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Editor's Introduction (to JNCHC 23:2)

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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This issue of the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC)* includes a Forum on “Honors Beyond the Liberal Arts.” The focus of the Forum, as established in the title as well as in its lead essay by K. Patrick Fazioli, is the desirability of outreach to professional schools by the NCHC and by honors educators generally. Although the essays reveal a shared and unambiguous consensus about what is meant by “professional schools,” they display considerable differences in what people mean by “the liberal arts.” While the standard dictionary definition of the liberal arts includes the sciences and social sciences as well as the arts and humanities, many of the essays in the Forum reveal conflation of the term with the humanities. Perhaps this foregrounding of the humanities has occurred as humanities scholars have needed to defend their disciplines in the face of declining enrollments and increasing public disparagement, perhaps leading faculty in other fields to jump ship. Fazioli addresses this trend as one of the reasons that the NCHC and honors programs generally need to reach beyond the liberal arts, often meaning the humanities, to include the more popular, less controversial, and more heavily enrolled professional majors. While the conflation of the humanities and the liberal arts leads to some ambiguity in the focus of the Forum, no such ambiguity arises in the arguments that honors needs to reach out to the professions and include them in the NCHC.

The contributors to the Forum responded to the following Call for Papers, which was distributed to all members of the National Collegiate Honors Council in the NCHC newsletter and in the previous issue of *JNCHC*:

The next issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: September 1, 2022**) invites research essays on any topic of interest to the honors community.

The issue will also include a Forum focused on the theme “Honors Beyond the Liberal Arts,” in which we invite honors educators to examine the NCHC’s exclusion and inclusion of preprofessional honors programs within its community. We invite essays of roughly 1000–2000 words that consider this theme in a practical and/or theoretical context.

The lead essay for the Forum (available at <https://cdn.ymaws.com/nchc.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/docs/pub_board_essays/

[Who Owns Honors.pdf?utm_source=Direct&utm_medium=Informz&utm_campaign=Bulk%20Email>](#)) is by K. Patrick Fazioli of Mercy College. In “Who Owns Honors?” Fazioli points out the historical role of the liberal arts as the cornerstone of honors, starting with the introduction of honors into the United States in the early twentieth century and continuing through and beyond its statement of the Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program. He cites evidence in NCHC publications and conference sessions of the minor role within the organization of preprofessional honors programs, and he advocates strategies to increase outreach to such programs. Fazioli acknowledges the arguments that have prevailed over the years for privileging the liberal arts, and he respects the value and often the validity of such arguments. Nevertheless, given the NCHC’s emphasis on inclusion and diversity, the absence of professional programs seems antithetical to its mission. Further, now that the number of preprofessional students is far outnumbering liberal arts majors in American higher education, excluding the professions seems especially short-sighted. He concludes by suggesting strategies for outreach to preprofessional honors programs and students.

Contributors to the Forum on “Honors Beyond the Liberal Arts” may, but are not obliged to, respond directly to Fazioli’s essay. Questions that Forum contributors might consider include:

- What would be the advantages and/or disadvantages of including a preprofessional track (or tracks) at NCHC conferences?
- What strategies have your (or other) liberal arts/college-wide honors programs adopted to better serve the unique needs of their preprofessional students?
- What models have worked successfully on your campus in integrating the humanities, sciences, and professional programs in areas outside of honors, and how might these models be adapted to the context of NCHC?
- What part, if any, is NCHC playing in how preprofessional honors programs develop their curricula and co-curricular experiences?
- Do you agree that the NCHC should broaden its focus beyond the liberal arts and, if not, why?

- Should the NCHC follow the lead of an organization like Phi Beta Kappa, which privileges the liberal arts as a way of awarding them prestige while the professions award status and income?
- Given the decreasing popularity and status of the humanities in contrast to the dramatic rise of the professions in higher education, should the NCHC acknowledge and reflect this contrast?
- Is there an inherent difference between university-wide honors programs and disciplinary (including preprofessional) honors programs that justifies a continued focus on the liberal arts in the NCHC?
- Should honors programs expose all their students to the liberal arts, perhaps especially the humanities, as fully as possible and not dilute them through a shared focus on the professions?
- What pedagogies and values do preprofessional honors programs share with honors programs that foreground the arts, humanities, and sciences? What are the differences?

Seven Forum responses and one research essay were accepted for publication.

