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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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Even in these perplexing times, most citizens of the United States would agree that social injustices in this country need to be addressed and alleviated. Most would acknowledge the high rates of poverty, hunger, illiteracy, incarceration, economic inequality, racial discrimination, and bias in college admissions, for instance, that undermine the ideals essential to a thriving democracy. The challenge, though, is getting beneath these abstractions to a level of empathy that can bring about change. While the National Collegiate Honors Council has taken on this challenge in years past, the energy and commitment required to meet the challenge has generally waned as years have passed and as programmatic, institutional, and organizational issues directly related to honors education have taken precedence.

Under the leadership of NCHC president Naomi Yavneh Klos of Loyola University New Orleans, a new agenda to address social injustices is now underway to make diversity and social justice a central focus of the organization, and so it is fitting that she opens this issue of the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* with the lead essay for a Forum on "Honors and Social Justice." A Call for Papers on the Forum topic went out via the NCHC website, listserv, and e-newsletter inviting members to contribute to the Forum. The Call included a link to Yavneh Klos's essay, "Thinking Critically, Acting Justly," with the following comments:

Yavneh Klos asks readers to consider two questions: "first, how to engage our highest-ability and most motivated students in questions of justice; and second, how honors can be a place of access, equity, and excellence in higher education." She describes the ways her program has wedded traditional and experiential educational goals with justice education to fulfill the Jesuit honors mission to "embrace diversity; foster reflection and discernment; promote social justice and preferential care for the poor and the vulnerable; and bring 'intellectual talents into service of the world's great needs.'" Rejecting the notion that a student's qualification for honors can easily be identified by test scores and high school GPA, she suggests ways that admissions policies and curriculum decisions can achieve equitable and inclusive excellence for the public good.

The Call for Papers then provided a list of questions that Forum contributors might consider:

What kinds of honors admissions policies best serve the cause of inclusive excellence? Is the notion of “inclusive excellence” an oxymoron? Can virtue and social justice really be taught at all? How might honors faculty and administrators address the notion that they should teach practical skills and “book learning,” leaving matters of morality and justice to parents and religious groups? Is social justice a partisan issue, part of a left-wing agenda? While diversity in an honors humanities curriculum is common practice, how might the sciences or engineering or computer science achieve a goal of inclusivity?

The Call indicated that “Contributions to the Forum may—but need not—respond to Yavneh Klos’s essay.” Four contributions were accepted for publication.

The first essay responding to Yavneh Klos’s challenge is by the incoming president of the NCHC, Richard Badenhausen of Westminster College. In “Making Honors Success Scripts Available to Students from Diverse Backgrounds,” Badenhausen explores beyond exclusionary admissions policies and examines the way we talk about honors as potentially obstructive to diversity. He contends that the narrative about honors we display to potential students on our websites and in our promotional materials tends to foreground test scores, study abroad, and national scholarships as markers of success in honors. The terminology and content of our narratives about honors create a script for success that alienates many students even before they might apply and creates an environment of privilege that is uncomfortable for students we want and need to welcome. Critical evaluation of this honors script can and should lead us toward greater inclusivity.

While Badenhausen addresses Yavneh Klos’s issue of “how honors can be a place of access, equity, and excellence in higher education,” the next essay addresses the other half of her formula: “how to engage our highest-ability and most motivated students in questions of justice.” In “Cultivating Empathy: Lessons from an Interdisciplinary Service-Learning Course,” Megan Jacobs and Marygold Walsh-Dilley describe a two-semester, interdisciplinary course at the University of New Mexico that immersed relatively privileged students in the realities of mass incarceration. Through the lenses of sociology and art, the course “intentionally constructed opportunities for students

to think in an interdisciplinary manner as a means to put a face on the quantitative research about mass incarceration, thereby cultivating empathy." The research and projects of the first semester prepared students to partner during the next semester with nonprofit organizations that assist at-risk youth. The students developed curricula, taught classes, and worked together with their young at-risk partners to create a zine of poetry and photographs. The projects led students to see their interconnections with the at-risk youths and to "recognize the intersections of privilege and exclusion within our own classroom."

