Spring 2006

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council -- Volume 7, no. 1 -- Complete Issue

JNCHC

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council

Spring/Summer 2006 Vol. 7, No. 1

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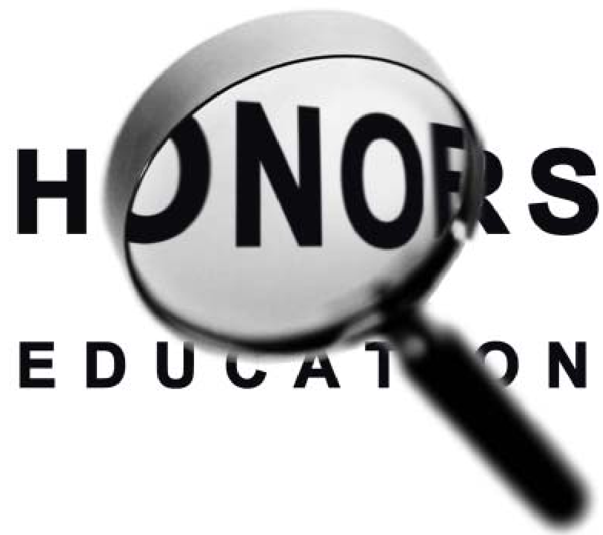

Outcomes Assessment, Accountability, and Honors

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council Volume 7, No. 1

JNCHC
Honors Program
University of Alabama at Birmingham
1530 3rd Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35294-4450

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 1256
BIRMINGHAM, AL

ISBN 0-9773623-4-5

JNCHC

JOURNAL OF THE
NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND HONORS

International Standard Book Number 0-9773623-4-5
International Standard Serial Number 1559-0151

EDITORIAL POLICY

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council is a refereed periodical publishing scholarly articles on honors education. The journal uses a double-blind peer review process. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at (phone) 850.927.3776 or (e-mail) adalong@uab.edu.

DEADLINES

March 1 (for spring/summer issue); September 1 (for fall/winter issue)

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Research Essays

Call for Papers

The *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* is now accepting papers for Volume 7, No. 2 (fall/winter 2006), which will focus on the theme of honors administration. We invite research essays for this issue that consider matters related to directing an honors program, serving as dean of an honors college, changing from a program to a college, term limits (or lack thereof), serving in any administrative or staff position of an honors program or college, institutional relations, positioning within an institutional hierarchy, budgetary management, fundraising, national involvement, tenure and promotion, career advantages or liabilities, balancing administrative/academic or honors/disciplinary responsibilities, or any other topic relevant to honors administration. We also invite book reviews of publications that might be of interest to readers of *JNCHC*, and we are happy to receive letters to the editor on matters related to materials published in *JNCHC*.

The deadline for submissions is September 1, 2006.

The following issue (**deadline: March 1, 2007**) will be a general-interest issue

Submission Guidelines

We will accept material by e-mail attachment (preferred) or disk. We will not accept material by fax or hard copy.

The documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author's primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.), but please avoid footnotes. Internal citation to a list of references (bibliography) is preferred; endnotes are acceptable.

There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.

Accepted essays will be edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for infelicities of style or presentation. Authors will have ample opportunity to review and approve edited manuscripts before publication.

Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu or, if necessary, 850.927.3776.

DEDICATION

SUSANNA FINNELL

It is our privilege to honor Dr. Susanna Finnell and the special blend of intellect and energy—with a Swiss accent—that she has contributed to the National Collegiate Honors Council. Susanna has been an invaluable leader of the NCHC, especially throughout the key decade of the 1990s when both the organization and the honors programs/colleges it represents were experiencing unparalleled growth. During just this one decade, she organized the very successful annual NCHC Conference in San Francisco in 1996 as well as the Western Regional Conference in 1990 and the Great Plains Regional Conference in 1994; served as President of NCHC in 1997; gave over twenty presentations at national and regional conferences; conceived and coordinated the Corporate Programs sessions at six national conferences; co-chaired the Idea Exchange; chaired the Nominating Committee, External Relations Committee, and Committee on Women and Minorities; and served on other committees too numerous to list. Susanna has been Assistant Director of the Honors Program at Washington State University, Executive Director of Honors Programs and Academic Scholarships at Texas A&M, Director of Admissions at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln and (most recently) the University of Houston, and a professor of English at several universities. She has published in a wide range of fields that include Canadian literature and higher education. Susanna has always been a woman to take on major challenges with enthusiasm and courage. Her most recent and least welcome challenge has been a severe stroke that she suffered on January 30. She is due for discharge from inpatient acute rehabilitation as this journal gets ready to go press. We wish her the very best, and we thank her for her gifts of wisdom, grace, dedication, and inspiration to the NCHC.

Jay Freyman

Letter to the Editors

To the Editors:

Len Zane's response to my essay is very interesting and perceptive.

Indeed, he is frighteningly perceptive in noting that the criteria I suggest (I assume he means the values in the second part of my essay) "seem like a wonderful set of outcome objectives for an honors program as opposed to set of admission requirements." In fact, that is exactly how these values started out. I sat on an "Honors Task Force" some years before leaving the Honors College; the members of the Task Force were asked to draw up a list of characteristics we would like to see in graduates of, in our case, an honors university, as UMBC is styled.

Over the years after I drew up this list, my experience with honors students led me to the conclusion that, while I would certainly want honors graduates to hold and realize these values to a great degree, they are, in fact, values which any graduate of a liberal arts institution should display to one degree or another. I came to think that one of the things which distinguished those students who, on entering the university, would become regular graduates from those who would be honors graduates was that, even before beginning their university experience, the prospective honors graduates would have some inkling at least of the importance of these values and might even already have given some evidence of having lived thereby, e.g., the service activities in which they had engaged would address the value of altruism. In this example, I guess what I am saying is that, if there were such thing as an AP high school course in altruism, I would give more weight to a student's having taken it than I would to his/her having taken AP biology or United States history

To couch the matter in terms from my own field of Ancient Studies, there should be some germ of the ideal honors product there which can be cultured and, initially, brought to birth by the Socratic midwifery which is the honors program. Or, if you will, the potential for production of that ideal result must already be inherent in the raw material from which the honors program will sculpt at least a rough likeness of it, i.e., the candidate for admission to the honors program must provide the material cause, and possibly even some conception of the formal cause, for what the program will hopefully produce. It is not, I think, a matter of nurture <u>or</u> nature, but one of the cooperation of nurture <u>and</u> nature. We are looking, in a promising honors candidate, for a disposition, or predisposition, admittedly something very difficult to detect in someone with whom we have had only very limited contact. But, as I indicate in my essay with a bow to the late Supreme Court Justice Stewart, this disposition, while ineffable, in the right circumstances is quite possibly detectable.

Jay M. Freyman, Associate Professor and former
Director of the Honors College, University of
Maryland, Baltimore County

[Ed. Note: Freyman's essay can be found in JNCHC 6.2 (fall/winter 2005), 23-29, and Len Zane's essay is in the same issue on pages 35-37.]

Editor's Introduction

ADA LONG
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

The opening section of this issue of the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* is a Forum on "Outcomes Assessment, Accountability, and Honors." This topic arose in part from the Forum on "What is Honors?" in the previous issue of *JNCHC* (6.2). The two topics are interconnected in numerous ways and have elicited important discussion of matters crucial to the evolution of honors education in the United States and beyond.

Before summarizing the essays that address the topic of outcomes assessment, accountability, and honors, I want to pull out of the conversation one issue that for the most part remains tacit in the essays but that to me seems fundamental. That issue is trust. What seems to have gained momentum in recent years is distrust of higher education and, more specifically, of college and university teachers. The various commentators on higher education—from journalists to parents, legislators to college presidents—seem to agree that teachers need to prove that they are doing their jobs, and pundits have a wide range of opinions about how teachers should provide such proof. My question is, what is the basis for this distrust? It cannot be some lowering of standards for the credentialing of faculty, who are spending more years getting more degrees and spending more years beyond the degree in post-doctoral teaching positions before finding full-time jobs. It cannot be that students are complaining that they have not been adequately challenged in college or that they are worse citizens after their college experience; if such complaints exist in some serious degree, I haven't seen them reported. It cannot be that a college education is failing to provide higher salaries or better jobs for graduates; all the data prove the opposite. The only cause for such distrust of which I am aware is the assumed crisis in literacy, but, even if the literacy crisis is real (do we really know that today's college graduates are less literate than in times past, or are we simply nostalgic about the good old days when fewer students had access to higher education?), the focus of current assessment developments has a much wider focus than basic literacy.

A subset of the problem of trust is the question of who will assess the assessors. A class and a culture of assessment professionals have grown up in the past decade or two, and they are having a major impact on the policies and procedures of undergraduate education across the country. Who are they, and why do they garner the trust that is with increasing meagerness afforded to college and university faculties?

These kinds of questions about the basis, validity, and motivation of increased distrust of college teachers and about the goals of the concurrent "accountability movement" are perhaps especially crucial to honors education. Honors programs and colleges are increasingly required to implement externally designed assessment procedures, a difficult task when their goals include curricular innovation and the personal as well as academic development of students, goals that are especially hard to assess. Moreover, honors programs and colleges depend on the enthusiasm, dedication, and expertise of faculty members to teach honors classes and to help run programs; if faculty members lose their autonomy, an inevitable by-product of losing trust, then what will become of the good will that is essential to honors education?

Honors programs depend, above all, on the love of learning that teachers bring to them, a love that very often—almost always, I would say—prompts teachers to do more work and to spend more time with students than what they or others would normally expect. But if teachers lose control over their classrooms, if they are required to teach in a manner that is assessable by instruments other than their own background and expertise, their love of learning and their desire to instill it in students will be imperiled.

And so we have wound back again to the previous issue of *JNCHC* (6.2), which focused on the question "What is Honors?" and from which emerged a consensus about what I called the "holy trinity of great education: the student, the teacher, and the focus of inquiry," a trinity that depends absolutely on mutual trust and (in many ways a synonym for trust) respect. Not only do all the contributors to this issue of *JNCHC* share in that consensus, but they also create a new one: that assessment and evaluation must come from within. There is considerable disagreement, as there should be, about more general issues of assessment and evaluation—including the dangers it might present to honors, the forms it should take, and whether it should exist at all—but there is unanimous agreement that requiring standardized measurement of student learning outcomes is inimical to the very nature of honors education. From this basic consensus, we can proceed now to a wonderful variety of variations upon the theme of accountability.

The lead essay in the Forum—"Saving Honors in the Age of Standardization" by Linda Frost of the University of Alabama at Birmingham—was distributed on the NCHC listserv in February, 2006, with an invitation to respond to the essay and/or to the topic of outcomes assessment and accountability in honors. Frost's essay is an outstanding overview of the issues as well as a compelling argument about the dangers of outcomes assessment. She attributes the rise of interest in accountability to "the skyrocketing costs of higher education," leading parents and politicians to question the quality of education. She suggests that questions ought more properly to target the business practices of universities and the under-funding of education by federal and state governments, but the consequence of public skepticism about education, combined with the allure of data, has instead been outcomes assessment. This kind of assessment privileges ends over means, product over process, and requires that teachers know in advance exactly what they want students to learn so that they then can measure whether students have learned it. This kind of pedagogy, Frost argues, can only lead to a learning based on predictability, repetition, compliance, and standardization—the antithesis, in other words, of the imagination, empowerment, individuality, and pleasure in learning that honors education fosters. Frost concludes her essay with the sobering thought that, even though honors programs and colleges—by virtue of their unique status—may be able to cling to empowered learning as their special prerogative, they cannot maintain this kind of learning in an institutional context antithetical to it.

As Frost indicates, there is confusion about exactly what "outcomes assessment" is. For some it means quantifiable measurements of predetermined goals; for others it means more generally the collection and analysis of information that will allow improvement of educational processes. We have no real way to resolve this confusion other than pointing out that the Forum contributors who see value in assessment tend to use the more general definition while those who see no value in it typically use the "quantifiable measurements" definition. That said, the responses to Frost's essay and/or to the general question of accountability fall into two categories: three essays argue for the value of assessment as long as it is internally developed and consistent with the goals of honors education; the other five responses focus on the dangers of assessment and counsel resistance. We present first the three responses that suggest the benefits of assessment.

Steffen Wilson and Rose Perrine, both of Eastern Kentucky University, published an essay called "We Know They're Smart, but Have They learned Anything? Strategies for Assessing Learning in Honors" in Volume 1 (2005) of *Honors in Practice*. This essay was part of the inspiration for the Forum on "Outcomes Assessment, Accountability, and Honors," and readers who want an in-depth discussion of outcomes assessment in honors should refer to that essay. In Steffen Wilson's essay here, "Using Learning Outcomes Assessment in Honors as a Defense Against Proposed Standardized Testing," she argues that outcomes assessment is here to stay because governments, donors, parents, and accrediting agencies demand it, and so we should develop forms of assessment that, even though they significantly change the educational culture and process, nevertheless give us some control. Wilson cites statistics showing that the success of higher education in producing higher pay and better job options is the reason most students go to college. It may seem paradoxical that the very statistics demonstrating "success" have created a climate where educators are required to produce *other* statistics to prove success, but Wilson argues that it is a fact and expectation that an undergraduate education is linked to future income and status. Accountability is necessary in this set of circumstances, and stakeholders have the right to demand demonstrable evidence of success.

Like Wilson, Jean Sorensen of Grayson County College suggests—in "Documenting the Achievements of Our Students without Compromising Excellence"—that academics need to design their own forms of assessment that can measure what they want to achieve, thus fending off external and standardized forms of assessment. Also like Wilson, she points to the need to be accountable to stakeholders, to prove that students are learning. In order to avoid the "reductive conformity" that Frost rightly fears, she says, honors administrators need to initiate discussions with other organizations—such as the State Higher Education Executive Officers—and certainly with each other about the appropriate ways to assess students and programs. She provides some ideas about how to get started on that conversation.

In "Honors Assessment and Evaluation," Cheryl Achterberg—currently of Iowa State University and formerly of the Schreyer Honors College at Penn State—agrees with the point made by Wilson and Sorensen that accountability to stakeholders is both necessary and valuable but that the kind of reductive standardization Frost describes provides meaningless results. Achterberg defines assessment, which tells us "how to get better," and evaluation, which judges our success, as processes that go beyond accumulation of data. She offers, as one model for assessment and evaluation, a collaborative process she undertook at Penn State to develop an honors course evaluation form. Because future developments of assessment and evaluation models will be a long-term commitment, she thinks honors administrators should start to take the lead now in that project.

Wilson, Sorensen, and Achterberg—while rejecting externally mandated and standardized forms of assessment—all seem optimistic about both the future role of assessment and the positive influence that honors educators can have on that future. The other five contributors do not share this optimism. Rather than encouraging honors educators to lead the accountability movement, they urge us to lead the resistance.

Two contributors—Jay Freyman of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and George Mariz of Western Washington University—make essentially the same point: that what matters in education are the long-term effects, not the short-term information that can be quantified but that has no relevance or value. In "When It's Bad Cess to Assess!," Freyman argues that the whole idea of outcomes assessment is linked to the faulty metaphor of "value added," a phrase that is properly used to describe the transformation of chunks of raw material into industrial products and that should not be used to describe or inform education. Education should aim at the long-term goal of civic responsibility, a goal that cannot be assessed; thus, implementing assessment of short-term goals distracts us from our proper vocation.

George Mariz, in "Accountable to Whom? Assessment for What?," makes the same point as Freyman, asking the question, "After all, how can an eighteen-year-old make meaningful evaluations of material whose real worth will be evident only years, sometimes many years after the fact?" Mariz provides an account of the political origins of the accountability movement in Washington Sate—an account that I suspect mirrors the recent history of many, if not most, other states. Mariz also describes the dynamics that have led institutions of higher learning to collude with legislatures and other external groups in promoting the accountability movement—dynamics that, he suggests, arise from a variety of motivations, all self-interested and all extraneous to the proper goal of education: learning.

Freyman and Mariz both argue against outcomes assessment on the grounds that it measures the wrong things, thus providing irrevocably flawed information that distorts and perverts the mission of higher education. Jeffrey A. Portnoy, of Georgia Perimeter College, adds a new facet to this argument in "Business and Educational Values." He argues that the business model, which seems to inform modes of accountability being imposed on higher education, has hardly been successful even for business, where fiscal irresponsibility (Enron, HealthSouth, etc.), huge salaries for management, lack of concern for workers, and government bailouts have become a cultural norm. Higher education has, alas, already adopted many of these norms even though the goals of education are and should be altogether different from making money and satisfying stakeholders. By its very nature, Portnoy suggests, education is designed to create unquantifiable "goods" such as critical thinking, diversity of ideas, flexibility in problem-solving—qualities that, when you try to standardize them, disappear. Thus the business model is not only inappropriate and inherently flawed, but it necessarily subverts the goal of excellence in education.

Whereas Mariz lamented the self-destructive complicity of universities in the accountability movement, Paul Strong of Alfred University finds this same complicity in the NCHC. In "Honors as Skunkworks," Strong sees the NCHC's document on "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program" as an instance and omen of the reductive standardization that Frost sees looming on our educational horizon. Honors programs, Strong says, should always be testing the rules, resisting restrictions, implementing new ideas, and challenging assumptions; they cannot accomplish these goals by acquiescing to measurements of conformity and standardization. The "Basic Characteristics," he argues, are a troubling manifestation of just such acquiescence.

Having the final word of the Forum in an essay called "They Graduated," Joan Digby of Long Island University – C. W. Post Campus underscores the point made by almost all the other contributors that the kind of data accumulated in large-scale assessment procedures are both unreliable and intrinsically meaningless. She echoes Mariz and Freyman in particular when she writes, "As honors directors, I believe, our own accountability lies not in any statistical results but in our moral directive." She then makes the disturbing point that, the more stringently we enforce quantitative measurement and standardization, the more we encourage cheating at every level. Perhaps most disturbing of all, she says, is the waste of time that teachers have to spend on assessment procedures, time they should be devoting to their students.

Those of you who read all the essays in the Forum in sequence will note, as I did, the differences in vocabulary as one moves into reading the essays urging resistance to assessment. The vocabulary itself—"morality," "civic responsibility," "innovation," "creativity"—signals values that are immeasurable. As Linda Frost outlined so effectively in her lead essay, the assessment issue exposes and pits against one another the dual roles of contemporary education, one of which, decades-old, is to prepare students for job opportunities at high salaries and the other of which, centuries-old, is to create better thinkers and citizens. The balance between these two goals is, to say the least, delicate, and there is cause for concern that the accountability movement will, as collateral damage, tip the scales in favor of career preparation. Honors educators do indeed need to be in the forefront of the national conversation about outcomes assessment, but first we will each need to decide whether we should join or resist the movement. The Forum essays should help readers make their decisions.

