference of Spelling in Honors Education." Lamb taught in honors for fourteen years at two English universities before returning to the U.S., where she is now Senior Associate Director of the University of Connecticut Honors Program, so she is familiar with honors in both countries. She cites the literature tracing U.S. honors back to its roots in England and then describes in detail the meaning of "honours" in the UK. While U.S. honors derives from components of the UK system, such as the tutorial, it has come to imply an independent curriculum with its own selection and graduation requirements and with values that include, for instance, original research, creativity, critical thinking, global awareness, collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and problem-solving.

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While these values are not intrinsic to the definition of honours in the UK, Lamb suggests that they are often present if one looks beneath the surface.

The following two essays describe honors programs that show a primary influence of the British system. In "Honours in Australia: Globally Recognised Preparation for a Career in Research (or Elsewhere)," Deirdre Barron of the Swinburne Institute of Technology and Margaret Zeegers of the University of Ballarat, both in Victoria, indicate that honors in Australia has always focused on rigorous disciplinary research. In the past, they write, universities took for granted that honors successfully prepared students for advanced post-graduate research in their fields but provided no evidence to support this assumption. In the past couple of years, government agencies have started establishing standards for all universities in Australia, and the authors argue that honors programs should, in this context, be held to high standards of accountability with documented proof of their effectiveness—an argument that seems in tune with the assessment and accountability movement in the United States and its proponents among a number of honors deans and directors. Another component of this essay's argument that probably resonates with most U.S. honors educators is the importance of research rather than vocational preparation as a primary goal in honors.

Denise de Souza Fleith, Aderson Luiz Costa Jr., and Eunice M. L. Soriano de Alencar, all of the Institute of Psychology at the University of Brasilia, describe another UK-based type of honors education in "The Tutorial Education Program: An Honors Program for Brazilian Undergraduate Students." The Ministry of Education in Brazil initiated this predominantly tutorial-based type of honors program in 1979, starting with fifteen students and now numbering more than four thousand students and four hundred teachers throughout the country. The authors describe the general structure, goals, requirements, and selection criteria for these honors opportunities throughout Brazil, and then they explain how the Tutor Education Program works in their Institute. The authors conclude by asserting that this kind of honors opportunity for academically gifted students is important not just to the students and to higher education but to the social and economic health of the country.

On the other side of South America, honors in Chile has been based more on the U.S. model. The 2006 volume of *Honors in Practice* included an essay titled "Honors in Chile: New Engagements in the Higher Education System," which is reprinted here with revisions and with a substantial Afterword. The essay was written by Juan Carlos Skewes, then of the Universidad Austral de Chile and now the Universidad Alberto Hurtado; Carlos Alberto Cioce Sampaio, then of the Universidad Regional de Blumenau and now the Paraná Federal University in Brazil; and Frederick J. Conway of San Diego State

University. In the original essay, the authors described a remarkable pilot program they developed in 2002 at the Universidad Austral de Chile (UACH)—inspired by honors education in the United States, aided by an NCHC consultant, and funded by the Chilean Ministry of Education—that adapted the honors concept to unique challenges (rural setting, rainy weather, and poorly prepared students) and opportunities (strong infrastructure, national concern about inequities in education, and a living laboratory for environmental studies) within a specific geographical and cultural context. The Afterword reports on the success of the program, as it enters its second decade, in achieving its original mission to merge academic skills with a serious commitment to environmental and social justice in its selection requirements, curriculum, and community involvement. The program has also gained a strong reputation within the university system. However, national problems that include restricted funding and social unrest present ongoing challenges to further development and expansion of honors in Chile.

Honors at the Tecnológico de Monterrey, Campus Monterrey, in Mexico also has its roots in the U.S. model, having evolved within the international degree program with guidance provided by NCHC consultants as well as numerous contacts made at NCHC conferences. In “Establishing a Latin American University Honors Program: The Case of Campus Monterrey, Tecnológico de Monterrey,” Mohammad Ayub Khan and Ruben Morales-Menendez describe the components of their honors program in terms of the NCHC’s “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program.” They describe the unique components of their program, many of which arise from its situation within an international degree program. They address some of the external factors that have determined the nature of their program, such as the “economic conditions, political situations, socio-cultural variables, demographic changes, technological developments, and legal issues,” and also the internal factors that have helped shape their program: “institutional history, student diversity, faculty diversity, physical facilities, leadership style, organizational culture, operational issues, and geographical location.”