In "Socioeconomic Equity in Honors Education: Increasing Numbers of First-Generation and Low-Income Students," Angela D. Mead of Appalachian State University homes in on an important component of diversity and social justice in honors that often goes unnoticed because it is not as easy to measure as race or gender. Mead provides a rich range of data about first-generation and low-income students, pointing out that these students can be hard to identify. She writes, "Although recruiting such students may require greater effort, the social justice payoff is well worth the time." She specifies ways of identifying these students and suggests strategies for recruiting, admitting, and supporting them. Mead shares her own roots in the kinds of populations that too often remain invisible to honors administrators as an illustration of what such students must overcome and what honors programs have to gain from recognizing and including them.

In the current political climate, social justice is often equated with a left-wing agenda as a way to disparage it. Sarita Cargas of the University of New Mexico addresses this issue in the final essay of the Forum, "Social Justice Education in Honors: Political but Non-Partisan." Cargas writes, "I contend that we can and must teach social justice from a non-partisan perspective and will offer recommendations for best practices for [social justice education] in the context of an honors program." She offers a variety of definitions of social justice education and their overlap with objectives of the NCHC. She then provides recommendations for how faculty members can advocate social justice while avoiding "teaching from their own bias." Her suggestions include critical thinking, multicultural understanding, civic engagement, and fostering empathy through narrative.

The first two research essays in this issue of *JNCHC* continue the Forum's focus on social justice, both emanating from Jesuit institutions and picking up on the themes introduced by Naomi Yavneh Klos. In "What Makes a Curriculum Significant? Tracing the Taxonomy of Significant Learning in Jesuit

Honors Programs,” Robert J. Pampel of Saint Louis University shares the results of his study of eight honors programs at Jesuit universities. He writes that these programs “are marked not only by their adherence to principles of honors education but also by what the Honors Consortium of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) calls ‘essential characteristics of a Jesuit Honors Program’”: “integrative learning, reflection and discernment, and commitment to social justice in the spirit of the ‘intellectual apostolate.’” He uses Dee Fink’s significant learning taxonomy to examine honors programs generally and to distinguish the special characteristics of Jesuit honors programs. He notes that the Jesuit programs promote “knowledge not only for students’ advancement but also for the advancement of the poor and disadvantaged” and also a high “level of intentionality” in guiding students “toward knowledge of self.” He suggests the “potential for Jesuit-inspired ideals of reflection, discernment, and social justice to enrich and differentiate a program’s curriculum and academic practices.” These strategies of “personal discernment and social justice,” he writes, “can serve as a model for other institutions interested in similar outcomes.”

Illustrating some of the principles of social justice described in previous essays, Lydia Voigt offers the example of a seminar at Loyola University New Orleans titled “Violence and Democracy.” In “Linking Academic Excellence and Social Justice through Community-Based Participatory Research,” Voigt describes the course objectives, the principles of social justice pedagogy, and the structure of the seminar, during which students collaborate with both campus partners and a social service agency on a project designed to meet the agency’s needs. One such semester-long research project, for instance, was a comparative cost analysis of “unassisted homelessness versus the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) approach” that “contributed to the expansion of the PSH program and ultimately a reduction of homelessness in New Orleans.” In line with both honors and Jesuit missions, the seminar “attempts to connect educational excellence with social justice through engagement with the community, solidarity with the needs of community members, and advocacy of social justice and human rights.”

While designing curricula, policies, and program-related activities to encourage social justice is one of the most satisfying challenges for honors administrators, dealing with the current drug crisis is one of the scariest. In “General Strain Theory and Prescription Drug Misuse Among Honors Students,” Jordan Pedalino and Kelly Frailing provide some understanding of this problem and potential ways to address it. After reviewing the literature

about prescription drug abuse among college students in general as well as three theories for explaining it—social bond theory, social learning theory, and general strain theory—the authors adopted the latter as the basis for a study of alcohol and drug misuse among honors program students at Loyola University New Orleans. Based on a data analysis of survey responses from 93 students, they determined to their surprise that the “lower respondents’ expectations of themselves, the more likely they were to report prescription stimulant misuse” and that relationship strains were generally not associated with prescription painkiller misuse. Pedalino and Frailing provide a number of possible explanations and caveats about these unexpected findings but nevertheless make several recommendations based on their results, such as providing upper-class mentors for newer students to help bolster their self-expectations.