The second part of this issue of *JNCHC* presents three research essays that directly or indirectly relate to the theme of assessment.

Of exceptional relevance to all college and university honors programs as well as to the topic of assessment is the essay by Jennifer Lane of Glendale Community College on "The Impact of K-12 Programs on Postsecondary Programming." Lane provides important insights into the students we recruit into our honors programs and what we need to know about them. Four of these insights are (1) that K-12 programs for the gifted, bowing to the pressures of egalitarianism or of aggressive parents, often admit students who are neither gifted nor able; (2) that honors and AP programs in high school may be providing test-taking skills rather than the analytical and problem-solving skills required in college; (3) that students in high-school gifted programs thus often have the misconception that they are ready for college; and (4) that honors directors at post-secondary institutions may be subject to the same misconceptions and thus admit students who do not really belong in honors. Given this context, Lane goes on to provide five specific pieces of advice to honors educators: (1) continue offering academic and social support to students who have benefited from such support in high school, support that is essential to their success in college; (2) promote development of the individual identity crucial to college success by working directly with students, not their parents; (3) recognize that the student/teacher relationship is at the center of any productive education; (4) focus on "community building, peer relationships, and student-faculty interactions"; and (5) recognize that high-school honors students may be under-prepared for college work and that these students might dilute or diminish the educational experiences of genuinely gifted students. Lane concludes with her belief that the processes of identifying gifted and able students need to be consistent and appropriate throughout the K-12 educational system in order to create a stronger alignment between high-school and college honors programs—an alignment that can be achieved if and only if the focus on standardized testing in high school does not skew the focus of high-school programs toward other goals. Many of these points resonate with the Forum essays that focus on the dangers of standardized testing and the need for personal teacher-student interaction, and they also help explain concerns that honors teachers often have about the preparation of their students.

Nancy A. Stanlick picks up on the vocabulary of virtue and responsibility that characterized the arguments in the Forum against outcomes assessment. In "Creating an Honors Community: A Virtue Ethics Approach," Stanlick provides the philosophical underpinnings and implications of an honor code such as the one in place at the Burnett Honors College of the University of Central Florida. She presents a detailed analysis of what it means to be a member of a virtue-theoretic model of social relations. Her argument, in short, is that membership in a community is authentic, rather than merely nominal, only when the member participates fully in the community, not only receiving its benefits but fully exercising its responsibilities. Stanlick lays the philosophical groundwork for the concept that plagiarism, for instance, is necessarily an action that excludes the plagiarist from full membership in an honors community. She suggests that other models of social relationships—such as the individual ascendancy model—do not offer full or adequate definitions of community membership and do not provide sufficient grounds to understand and prevent academic dishonesty, a point that connects in interesting ways to Joan Digby's argument that quantitative assessment encourages plagiarism.

The final essay in this issue of *JNCHC* is "Building a City of Ladies with Christine de Pizan and Arkansas State University Honors Students" by Frances Malpezzi. Malpezzi describes an honors seminar she has taught that is built around the study of five medieval and early modern women: Hildegard of Bingen, Margery Kempe, Christine de Pizan, Aemilia Lanyer, and Elizabeth Cary. To imagine, however, that the study of these five women, remarkable as they are, is the only goal of the course would be to ignore the great variety of activities and objectives that arise from the seminar, many of which echo the values described elsewhere in this issue. Like the women they are studying, the seminar students re-vision their world and its history; they question assumptions, especially the misogynist assumptions that women have been contesting for almost a millennium; they do individual research on a wide range of topics that include medieval women poets, warriors, and mystics as well as modern women such as Benazir Bhutto, Emma Noether, and Oprah Winfrey; they build a community akin to the one described be Nancy A. Stanlick, in which each student participates and contributes; and, above all, they learn that the seminar is only the beginning of their study and of their re-visioning, a process that will continue throughout their lives as they question assumptions about their past and present culture.

It is fitting to conclude this issue with an essay about what actually happens in an honors classroom and with, therefore, the "holy trinity of the student, the teacher, and the topic of inquiry." However much we get caught up in debates about assessment or about all the policies and procedures that preoccupy our daily lives in the academy, we need always to remember, value, and protect the immeasurable joys of teaching and learning that are the reason we care about everything else.

Forum on
"Outcomes Assessment, Accountability, and Honors"

Saving Honors in the Age of Standardization

LINDA FROST
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

I went to my first National Collegiate Honors Council conference just this last year and was sitting in a session on national scholarships when the phrase "learning outcomes" came up. I turned to the woman behind me with whom I'd been briefly chatting before the session began and asked if this kind of evaluative structure was being implemented at her university.

She rolled her eyes. "We're all just sick of it," she said. "When I list my 'learning outcomes' on my syllabuses, I just want to say, 'I have no idea what we'll learn.'"

It is no secret that educational institutions across the nation have in recent years been encouraged, urged, and forced to adopt a lexicon that seems better suited to the worlds of corporations and governments. In fact, according to Charles Miller, the business executive heading up the presidentially-appointed Commission on the Future of Higher Education, "levers" like the accreditation process can and should be used to push educational reforms that will utilize standardized testing to measure student learning at all levels of higher education. At the same time that my colleagues in the English Department have decried the use of terms like "clients" and "customers" to describe our students, our upper administration has adopted a "scorecard" to rate our ongoing progress as an institution and, for purposes of state accreditation, a "quality enhancement plan" or "QEP" to articulate, guide, and evaluate our educational successes and failures. (Our adherence to and success with our QEP will decide our future accreditation; clearly, as Miller hopes it will, accrediting bodies are already being used as levers to force such educational "reforms.")

Designed in part to reassure the public—now paying more than ever for higher education—that they are indeed getting their money's worth, such plans in part require professors to provide greater "clarity" in determining what students should learn in their classes and to follow through on that by testing them more closely for those pre-defined items. According to Steffen Pope Wilson and Rose M. Perrine, "Because of concerns that higher education was not meeting the needs of American society, the assessment of student learning, or *outcomes assessment*, was deemed necessary for the development of 'excellence' in undergraduate education"(27). According to other researchers, the primary need that higher education in the United States has not been fulfilling in recent years is a salary for its graduates proportionate in size to the debt they have incurred accruing that education—a situation brought about by a steady increase in tuition due to an inadequate growth (and at times a decrease) in funding for higher education at the federal and state levels.[i] Certainly these are linked concerns, and I can't help but feel the resonance of the premise that James Engell and Anthony Dangerfield put forward in *Saving Higher Education in the Age of Money* that, rather than a means, money "is becoming the chief end of higher education" (2).

Means and ends are subjects in which my honors students are particularly well versed. Certainly the vast majority of them in the University Honors Program where I am now Associate Director do not pursue what Engell and Dangerfield might call the "unmonied fields"—fields like English and philosophy and anthropology. Even though they may spend their spare time writing novels, their "end" in medical school is of generally greater significance to them than the "means" of the time they spend studying to get there. They keep a close eye on the "ends" of their specific classes as well—what will be on their tests, what they really have to read in order to ace them, and what they'll end up with on their MCATs. Wilson and Perrine also indicate a concern with means and ends regarding outcomes assessments. As they note, "there must be a focus on the *ends* or the results of learning more than the *means* or the process and resources that can promote student learning" (27). My students don't seem to have any difficulty with that at all. Those of us who teach, though, often do.

I want to suggest that honors education—or what I have learned about it both from my experiences as a new administrator in it and as a student in an honors program myself when I was an undergraduate—represents a pedagogical antithesis to the kind of teaching such outcomes-assessment-based education promotes. I want to suggest that, while outcomes assessments lend themselves to greater standardization and presumably therefore more accurate data collection regarding what our students have actually learned in our classes, the pedagogy that most clearly defines honors education is one that spurns such standardization and predictability, promoting instead an education more closely based on individual initiative than university mission, on surprise and pleasure rather than predictability and presupposed knowledge.[ii] When a university pushes to create and sell a quantifiable knowledge product while simultaneously claiming to model itself on honors initiatives, that university is in reality working directly counter to the pedagogical aims honors courses, programs, and colleges strive to achieve.

It's important to return to the reason behind all this—namely, the skyrocketing costs of higher education. It's important because I believe the reason those costs are shooting up has little to do with the quality of education our students are receiving and much more to do with a changing model of bad business practices employed by our largest and most cumbersome universities—that and the fact that our federal and state governments have increasingly turned their backs on their responsibility for supporting higher education.

I recently spoke with a professor teaching one of our honors seminars who said he was going to administer a pre-test to his seminar students that he would then refashion as an exit exam of sorts in order to try out this idea of learning outcomes—to see if his students indeed had gained the knowledge he had claimed they would gain when he put together his syllabus for the course. Certainly this model of education—where one decides in advance the "content" one's course will cover and then spends that course's class time covering it, finalizing the class with a test that measures how much of that information has been absorbed—is anything but uncommon. It guides most large lecture-based courses out of practicality as well as pedagogical imperative; it guides our K-12 public educational system and their school boards, concerned about federal funding tied to student test scores. Increasingly, it could guide the bulk of our public institutions of higher education if the Commission on the Future of Higher Education has its way. But it is, to my way of thinking, precisely what Paulo Friere talks about in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* when he describes the "banking concept of education," a system in which "the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositer. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" (72).[iii]

The push to provide "accountability" in our learning models by virtue of a system like outcomes assessment sounds appropriate and right and helpful to the general populace, but it also necessarily promotes a pedagogy that I think is not only reductive, but ultimately repressive and socially regressive. In his argument for a "dangerous literacy," Patrick J. Finn makes it very clear that the most empowering model of pedagogical practice is also the most self-propelled and unique—and the most unpredictable. He refers to a study by Jean Anyon of fifth grade classrooms in New Jersey in which she describes the vastly different learning environments created in differently class-marked schools. In what she terms an "affluent professional school,"

> work was creative activity carried out independently. It involved individual thoughts and expression, expansion and illustration of ideas, and choice of appropriate methods and materials. . . . In the affluent professional school, work was not repetitious and mechanical, as it was in the working-class school; it was not knowing the correct answers, as it was in the middle-class school; it was being able to manipulate what Anyon termed *symbolic capital.* (18,19)

Finn's study goes on to argue for a "literacy with an attitude" for teachers of working-class children that models the practices and behaviors of schools with more elite class markings.

When I read this book, I was moved to contact three of my former teachers who practiced this kind of dangerous literacy at the rural Ohio high school I attended. While I have very little memory of what I did in most of my classes on a day to day basis, the things I do remember are the kinds of self-empowering activities that Finn and Anyon describe and that shaped me to the point where I actually embraced an "unmonied degree" and then went on for a graduate degree and a career in education. These were projects, not assignments, and many of them were extracurricular, not part of the school's primary coursework at all. (I'm thinking about projects I did for our school's Science Fairs and its humanities equivalent in my home state, History Day.) Without the involvement of these teachers and the very active support of my parents, I would have had no such experience. But because of these pedagogical anomalies, I went on to attend a university honors program that perpetuated a similar model. I remember taking a 1-credit-hour honors course in "War and Peace" for which I undertook a ridiculously ambitious research project that had little transcript value but tremendous personal reward, a project that moreover connected what I was learning in that class to my own life in college—another key difference between the empowering school environments in Anyon's study and the more compliant and disempowering ones. There is simply no way that an instructor could have predicted what we were going to learn in those classes and test us to make sure we had learned it because what we learned was self-motivation and the drive to research—the drive, in other words, to find out something that was significant to us and communicate those findings to someone else. When my acquaintance at NCHC said she wanted a learning outcome that was simply open, with no preordained idea of what her students might learn, she wasn't being flippant or cranky. She was expressing a pedagogical premise that to me is foundational to the idea of honors education.

At this year's NCHC conference, I also experienced my first City As Text© assignment. My Birmingham partner in crime, Donna Andrews, and I took the city bus into St. Louis to find—something! What a great idea, I thought—simply making the exploration of a place the very object of intellectual endeavor. And it's even more significant to me that City As Text© is the signature pedagogy for the National Collegiate Honors Council; such explorations are nothing if not the best example of what we mean by "active learning," the kind of attitude and empowerment and intellectual claim that the children in Anyon's affluent professional school were not simply encouraged but expected to enact. To me (and this is really yet another answer to the question posed by the last forum in the most recent issue of JNCHC [6.2]), honors education is precisely about this kind of intellectual ownership and pedagogical independence.

In her introduction to the "What Is Honors?" issue of JNCHC (6.2), Ada Long notes that "the most prestigious universities, such as Harvard and Stanford, and honors programs and colleges" are still areas of exception to "the national trend toward standardization and accountability"(10). This may or may not still be true—or be so only to varying extents at different institutions and in different areas of the country. But with any luck, we'll dodge the bullets of outcomes assessment and the kind of standardization on which its successful data collection depends. And if we do, I can't help but wonder what it will say about the rest of public higher education in this country. As the role of a college education replaces what was once the role of a high school diploma in the United States, so the strategies that have been used to make public education "accountable" are the same that are now creeping across our college campuses. What kind of classed public university educations will these models perpetuate? What kind of collectively acquiescent rather than individually exploratory students—and faculty—will it create? And if that does happen, what will those of us in honors programs and colleges do? If we do nothing but count our lucky stars, we will surely compromise our integrity and undermine our mission to encourage excellence in higher education so that, in the end, we might wind up with nothing worth saving at all.

ENDNOTES

[i] See, for instance, Annette Kolodny and James Engell and Anthony Dangerfield.

[ii] Carol T. Christ refutes even this supposition: she claims that "when members of the government, the news media, or the public call for greater accountability from our colleges, they are rarely complaining that students are not learning enough. At heart they are concerned about which students have access to learning, at what price, and whether and when they graduate. They want to know about students' success in the job market, not how much they have learned about literature, astronomy, or anthropology."

[iii] One can argue, of course, that a writing class, simply by virtue of its focus on writing, presents an institutionally housed opposition to this kind of learning. But we can't forget the reign of the useful, but nevertheless limited 5-paragraph essay, a form that has an iron grip on our students—particularly those who got really good at it in high school and therefore don't trust writing in any other way. I had a student in our fall honors interdisciplinary course who was completely stymied when I told her that it didn't matter to me if she had two points or five points to support her thesis in her literary analysis for the course. Flummoxed, she just kept repeating, "But don't I have to have three points?" The whole reason for using evidence in the first place was lost to her. Worse, the use of writing as an exploratory intellectual tool was lost on her.

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Using Learning Outcomes Assessment in Honors as a Defense Against Proposed Standardized Testing

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Learning outcomes assessment (LOA) is the <u>self-assessment</u> of <u>self-created</u> learning goals for students at the class, department, college, and university level. In higher education, LOA is being imposed upon us by our accrediting bodies (Eaton, Fryshman, Hope, Scanlon, & Crow, 2005; Lingenfelter & Lenth, 2005; Nichols, 1991, 1995; Wergin, 2005). This is difficult for us because LOA is not a part of the university culture, and there are very few people on most campuses skilled in the implementation of LOA. There is also very little in the way of release time and other resources that are being provided to implement LOA on many college and university campuses nationwide.

With these factors in place, it is not surprising that most of my colleagues did not welcome the LOA introduced in 2003 at my university in preparation for our upcoming reaccredidation visit. Similar resistance is being experienced on many campuses nationwide. To add to the discontent with the current testing movement, recent reports have suggested that the Secretary of Education's Higher Education Commission may call for standardized testing in higher education (Field, 2006).

We are all familiar with the high-stakes standardized testing mandated in the early 1990s in our primary and secondary education systems, and then augmented by No Child Left Behind in 2002 (Cala, 2004; Mathison, 2004). The fundamental flaw in the primary and secondary assessment system is that *assessment drives learning*. That is, our primary and secondary schools must "teach the test" in order for students to do well on the assessment (Popham, 2002). High-stakes standardized tests tend to use multiple choice formats that are best suited to the learning of factual knowledge, and student failure on these tests results in harsh penalties for the school. Consequently, innovative teaching methods that result in more sophisticated levels of learning are frequently eliminated to allow instructional time to teach the factual information that will be assessed on high-stakes standardized tests (Hursh, 2005).

There is no doubt that we in higher education do not want a similar system to be implemented in our classrooms, and we must make a stand against the current movement towards standardized testing in higher education. We need a method of assessment that is controlled at the level of the institution and that allows for the academic freedom to teach and assess complex skills and expanding knowledge (Lingenfelter & Lenth, 2005). LOA allows us to provide the information desired by our stakeholders without the need for standardized testing, and it gives us the academic freedom to teach the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed by adult learners.

THE PURPOSE OF AN EDUCATION

Before one can fully consider the implications of any type of assessment in higher education, one must first consider the perspective of each of the stakeholders (e.g., the federal and state governments, students and their families, faculty and administrators, and external donors) in higher education. According to the Unites States Department of Education, a major purpose of higher education is to create an educated populace to address the economic and workforce needs of the country. Eighty percent of the fastest growing jobs require highly skilled workers who have at least some higher education, but significantly less than half of our college- aged population will ever complete their college degree ("A National Dialog," 2005; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002).

For the student, the primary purpose of obtaining a degree in higher education is to find high-paying employment (Montgomery & Côté, 2003). This goal is reasonable as it has been reported that each year of completed higher education has a positive impact on the occupational attainment of the individual, with a bonus added for completing the degree. This predictor outperforms all other predictors related to career success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 427).

One explanation for this effect is that college develops the cognitive, attitudinal, and social skills needed to succeed in the work world. Considerable evidence also suggests that an additional causal mechanism for this effect is that employers in the U.S. use the presence of a college degree as a certification or credentialing mechanism to help screen potential employees (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The employment of college graduates also tends to be at the higher paying and more stable managerial, technical, and professional levels (Hamilton, 1994). College graduates are also promoted at a faster rate than other employees (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

College faculty and administrators frequently put more emphasis on the non-employment-related benefits of higher education. This emphasis is also reasonable as it has been found that as a result of participating in higher education students develop their knowledge base, can better handle complexity, and think more abstractly and critically. They also change attitudes, experience an increase in positive self-concept, expand their intellectual interests, and increase in general maturity and well-being (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

An increasingly important stakeholder in higher education is external donors. External donors—including corporations, organizations, and private citizens—support higher education for a variety of reasons that include creating an educated workforce and educating citizens.

It should be noted that the faculty and administrators' perspective on the reasons for completing higher education differs from that of the government, students, employers, and some donors. Faculty and administrators in higher education should maintain their emphasis on the intellectual and attitudinal impacts of a college education. We should also embrace our role as the educators of our future workforce and demand the respect that this role deserves.