While the essay on honors in Mexico describes the importation of a U.S. model of honors education, the following essay describes the exportation of NCHC’s City as Text™ pedagogy to Switzerland. In “Self as Text: Adaptations of Honors Practice”—a revised reprint of an essay published in the 2012 volume of *Honors in Practice*—Michaela Ruppert Smith recounts her experience in adapting CAT™ methodology to an orientation activity at the Collège du Léman in Geneva. To prepare a class of International Baccalaureate students for a course called Theory of Knowledge, Smith collaborated with other teachers in designing a field trip to two museum exhibits and one very unusual restaurant in Zurich. This trip became an unusual,

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challenging, and delightful journey of discovery during which students “questioned their basic values and integrated new ways of thinking and being into their lives.”

Another direct export of U.S. honors education—on a grander scale—has taken place in Qatar. In “An American Honors Program in the Arab Gulf,” Byrad Yyelland describes the fascinating consequence of transplanting an American concept of honors education into the Middle East. As director of the seven-year-old honors program at Virginia Commonwealth University Qatar, Yyelland recounts his adaptation of ideas from the VCU Honors College to the national vision established by the royal family of Qatar: to maintain Islamic culture while at the same time promoting an ambitious agenda for economic and technological development. This double mission plays out in the VCU Qatar Honors Program in ways that will interest honors administrators in other parts of the world, who typically do not face the problem of, for instance, creating an honors brochure when their students are forbidden to be photographed.

A detailed comparison of honors education in the U.S. and China is the subject of the next essay: “On Training Excellent Students in China and the United States.” This essay was first published in *JNCHC* 9.2 (fall/winter 2008), when the authors—Ikuo Kitagaki and Donglin Li—were both at the Research Institute for Higher Education at Hiroshima University and were motivated in part by a move toward starting honors programs in Japan. In response to increasing global competition in advanced research and thus an accelerating need for high levels of student training, Kitagaki and Li saw the international growth of honors programs as an important means to meet this need and were interested in finding the best strategy for national development of honors programs. Their essay compares the evolution, focus, curriculum, requirements, and student services of honors programs in China and the United States. Their findings indicate more broad-based curricula and greater emphasis on service and leadership in the U.S. and stricter retention standards and foreign language requirements in China. This comparative study can help readers in the U.S. and elsewhere design and reflect upon their own honors programs.

We conclude our panoramic view of honors around the globe with “Mission, Performance Indicators, and Assessment in U. S. Honors: A View from the Netherlands” by Vladimir Bartelds, Lyndsay Drayer, and Marca V. C. Wolfensberger of Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen in the Netherlands. The authors focus on the role of mission statements in U.S. honors programs and their lack of alignment with either performance indicators or assessment practices. Based on a survey of 169 programs randomly selected from the 842 institutional members of NCHC in 2009, the authors conclude—

based on a wide array of quantitative and qualitative data—that not only do assessment practices typically show little correlation with mission statements or performance indicators, but they seldom include long-term outcomes for graduates of the honors program. Indicating that U.S. honors programs may not always be doing what they claim or believe they are doing, this study will be valuable to U.S. honors administrators in analyzing their current mission statements, and it warrants careful consideration in the design of new honors programs around the globe.

Having viewed U.S. honors programs from the perspective of the Netherlands, our focus shifts to the Netherlands itself for the remainder of this issue of *JNCHC*, starting with an essay titled “Laboratories for Educational Innovation: Honors Programs in the Netherlands” by Marca V. C. Wolfensberger of Utrecht University and Hanzehogeschool Groningen and co-authors Pierre Van Eijl and Albert Pilot of Utrecht University. Within a broad overview of the rapid growth of honors programs in the Netherlands, the authors make the specific case that honors fosters innovations in course content, pedagogy, and program structure that fan out—via the students and teachers in honors—into the host institutions and eventually into national policies and practices at all educational levels. The essay focuses on the kinds of honors programs that have grown up in the Netherlands, the characteristics that enable them to foster innovation, and the particular dynamics whereby their innovative practices get transferred beyond honors to promote excellence and talent in Dutch education.

In an update of a 2004 essay published in *JNCHC* 5.2, Wolfensberger—now with a co-author, G. Johan Offringa of Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen—offers the results of three surveys conducted in the past decade. In “Qualities Honours Students Look for in Faculty and Courses, Revisited,” she and Offringa conclude from the surveys that honors students in the Netherlands, to a greater degree than their non-honors peers, seek not only academic competence but individual freedom combined with a sense of community. They also conclude that honors students’ motivation tends to be intrinsic—focused on knowledge, learning, and intellectual challenge—rather than extrinsic; they are motivated less, the authors claim, by grades and future careers than non-honors students are. The authors hope that similar studies will be conducted in other countries so that they can determine whether these findings are unique to the culture of the Netherlands.