The Forum essays generally follow the lead of K. Patrick Fazioli in suggesting strategies for reaching out to include professional schools in the NCHC. Fazioli's suggestions include inviting professional faculty and administrators to propose sessions at the annual NCHC conferences; facilitating professional networks at the conference; making NCHC membership inclusive of multiple honors directors from a campus without additional dues; promoting and supporting development of honors programs within the professions; providing models for developing preprofessional honors programs; and offering consultants in developing preprofessional honors. Promoting preprofessional participation in honors programs and colleges might require redesigning an honors curriculum to accommodate the prerequisites mandated by professional accrediting agencies as well as increasing the flexibility of requirements by including internships, contract options, and service abroad options.

Beata Jones of Texas Christian University, who has previously published on preprofessional honors in the NCHC journal *Honors in Practice* (Vol. 5) with Peggy W. Watson, begins by providing a valuable summary of previous research on preprofessional honors in fields such as business, engineering, nursing, and education. She then describes different models for

preprofessional honors, which include at least three: an independent honors program within the profession; collaboration between a profession and honors whereby students can satisfy some of their honors requirements through courses in their professional schools; and a requirement that preprofessional students fulfill their general education requirements in the university-wide honors program. Next, Jones examines in detail the limited number of appearances, during the last five years, of professional schools in NCHC journals and annual conference presentations. She notes, however, that 2017–2018 saw the creation of an NCHC Business Honors Special Interest Group, which has 46 members from 31 institutions nationally and internationally. There is interest from professional schools, Jones concludes, but NCHC needs to take the initiative to diversify and strengthen the organization through inclusion of these groups. First it needs to acknowledge the problem and then take steps like creating professional tracks at conferences, inviting professional submissions to special issues of the journals, recruiting professional members for the Board of Directors and other committees, and creating an NCHC Professional School Committee.

While echoing Fazioli's and Jones's suggested strategies for making the NCHC more inclusive of all disciplines, in "Honors Education Is Discipline-Neutral" Mike Sloane primarily focuses on the failures of the NCHC to appeal to a diverse constituency. Exemplifying the liberal arts as the humanities, he argues that the organization has largely excluded the sciences and social sciences as well as the professional disciplines. The dominance of the humanities has no precedent in the origins of honors, he writes, nor is it justified on the basis of the organization's mission and principles, yet he claims that the conference sessions, publications, and leadership of honors are heavily biased toward the humanities. The future viability of both the NCHC and honors education, he suggests, depend on eliminating the privileged status of the humanities and diversifying honors to welcome and include all disciplines within the leadership, activities, and public face of the organization.

In "Honors Is Pedagogy," John Zubizarreta, of Columbia College in South Carolina, argues that honors is not just "discipline-neutral" but is universally applicable to all disciplines beyond as well as within the liberal arts. He sees Fazioli's essay as "a clarion call not to change the fundamental principles of honors education to include disciplinary programs outside of the humanities and [liberal arts] but rather the other way around": as an invitation to disciplines beyond the liberal arts to "use the inherent power of honors to improve teaching and learning in these fields." He defines this power as the

“creative, participatory, experiential strategies of what we know today as active learning.” While the NCHC and honors generally can and should adopt Fazioli’s suggestions for outreach, Zubizarreta points out that in recent years the NCHC has progressively implemented many of these strategies, citing the publications and development opportunities that have included a wide range of professional areas from technology and nursing to engineering and athletics. The “transgressiveness of honors,” is a pedagogy, writes Zubizarreta, that “defies the notion that honors belongs to any particular disciplinary domain.”

Carla Janell Pattin offers an example of Zubizarreta’s assertion that honors is pedagogy in “The Messages Are Everywhere: An Intersectional City as Text™ Approach to Enhance Honors Preprofessional Student Learning.” A signature program of the NCHC that was introduced in the 1970s by Bernice Braid, *City as text™* (CAT) is one of the first and best strategies of active learning that has been adopted in honors throughout the U.S. and internationally. Pattin points out that this strategy, which she uses in her course *Multicultural Toledo*, is especially useful in teaching preprofessional majors in areas like nursing, engineering, and pharmacy. She describes three CAT walkabouts that she has designed for her course in such a way as to appeal particularly to students planning a career in the professions. These walkabouts engage the students in experiences valuable to them personally as well as professionally, teaching them how to “think reflectively and analytically about the nature and impact of multicultural resources in the city.” The course also shows them how to examine “race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other social identities and how these identities intersect and interact with each other” in ways that will augment and enrich their careers.