We must also keep in mind that higher education in the United State is a fee-for-service enterprise, and it is the state and federal governments, students and their families, and external donors who are paying for higher education. It is reasonable in any fee-for-service enterprise for those paying for the service to request accountability information in order to verify that they are receiving the services for which they are paying. The federal government, as a major investor in our higher education system, is currently questioning the outcomes of their investment in higher education ("The Challenge," 2005). LOA data can provide our stakeholders with information regarding the types of learning that can be expected by students attending the institution (Eaton et al., 2005).

STEPS TO TAKE

EMBRACE LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

As mentioned earlier, it is reasonable for stakeholders to request accountability information from us. Therefore, faculty and administrators in higher education need to proactively embrace the LOA being imposed upon us by our accrediting bodies; this is a system of assessment that we can control and that will allow us to retain our institutional identity and innovative teaching methods (Lingenfelter & Length, 2005; Wergin, 2005). Specifically, we need to let *learning drive assessment* and develop assessment methods that can test the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that we teach and value in higher education. For example, critical thinking on an assignment can be assessed with the development of a holistic scoring rubric and a small amount of scorer training. Wilson and Perrine (2005) and Maki (2004) provide an overview of how to create a learning driven assessment plan.

HONORS PROGRAMS SHOULD TAKE THE LEAD

As honors educators, we have the responsibility of educating the best and the brightest of the young adults who are attending college. A degree in honors adds both excellence to the curriculum and an additional credential to the college diploma. Thus, a degree in honors increases both the quality of the college education and the employability of the graduate. Honors students are some of the best prepared students in the nation. As such, they are positioned to take places of prominence and influence in our workforce. As the educators of our most capable students, honors educators should lead the charge in developing LOA in higher education as an offensive strategy against proposed compulsory standardized testing. Our students have the most to lose if an ineffective assessment program causes the decline in the quality of higher education.

PROVIDE RESOURCES

With LOA, higher education can prove to our funding sources the quality of work being done in the university. We can then demand the respect and support that we deserve as the educators of our nation's current and future workforce. However, LOA cannot be created without the appropriate resources. University administrators, including honors program administrators, must provide their faculty with the time, training, and in some cases financial support if LOA is to be properly developed on any university campus.

CONCLUSION

My frustration with my university's LOA was apparent in a recent conversation with an honors colleague. In the course of our conversation she said, "This is really a paradigm shift. It is going to take some time for us to get used to it." She is exactly right; this is a paradigm shift, and it is a paradigm shift that is here to stay. By creating our own LOA, we can manage the direction of this paradigm shift and preserve the quality of the education that we in honors programs, and in higher education, provide to our students.

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Documenting the Achievements of Our Students without Compromising Excellence

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When questions arise about the quality and costs of higher education, honors educators, administrators, and students are best positioned to provide answers. When national groups report data questioning the achievement of our graduates, are we willing to be held accountable? Are we even in a position to provide evidence that our students have not only achieved some minimal level of competency but also excelled by exploring challenging issues central in our society, our disciplines, our nation's workforce, our government, and the international arena?

PUBLIC CONCERNS ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION

In "Graduated but Not Literate," Doug Lederman observes that just 25% of college graduates scored at "proficient" according to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL). The highest score of proficiency denotes the ability to do complex comparisons of "viewpoints in two editorials or interpreting a table about blood pressure and physical activity" (Schneider). Surprisingly, an honors administrator Lederman interviewed about the decline in literacy scores from 1992 to 2003 saw honors participation as part of the problem rather than the solution to improved literacy. Doug Hesse, professor of English and head of Illinois State University's honors program, noted that honors students were assigned an average of fewer than fifty pages of reading a week and that two out of five students reported completing less than half of that work (Lederman, "Graduated").

LEVELS OF ASSESSMENT AND STANDARDIZATION

Low expectations of our best students and even lower performance claims from the students themselves have contributed to the call for greater accountability in higher education. Should we believe that the honors experience transcends measurement coming from sources like the NAAL? Linda Frost contrasts pedagogically reductive methods of reading instruction (standardization) with a "dangerous literacy" that Patrick J. Finn reported from Jean Anyon's fifth-grade classrooms in New Jersey. She also reviews her own "self-empowering activities" from elementary school through college in pursuit of "an unmonied degree." Frost cites Steffen Wilson and Rose

Perrine's introduction to assessment strategies in honors at the point where they rely upon J.O. Nichols's institutional effectiveness handbook with its focus on *ends* rather than *means* (Wilson and Perrine 27). Indeed, institutional effectiveness is concerned with ends, as are many levels of assessment at the student, course, departmental, program, degree, and institutional levels. At what level does Frost want to prevent standardization of the learning experience?

Standardization of students' experiences is undesirable, but at the levels of the course, degree, and institution, standardization is not only desirable but also necessary for integrative learning. For instance, the sequential nature of two semesters of Freshman English illustrates how material learned in one class serves as prerequisite knowledge for success in another. In another example, material learned in a math class is essential for computations in chemistry and physics. If, like Frost's hypothetical honors professor, faculty claim, "I have no idea what we'll learn," then the very notion of graduates earning degrees or demonstrating achievements appropriate to any field of study becomes a suspect proposition. If the faculty assigning credit for undergraduate courses cannot indicate learning outcomes for the courses they taught, how are we to determine which degrees are appropriate to various kinds of graduate study and employment? Would the hypothetical honors professor be willing to describe and catalogue the outcomes after they occurred?

HONORS INSTRUCTION THAT DOCUMENTS STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

Frost asserts that "the pedagogy that most clearly defines honors education is one that spurns such standardization and predictability." If the primary objection to ends-oriented assessment is that predicting outcomes creates expectations of honors students that limit opportunities for them to formulate their own innovative outcomes, then non-proscriptive outcomes could serve as guidelines for students. Given the variety of assessments available to document students' achievements, our concern as honors educators and administrators must surely be focused not on preventing such documentation but on choosing the forms least restrictive to the individual initiative shown by honors students. We may reject standardized testing from outsiders unaware of the variety of outcomes our students have achieved, yet we may embrace locally designed assessment instruments, course-embedded assessments, and portfolios as useful in cataloging the very diversity we celebrate. Faculty-driven assessment documenting learning outcomes unique to our honors programs is at the core of Wilson and Perrine's article (33-34). They recommend comparing pre-test and post-test results for honors students with a control group of non-honors students to determine the extent to which honors students are outperforming their peers, not because they are more talented or motivated than their peers from the start, but because honors instruction is more challenging and gives students the ability to learn more than non-honors instruction (35).

OUR ROLE IN PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

We already report a variety of institution-level measures allowing the public to examine college costs through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

(IPEDS). The reports themselves point to a variety of stakeholders in higher education since students rarely provide for their college expenses exclusively from their own income and savings. Students receive financial assistance in the form of loans, scholarships, and grants to pay for their degrees. IPEDS reports that, during the period from 1988 to 1998, two thirds of public four-year students and 56.8% of two-year students received aid from some source. Four-year private schools were second to four-year public schools in student loans, and two-year institutions received the highest percentage and average amount of federal grant aid (Cunningham et al.). In part, the Commission on the Future of Higher Education seems to be looking at assessment to provide information useful to the many stakeholders invested in higher education—students, their parents, taxpayers, employers, and legislators—so that they can make sense of the costs of higher education as they occur in a free market environment. The Chairman of the Secretary of Education's Commission, Charles Miller, argues that these costs require evidence that students are learning: "We need to assure that the American public understand through access to sufficient information, particularly in the area of student learning, what they are getting for their investment in college education" (Lederman, "No College"). We can direct the form that assurance takes.

Honors educators and administrators can provide assurance about the best and most exciting kinds of learning occurring in higher education. Much of our national conference is dedicated to showcasing the research and artistic achievements of honors students. The State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) argues, "A better system of accountability will rely on pride, rather than fear, aspirations rather than minimum standards as its organizing principles" (National 7). Maybe we should invite these executive officers from our accrediting agencies and governing boards to our national and regional conferences.

Before the invitations are issued, let us take stock of our students' achievements with a view to the larger framework of accountability and assessment. The Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) suggests four elements for a comprehensive accountability and assessment framework:

(1) *Orientation* during students' first year about the institution's expectations for learning outcomes and a diagnostic assessment of each student made in conjunction with outcomes.
(2) *A plan of study* designed with students' advisors and connected to outcomes tied to students' choices of courses and fields.
(3) *Milestone assessments* in both general education and the major linked to outcomes with feedback to students and advisors. Portfolios document and align these assessments between two-year and four-year schools.
(4) *Capstone or culminating experiences* in the field of study document accomplishments in liberal education. (16, presented as summary)

Some of these elements such as orientation, planned advising with feedback, articulation agreements for transfer students, and senior theses are standard fare in honors education. Diagnostic assessment and learning outcomes could become points of contention unless they are integrated into the curriculum and degree plans at the local level. Point four affirms AAC&U's position that "we must hold ourselves accountable for assessing our students' best work, not generic skills and not introductory levels of learning" (11). Fully integrated assessment at the highest levels cannot be purchased with standardized products advertising generic testing of critical thinking skills.

I suggest that we take Frost's warning against reductive conformity to heart and question the value to students and taxpayers of expanding the profits of testing companies and their auxiliary preparatory services. We care deeply about our students and their learning opportunities as well as their success in achieving their educational and employment goals. At our national conference in Philadelphia this 15-19 November, the Teaching and Learning Committee is sponsoring panels in assessing and evaluating honors teaching and learning (Zubizarreta). Let us debate the many ways of helping our students document their achievements through creative assessments that go beyond our current provisions of honors transcripts and diplomas. Honors educators, administrators, and students possess the talent to forge solutions to the public questions about the quality and costs of higher education.

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Honors Assessment and Evaluation

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I am currently leading a college where our vision is simply "Expanding Human Potential." That vision perfectly encapsulates my personal value set for education as well. I believe that expanding human potential is also the business of honors education. And because I believe so firmly in this concept, I shall go on record supporting assessment and evaluation in honors education as well as general education.

As an administrative leader I need to make daily decisions about what will serve my college, my students, and my faculty well. Some of those decisions are internally motivated, internally addressed, and relatively unknown beyond the college. Some of those decisions are externally driven, and the public wants to see the answers. Assessment and evaluation are important to both internal and external audiences, so there are several reasons to engage in them. Among these are:

- Expectations of accountability regarding quality from students, families, and taxpayers;
- Demands for accountability from the college advisory board (consisting primarily of alumni) and donors;
- Concerns about accountability from the central administration (because university funds are invested to support honors); and
- Needs for honors administrators to evaluate and improve the honors experience for honors students.

I am a pragmatist. Concerns, questions, and demands surrounding accountability will only increase in the future. A good leader will prepare in advance, but not only to meet the requirements of the public or central administration. More importantly, the honors administrator should be continuously careful to monitor and improve the learning experiences of honors students; that can't be done without some form of assessment and evaluation.

Before we get ahead of ourselves, however, it is important to define terms. I regard *data* as simply counts, dumps of information that do not contain much meaning. They may yield meaning with analysis, especially if the analysis identifies trends across time. *Assessment*, however, is much more specific; assessment looks to collect the specific kinds of data and analyses that tell us "how to get better," i.e., how to improve the process, practices, and, yes, even learning outcomes on a regular basis. *Evaluation* goes a step further. Evaluation is judgmental. It provides the kind of data and analysis that gives us a thumbs up or thumbs down, tells us to continue as is or not, to grow or not, to increase funding or not. Assessment and evaluation require tools designed to do the job. These tools typically yield numerical data, but raw (random) data alone are never a substitute for assessment and evaluation.

To illustrate a case in point, I shall refer to honors course evaluation in the Schreyer Honors College at Penn State University. Concerns were expressed about honors course quality for all the reasons listed above, but the only information available about teaching performance or course evaluations on campus was unavailable to the Honors College as it was tied to promotion and tenure. Data that go into dossiers are kept confidential. So, the SHC had to develop its own course evaluation instrument. That was a serious undertaking. As of October 2005, the SHC had invested 18 months in the process engaging a team of no fewer than ten people. They began by asking the question, "What is an Honors Course?" A statement was devised and reworked upon review by the Faculty Advisory Committee to the SHC, student focus groups, and numerous other reviewers. From that document, a course evaluation instrument was drafted in consultation with the university's Center for Excellence for Learning and Teaching (CELT) and modified by an M.S. student in Student Affairs/Higher Education. Nine separate versions were produced and assessed by focus groups and expert review for face validity, content criterion analysis, and clarity. A pilot test was run on five honors courses. When that test yielded insufficient data, a second pilot was conducted with forty courses. Based on those data, a final version was produced for general dissemination.

All of that effort was simply to arrive at square one: having a tool in hand that could begin to speak about the quality of honors instruction. There were (and are) a number of other barriers to clear including faculty acceptance, implementation procedures, and institutionalization. Additionally, the course evaluation instrument is only the first of many such tools that will need to be developed to fully assess and evaluate honors education at this one institution. The next tool in line is an evaluation of honors advising. There will be several more initiatives that target efforts and experiences in service learning, international study, and undergraduate research/thesis experiences. What students learn will be a piece of that assessment. Only when a full suite of tried and true instruments and a body of evidence are collected will anyone be able to stand up and verify, in an "accountable" way, what impact honors education has.

Linda Frost seems to dwell on "learning outcomes," and these appear in her piece to be equated with learning objectives. If these are one's only focus, she may be right. Such evaluation will lead to nothing but meaningless standardization. Yet, assessment and evaluation offer educators much more. I believe that people have two concerns: quality and whether that quality is worthy of their monetary investment. Honors educators can develop measures of innovative pedagogies and individual initiatives; they can establish the feasibility of implementation and interpretation of such measures; and they can become the leaders on campuses, and perhaps throughout higher education, in developing meaningful assessments and evaluations of both processes and outcomes. Indeed, they can define what those outcomes should be!

Without doubt, developing assessments and evaluations that are constructive and meaningful is a serious enterprise, and it will take a long-term commitment to make it happen. We teach our honors students to question; we should not shirk when questions are also asked of us. We need to take these questions about our value and outcomes seriously. Indeed, we need to recognize that assessment and evaluation are essential in honors education. At present, there is little understanding of honors issues in higher education and few studies that show its worth one way or the other. Honors cannot survive the future on anecdotal evidence. If we do not act, and if we do not lead, there will be nothing in honors to save at all.

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When It's Bad Cess[1] to Assess!

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It seems to me that efforts at outcome assessment in higher education are deficient because of a failure to understand what exactly it is that is being or should be assessed. Certainly, the object of such assessment should not be what, if anything, the student has learned in courses; grades for course work, grade inflation notwithstanding, should suffice to tell that tale.

Some years ago, one state legislature termed the object of higher-education assessment efforts to be "value added." When I heard this, I immediately thought of the VAT prevailing in many countries. From the time when a raw material enters the process of being transformed into a finished product, an assessment is made of the value added to the product at each stage in that process; and a tax is imposed on the sum of the values added at the various stages. This value added tax is paid by the purchaser. I conjured up the image of students as just so many chunks of raw material which take on more and more form and utility (value) at the intellectual hands of craftsmen/professors as they pass along the assembly line of the courses which constitute their college curricula.

Such quantifiable objects of assessment do not, I suggest, provide a direct indication of whether or not an academic program is being successful. In our rage for the instant results that we seem to see quantification providing, we may accept them as an indirect indication of that success. But I submit that in so doing we are deluding ourselves about both the appropriate object and the appropriate method of the assessment being sought.

If Bruce Kimball is accurate in his book ***Orators and Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education*** that civic responsibility is a common goal of most, if not all, academic programs of liberal education, then what higher education is about is the production or, if it is already there, the encouragement of such responsibility. Is that goal of civic responsibility to be considered properly just one objective of liberal education, or is it to be considered <u>the</u> goal? I take as text the dictum expressed by Aristotle in his ***Politics*** "*Ho anthrõpos physei politicon zõon*." While in popular parlance the meaning of this statement is usually expressed in the words "Man is a political animal," I maintain that the following rendition is much more accurate to Aristotle's meaning: "The human being is by nature a civic animal" in which the term "civic" is to be taken as having also the connotation of the term "civil." It is fair, I think, to argue that, under this construction of Aristotle's sentiment, civic responsibility is a goal ulterior to any of the other goals usually enunciated for liberal education, i.e., any formal intellectual exercise in which a person engages is ultimately aimed at making him/her a productive

[1] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term "cess" has been used both as a clip of "success" and as a misspelled clip of "assess." In the former case, it means "luck" or "fortune" as in the phrase "bad cess to" = "bad luck to" or "a pox upon." In the second case, it means "assess." The term provides, in the present circumstances, quite a fortuitous pun.

and contributory member of a *polis* (city-state or entity defined in geographical and social terms).

Honors education is about the culture of philosopher/citizens who are more acute than most people in their productivity for and in their contributions to the *polis*. Such individuals have a higher consciousness and a deeper understanding of why they are doing what they do and thus are more fit to guide the *polis* in its day-to-day business or, in a democratic *polis*, to be watchful of those who actually perform that guidance.

Now, it is clear that academic assessment as it is currently practiced is at best aiming at examining short-term results which, it is assumed, are the appropriate indirect indications of success toward the ultimate goal. Current assessment, then, is no more or less than a predictive, indirect measurement of what higher education should really be about, i.e., it is a kind of crystal ball. It presumes to measure what students have learned and not how they have learned to use it. Can you imagine the same legislature which spoke of value added requiring the assessment of the morality of college graduates? The achievement of the real goal of higher education is something that can become evident only over the long term when we can see whether that education has produced a civically responsible individual.

Admittedly, a long-term outlook is impractical in our age of instant gratification that seems to evidence a strange mix of guarantee-requiring and risk-taking. The student says, "If I am going to put out $15,000+ a year for four or four-plus years for a college education, I want to be darned sure that I am, immediately on graduation, going to get my money's worth in the form of a highly remunerative professional/occupational position," which is the type of thing Linda Frost describes. The established professional who should know better says, "We have to show immediate bang for all the bucks we have been putting into this space program, so let's get this turkey off the ground and not worry too much about those pieces of foam that keep getting torn off after launch." As Linda Frost indicates, however, honors education is means-oriented instead of end-infatuated.

The honors educator has the patience to wait for twenty or so years to find out whether what (s)he thought was a good idea at the time proves to have been so at the voting machines, in the soup kitchens, in the clean or polluted air, etc., of the future. The fifth century BCE Greek historian Herodotus reports that the Athenian lawgiver Solon advised Croesus, the King of Lydia, to assess no one's happiness until his/her life has been completed; Solon could afford to do this, for he was going to leave Croesus' capital shortly thereafter. Honors education is stuck in circumstances in which there seems to be an increasing demand for immediate assessment of that which is not immediately assessable. Honors education has, I believe, two contributions of value to make in the discussion of assessment: an understanding of how long it takes to realize the true goal of higher education; and the patience to wait to assess that realization at the appropriate time, meanwhile simply doing the best we can as reason dictates.