Pedalino and Frailing address the question of anticipating and addressing the special needs of honors students in the context of the national drug crisis, which is surely one of the many considerations that honors advisors must take into account in serving this population. The work of honors advisors—how they perceive it and how it is distinct from that of other advisors—is the subject of “Perceptions of Advisors Who Work with High-Achieving Students.” The three authors—Melissa L. Johnson of the University of Florida, Cheryl Walther of Colorado State University, and Kelly J. Medley of Arizona State University—begin with a literature review on the characteristics of honors students and the need for specialized advising. They then describe a study they conducted after soliciting the participation of honors advisors around the country and then doing a thematic data analysis of telephone interviews with the twenty-two advisors who agreed to participate. Themes that emerged were that honors advisors provide a “one-stop shop”; build “connections and referral networks”; indulge a “future orientation”; and cultivate a “support system.” The participants also made detailed distinctions between honors and non-honors advising, with particular emphasis on the “time-intensive nature” of honors advising. The authors conclude by drawing parallels between honors advising and honors teaching and by attesting that honors advising is, in fact, teaching.

The next essay contends that developmental assessment centers can complement the work of advisors in preparing students for the next step in their lives and careers. In “From Campus to Corporation: Using Developmental Assessment Centers to Facilitate Students’ Next Career Steps,” Rick R. Jacobs, Kaytlynn R. Griswold, Kristen L. Swigart, Greg E. Lovisky, and

Rachel L. Heinen of Pennsylvania State University describe the practices used in the Schreyer Honors College's Leadership Assessment Center to provide honors students with the skills and understanding they need as they prepare to enter the workplace. They summarize the competencies that students will need, their strategies for identifying students' strengths and weaknesses in these competencies, and the method they use to "recreate a typical workday by including activities characteristic of an office environment, e.g., presentations, meetings, and email." They then describe adaptations of the Schreyer Honors College's model to the Huck Life Sciences Institute at Penn State and to other institutions such as Bryn Mawr College and Northeastern University. They describe how to build an assessment center based on this model, including how to develop assessment tools and what to assess, and they conclude by describing the benefits and success of this model.

Echoing the value of focusing on careers but transitioning from a corporate to a philosophical approach, Christopher Keller of Western Kentucky University offers an approach to "the liberal arts and humanities that does not pit them against career-centered programs and people but instead offers ways for honors educators . . . to impose limits and boundaries in the context of institutions and programs that continually seek their removal." In "How to Drink from the Pierian Spring: A Liberal Arts and Humanities Question about the Limits of Honors Education," Keller argues against the idealization of the arts and humanities and the demonization of career-oriented education. He suggests that "the liberal arts and humanities can sustain only so much pressure to rise above the fray and represent access to universal truth and wisdom before they must be brought back down to terra firma and the realm of workplaces and job skills." He questions the connections between the lofty goal of high-minded wisdom and "the specific types of people, citizens, and professionals that honors educators seek to develop and send out into the world." He argues that "asking and expecting more from students, expecting them to dig deeper, go farther, explore broadly, and form endless appetites for knowledge . . . necessitates a responsibility to spend as much effort producing a language and rhetoric of limits and boundaries." As Keller points out, Alexander Pope's "Pierian Spring offers a knowledge in limits: the more one drinks, the deeper one drinks, the more one comes to recognize the unattainable heights and breadth of learning's terrain." Honors educators need to acknowledge these limits rather than making claims that their students can attain limitless heights of wisdom without having to deal eventually with all the limits of a job.

We conclude this issue of *JNCHC* with one of the winning essays in NCHC's annual Portz Prize competition. We are proud this year to publish an essay by Ashlyn Stewart of the University of Denver as an example of the exceptional accomplishments of honors students nationwide. "Creating a National Readership for *Harper's Weekly* in a Time of Sectional Crisis" is an analysis of one of the first national magazines in the United States, launched in 1857 just as the country was starting to move toward the Civil War. Stewart describes the dilemmas confronting the editors of this fledgling periodical as they tried to maintain a wide circulation in both pro- and anti-slavery regions of the country. She analyzes *Harper Weekly's* coverage of "the Dred Scott trial of 1857, John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in 1859, the fallout of the 1860 election, and the buildup to the firing on Fort Sumter in 1861" in light of the editors' increasingly challenging attempt to maintain a national readership and remain profitable. The periodical progressed through various phases to achieve their goal of remaining viable; coverage shifted from avoiding controversial issues to appealing to a majority of readers to relying on illustrations to appease all sides to constructing "a narrative of the war by placing stories—both fictional and nonfictional—about the war in a collection built to last beyond the week's news cycle." All the while they were conditioning readers "to have certain expectations about what a national weekly periodical would and would not cover, making them true arbiters of the genre." Stewart's analysis perhaps sheds light on how national periodicals cover issues of social justice today.