“Setting Them Free: Students as Co-Producers of Honors Education” by Bouke van Gorp, Marca V. C. Wolfensberger, and Nelleke de Jong lays out a strategy for offering honors students the freedom to help shape their own education through student-led classes; these kinds of classes are built into honors seminars at the Faculty of Geosciences Honors College of Utrecht University.

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Giving students this freedom has three goals: encouraging students to explore their passions, helping them develop their best learning strategies, and getting them involved in their own education. The authors describe the benefits and challenges of this approach, stressing that it should focus on developing students' creativity rather than freeing up time for the faculty.

In "Building a Vibrant Honors Community among Commuter Students," Stan van Ginkel of Wageningen University and Pierre van Eijl and Albert Pilot of Utrecht University team up with John Zubizarreta of Columbia College in the U.S. to discuss methods of creating successful honors communities. The authors use interviews of U.S. faculty and students as one source for defining honors communities, and they apply the definitions to five programs in the Netherlands. A primary objective of the essay is to identify components of successful honors communities that can or cannot be adapted to honors programs that comprise commuter students. The essay's conclusions can equally apply to honors programs in the Netherlands, in the U.S., and around the world.

Fred Wiegant, Johannes Boonstra, Anton Peeters and Karin Scager, in "Team-Based Learning in Honors Science Education: The Benefit of Complex Writing Assignments," advocate a team-based learning approach that they have used successfully in honors science courses at Utrecht University. One of these courses requires undergraduate honors students to produce proposals for PhD theses, and the other requires that they write a popular science book. These challenging assignments produce excellent results, according to the authors, because the students guide and support each other rather than relying on the teacher to tell them what to do. As a result, students improve their skills, gain confidence in their abilities, and expand their understanding of what they can accomplish.

The following three essays focus on honors in the applied sciences. In "Selecting for Honors Programs: A Matter of Motivational Awareness," Ron Weerheijm of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences and Jeske Weerheijm of Utrecht University give an overview of research on effective ways to recruit and select honors students, and they apply that research to the special mission of the honors programs in the Universities of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. Designed to find, foster, and produce students who meet the standards of an "excellent professional," these honors programs adopt many of the same criteria described in the literature but adapt them to goals of success in the workplace and lifelong learning. Directors of professional honors programs in the U.S. and elsewhere will find ideas here for distinguishing honors from the standard curriculum and from traditional liberal arts programs.

In “The Reflective Professional Honours Programme of the Dutch Saxion Universities,” Trijntje van Dijk describes the six characteristics that define the successful graduate of the honors program for professional students at the Saxion Universities of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. The characteristics create a profile that determines the goals of the program while also indicating to businesses what they can expect from a graduate of the program. Van Dijk describes her interactions with American honors educators and includes in the essay a fascinating and provocative impression of U.S. honors programs from the perspective of Dutch honors educators in professional universities.

“Looping up Professional Reflection in Honours Programmes” is a companion piece to Trijntje van Dijk’s essay on “The Reflective Professional Honours Programme.” Here she describes the three phases, or “loops,” of development through which honors students progress, addressing specific sets of questions in each loop. The questions become progressively more challenging and require increasing sophistication in personal development, teamwork, interdisciplinary cooperation, and cross-disciplinary thinking, causing students to leap beyond the loops and imagine new paradigms for their professional lives and potential contributions.

“Honors in the Master’s: A New Perspective?” is a study of the proliferation of master’s-level honors by Stan van Ginkel of Wageningen University in the Netherlands, Pierre van Eijl and Albert Pilot of Utrecht University in the Netherlands, and John Zubizarreta of Columbia College in the U. S. The authors provide a comparative analysis of seventeen master’s-level honors programs in the Netherlands as well as other programs in the U.S., Canada, Australia, Germany, Italy, and Ireland. Honors at the master’s level is probably a topic unfamiliar to most honors educators in the U.S. and may spark interest in this new and fast-proliferating initiative.

We conclude this special issue of JNCHC with another essay by Marca V. C. Wolfensberger, in which she provides a lofty and idealistic view of honors that seems an appropriate final word on “Honors Around the Globe.” In “Honors Education and Global Citizenship,” Wolfensberger suggests that, given the serious challenges as well as opportunities of rapidly increasing globalization, honors programs have an important role to play: to push changes toward human dignity and world peace. She discusses three pedagogical strategies—genuine conversations, interactive learning, and international exchange—that encourage honors students to develop the respect for cultural differences that will make them important contributors to a better world. Surely these are strategies and goals to which we all aspire, regardless of geography or national history.