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Accountable to Whom? Assessment for What?

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Can there be anyone in the honors community or higher education who has not been assaulted by campus assessment initiatives in the recent past or the present? The current agitation surrounding this topic is equaled only by the absence of clear ideas about the purpose or utility of assessment. While assessment's proponents believe that its aims and virtues are obvious, most of the academic community is either vexed or bemused by the whole thing. How has higher education arrived at this juncture, and where are we going in regard to assessment? I will try to give some answers to these questions. As will become obvious, at least in the state of Washington assessment began as a political issue and in response to "public" concerns about higher education, but it is increasingly driven by pressures internal to higher education itself. Additionally, it is not at all clear that assessment is measuring anything meaningful.

The impetus to assess higher education in Washington originated outside higher education itself, springing from political concerns about accountability and a sense that public higher education was under-educating or miseducating students. Like all politically driven initiatives, it sprang as much from the re-election needs of legislators as from any genuine concern with issues relevant to higher education itself, and at least according to my reading of the tea leaves in my own state, the initiatives here were "hero bills," i.e., measures legislators were bound to introduce as a result of promises they made on the campaign trail.

Of course, assessment means assessors, and so the office on my campus responsible for a number of activities, e.g., administration of student evaluation of teaching, collection of various kinds of data for the state legislature, and production of reports for internal and external constituencies on a number of aspects of student satisfaction, became the home of assessment. On this campus, state mandates found an ally, able and ready to collect information and assume responsibility for assessment, indeed to take up the banner and act as advocates for the process.

National efforts have joined local ones in depicting assessment as a positive good. In the words of one of its advocates, Richard Hersh, a Senior Fellow at the Council for Aid to Education, "it is an educational, professional, and ethical duty of higher education to assess its impact on student learning in ways that promote our educational mission and at the same time improve accountability" (Hersch, 1). The very passion of assessment's constituents is a measure of both the hollowness that comes of taking this sort of initiative as an ethical imperative and the utter lack of intellectual underpinning for it. Poor Kant would shudder, indeed may well be shuddering at this very moment. In fact, while many are willing to trumpet the necessity of assessment, nowhere have I seen a reasoned pedagogical justification for its practice, nor is one likely to be forthcoming. I have seen no evidence that assessment has led to any demonstrable improvement in higher education, and save for the accountability portion, I think, no one can produce such evidence. We do have more things to report to the legislature, whether or not those things have any value, educationally or otherwise.

Above all, I believe, assessment defects stem from its demands for immediate answers to questions about a very long process and, in its most important aspects, a life-long process. Does it even make any sense to pose these sorts of questions to a first-year college student? There is no need to continue the litany, but it is worth asking about the grist for the mill of assessment. As Alexander (Sandy) Astin of UCLA, among the nation's most careful students of assessment, has so trenchantly noted, the strongest and most persistent correlation on the most common assessment instrument, student evaluations of teaching, is between numbers and grades—classes filled with students who receive high grades generally also receive good numerical evaluations, and those whose students receive low grades generally score low. In other words, students assess (grade) their professor about the way their professors assess (grade) them; someone who gives very few A grades and many C grades in addition to Ds and Fs is unlikely to score well. Faculty, especially untenured faculty, learn these lessons very quickly and well (Boyer, 17-32 and 131-82). Unfortunately, these and similarly suspect data are being turned into data for use by the assessment mill.

A generation ago Michael Polanyi's notion of "tacit knowing" prevailed on many campuses (Polanyi, 29-39; Polanyi and Prosch, 34-5 and 52-3). Boards of trustees and state legislatures would become outraged over one or another aspect of higher education. University administrators would appear to share that outrage, and faculty would appear to respond, however half-heartedly, to the challenge. I believe there was a shared set of unstated assumptions among both faculty and administrators regarding the need to shield the content and processes of higher education as well as faculty and students from the grosser forms of evil that resulted from untoward interference. The contemporary situation is quite different, and outside bodies now seem to have campus allies in both central administrations and assessment offices who permit interference with the processes of higher education to a degree heretofore unknown in the academy. It very well may be that an alliance has grown up between assessment offices and assessment initiatives, and the second of these are increasingly becoming a significant part of the *raison d'être* of the first.

Above all else, assessment has had a very unwholesome effect on the proper business of the academy, which is ultimately nothing less (or for that matter, nothing more) than learning. It subserves the process for non-educational ends and makes assessment an end in itself, no matter its worth. It asks trivial questions, e.g., about "the clarity of the course's goals and objectives" (wording taken directly from my institution's student evaluation of teaching form) and consequently elicits trivial answers. It then quantifies the results and inflates them with an air of genuine significance. Moreover, it asks questions of people who are not very well equipped to give good answers. After all, how can an eighteen-year-old make meaningful evaluations of material whose real worth will be evident only years, sometimes many years after the fact?

The above is certainly screed to a degree, but it also indicates the dimensions of the problem. Assessment is impoverishing the educational process, first by draining resources away from other, far more beneficial activities, e.g., more sections, and also by standardizing it. In the latter regard, it is often a positive good that a syllabus and a course's ultimate aim be left open-ended, and it is by no means a bad thing that students leave a class with a degree of uncertainty, with the realization that there are answers that they do not know and must continue to seek, even though lack of clear goals and objectives does not make good grist for the assessment mill. Educational psychological agendas and issues, more properly relegated to the world of secondary schools, alas have become staples in the realm of higher education.

These are depressing realities, and I have no easy solutions for the assessment problems that plague and will continue to plague us. If the fight is to be sustained—I do not imagine victory is possible over the short term and perhaps not over the longer term either—it must be fought not only on individual campuses but nationally, and I think it is here that NCHC can make a significant contribution. By framing well argued and well supported assessments of assessment itself, we, and here I mean honors administrators, can perhaps begin to make headway against it. The fight will be a long one, and I am not hopeful that its outcome will be successful, but I am equally certain it is a fight we must undertake.

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Business and Educational Values

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In "Saving Honors in the Age of Standardization," Linda Frost astutely observes the confluence of two disturbing trends in higher education that are generating a current so deep and swift that one wonders if resistance is possible: the business model for education and the standardization of educational processes, especially through testing. Hardly an issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* appears without an article or discussion featuring business practices or business leaders dominating the landscape of this or that college or university. Rarely does a meeting with or missive from an administrator not include some element directly connected to one of these trends. Here in Georgia, the new Chancellor of the University System of Georgia is a business person and former CEO. My institution, Georgia Perimeter College—the third-largest school in the University System—has initiated a search for a new president, and the Chair of the Screening Committee is a business professor, as is another of only three total faculty on the committee. None are faculty members from the English Department, a humanities discipline, or one of the social sciences. What will be the background and passions of this new president is the obvious question, but the answers feel eerily preordained. Five to ten years ago, I recall, my somewhat reductive but comforting pat explanation for the hiring of business people as administrators at all levels of college and universities was that they seemed like people who were not smart or clever enough to make it in the business world. Outmaneuvering academics, however, was a game they could play, and we were fair and easy game. Moreover, everyone qualifies as an expert on education because all of us endured elementary, middle-school, high-school, and college classrooms for years. The situation has become more serious in recent years, and finding comfort in pat answers and reductionist barbs is not easy. I worry that the future of teaching is a race to retirement against the accelerating forces of standardization and business practices. Certainly that is not the epitaph I would like to read about my career in education, nor is it the environment I want my students to experience.

I spent several years in New York City after I graduated from college and before deciding to attend graduate school to earn a doctorate in English Literature. I worked on Wall Street and at Rockefeller Center in what I call my Junior Businessman phase. There I learned several lessons. Clearly, those individuals who could communicate and write well and exhibited a flexible and critical mind were the ones who were prospering and moving up the proverbial ladder. This observation from the real world has metamorphosed into a mantra in my composition classes to encourage students to recognize that they are likely to find themselves needing to write well no matter what profession they pursue. One other object lesson from the Wall Street firm that seemed to have so little regard for my work and subsistence: about ten years after I left there, I learned that the principals had all been indicted and convicted of fraud. (Sometimes justice delayed is not justice denied; they were a sleazy bunch.) Certainly, I did not see in those New York City operations exemplars of business practices for the academy to emulate, and my confidence is not rising as I review the machinations of Enron, Ken Lay, and fellow travelers in the corporate world. Therein lies the problem. I am having a difficult time understanding what elements in the business world beckon as ones that the academy should embrace.

Accountability, especially fiscal accountability, is purportedly what colleges and universities must learn. Few of us are likely to argue for fiscal irresponsibility as the modus operandi we endorse for our institutions, but I do not see that colleges and universities are more egregious than our counterparts in business and politics on that score. Certainly fiscal responsibility is not the watchword of our federal government, where the deficit long ago transcended astronomical, or of most state governments making decisions based on the power and influence of lobbyists and the need to mollify the often parochial and shortsighted desires of constituents. Businesses appear most adept at rewarding upper management with huge salaries, thousands of times higher than the lowest-paid workers in the company, and golden parachutes, whether the company has prospered or not during their tenure. The *Chronicle* certainly attests to institutions' adopting this business practice as the salaries of presidents at major universities reach into the mid-to-upper six figures. In contrast, my first raise in three years last January resulted in a net decrease of twenty-five dollars in my monthly paycheck. Sharing the monetary rewards does not seem to be an element pulsating through the hearts of business leaders; greed and other self-serving motivations—not generosity and largesse—dominate.

Concern for workers and their quality of life does not appear to be a valued commodity in the business world. While workers' salaries succumb to the rising cost of living, health care and other benefits are receding as well. The signs of the times: a shrinking middle class and rising personal debt made easy and enticing by the ubiquitous credit card offers. The planet's environment and well being appear to be no beneficiary of corporate practices. I am struggling here to find many models to emulate besides something like what Ben & Jerry's attempted. Perhaps we are hearing only the bad news, but I suspect not. Businesses are, in fact, capable of many good things. In the early 1960s when the South was beginning to industrialize, my father was the production engineer/plant manager for a new garment factory in rural Mississippi. That factory was the first integrated factory in Mississippi and offered job training, supervisory positions, and decent wages in an area with few economic opportunities for blacks or whites. Over thirty-five years later, many decades after my father left that company, the factory stands abandoned and empty, by far the largest structure in the town, and that small town appears even smaller and less promising than it once was; upon every run-down porch across the sun-parched, raggedy field from the factory sit adults not at work at 10:30 in the morning. I suspect the economic prospects of the factory's owners are less grim and their porches a brighter hue.

Perhaps the answer to the question of what businesses can teach the academy is in the way we treat our students as they deal with the mechanics of applying to schools, registering for classes, buying books, and dealing with the offices, typically understaffed and underappreciated, of support staff keeping the institution running. Treating students efficiently and with respect is critical; they are, however, not business customers and clients in the traditional sense. These terms are grossly misapplied to students. From taxpaying students at inexpensive state colleges to students paying five-figure tuition at prestigious private schools, they are not covering the cost of their education. Their educational purchase is subsidized by taxpayers and donors and endowments. Students are not customers paying in full for a product. In the Fall 1998 issue of the University of Iowa's *Spectator*, the alumni newsletter, Ed Folsom, the F. Wendell Miller Distinguished Professor of English, offered this cogent perception of the metaphors explaining the students' place in the educational dynamic:

> Maybe now is a good time to alter the metaphors we employ to understand our labor: maybe our students are not customers, choosing among, buying, and consuming a bewildering array of educational products. Maybe, instead, they are our readers, the readers of this vast and contradictory and changing university of a poem, which exists primarily to keep generating more and better readers, readers who will talk back to us, readers with "supple and athletic minds" who will recognize their own diversity because we have awakened it in them with our diversity, readers whose imaginations will be unbridled because the subject of our university is them, each individually and all together. They are what we represent.

Within Folsom's metaphoric vision, education is not reductive and standardized, and it is not job training. Businesses can train our graduates to perform the specific tasks at hand if they have the intellectual wherewithal that Folsom describes, if they can think critically and can communicate clearly.

Students are not traditional clients for other reasons as well. Customers do not prove their competence as drivers to exit an automobile dealership with a new vehicle; they only have to be qualified to carry more debt. Hungry people do not have to prove they are meticulous or fastidious diners to receive their happy meals. While institutions, or honors programs for that matter, employ admission standards with the hope of selecting students who will be successful and thrive in their environment, how students appear on paper does not necessarily translate into success in undergraduate classes or honors programs. A constellation of factors from maturity and motivation to health and finances often determines whether students will prosper in school.

Obviously, all students are not the same, and we do not want them to be. They are not uniform when they arrive, and they should not be that way when they graduate. Rigidity and standardization should not be the objective. The problem with education is that it is messy and uncomfortable. Unfortunately, Americans appear locked in a phase where we do not want to notice circumstances that are messy, that are complex in nature, and we do not want to be discomfited. The problem is that education is at its best when it is complex, when it challenges the participants and makes them feel a disease. In contrast, the promise and profit of many businesses depend on the uniformity or standardization of their product or service, and we may support them for those very reasons.

During the recent spring break, my wife and I had occasion to drive over two thousand miles. During the legs of the trip when we were traversing familiar ground with our animals (Bill Hall—a cat from Botswana—my wife's Peace Corps location, and Merriweather—the sweetest dog on the planet), we invariably stopped at a Wendy's; of the three located at convenient stopping points, we would only frequent two—the third was nasty. (Even where uniformity is of the highest priority, it is not always attained.) Wendy's offers decent vegetarian fare for me—salad and baked potato—and a pretty good chicken sandwich for Mary. This food and its prompt, efficient delivery served our purposes. In another phase of our spring travels, we sojourned with a van full of relatives to the funeral of a great uncle who was in his nineties and had enjoyed a long and healthy life. Although the distance was substantial, time was not a factor. We ventured miles from the highway to a small town in North Carolina where we lunched in a wonderfully quirky café with fresh ingredients and inventive selections. That adventure highlighted the food, the company, and the experience. These food options while traveling parallel our students' educational choices. Educational institutions—honors programs and colleges especially—should be unwilling to trade speed and efficiency in the classroom for depth and breadth; as Mohandas Gandhi wisely noted, "There is more to life than increasing its speed." We are in Frost's educational paradigm of "surprise and pleasure rather than predictability and presupposed knowledge."

I sympathize with Frost's colleague at NCHC's St. Louis conference who talked about the frustrations of listing learning outcomes on a syllabus: "I just want to say, 'I have no idea what we'll learn.'" That she says "we" and not "they" or "the students" seems significant. What a classroom full of diverse students will learn during a class session is unpredictable, especially if the class is an honors seminar with discussion as its pedagogical approach. In my classes, I certainly know some of the points and literary passages I hope will be part of what we discuss, but which ones we get to or how we approach them is often subject to the comments and observations of the students. I cannot predict what I, as part of the "we" above, will learn in class each day; that typically depends on the students and their providing a fair share of the "surprise and pleasure" of the educational experience. Whether they learn and understand, for example, epic conventions as we proceed is something I hope for, but that is only a portion of the outcome. Here we return to the murky world of means and ends to which Frost alludes. Memorizing the list of conventions is insufficient; students have to make them one of many tools for understanding the epic even as they realize that the great authors are reinvigorating and transforming the conventions. The process of reading and the conventions themselves are not static. Teachers can demonstrate the types of questions one can ask to elicit good discussion or open up a text, but they are certainly not all the questions that can be asked. Faculty must grade the papers—the end product—that our students produce, but the grade is a judgment about that work; it is not necessarily the definitive statement about what our students have learned about or should learn about writing. In my English classes, through draft after draft students experience what writers have to do to master their craft or to produce superior texts. With luck and hard work and some verbal dexterity, they will perform well within the boundaries of the semester, but all English professors have had the experience of hearing from students a semester or two or three later who proudly state that they finally understand what we were trying to show them about writing and that they have written a great paper for a recent course. These students needed additional time and practice. I cannot fathom the intricacies of a system of accountability that can account for such students and their learning outcomes.

A friend who is an elementary school principal in North Carolina happened to read Frost's essay and an unfinished draft of this essay while visiting during her spring break. She expressed her dismay that the educational movement driving her school is reaching its tentacles into colleges and universities, places that she envisioned as the last bastion of hope for free thinking. If we think that outcomes assessment and standardized approaches to accountability have created excellence in K-12 education during the past several decades, then it makes sense for us to go down that well-traveled path. If instead we worry about the state of pre-college education and feel that the path it has taken is treacherous and demonstrably unsuccessful, then we had better find a fork in the road or at least a welcoming rest stop, and I do not mean Wendy's.

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Honors as Skunkworks

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> "This is the only way, we say; but there are as many ways as there can be drawn radii from one centre."
>
> —*Walden*

For the Fall/Winter 2005 issue of the *JNCHC*, Dail W. Mullins, Jr. was asked to address the question, "What is Honors?" He "began by researching several dozen honors program websites from around the country and came to the quick realization that their various program descriptions all seem to be 'cut from the same cloth' and might very well have been produced by an 'Honors Program Description Generator.'" This sentence was the first nudge I needed, and Linda Frost's essay was the second, to write something I'd long been thinking about but was reluctant to state publicly: I believe the "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program" does our organization a real disservice.

It's not that "Basic Characteristics" is responsible for the fact that "various program descriptions all seem to be 'cut from the same cloth.'" Surely not. "Basic Characteristics," like the mission statements it encourages, is more honored in the breach than in the observance. But why would we, as honors educators, want such a document? Do we really believe one size (extra large) fits all? Despite the disclaimers at its head that "no one model of an honors program can be superimposed on all types of institutions" and "not all characteristics are necessary for an honors program to be considered a successful and/or fully developed honors program," we as an organization have chosen to state, in rather large type, that "Basic Characteristics" do in fact exist, and we follow the disclaimer with a list of sixteen "Characteristics," most of which literally use the word "should" to tell us what to do if we, too, wish to be fully developed. In this, as in other endeavors, size matters, and in my judgment "Basic Characteristics" seems to have as its model large universities – places more likely to have an "honors center with such facilities as an honors library, lounge, reading rooms," for example. As the director of a small program at a small university I find that troubling. It seems to me that some of the most thoughtful and distinctive NCHC leaders, not to mention some of the most interesting honors innovations, have come from smaller programs, programs which are not "fully developed" according to our own organization's criteria.