Bailey J. Nafziger of Georgia Southern University offers another model for including and benefiting preprofessional students in her essay “Modifying Practices to Serve Underrepresented Preprofessional Students with Help from Gifted Education.” She recommends the Achievement Orientation Model (AOM), “a theoretical construct from gifted education” that “can combat gifted underachievement and organize strategies to amplify the voices of underrepresented groups on the STEM preprofessional track.” She focuses especially on underrepresented minorities in the professional and STEM fields and how to use AOM in an honors environment to increase both their self-confidence and sense of belonging. She explains the three motivational tactics of AOM—“(1) supportive environment; (2) self-efficacy; and (3) meaningful tasks”—that honors programs can use to support underrepresented preprofessional students and meet their “social, emotional, and

intellectual needs.” She also gives examples of how these tactics have been used successfully in specific honors programs and colleges in the U.S.

Lynne C. Elkes also addresses the need to meet the “social, emotional, and ethical needs” of preprofessional students, but her point is that accomplishing these goals is the same for preprofessional as for traditional honors students. In “Cross-Cultural Connections: How Traditional and Preprofessional Honors Programs Can Survive and Thrive Together,” Elkes points to values similar to those expressed by Nafziger—“care, mentorship, and concentrated studies”—as essential for all honors students, echoing Zubizarreta’s point that honors is a pedagogy applicable to all disciplines. Whether traditional or preprofessional, four types of students are drawn to honors: bright and inquisitive; precocious and aloof; quiet and observant; and overwhelmed by countless questions. (A fifth type, who may be more intelligent than any other group, might not know there is such a thing as an honors program.) Elkes describes the Business Honors Program (called the Sellinger Scholars Program) in the Sellinger School of Business and Management at Loyola Maryland University. She explains how this program both meets the needs and brings out the best in all kinds of students in a servant leadership approach that “partners with Baltimore’s non-profit and corporate sectors to create a positive impact for a more just and equitable world.” The program supports “an insatiable thirst for knowledge and lifelong learning” in an active learning environment characteristic of traditional honors programs.

Linda Frost presents a case study of sorts in “Who Owns Honors? Whoever Defines It—and Maybe, Who Pays for It” in her account of efforts at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) to extend “Honors Beyond the Liberal Arts.” Frost reached out to her colleagues in professional schools to ascertain their thoughts about creating honors in their colleges and found that “[l]ike our two university-wide honors college programs, nursing and business are choosing to feature the creation of strong communities, the support of undergraduate research, and the creation of more opportunity for students who are hungry for it.” For the past several years, a more complex collaboration between the honors college and the Grand Challenges Scholars Program in the UTC College of Engineering and Computer Science has been in the works and involves the potential dual enrollment of students in both colleges so that they would graduate from both. Frost had tried to work out a similar collaboration with the business school, but the business faculty did not want to require a thesis, a signature feature of the honors college, so graduation from both colleges did not work out. An additional problem with

honors engineering students was whether they would be eligible for honors college scholarships and travel expenses. The honors college and professional programs are in ongoing negotiations, but collaborations present challenges and roadblocks that lead back to the question “Who Owns Honors?”

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We conclude this issue of *JNCHC* with a research essay about a faculty/student research collaboration that has been underway at the University of Maine for the past three years. This collaboration can serve as a model for any traditional or preprofessional honors program, and it illustrates the kind of active learning that John Zubizarreta described in the Forum as a defining characteristic of honors. In “Disordered Eating, Perfectionism, Stress, and Satisfaction in Honors: A Research Collaborative Investigating a Community Concern,” the co-authors are a group of faculty and students: Jeffrey E. Hecker, Jaimie Giguere, Ethan Lowell, Mimi Killinger, Bailey Lewis, and Ailin Liebler-Bendix. Working together as colleagues in an Honors and Eating Concerns Research Collaborative rather than in the “the traditional expert/mentee model,” the co-authors investigated a serious problem noted by many honors deans and directors: the increasing prevalence of eating disorders among honors students. The Research Collaborative designed a series of surveys, administered by the students, focusing on the relationship of eating disorders to (1) self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism, (2) perceived stress levels (administered to 8,124 UMaine undergraduates), and (3) satisfaction with the honors college experience (administered to over 700 UMaine Honors College students). Among the many interesting findings, the surveys revealed that there were no significant correlations between eating concerns and socially prescribed perfectionism; that honors students were not more likely than non-honors students to exhibit high levels of perceived stress; and that most students in the honors college were more satisfied with their major than with their honors experience. None of the students found the results they were expecting. They did, more importantly, experience fruitful “faculty/student engagement rooted in scholarly inquiry and shared community concerns”—the kind of engagement that could be adapted to any traditional or preprofessional honors program.