There is one "Characteristic" however, near the very end—thirteenth in a list of sixteen—that I have always been drawn to:

> The honors program, in distinguishing itself from the rest of the institution, serves as a kind of laboratory within which faculty can try

> things they have always wanted to try but for which they could find no suitable outlet. When such efforts are demonstrated to be successful, they may well become institutionalized, thereby by raising the general level of education within the college or university…

This is compelling. If this were the first criterion, if this were the *only* criterion, the one we really believed in and the one we really lived by, then perhaps honors descriptions might not appear to be cut from the same cloth because honors programs would be distinguished not only from the rest of the institution but from one another. For me, at least, it points toward the single most powerful role honors programs can play – honors as skunkworks.

Here's one definition of skunkworks, a mixture of several to be found on the web: "A skunkworks is a group of people who, in order to achieve unusual results, work on a project in a way that is outside the usual rules, who research and develop a project for the sake of innovation. It is often a small team that assumes or is given responsibility for developing something in a short time with minimal management constraints. It often operates independent of a company's normal R&D operations, to spearhead a project design that thereafter will be developed according to the usual process. A skunkworks project may be secret."

We as an organization *could* foster a view of honors education, of honors programs themselves, as small independent groups on our campuses, working within a larger structure but outside the usual rules and with minimal management restraints, attempting to achieve unusual educational results. It goes without saying we would not want our skunkworks projects to be kept secret, and we would surely hope our successes would be widely disseminated.

Of course, were our focus on agile innovation, our organization wouldn't foreground a document with the turgid title "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program," which suggests that programs not having these characteristics *because they may in fact be unique* are somehow, what? immature? underdeveloped? wanting in "basics" because they don't report to the administrative officer they "should," or because the percentage of their students' coursework in honors isn't up to snuff? We would laugh if we were told someone had given Woolf or Faulkner or Nabokov something called "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Novel." So why do we do this to one another, to ourselves?

In her introduction to the issue in which Dail Mullins' piece appeared, Ada Long wrote:

> My own view is that increasingly what distinguishes honors and makes it the standard-bearer, fortress, and refuge of excellent undergraduate education is flexibility. As the national trend toward standardization and accountability grinds forward, more and more colleges and universities limit faculty autonomy, curricular experimentation, and student choices.

Powerful words with which I'm sure we'd all agree. It's hard to imagine any of the many honors directors I've known advocating for the "quality enhancement plans" or "scorecards" Linda Frost describes in "Saving Honors in the Age of Standardization." So why would we, the NCHC, which has long discussed how our organization might have a more visible, cutting-edge role in American higher education, want to be on the side of "standardization and accountability" by creating a long list of "shoulds"? Instead of following the mindless models forced on us by state legislators and reaccredidation visits, instead of spending our energy worrying about mission statements, reporting structures and the like, why not encourage each NCHC program to find its unique way. As Thoreau would have it, "In the long run men hit only what they aim at. Therefore, though they should fail immediately, they had better aim at something high." Were hundreds of honors programs working toward this end, each on its own campus, following its own light, the result might just be radical innovation and substantive change that would give the honors movement a leadership role (not to mention recognition) many within the organization have long desired.

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They Graduated

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Linda Frost's essay, "Saving Honors in the Age of Standardization," has many saving graces of its own. It is direct, honest and about as optimistic as we have any right to be. Even her title acknowledges that there is at least some chance of saving honors from the number crunchers and their lingo. I'd be right there with the woman who rolled her eyes and exclaimed "We're just sick of it" if I hadn't managed to steer clear of the measurement folk and their instruments of inquisition all these years.

I can remember the moment that I staged my first resistance. I was assigned to a Task Force on attrition. For months we interviewed students who were planning to leave the university and reviewed surveys written by students who had already left. None of it was either interesting or helpful. When I thought about all the time and human energy that we wasted, it all added up to just a single sentence, "They're dropping like flies," so I handed that sentence in as my completed report. I'm happy to say that it kept me off similar committees for many years. More than a decade later when, for my sins, I was asked to serve on an Outcomes Assessment Committee, I found another summary sentence that helped me gain my freedom once again—"They graduated!"

Isn't that the outcome we are hoping for? What else do we really need to know? Every bone in my body resists statistical assessments of what we do in honors and in the university more generally. We provide, most simply, doors into the future. We get the students to open some of the doors, and eventually they choose the ones that satisfy their curiosity. What we teach them sometimes informs their choice. That's probably as much as we can know. The process of teaching and learning has ineffable—often unspoken—dimensions; so it is largely impossible to say what any one student got out of a particular class or whether the course itself helped that student take even one step toward a particular door into the future. Even the student might not fully sense the influence of a lesson, a professor, a field trip or a course until reflections years later make the connection clear. Nevertheless unspoken dimensions often make the greatest impact and build the strongest bonds. Think of how much you treasure the letters and e-mails from former students who are finally able to let you know how much you touched their lives. This can't be represented by flow charts, graphs, data output or surveys. So why bother with all the numbers?

At my institution the answer is that we are a tuition-driven business in competition with others just like us, and we will go under if we don't have quantifiable students and their very tangible dollars. Yes, I know, it's a business. And one of the least savory outcomes of that reality is that the university is open to the litigious nature and corruption of business. We bend our own admissions standards to take in the numbers we need to stay afloat. Then we threaten students with financial loss if they don't maintain their GPAs. So, they cheat and plagiarize to satisfy requirements, or if that doesn't work, they threaten us with law suits if we don't give them grades high enough to maintain their scholarships.

When I see these grotesque paradigms filtering into—yes—my honors program, I know how hard I really have to work in order to contribute to the rescue mission that Linda Frost put forward in her fine article. The more the university is standardized and reduced to measurements, the more cheating there will be on every level to satisfy the insistence on reportable figures.

One could believe in the figures—perhaps—if they were reliable. In my experience the Outcomes Assessment folk have enough problems with "Incomes Assessment." The Byzantine spread sheets representing honors student profiles that I receive from the Data Center (wherever that Dickensian office may be) using such poetic programs as *Oracle* and *People Soft* never gibe with the information students write down for us on a single sheet of paper that we store in our good old manila folders. The names and numbers, alas, are never exactly the same. Students at my institution are mysteriously coded and un-coded as "honors" (for some reason with a y-chromosome designation) as they pass through Admissions, Financial Aid and Academic Counseling. It is no wonder that dazed students drift into the office begging to know what the Honors Program is and how they have become indentured! I wish I could capture the tone of Yul Brenner in *The King and I* exclaiming, "It's a puzzlement"!

The truth is that the only data I have found really useful are transcripts. They give me an accurate count of students in my honors program, and they allow me to see, student by student, whether or not they are progressing toward a degree with honors and thus whether they need to be congratulated or dropped from the program. It might be primitive, but transcript review is what I use to assess outcomes and hold students accountable.

As honors directors, I believe, our own accountability lies not in any statistical results but in our moral directive. We must be accountable in holding to ideals and fostering models of social justice. We must do what we can to counteract the business model by making exceptions and using intuition as often as statistics in communicating to our administration the work we do. In our practice, we must be accountable in rejecting poorly written papers, plagiarized ideas, and inflated grades as well as demands for larger class size and half-baked schemes put forward to attract more student bodies. If we don't do this, our outcomes will all be tragic, and there will be no American university system, much less honors programs and colleges, to assess.

Do you remember "busy work"? If you Google "Outcomes Assessment" you will discover how scores of universities have set departments to such thankless tasks. What I found were documents in doubletalk, enough unreadable drivel to get anyone through retirement. Hey—there are jobs out there in "measurement and evaluation"! They pay people to create this garble. My advice is take up knitting, the banjo, bridge, boogie boarding, or camel riding—my personal favorite. Don't let them suck you in to spinning your wheels over outcomes assessment—lower case, not worth the caps! For self-preservation, I urge you to adopt the coy strategy of Alan Arkin in *The In-Laws,* dodging the dictator's bullets. "Weave, weave, weave."

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Research Essays

The Impact of K-12 Gifted Programs on Postsecondary Honors Programming

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BACKGROUND

While not all students entering a post-secondary honors program have previously participated in gifted programming, honors programming in theory begins through gifted services in elementary schools and later culminates in honors colleges and honors programs at post-secondary institutions. However, a review of participants in these programs suggests that the population is not consistent through the various levels of the educational system. Studies indicate that gifted services and the participating population change in middle school and/or high school when programming shifts from gifted to honors. Related to these shifts are misconceptions and mistaken assumptions that often correlate to a lowering of standards and rigor in "honors" offerings. In order to develop programming appropriate for any population, the population must first be identified and its needs assessed. Thus, it is important that honors directors at the post-secondary level understand both the services provided and population served in the K-12 system. From this understanding, honors directors will be more aware of the needs of two divergent sets of students, those who are identified as gifted and those who are involved in such programs as a result of parental pressure or other perceived advantages. Further, honors directors may find an underserved population in truly gifted students who are not currently participating in post-secondary honors programs partially as a result of their experiences in K-12 gifted programs.

K-12 GIFTED EDUCATION

One of the first problems in addressing gifted education is establishing the definition of "gifted." While IQ has typically been a determining factor in the identification of students qualified for gifted programs in the K-12 system, the Marland (1972) Report as well as the United States Department of Education's (1993) *National Excellence: The Case for Developing America's Talent* have helped to expand the definition and concept of giftedness. Still, according to Borland (1989), "Although most educators would agree that there are children in the schools who should be designated as gifted, there is very little agreement as to *which* children should be included in this category. One person's gifted child is another's troublemaker, while the latter's candidate is regarded as merely a good test taker by the former" (p. 6). Nevertheless, according to the Davidson Institute (2005), eighteen states mandate gifted programming and twenty-four states provide funding for gifted services, each state defining "gifted" in its own way but typically identifying the top three to five percent of the student population.

Absent federal requirements for gifted education and minimal federal funding, gifted education is almost entirely left to the states, and "state budgets for gifted education vary widely, ranging from roughly $100 million a year to nothing" (Davidson, Davidson, & Vanderkam, 2004, p. 36). Thus, services provided to this population vary as much as the definition of participants. Borland (1989) presents seven program formats typically employed in K-12 gifted education: special schools for the gifted; the school-within-a-school; self-contained classes; multitracked programs; pull-out programs; resource rooms; and provisions within the regular classroom. It should be noted that each of these program formats has strengths and weaknesses in addressing the needs of gifted students, but each attempts to best meet the needs of such students within the constraints of the system in which the program in employed. Nevertheless, much of the programming is concentrated in the lower grades, prior to middle school. As described by Davidson, Davidson, and Vanderkam (2004), Caryn Ellison, a runner-up for Indiana Teacher of the Year, presents differentiated instruction in her self-contained gifted classroom: "soon they will go to middle school, though, where the self-contained gifted program turns into the equivalent of honors classes, which at any school can have varying levels of difficulty" (p. 47). In fact, many states provide gifted services up to the point at which students become eligible for "honors" courses, Advance Placement (AP) courses, and/or dual enrollment/concurrent college offerings. At this point, students are often no longer specifically identified as "gifted"; "the majority of gifted identification at the secondary level is through self-selection" (Delisle, 1997, p. 476). Thus, gifted and talented (GT) students enter into these course offerings with students who were not previously identified as needing special academic services. In many cases, it is thought that, if the students are willing to do the work, they should be allowed to participate; however, others suggest that, in the era of highly involved parents and increasing pressure for all students to attend college, the reality is not "self-selection" but rather pressure from outside sources to do more, faster. Some question whether this reduces the rigor of such offerings while others argue that such offerings are elitist if they are not available to a broader population. This debate has a long history and is not likely to be quickly resolved.

POST-SECONDARY HONORS EDUCATION

Identification of students for post-secondary honors offerings is not necessarily clearer than identification in the K-12 system. According to V. H. Bhatia (1977), "There does not exist any standard pattern or format for [honors] programs. In fact, they vary from campus to campus in their structure, operation, and scope" (p. 24). Each post-secondary institution determines its own admission criteria, and some have established more specific criteria for honors offerings while others allow all students in good standing to participate. Nevertheless, Austin (1986) builds on the Halverson (1973) report in presenting four educational objectives of any honors program: identifying students "whose ability and motivation are so high that their academic needs would not be met adequately by existing programs"; providing academic rigor to challenge identified students to excel as independent learners; providing environmental conditions that inspire students to achieve their potential; and providing benefits to the larger college community such as focus on "quality education and a concept of excellence, giving faculty members the psychic reward that derives from working with gifted students, and attracting to the campus scholars and speakers who would not otherwise be there" (p. 7). Given the commonality of these objectives, one might expect greater alignment of practice; however, "the reason for this variation is that most programs have developed in order to meet local needs and have not been forced to conform to any universally accepted idea about the nature of honors education" (Bhatia, 1977, p. 24).

The questions regarding honors programming are further complicated by the fact that postsecondary education in America is experiencing tremendous change as more and more students indicate a desire to attend institutions of higher learning but fewer and fewer of these students are prepared to succeed. This problem is perhaps having its greatest impact on broad-access institutions such as community colleges.

Most community colleges grant access to the entire community, and though many do have placement exams for English, math, and reading, these exams are often used only for placement recommendations, not admittance. This complicates the issue of honors programming since many campuses report that more students are testing into remedial classes each year. Cloud (2002) states that 29 percent of all freshmen entering US colleges in the fall of 2002 were taking at least one remedial class in math, reading, or writing. This statistic is important in that taking remedial courses is correlated with significantly lower chances of completing a degree program (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2001). Most disturbing has been the fact that many of these students, having had some experience with "honors" education in the secondary level, do not recognize their own lack of preparedness and demand to be placed in college-level courses rather than getting the remedial help that they so badly need. In such cases, students inevitably fail and often drop out entirely: "About one-half of first-year students at community colleges do not continue for a second year" (Kirst, 2004, p. 52). These problems are not limited to students outside the purview of honors education, and this has raised questions about the honors experiences that students are having before they come to post-secondary campuses.

ALIGNMENT OF K-12 AND POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS

Part of the problem seems to be the reform that is happening at the secondary level. According to Schneider (2003), "school reform has tied itself to a regimen of standardized answers that ignores, if it does not actively discourage, innovative thinking and wide-ranging curiosity" (p. 13). This is problematic in that these skills are demanded at the college level. Kirst (2004) states, "State high school assessments often stress knowledge and skills that differ from college entrance and placement requirements" (p. 51). Because of this, students who perform well in high school are often still not prepared for college success. In fact, Davidson, Davidson, and Vanderkam (2004) report that the Higher Education Research Institute's 2002 survey "found that while nearly 46 percent received A averages, fewer students than ever did even an hour's worth of homework each night" while in high school (p. 17). Conley (2003) indicates that even the design and purpose behind K-12 standards and assessments has not been to increase college success rates, so standards-based reform at the high school level will not solve the problem that postsecondary institutions are experiencing. Additionally, it is possible, perhaps even probable, for students to "believe that they are 'proficient' or 'advanced' based on their state test scores" (Conley, 2003, p. 9). Such mistaken beliefs only set students up for further problems by leading them to decline recommended remedial offerings.

Postsecondary institutions must be ready to provide students, parents and secondary teachers with the necessary information to help prepare students for postsecondary standards and make it very clear to students that performance on standardized tests does not demonstrate college aptitude (Kirst, 2004, p. 53). "A commitment to be clear and consistent on the prerequisite knowledge and skills required for success in entry-level general education courses would enable the creation of effective placement procedures that could even motivate high school students to continue to work hard and achieve throughout their senior year" (Conley, 2003, p. 11). A number of studies suggest that the more rigorous the senior year the better the student will fare in college courses. Kirst (2004) suggests that the senior year could be used to "correct college readiness deficiencies and link appropriate senior-year courses to postsecondary general education courses" (p. 54). This strategy would better prepare students for college success, particularly when, as Kirst (2004) cites, the "high school textbook reading level is much lower than the college textbook reading level" (p. 55). In fact, Davidson, Davidson, and Vanderkam (2004) state, "standard textbooks have declined as much as two grade levels in complexity since early in the twentieth century" (p. 16). Creating a more rigorous senior year may be different, though, from pushing students into Advanced Placement (AP) courses or concurrent/dual enrollment. "Princeton University recently instituted basic writing classes to assist some of the highest-achieving kids in America who show up at college unable to write essays" (Davidson, Davidson, & Vanderkam, 2004, p. 17). If highly selective institutions such as Princeton University are experiencing such problems, certainly other post-secondary institutions are as well.

Schneider (2003) points out that postsecondary institutions are changing by replacing survey courses "with more 'hands-on,' investigative, inquiry-oriented and interdisciplinary learning" and "advanced, interdisciplinary capstone" courses (p. 14). Because of these changes, AP courses, or broad survey courses, may no longer reflect "college-level" work and thus fail to prepare students adequately while at the same time providing students a false sense of mastery of college-level material. Additionally, Schneider (2003) argues against concurrent/dual enrollment courses stating that they will "only result in future generations who have an even thinner understanding of science, history, world cultures, languages, and the arts, and even less ability to connect their specialized interests to broad human questions" (p. 14). Schneider's position, though, is controversial. Kirst (2004) argues that concurrent/dual enrollment options should be made available to all students, suggesting that only traditionally identified "college-bound" students are currently being offered this option; however, many high schools suggest that all students are now considered "college-bound" to avoid discrimination. In consideration of the previously identified gifted population, AP and concurrent/dual enrollment offerings have been found valuable only when they are taught in a rigorous manner (Borland, 1989; Southern and Jones, 1991). This is an important consideration as these courses often attract eager and willing students rather than meeting the needs of truly exceptional and "gifted" students; thus, the level at which the course may be taught is often adjusted to meet the realities of the students enrolled in the course. Additional information regarding the long-term success of students participating in concurrent/dual enrollment options would help settle the debate regarding such offerings.

Either way, postsecondary institutions must do a better job communicating what "they view as more powerful forms of learning" (Schneider, 2003, p. 14) so that high schools are not operating with outdated assumptions about the expectations of college-level performance. "Many professors assert that students who delve deeply into fewer areas and develop greater understanding of and stronger skills in reading and writing, problem solving and critical thinking, do better in college than those who get A's in high school but don't develop these skills" (Conley, 2003, p. 11). This should not be kept a mystery from students or the secondary programs that are trying to prepare them for college.

SUGGESTIONS FOR POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

Post-secondary institutions have a unique role to play with regard to the education of gifted and talented (GT) students. Gifted students "do not stop being gifted when they turn eighteen" (Daniel, 195, p. 235) though the post-secondary system does not typically target this population specifically other than attempting to attract the "best and brightest" to populate the respective campuses. The hope seems to be that GT students will find their way to and through the post-secondary system on their own, perhaps with the benefit of an honors program. According to Pflaum, Pascarella, and Duby (1985), participation in an honors program, particularly during the first year of college, is positively related to academic success. This may be due, at least in part, to the fact that students are assisted in transitioning from a controlled environment into one that requires "self-advocacy."

As Smith, English, and Vasek (2002) note, a sense of individual identity, as separate from one's parents, is key in the transition process from high school to the post-secondary environment, and this individual identity is also imperative for students to begin establishing relationships with faculty and other students. Smith, English, and Vasek (2002) present transition issues specific to college freshman with learning disabilities, but one might argue, as it has been suggested in other literature, that gifted and/or honors students are in many ways akin to this population. Specifically, both populations are likely to be transitioning from "an environment wherein students are carefully guided by school staff and individually taught by specialized teachers to an environment wherein they are expected to achieve on their own" (Smith, English, and Vasek, 2002). Honors programs, themselves, can assist students in this transition by working directly with students, rather than their parents, and by informing parents of the laws and regulations that govern their access to information regarding students (Smith, English, & Vasek, 2002).

With regard to social connectedness and academic competence, much of the literature regarding college success addresses the importance of the relationship between the student and the instructor, and this may be of particular importance for students entering postsecondary honors programs. As Nieto (1999) states, "learning emerges from the social, cultural, and political spaces in which it takes place, and through the interactions and relationships that occur among learners and teachers" (p. 2). Further, Smith, English, and Vasek (2002) state, "An important aspect that mediates the level of role adjustment seems to be people's sense of connectedness and belonging to the higher education environment." This connection is best achieved when the student is proactive in making connections within the new institution and when the institution itself helps the student identify with a community of peers, resources, and support.

Since most honors courses are more rigorous than their traditional counterparts, students may be "in over their heads" before they seek the help that they need. For community college honors programs, this is an important consideration if students are not anticipating the shift from high school expectations and further are not transitioning as fully as they might in attending a residential program at a four-year institution. Additionally, these students may not have the opportunities for classroom support in the way that they had in high school, or they may not have needed outside help before attending college. Often, the concept of visiting instructors during office hours is foreign to first-year students, so students need support in identifying how to get the help that they need. As Tacha (1986) advises, "The schizophrenic mixing of course and enrollment advising, career planning, and a sprinkling of academic philosophy results in little, if any, development of an intellectually challenging and personally supportive relationship between an individual faculty member and a student" (p. 53). Since a student's typical experience at an institution may not serve to foster a relationship between instructor and student, programs such as community college honors programs can focus on meeting this need.

Community college honors programs have many opportunities to assist students in achieving their "optimal" development, but careful planning and consideration need to be directed to the specific needs of this population. In particular, community building, peer relationships, and student-faculty interactions should be the goals of the community college honors program's attempts to assist with the transition process. Though many honors students may be academically well prepared for their postsecondary experiences, others, particularly those from traditionally underserved populations, may not be as well prepared and thus in greater need of assistance. These students are often unaware of the possibility that the "honors," AP, and/or concurrent/dual enrollment courses that were offered at their campuses may not have been offered with the same rigor as courses on the campus of post-secondary institutions. Understanding the continually changing needs of such populations is imperative in designing an appropriate program of support.

ACCELERATION

Beyond honors colleges and programs, other avenues of support for GT learners are available at post-secondary institutions. According to Colangelo, Assouline, and Gross (2004), "acceleration is critical to the vast majority of academically gifted children who will not have the means to find alternatives" (p. xi). For these students, acceleration, "an educational intervention that moves students through an educational program at a faster than usual rate or younger than typical age" (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004, p. 5), is more appropriate than working within the constraints of an age-based academic system. In examining the history of education and the need for acceleration as an option for GT students, Colangelo, Assouline, and Gross (2004) state:

> The one-room schoolhouse let students learn at their own pace. Teachers knew their students well, and nothing held back a student's progress. In time, as the population grew, and as America's culture became more collective and standardized, one-room schoolhouses were replaced by schools that grouped students according to age instead of ability and motivation.
>
> This was not an educational decision. It was an organizational decision based upon a narrow understanding of child and adolescent development that supported the goal of keeping kids with their age-mates. (p. 11)

Further, Colangelo, Assouline, and Gross (2004) add: "In times of war, America traditionally has encouraged students to get through college faster. During these times of crisis, our leaders tend to recognize that ability and skill matter more than tradition and rules" (p. 12).

From the post-secondary perspective, acceleration can take a variety of forms: mentoring of pre-college students; correspondence courses; concurrent/dual enrollment options; advanced placement or other credit by examination programs; or early admission to the post-secondary system. Each of these types of acceleration has been used to varying degrees of success, but all are under the purview of the post-secondary system.

Many post-secondary institutions receive political pressure to be inclusive and accessible to a broad base of students with regard to the offering of concurrent/dual enrollment options, and such institutions are increasingly disappointed with the resulting student performance after completion of such courses as well as the trending performance of students who have completed advanced placement (AP) or other credit by examination programs. As a result, many post-secondary institutions are considering the early admission prospects for acceleration. Nobel and Robinson (1993) report, "accelerated students were more likely to be high achievers in college, to graduate, and to attend graduate school than were their regular age peers."

In fact, Nobel and Robinson (1993) conducted a longitudinal study that followed the educational and vocational attainment of three groups of gifted young adults: students who entered the University of Washington's Early Entrance Program (EEP), enabling students to enroll in college after seventh or eighth grade, from 1977-1986;

students who qualified for EEP but decided to remain in high school rather than participating in this radical acceleration program; and former University of Washington students of the same timeframe who were National Merit Scholarship finalists. One of the most surprising findings of this study was "the fact that the educational aspirations [of the National Merit finalists] in our study (two-thirds of whom were female) appeared to be lower than those of the EEPers [which] may argue for the value of acceleration as a major ally for intellectually competent and motivated young women" (Nobel and Robinson, 1993).

In further discussion of the impact of radical, post-secondary acceleration on women, Nobel and Smyth (1995) report:

> Participants in this study developed more confidence in themselves and in their intellectual and social skills as a result of their efforts and the enhanced perceptions of families and friends. The experiences of being surrounded by intellectual peers, something few believed they would have had in high school, meant that they didn't have to hide their level of ability or enthusiasm for learning, or perform less well than their abilities allowed. Although this experience is also true for males who accelerate (Nobel & Drummond, 1992), we believe that it is particularly important for gifted young women because it exposes them to a rare combination of acceptance and encouragement at a critical age and might help to inoculate them against less supportive environments as they get older.

It is evident that both male and female students can benefit when post-secondary systems find ways to address the needs of the gifted and talented population; however, such programs must be constructed with attention to the particular nuances of higher education. Olszewski-Kubilius (2002) points out that special early entrance programs, such as the University of Washington's EEP, are offered at only a small number of colleges and universities, and these are typically not highly selective institutions: "Early entrance students are likely to pursue graduate studies and so the reputation of their undergraduate institution is an important concern" (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002). In fact, Janos, Robinson, and Lunnenborg (1989) followed students who were qualified for early entrance programs but chose not to participate and reported that these students, otherwise matched by gender and SAT scores, eventually entered more academically selective institutions than the students who entered the post-secondary system early. This may influence long-term student outcomes in relation to the pursuit of graduate studies and other competitive selections.

The findings of Janos, Robinson, and Lunnenborg (1989) are also significant in light of their application to the community college system. Variance between post-secondary institutions is of greater concern when consideration is given to the entire range from community colleges to highly selective universities. Brody (1998) also raises concerns in stating, "if a student takes a course at a community college and then enrolls in a highly selective university, the community college course may not be equivalent to the comparable course at the selective university in depth and breadth of content."

As Brody (1998) suggests, post-secondary institutions will continue to formulate their own expectations for students, but just as the post-secondary institutions must more clearly convey expectations to high school students, so must senior post-secondary institutions convey expectations to community colleges for the benefit of students who begin their college-level coursework in an accelerated way. Additionally, it merits consideration that honors programs and honors coursework at community colleges and universities might more closely align with the expectations of more highly selective institutions than mainstream offerings.

CONCLUSION

Students in the K-12 system, specifically in elementary schools, are clearly identified for gifted services; but the identification process for gifted services becomes more obscure as students move into the middle school and high school classes where honors offerings are often provided on a self-selected basis. This change in selection criteria presents problems as students later shift from high schools into the post-secondary system because political implications attach to the fact that such students have been receiving "gifted" or "honors" services and questions are raised if they no longer qualify. To best address this problem, it seems that the criteria used to identify students early in their academic years, elementary school, should be consistently applied throughout the K-12 system. Certainly the testing could, and perhaps should, be offered at various milestones in order to capture as many qualified students as possible, but self-selection for services does not seem to be sufficient in determining qualification for services, particularly when the intent is to maintain the appropriate rigor in such programs. If this were to occur, high school honors offerings would likely align more closely to the expectations of the post-secondary system; however, with the current focus on standardized testing, high schools may be reluctant to focus on the resolution of this problem as it ultimately impacts students at the post-secondary level.

Thus, the post-secondary system is currently facing the problem of addressing the needs of an increasing range of ability in students who are qualified, or at a minimum believe themselves to be qualified, for gifted and/or honors services. Some of the students requesting admission into college honors programs are gifted and talented. However, others are requesting admission into college honors programs because they have been able to identify with the honors label in the K-12 system and do not understand that self-selection for honors in K-12 may not have adequately prepared them for honors programming at the college level. This distinction is further complicated by the fact that post-secondary institutions are themselves clamoring for students, and they may seek to increase numbers, to the detriment of honors programs and colleges, rather than maintain stringent criteria, particularly in community colleges. This may leave truly gifted students without the educational challenge and support they need. If gifted students have left honors programming in the K-12 system for lack of challenge, they may not seek honors programming opportunities at the college level. Early entrance programs are another way to approach the truly gifted and talented population, but these programs require a great deal of management and offer their own drawbacks as well as benefits.

Perhaps one of the best approaches to resolving the problem of divergent abilities in honors students emerging from the K-12 system is to offer a "school-within-a-school" approach. If political implications are such that a wide spread of abilities will remain part of the honors program, a tiered program could be constructed. In this way, students who want or need the experience of a rigorous program can have that opportunity and receive recognition, such as Honors Program Graduate status, while others can have a different "honors" experience. Students would then be more clearly identified on an ability and motivation basis in transferring to senior post-secondary institutions, and truly gifted and talented students could receive the rigorous experiences that they need and desire. No student would be relegated to a particular level of participation in such a program, so students would be encouraged to work to their highest ability. Society, as a whole, only benefits when all students are sufficiently challenged and encouraged to perform at the height of their potential.

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Creating an Honors Community: A Virtue Ethics Approach

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INTRODUCTION

To become an honors student (that is, to be accepted into an honors college or program) requires satisfying specific entrance requirements, most or all of which are directly related to a student's grade point average and potential for success in a rigorous academic environment. To gain entrance into and be present in an organization or community are not sufficient, however, to characterize a person as a complete member of it. There is more to community membership than simple presence. To be a member of a community is also to perform actions and develop or possess traits of character consistent with those actions. In a community of honors students, membership requires that one be or become a person worthy of honor.

"Honor" is an active moral notion, understood not only as that which someone receives (i.e., to be honored) but also that which a person warrants (i.e., to be worthy of honor). To be honored is one thing; to be worthy of honor is another. To examine and explain the concept of honor in its virtue-theoretic sense in the context of an honors college requires understanding the unique position of the honors student, her responsibilities as a member of an honors organization, and the implications of her position and responsibilities in the creation and sustenance of an honors community.

What I wish to discuss in this paper are the importance and implication of the notion of "community" as it affects, is affected, and is *effected* by a student's membership in an honors college/community. To this end, I will concentrate on the *meaning of honor*, the distinction between *gaining acceptance into a community and becoming (and being) a member of it*, and the way in which a student's conception of her *place in an honors community entails benefits and obligations that are central to the creation and sustenance of the community*. I explain this using the honor code from the University of Central Florida Burnett Honors College to distinguish between individualism and communitarianism, which are in turn related to individual and community ascendancy models of social relations. I will show the ways in which honors colleges and their students are central players in the creation of academic communities of personal and intellectual excellence. That is, I will show that honors students are academic *and* moral exemplars.

HONOR, DISHONOR, FRIENDSHIP, AND THE HONORS COMMUNITY

The term "honor" may indicate high status (e.g., "honors student"), in which case the word "honor" serves to describe the person to which it is applied. It also functions as a verb when it is used to express something being done (e.g., "I honor my father"). Further, however, "honor" is a moral term, indicating approval and exhortation to *be* a person of honor. In its moral sense, then, "honor" can be a descriptive term signifying a person's perceived status or the character of a behavior, as would be the case in "She is an honors student" or "She is a person of honor." But one can go further with the moral notion of honor and see that it is also a morally laudatory term. When one is called an "honors student" or "a person of honor," the speaker is not only describing the status of one possessed of honor but is at the same time indicating that it is *good* to be an honors student or a person of honor.

I suspect that, in ordinary speech, one rarely hears a tone of disapproval when a person's actions or character are said to be worthy of honor. To claim that someone's action is honorable is to say that the action should be held in high esteem and be respected. It would be peculiar to claim that a person who praises the honorable person or action does not at the same time prescribe that trait of character or that action for himself and others. So when "honor" is used to elaborate on what it is to be a person of honor, "honor" is a term of moral approbation. To be dishonorable, then, or to perform actions that are dishonorable, is a matter of moral disapproval.

Also in ordinary conversation, the term "honors student" conjures up in the imagination a high academic achiever but not necessarily a moral exemplar. But this is, I think, where the notion of honor implies something about the nature of those who are honored for their attainments or traits of character and about the relationship of honor and honoring to the creation, maintenance, and character of community. Because honor is negatively associated with shame, "the fear of being shamed leads to a strong sense of honor. Honor, then, is more associated with a group or community, an attempt to achieve a certain recognition from others" (Liszka, 44).

Honor connotes respect and admiration from others who understand the behavior of a person who is "honored" to have done something, or who is the sort of person, that other members of the group or community ought to do or be. If we understand the term only as descriptive or designative of a position, the term "honor" may lose its more complete moral meaning and importance in the same way that other terms have incomplete meanings when used only as descriptors of the appearances of things. Consider the incomplete meaning of honor when it refers only to a person's placement in an organization by comparing it with a person's status as a citizen in a political community.

Being present in an organization or community is not sufficient for complete membership in it; thus, for instance, a person visiting a nation of which she is not a citizen is present in a political group without being a member of it. The visitor may wish to be a citizen, pretend to be one, apply to become a citizen, and, prior to obtaining citizenship status, perform at least some actions that are consistent with citizenship (such as paying taxes, for example). But there are rights and obligations of citizens that do not belong to a visitor, among them the right to vote and obligations such as service in a nation's military (where applicable). The citizen, then, has access to benefits of membership in the organization *but also* is charged with satisfying obligations attending citizen status. The visitor, on the other hand, may receive some (or all) benefits (even if not all the rights, such as to vote) accruing to a citizen but may be required to perform no duties or at least may be required only to refrain from breaking rules, laws, or procedures while present in a nation. The visitor may be mistaken by others for a citizen while not, in fact, being one.

A citizen may choose (in most democratic societies) not to participate in all or some of the most important rights that belong to her as a citizen. The group of citizen-voters, for example, can be and is (in American society, at least) larger than the number of those who actually vote. One can be called "voter" (because one is registered to vote and has a right to do so) and yet not vote at any particular opportunity to do so. One may participate only incompletely or not at all in the activities that define a citizen. A citizen who does not participate in the essential activities that characterize citizenship may be a full citizen in name but not in fact. On an Aristotelian interpretation, such a citizen is one only "homonomously" in the same way a hand detached from a body is not properly a hand because it does not perform its appropriate function. Aristotle clarifies this position such that "for example, if the whole body be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except in an equivocal sense, as we might speak of a stone hand; for when destroyed the hand will be no better than that. But things are defined by their working and power; and we ought not to say that they are the same when they no longer have their proper quality, but only that they have the same name" (*Politics*, I, iii). Aristotle is referring to the social or political nature of human beings such that we *need* the state and are fulfilled through it. The state or community, in addition, requires fully functioning individuals for the community to achieve its ends.

The same can be said with respect to the presence of a student in an honors community. Even though a student may satisfy requirements for admission, it is possible that, after admission, she may not participate in activities characterizing membership in the honors community. One who does so is an honors student in name only, not in fact. Complete membership in a community requires, again, not only that a member be present *within* the community but that the individual performs actions that are *consistent* with membership in it. So the voter who casts a vote at an appropriate time and place, who takes advantage of the opportunity to cast the vote, is more fully engaged in what it means to be a voter (and a citizen) than one who possesses but does not exercise the right to vote. Just as we may distinguish between citizen-voters in name and in act, we can distinguish between members of an honors college ("honors students") who are and are not participating members, i.e., fully engaged in what it means to be, what defines, an honors student.

I have made a distinction between an "actively participating member" in a community and a "passive" or incompletely participatory member of a community. This distinction is reminiscent of John Dewey's comments regarding the Great Society and the Great Community. For Dewey, developments in modern technology and means of information dissemination make possible advances in creating comfortable lives and access to myriad types of information for citizens, but in such conditions people may lose their sense of community – or a common strand of activity leading toward a common goal that defines a community.

> For Dewey, the problem … is to locate and declare the conditions that can enable the transformation of a Great Society into a Great Community. This in turn is to explain how the mere germ of community can grow into a unified *democratic* community, where democracy 'is the idea of community life itself.' When we find some association or activity 'whose consequences are appreciated as good by all singular persons who take part in it' and where what is good and shared and promoted by all who produce it, there we have what Dewey calls a 'community'. As far as Dewey is concerned, the association of men and women that is necessary to a community does not require explaining. He says of 'associated activity,' very succinctly, 'things are made that way.' But on its own this fact does not give us a community. A true community has an essential moral dimension. That dimension requires content and character through sharing common purposes. (Stanlick and Silver, Vol. II, 139)

In short, the creation of community underscores the notion not only that members share common purposes and perform actions consistent with those purposes but also that members develop a feeling of common identity and membership. Central to the creation of community is not whether academic programs and colleges/universities are themselves complete democratic institutions (although on the Deweyan model that is the ideal case) but whether education serves the purpose of educating people for participation in democratic societies in which the development of community is essential. Losing or never having a sense of shared purpose, feeling or acting as though one is only present in a group but feels no deep connection to it, either because community does not exist or because the individual does not share the commitment that defines the group (that is, the individual loses or does not have a sense of shared purpose and as a result feels only present in a group but not connected to it), may, in fact, begin to explain, in the context of an academic community of any kind, the general breakdown of respect for and participation in the life of a community where it does or can exist.

The reasons for which human beings associate themselves with others and form communities are many and varied. Much ink has been spilled in the history of ethics examining these reasons, and the reasons vary widely. In the individualist, rights-based tradition, an individual associates herself with others to gain benefits for the self that would not be achieved as efficiently, or at all, by herself. Jeremy Bentham's conception of the character of community expresses this point in that the "community is a fictitious body, composed of the individual persons who are considered as constituting … its members. The interest of the community then is, what?—the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it" (*PML*, Ch. 1, Sec. 4, p. 12). Here, community is nothing more than whatever the members of the community have in common with each other. Further, community in this sense is artificially constructed *only for* the interests of the individual. On the other hand, the virtue-theoretic (or communitarian-oriented) sense of community is quite different in that it encompasses the notion that "community already exists, in the form of common social practices, cultural traditions and shared social understandings" (Kymlicka, 367) such that it "does not need to be built *de novo*, but rather needs to be respected and protected" (Kymlicka, 367). Further, however, the virtue-theoretic or communitarian approach to social organization is such that "people form communities to realize something of value that is achievable in association with others" (Julius Moravscik, qtd in Stern-Gillet, 213). So even when a specific community is formed at some particular time, the ability to form the community, to give it a name or designation, comes about only as a result of the association of people with a similar overriding interest, recognizing that the interest is then a *community* goal shared by the individuals. This makes it possible, too, that communities continue to exist as relatively stable constructs even when particular individuals enter and leave the community. In essence, then, in the virtue-theoretic conception of community, individuals associate with others not only for the advancement of the self but also because human beings are naturally social or political beings who understand their place in a social group as having implications for the individual's benefit as well as for that of others.

The problems created by the individual, rights-based conception of social relations in which a sense of real community membership is neither required nor necessarily desired by individuals are captured in Michael Sandel's explanation that, under this scheme, there are no particular ends sought by a particular society. Instead, pure procedural rules replace ends, enabling "citizens to pursue their own ends, consistent with a similar liberty for all; [the society] therefore must govern by principles that do not presuppose any particular conception of the good" (Sandel, "Procedural Republic," 82). Without a shared conception of the good, however, the "self" or individual has no identity and little or no moral compass because there are no clearly identifiable institutional roles. So, as apologists for virtue-theoretic or communitarian conceptions of social life contend, it is important to realize that who and what we are is formed largely by our place(s) in social settings. This realization has accompanied the resurgence of interest in the virtues and their development in the work of Elizabeth Anscombe, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, and others, related to claims such as "it takes a village to raise a child" and the like. This realization also includes, I think, a resurrection of the notion of "honor" as part of a virtue theoretic sense of our moral lives.

For the modern individualist, we are essentially individuals and *not* members of groups or communities, so if the concept of honor requires a stable sense of community, honor becomes obsolete in the modernist account. Berger et al. explain the obsolescence of honor in the modern world such that honor is understood "in a world of relatively intact, stable institutions, in a world in which individuals can with subjective certainty attach their identities to the institutional roles that society assigns to them" (93), and since the modern world and its procedural rules for the unencumbered self do not lend themselves to any such identification, "[i]nstitutions cease to be the 'home' of the self; instead they become oppressive realities that distort and estrange the self'" (93). Another way to put it is that "[*t*]*he concept of honor implies* *that identity is essentially, or at least importantly, linked to institutional roles"* (90; emphasis added).

Here, however, it is easy to see why both the communitarian ideal's proponents and detractors point out that one particular danger of such a close link between the individual and the community is the risk of coercive practices, of forcing conformity among members of a group. Sandel, however, contends that this is not necessarily problematic. Sandel describes de Tocqueville's analysis of American public life as a "complex mix of persuasion and habituation" that "offers a way of conducting political argument, not transcending it" so that public institutions such as "townships, schools, [and] religions … form the 'character of mind' and 'habits of the heart' a democratic republic requires" (*Discontent*, 320-321) rather than eliminating differences between people and ideas. Sandel's conclusion is that "[t]he hope of our time rests … with those who can summon the conviction and restraint to make sense of our condition and repair the civic life on which democracy depends" (351). I take this to mean that the ideal of community life does not require conformity and it does not stifle individuality. Instead, it gives a dynamic quality to the community so that individual excellence may manifest itself in the search for the good for all. That good is dependent upon the creativity, the critical eye, and the intelligence of people like students in honors programs.

Whether an individual's goal in gaining entrance into a specific community is purely self-interested or other-regarding is, however, not my primary interest in this paper. Regardless of the reason(s) an individual may wish to become part of a community, it is the community itself which is central to morality for building and sustaining the community. Even the self-interested individualist recognizes that becoming a member of a community requires respecting the interests of the community lest the benefits gained by the individual from the community cease to be received. And for the individual who understands her placement in a community to include responsibilities to others and to the vision or goal of the community that reaches beyond the individual's own interests, it is clear that the community cannot continue to provide benefits for individuals without taking into account the interests of the community as a whole. I think it is true both that the creation of and entrance into an honors community are central to the honors experience and that students in honors communities distinguish themselves as academic and moral exemplars for larger academic and social/political communities.

For an honors community, "honor" is the shared practice and commitment of the group, but to understand more clearly the way in which the individual and the community are connected to the notion of honor, and the way in which the interests of the individual and community may *appear* to clash but actually do not, it will be useful to consider the opposite of honor in an academic context. That is, it will be helpful to consider dishonest or dishonorable persons or practices (such as cheaters and cheating) ultimately to show how individual and community interests are consistent with each other, why building a community is beneficial to the individual, and how this is relevant to the meaning of an honor code for an honors college. One ethicist claims that "honor codes are very effective in keeping individual behavior in conformity with a group's standards. Honor codes are often developed with the context of a sense of solidarity with the group…. As a result, it is expressed more in those cultures which value community over the individual" (Liszka, 44). Whitley and Keith-Spiegel note, however, that:

> The nature and feel of the campus community environment – the campus ethos – is a powerful influence on individual students' attitudes toward cheating. If students perceive their campus as merely providing a means to an end, and as unjust, disjointed, laissez-faire, impersonal, and without a core identity, deterrents to cheating may be very weak. (147)

They note, too, that "the simple establishment of an honor code is not sufficient to reduce academic dishonesty; rather, the honor code reflects the presence of a normative climate that frowns on dishonesty" (31). In addition, McCabe and Drinan contend that "honor codes, in and of themselves, are not the only means to mitigate cheating at colleges and universities. The success of honor codes appears to be rooted in a campus tradition of mutual trust and respect among students and between faculty members and students."

It is interesting to note here that Liszka's position is not that the notion of honor is used or expressed *only* in cultures in which the community is valued over the individual but simply that it is expressed *more* in those contexts. It is not necessary that the community be valued over the individual for honor to be an important or essential moral notion closely connected to the role and status of an honors student. Further, it is not clear that an honor code reduces cheating in some causal way.

Research on the effect of the existence of an honor code on college students with respect to problems of cheating and plagiarism indicates that there is a significantly smaller number of self-reported instances of academic dishonesty among honor code schools than among those with no honor code (see McCabe and Treviño). It is unclear whether the existence of a code reduces instances of academic dishonesty due to fear of reprisal for violating it or whether there is a culture of honesty at honor code schools that might not be as prevalent at other institutions. The question, then, is whether the difference in instances of occurrence of academic dishonesty is a result of having an honor code in place or whether those who attend honor code schools already overwhelmingly embrace the ideals embedded and expressed in a code. To attempt to answer this question through statistical analysis of empirical data concerning rates of cheating and plagiarism is not my purpose here. It is, instead, to discuss the moral notion of what distinguishes *adherence to a code* and *being honorable* from simple *compliance with a code* and *appearing honorable*. I am concerned with the *moral* import of the reasons that students adhere to a code, not whether they in fact do so. I will use the University of Central Florida Burnett Honors College honor code as an example to investigate concepts such as individual and community ascendancy models of our social relations, or the moral and social orientations of students, leading to a conception of the role of the honors student in building and sustaining an academic community.

The University of Central Florida Burnett Honors College honor code consists of five statements of expectations for members. It reads:

> *As a member of The Burnett Honors College I pledge to uphold the following academic and ethical standards:*
>
> To strive for the highest levels of performance in all scholarly endeavors and to do so with the enthusiasm that stems from a true love of learning and a devotion to academic excellence
>
> To demonstrate self-discipline, commitment, and responsibility in fulfilling my obligations as a member of the academic community
>
> To show thoughtfulness, understanding, and empathy toward my peers, and to offer encouragement as they pursue their academic goals
>
> To be respectful of, and attentive toward those who teach and mentor, while cherishing the ideal that academic excellence is best served where scholarly debate flourishes
>
> To honor the traditional rules of conduct that guide the achievements of a scholar including contempt for plagiarism, cheating, falsification, or any activity that threatens academic integrity and honesty

Is a list of expectations stated in this honor code – this *list of rules* – simply a list of externally imposed expectations such that it is considered negatively as the statement of a community that "build(s) connections around beliefs, and affirming those beliefs is frequently a part of the *price of admission*" (Glotzbach, 50)? Or is it a way of academic, personal, and professional life that the honors student chooses for herself and strives to attain? To answer these questions, consider two competing theoretical views of the way we may conceive of the notion of academic integrity through its opposite, academic dishonesty. These competing views are roughly similar to the distinction made earlier in this paper between an individualistic approach and a virtue-theoretic model of social relations.

The two competing views I consider here are that of Bernard Gert (see Gert, 1998) and my own (Stanlick, 2005). According to Gert, the goal of education is not only to do the best one can but to do better than others. Gert uses an analogy to the game of golf to explain that cheating is wrong because it disadvantages others who are engaged in the same competition but that cheating does not disadvantage or cheat spectators, referees or judges, or even the cheater herself.

Gert's position is roughly analogous to what Kibler et al. describe as the individual ascendancy model of our social and educational relations. It is an orientation of action and attitude focused on the present, on hedonism, and on duty to oneself (4). It is further characterized by heavy emphasis on negative rights, the notion of individualism that one has an obligation not to harm others and not to interfere in the exercise of their rights while pursuing one's own individual interests. Another way to understand Gert's position is to consider his claim that the means by which cheating and dishonest behavior may be curtailed is to ensure that the cheater realizes that others engaged in the game will not allow the cheater to gain the benefits of the activity when cheating has been detected. Or, to put it differently, other players will cease to play with the cheater once cheating behavior is discovered, and the players will, in short, expel the cheater from the community of players (if, of course, the cheater is exposed as such). Paradoxically enough, however, the cheater violates the primary obligations to self and others in seeking to fulfill his duty to himself (to look out for and pursue his own interests) by cheating since, by seeking to fulfill his duty to himself, the cheater harms others on whom he depends for the ability even to *begin* to play the game. In this view, then, Gert is wrong because "cheaters *do* hurt themselves, but they do not *only* hurt themselves. They also degrade the education of and affront the integrity of their honest peers" (Whitley and Keith-Spiegel, viii). Perhaps, then, the inverse is also true in that the culture of honor and honesty benefits the individual and her peers, enhancing the education of and respecting the integrity of honest peers. The paradoxical nature of Gert's model of social relations shows not only that cheating is counterproductive to the cheater *who is detected* but that there is something inherently inconsistent in the individual ascendancy view.

Is individual ascendancy the model for defense of integrity that one should adopt in or for any community? It appeals largely to censure, to the fear of expulsion, and hence to the loss of benefits gained by membership in a community. This kind of negative appeal is the problem with individual ascendancy and hence the individualist model of social relations. When people are members of communities in which the primary duty is to oneself and duties to others simply amount to non-interference in the exercise of others' rights and freedoms, communities in which the spirit of activity is primarily competitive, one is reminded of Sissela Bok's contention that "the very stress on individualism, on competition, on achieving material success which so marks our society also generates intense pressures to cut corners" (Bok, 224) or, in short, to cheat.

Cutting corners in the academic realm is engaging in dishonest academic practices, but the pressure of fear of censure, coupled with the pressure to succeed and gain benefits for oneself, may very well lead the cheater to feel compelled to find ways to *cheat undetected* rather than to cease cheating. In other words, if Gert is right that education is a competitive activity, the incentive *not to cheat* is fear of expulsion from a community; and if the goal of education is not only to do the best that one can but to do better than others, the cheater may decide that it is best to find more and better ways to cheat so as *not to be caught* and thus to continue to receive benefits from participation in the activities of the community.

The problem of academic dishonesty (not simply dishonest behaviors but the attempt to find more, and more effective, ways to be dishonest) can not to be solved by means of Gert's view, especially if the incentive not to cheat is simply fear that one may not gain benefits from membership. It is ironic, however, that the successful cheater remains in the community without truly being a member of it. Just as the citizen-voter who lies to other voters about having voted only *appears* to be a voter but actually is not one, the student who cheats to retain her position in an honors (or any) academic community only for her individual benefit at most *appears* to be a member of the community.

Membership in a community requires more than simple presence in that community or the pretense that one has achieved, or that one possesses, qualities or characteristics requisite to the fullest participation in the activity or activities (the *life*, for the Deweyan, of the community) that the community makes possible. It requires the performance of actions and the development and possession of character traits consistent with the individual and community standards that are the primary duties of individuals in communities. The individual who possesses traits of character that are themselves consistent with honor feels "a sense of honor in the emphatic sense that a moral person is one who does or does not engage in certain types of acts; that an individual's identity is bound up with his conduct, which is becoming of certain roles and status, and that it is beneath one to engage in anything less or contrary to it" (Liszka, 44). In addition, however, honor is also important to the larger community in that the moral person of honor is one who holds that "to fail at one's duties with respect to that role is to bring dishonor. Whereas duties specify what people are to do for others, given their role, an honor code has to do more with status within their position or role and how others should treat them in that regard. In other words, they act honorably because they have a certain sense of self which others should also have" (Liszka, 44). To act contrary to one's status is beneath the honorable person. So the person of honor, no less than those who honor the honorable, prescribes honorable behavior and character for others as well. The person who has only a pretense to honor or goodness and who "is a good man only because people will know it, and because they will esteem him better for it after knowing it, whoever will do well only on condition that his virtue will come to the knowledge of man, that man is not one from whom we can derive much service" (Montaigne, "Of Glory," 472).

The person who conceives of her social relationships as involving obligations (or better, commitment) to herself for personal excellence as well as an obligation or commitment to the community to promote its excellence has an alternative to the individual ascendancy model and is, I think, more likely to perform academically honest actions (and thus more likely to promote academic integrity) that are consistent with the view and characters of other individuals of honor and integrity. It is a virtue-theoretic, community-oriented view of the place and role of the student in the academic community that Kibler et al. call "community ascendancy" (4). It emphasizes the interests of the community *and* the individual such that those who adopt the community ascendancy model are future oriented, accept responsibility, and recognize and act on their obligations to others. These are people for whom trust and integrity, honesty and honor, are much more important than *pretense* to individual excellence. The "community ascender" realizes that benefits for the individual come about only through the strength of community and that the community gains its strength, its honor and reputation, from the individuals who comprise it in their having a shared vision of the goals of the community.

To possess a shared vision, to feel a sense of community, requires respect and concern for others that may be explained more completely through a discussion of Aristotle's conception of virtue friendship. His understanding of friendship may in addition serve to underscore the value of community and also the paucity of the individual ascendancy model of human relations.

For Aristotle, virtue (or perfect) friendship, the human relationship that is requisite to the creation of the most morally advanced political communities, can be understood as the model of relationships that community ascendancy recommends. Aristotle distinguishes between three types or levels of friendship, only one of which is *perfect* and suited for the relationships obtaining between individuals who will be able to forge political communities of virtue. The first and lowest form of friendship is that of utility. Here, people associate with each other to fulfill some need or desire and the association dissolves once it has been satisfied. The second form of friendship is that of pleasure, existing only so long as the people involved in the friendship remain pleasant to each other. As Aristotle puts it:

> Those who love for utility or pleasure, then, are fond of a friend because of what is good or pleasant for themselves, not insofar as the beloved is who he is, but insofar as he is useful or pleasant. Hence these friendships as well [as the friends] are coincidental, since the beloved is loved not insofar as he is who he is, but insofar as he provides some good or pleasure.
>
> And so these sorts of friendships are easily dissolved, when the friends do not remain similar [to what they were]; for if someone is no longer pleasant or useful, the other stops loving him. (*NE*, VIII, iii, 2-3, p. 121)

Pleasure friendships are neither long-lasting nor dependable. They are centered on the use and pleasure of one who *uses* others for her own benefit alone. The attitude of the friend for utility or pleasure is that of the individual ascender who looks solely at the company of others as a means to achieve her own goals, ending relationships when utility and pleasure are no longer forthcoming.

It is important to note that the analogy to friendships of utility or pleasure that I am using here is certainly not perfectly parallel to the case of the cheater or impostor, but it has affinities to the behavior of the friend of utility or pleasure in conceiving of friendships (and other social relationships) as means to the ends of individuals without consideration of the interests and ends of others. For the individual ascender, cheaters and impostors are removed or marginalized from a social setting when their purely self-interested cheating behaviors are detected, thus ending or curtailing the relationship. So the cheater who remains undetected, like the friend who does not cease to find use or pleasure in others, at best has only *pretense* to membership in a group and is only incompletely a friend or is a member of a group only insofar as continued benefits are to be obtained.

Even where the duty of the individual is to *herself* on the individual ascendancy model, the individual who wishes to obtain individual benefits from the community must also respect the concerns and interests of others *who constitute* the community in which she is present insofar as she must also look out for their interests if she expects others to look out for hers. To respect the interests of others (consistently with

Gert's view) but also to respect the community (that is, to respect the "game" being played and the other players) requires at least that the individual act in accordance with community standards. Even this, however, is not enough for full membership in a community, and it is not enough to claim that the person is one of honor or integrity. To be a person of honor or integrity, a person must be one who can be trusted under any circumstances "to do the right thing, to play by the rules, to keep commitments" (Carter, 7).

The community ascender, unlike the individual ascender, realizes that benefits for the individual come about only through the strength of community and that the community gains its strength, honor, and reputation from the individuals who comprise it. The community ascender, in addition and most importantly, cares about the community in itself. Turn again to Aristotle's discussion of friends and friendship, specifically to his conception of perfect friendship, to which the community ascender has significant affinities:

> Each of them is both good without qualification and good for his friend, since good people are both good without qualification and advantageous for each other. They are pleasant in the same ways too, since good people are pleasant both without qualification and for each other. [They are pleasant for each other] because each person finds his own actions and actions of that kind pleasant, and the actions of good people are the same or similar.
>
> It is reasonable that this sort of friendship is enduring, since it embraces in itself all the features that friends must have. For the cause of every friendship is good or pleasure, either unqualified or for the lover; and every friendship accords with some similarity. And all the features we have mentioned are found in this friendship because of [the nature of] the friends themselves. For they are similar in this way [i.e., in being good]. (*NE,* VIII, iii, 6-7, p. 122)

It is this type of friendship, one of mutuality, a perfect friendship in which a friend sees her friend as *another self* that serves as the model and foundation of community.

Neither Aristotle nor I contend, however, that a community consisting of hundreds or thousands of members can be characterized by the emotional and intellectual connection that is central to close personal friendships of the sort described here. Aristotle does, though, use this model of friendship as a transition to his political thought in which the *polis* (the city-state), which is a *koinonia* (community), is composed of people who understand the value and importance of such highly moral relationships with very specific, well-known other individuals. The translation of this sort of friendship and its application to a larger population is civic friendship. The person who understands the value and characterization of virtue friendship, who *is* a friend to others in this way, is a "normative communitarian" who "sees civic friendship as the expression of the goods and values shared by fellow citizens who respect and care for each other" (Stern-Gillett, 161). This member of the community would "understand that the excellence of the city requires the dedication of all its capable citizens, and he would act accordingly" (Stern-Gillett, 167). Aristotle, however, points out that such people are rare (*NE*, VIII, iii, 7, p. 123).

Concentrating his attention on Aristotle's claim that we must, however, honor truth above our friends, Glotzbach asks, "if academic community is necessary for the central work of teaching and learning and friendship or something like it is essential to the creation of genuine academic community, then how can we rationally 'honor truth above our friends'?"(52). Glotzbach finds Aristotle's position paradoxical, and perhaps it is so to some extent despite Glotzbach's attempts to find a solution to it. He contends that the "quick solution" to the paradox is "the realization that the friendship that should stand at the heart of an academic community needs to be of a managed sort, one that does not go to the full extreme of solidarity that characterizes the very deepest friendships" (53), but he adds that "in a deeper sense, to accept membership in an academic community is to place oneself under the continuing authority of one's peers for the evaluation of the products of one's intellectual or creative labor" (53).

I think that Glotzbach is right that the quick solution is insufficient because it misses the point of Aristotle's conception of friendship that a friend of virtue would "not give in to requests from others to do something base," so "the possibility of the obligations of justice" (which is correlative with truth) clashing with "primary [very personal] relationships is therefore ruled out in Aristotle's ethics" (Stern-Gillett, 164). So Glotzbach's deeper solution, that members of a community are always under the authority of their peers, means also that members of the community have its members' and the community's standards always on hand as a check on non-virtuous (or better, vicious) behavior. What this means is that the code of the community trumps the friend but not the friendship in that the code expresses the actions and goals of individuals and community that define the good person. Since the good person is most fully a friend, any temptation that would compromise goodness in its members could threaten to compromise the friendship but will not do so as long as the friend does not develop personal character tending toward such moral mistakes. Thus, preserving the community and its ideals *is* preserving the association not simply because the community has ideals but because the ideals express individual and group commitment to moral excellence, i.e., to the virtues that warrant honor. Aristotle notes that such friendships (those of virtue) are rare because such people are rare, and he explains that such people cannot "accept each other or be friends until each appears lovable to the other and gains the other's confidence" or trust (*NE*, VIII, iii, 8, p. 123). And when the friendship has been formed, it is not easily dissolved because the character of the friends is not easily shaken. Such friends are people of character; they are people of honor. It does not mean that they are perfect, but it does mean that they strive to become the best that they can be.

So, if Aristotle's account of friendship holds any weight in the conception of community to be developed in an honors college, students who recognize that simple presence in an organization is not enough to maintain the status that is awarded to the honors student will realize that membership in the honors community requires consideration of others *and* of the community as a whole. One must be worthy of friendship and trustworthy to her peers, not merely gaining friendship and trust of peers by pretense to community membership and trust but by *being a member of the* *community* and *being trustworthy*. It is in social conditions such as these that the goals of community and hence the goals of the individual may be reached.

It is the goal of the honors community both to present opportunities to the honors student to take full advantage of her abilities and to establish a community of honors that is consistent with those goals. To do that may, again, be explicable on the Aristotelian model of virtue (perfect) friendship. He contends that "the friendship of decent people is decent, and increases the more often they meet. And they seem to become still better from their activities and their mutual correction. For each molds the other in what they approve of, so that '[you will learn] what is noble from noble people'" (*NE*, IX, xii, 3, p. 153). In short, the honors community becomes a community by its members becoming moral exemplars to each other, adopting the characteristics they approve in others, developing further those they already possess, and maintaining the code or ideals by which they live as a statement of the beliefs they already hold and that they recommend to others. They do this for the good of the self *and* others. This is concord, which Aristotle calls "political friendship" (civic friendship), "for it is concerned with advantage and with what affects life [as a whole]" (*NE*, IX, vi, 3, p. 144). This community concord is, for Aristotle, "the safeguard of the state" and thus of community in that "concord is the preserve of those who are decent…. Far from allowing that there can be honor among thieves, Aristotle … appears to claim that concord cannot obtain unless the citizens themselves are morally sound. The base, whose motivation is generally unsteady, can neither feel concern for the common good nor cooperate with others in its pursuit" (Stern-Gillett, 152).

Returning to the honors code of the Burnett Honors College as an example of the commitments of an individual to *create and maintain* the community, one can see that the exhortations to strive for high levels of academic performance, to fulfill obligations as a member of the academic community, to offer encouragement to others in pursuit of intellectual goals, to cherish academic excellence and debate, and to honor traditional rules of scholarly conduct are not externally imposed rules set up for honors students simply to memorize and follow. They are, instead, a statement of commitments already possessed by those who deserve the designation "honors students." Honor makes no sense for the isolated, atomistic individualist because honor and honoring require community. To build an honors community (or any community, academic or otherwise) is to admit members for whom commitment to academic and personal excellence is a way of life, not an externally imposed, onerous requirement that one must satisfy in order to receive benefits from the group. To build and maintain a community, a person must see herself as *a member* of it, not simply present in it. For students who are admitted but who are not already possessed of traits of character, student who are possessed of only minimal external indicators of honors status, the presence of an honor code and the behaviors of those who are already committed to it may lead them to adopt the code as their own, thereby *becoming* and then *being* members of the community because they have chosen to be so. Members of communities who participate most fully in the *life* of the community cultivate character and traits of character that are consistent with the good. They consider an action contrary to what is good to be "something they don't do" not because someone has told them so or because there is a list of rules they must follow. They do what is good simply because it is good. The honors academic community exists as a place in which education, honestly obtained and cherished, is such that the community enhances the individual and the individual enhances the community.

CONCLUSION

Communities come into existence and develop in a manner consistent with the needs, desires, and interests of their members, who share a vision of the good with each other. A person might adhere to a self-interested model of human behavior and believe that people associate with others solely for the benefit of themselves, or instead she might believe that people form communities because it is part of their nature to do so in their common pursuit and conception of the good; this distinction is relevant to the way in which a community will exist, but it is not essential to understanding the way in which a sense of community and a sense of membership in a community are created and sustained.

The membership of individuals in a community helps to define the community while the community serves as a framework in which the individual may enhance her position as well as define and attain her own goals. Honors colleges and their students are uniquely situated in the academic realm to exemplify and illuminate the consistency of individual interests and community goods and to use this to build other academic communities. In doing so, they serve as examples of the importance and effectiveness of communities in providing an atmosphere in which the goals of education overall may be realized.

To create and sustain not only the honors community but also the larger academic community of which an honors college and its students are a part, administrators might consider implementation of service learning courses as a central function of the honors college and perhaps of colleges and universities on the whole. As part of education for democratic citizenship, service to the community of which one is a member is part of the growth and development of the individual as well as the community itself. Aristotle notes, for example, that "base people … cannot be in concord, except to a slight degree, just as they can be friends only to a slight degree; for they seek to overreach in benefits [to themselves], and shirk labors *and public services*. And since each wishes this for himself, he interrogates and obstructs his neighbor; for when people do not look out for the common good, it is ruined" (*NE,* IX, vii, 3, p. 145; emphasis added). Service-learning courses are consistent with development of civic consciousness in the honorable person who realizes that, to be a person of honor, one must not simply seek the good for herself but for others as well. White describes Aristotle's view that for "an action to deserve honor … it must promote some valuable end, and for the virtuous to deserve honor, they must aim at the end and not only at honor itself" (White, 261). Further, "in place of competitive ideals based on status that exalt external success, [Aristotle] proposes a cooperative ideal based on self-knowledge and rational virtue that finds its highest expression in beneficence" (270). In essence, then, to be an honors student implies a commitment to dignity and honor, but that commitment expresses itself in care and concern for others, not for the mere trappings of the benefits to be found for oneself through one's achievements or abilities. As I indicated earlier, Aristotle did not claim that political friendship is the same as personal friendship (see *NE* VIII, ix), but personal and political friendships are very similar in that good friendship is altruistic and pluralistic (see White, 84) and so are our political relationships. For Aristotle, the similarity of goodness between personal friends is individual while the similarity of goodness for political relationships is defined through a constitution or laws; in the case to which I am applying this conceptualization of our social relations, political friendship expressed academically is a shared commitment to educational goals generally. Those goals are defined by the shared commitment to educational attainment, to the acquisition of knowledge, which the honors student and the honors community are well qualified to promote and exemplify for all.

The honors student is not simply to be honored for academic attainment or for abiding by rules or ideals; the honors student must, as a full and participating member of an honors community, internalize and exemplify honor as a way of life that maintains her real status in an honors community. Honors colleges and their students are uniquely capable of knowing by experience the distinction between individual interests and community ascendancy in the academic realm. They are similarly situated to embody the best of the insights of both points of view in creating and maintaining academic communities of honor and integrity in which students are persons of personal and academic excellence who realize that their code of honor is an exhortation to live the life of community *and* individual ascendancy. A community of honors students is a group of people who understand their relationships with each other to be exemplifications of Aristotelian virtue and civic friendship. McCabe and Treviño (2002) put the case regarding organizational cultures of integrity that "the greatest benefit … may not be reduced student cheating. Instead, it may be the lifelong benefit of learning the value of living in a community of trust." This is not to say that the value of learning and living in a community of trust can be achieved, maintained and experienced only by honors students in honors colleges. There are numerous other academics, professionals, industrialists, inventors, and "everyday people" who belong and contribute to communities of trust. On the other hand, there are students in honors colleges and programs who do not share in the life of the organization and who may feel no obligation, or only very minimal duty, to any community in which they are present. To recognize exceptions is not to minimize the moral and social import of the exhortation that we may make to honors students to develop traits of character that situate them specifically for the obligations and benefits that "honor" may bestow upon them. To be an "honors student" is more than to attain a high level of academic achievement. An honors student is a moral exemplar in the academic community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank Dean Alvin Wang of the Burnett Honors College of the University of Central Florida for reading and commenting on an earlier draft of this paper.

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Building a City of Ladies with Christine de Pizan and Arkansas State University Honors Students

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In "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," Adrienne Rich—American poet, feminist, and social critic—expressed exhilaration and confusion in being alive "in a time of awakening consciousness" (18). Self-knowledge, Rich emphasized, eludes us until we recognize and question the basic assumptions that shape our perspectives. Re-visioning is an important part of this process. For Rich, re-visioning is not the meticulous correcting of our comma splices and dangling modifiers but "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (18). The task Rich set before herself is not just the work of a feminist poet in the 1970s but an appropriate intellectual challenge for honors students in any decade. Interdisciplinary honors seminars should encourage students to move beyond the platitudes and prejudices of the past and examine a variety of issues with fresh perspective.

In the fall of 2003 I taught an honors seminar at Arkansas State University that engaged students in the act of re-visioning. The course focused on medieval and early modern women writers and was designed to dispel the misconception that the literary, artistic, and cultural contributions of these women were nil or at best insignificant. The audience for the course was a group of junior and senior students from the ASU Honors Program. Their majors were diverse and included Psychology, Radio-TV, Graphic Design, History, Marketing, Theatre Arts, English, and even the ubiquitous Undecided. Not all of these students took the course because they were interested in the subject; some simply needed an honors seminar to fulfill requirements for graduation.

In part at least the model for the course was Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Christine de Pizan was engaged in the act of re-visioning long before Adrienne Rich ever addressed the subject. As Maureen Gillespie Dawson has noted, the aim of *The City of Ladies* "is to contest the contemporary, pervasive belief that women are unintelligent, unfaithful, insatiable, and immoral. The book systematically challenges what men have written about women; it builds an alternative, authoritative female identity grounded in the intellectual, artistic, and moral contributions of women" (17). Recognized as an important contribution to the history of the psychology of oppression, *The City of Ladies* begins by depicting the process by which a despised person accepts the judgment of her oppressor and consequently despises herself and all her sex. At the beginning of the work, the character Christine is ready to succumb to the misogynist views of the male authorities she has read, especially Matheolus. Just as she is about to be overwhelmed by self-contempt and despair because she is female, the three daughters of God–Reason, Rectitude, and Justice–appear to her and engage her in the task of building a city of women, a project whose end is to vanquish from the world the same error into which Christine had fallen. Appearing to Christine because she has always been a diligent searcher for truth, the divine ladies proceed to address negative stereotypes about women prevalent in the time by summoning countless examples of those whose lives refute the stereotype. These examples are drawn from scripture, mythology, history, literature, and Christine de Pizan's contemporary experience. In highlighting the capabilities, virtues, and achievements of numerous women, the work counters misogynist voices throughout time.

Unlike Christine de Pizan, our seminar did not have the heavenly assistance of three crowned ladies; rather, we had to muddle through without divine intervention. The course, however, was intended to demonstrate to students that there really were learned women in the medieval and early modern period, that some of these women were responsible for significant works that continue to speak to us today. Our city of women was populated by Hildegard of Bingen, Margery Kempe, Christine de Pizan, Aemilia Lanyer, and Elizabeth Cary. In addition to studying the works of these women, students were responsible for researching and presenting oral reports detailing the contributions of, among others, Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, Marie de France, Bridget of Sweden, Julian of Norwich, Anne Askew, Mary Sidney Herbert, Rachel Speght, Anne Bradstreet, Bathsua Makin, and Katherine Philips.

We began with Hildegard of Bingen because of her current popularity and also because the varied accomplishments of this phenomenal twelfth-century woman can quickly convince students that women were more than bit players swelling a scene or two in the drama of medieval life. The tenth of her parents' children and thus their tithe to God, she was dedicated to the religious life at a very early age. At seven she entered a hermitage attached to the Benedictine monastery of Disibodenberg, Germany with Jutta of Sponheim. The hermitage ultimately became a Benedictine convent, and Hildegard made her profession as a nun when she was a teenager. When Jutta died, Hildegard became head of the convent. After seeking counsel from Bernard of Clairvaux, she responded to a divine imperative to write about the visions of the living Light she had experienced since childhood. Hildegard recorded her visions in three books and supervised illuminations for her texts. She is also responsible for the first extant morality play, *Play of the Virtues*, and she composed a cycle of seventy-seven songs, *The Symphony of the Harmony of Heavenly Revelations.* She is often designated as Germany's first woman doctor and scientist because of her encyclopedic two-part work, *Causes and Cures* and *The Book of Simple Medicine*. Moreover, she carried on such an extensive correspondence with religious and secular figures that she is often likened to a medieval Dear Abby. Hildegard embarked on four preaching tours; she wrote a life of Saints Rupert and Disibod and a treatise on the Benedictine Rule and the Athanasian Creed; and she is responsible for an invented language. Healer, prophet, visionary, abbess, composer, scientist, herbalist, and dramatist, Hildegard accomplished much in her lifetime. A Penguin paperback of the selected writings of Hildegard edited by Mark Atherton enabled students to sample Hildegard's diverse works. This text was supplemented by several CDs of Hildegard's music. We also viewed *Radiant Life*, a forty-minute film narrated by Reverend Dr. Lauren Artress that provides a modern perspective on Hildegard's spirituality. Students were surprised to learn just how popular a figure Hildegard is more than 900 years after her birth. A guest at Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* and the subject of two novels, Barbara Lachman's *The Journal of Hildegard of Bingen* and Joan Ohanneson's *Scarlet Music*, she is also featured in an opera composed by Brian Inglis and is the subject of several videos. Numerous books both by and about her are currently available. Jany Fournier-Rosset's book even provides us with recipes from Hildegard. Her music is internationally known, and many CDs are available. A publishing company in Bryn Mawr, PA that is designed to promote the music of women composers of past and present has been named after her. An Australian electronic mailing list that serves as a communication channel for teachers involved in science and technology is named after her as well because she was one of the first women to write about the method of scientific investigation. Her medical treatises interest both mainstream Christians who practice traditional medicine and practitioners of New Age religion and alternative medicine.

Our honors seminar explored some of the manifold reasons for Hildegard's current popularity. One is obviously gender: as a woman who lived in what is perceived to be an extremely restrictive and chauvinistic age, she accomplished a great deal and was outspoken in her dealings with male authority figures; her visions of the feminine divine (Sapientia and Caritas) deriving from the ancient Wisdom tradition, strike a modern note; moreover, she discusses human sexuality openly in her writings and specifically treats medical matters of concern to women including conception, birth, complications in childbirth, gynecological diseases, menstruation, and menopause. Secondly, her approach to health care is holistic and encompasses body, mind, spirit, and cosmos. For Hildegard health is more than the absence of symptoms of disease. Health is the harmonious union of body and soul with Nature and with God. It calls for balance and moderation in all aspects of life. In addition, her health care methodology is varied and incorporates herbalism, aromatherapy, diet and fasting, laying on of hands, therapeutic stones, prayer and incantation, light energy, sound therapy, and hydrotherapy–an array of today's New Age and alternative medical practices. Finally, Hildegard's work manifests her ecological consciousness. Her concept of *viriditas*, the greening power of God necessary for physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual health and well-being, emphasizes the sacrality and interconnectedness of all creation. Hildegard respects Nature and recognizes its power. Those currently interested in Green Power cannot help but find the Hildegardian image of *viriditas* intriguing.[1]

Certainly Hildegard of Bingen's varied activities and some of the very crucial and contemporary concepts treated in her works should amply demonstrate why a course in medieval and early modern women would have the interdisciplinary appeal so crucial for honors classes. A study of Hildegard should intrigue not only students in literature but those in drama, music, art, religion, history, and the sciences.

The other readings also convinced students that not only Hildegard but Margery Kempe, Christine de Pizan, Aemelia Lanyer, and Elizabeth Cary had something to say to them in the twenty-first century. After reading selections from Hildegard we moved to *The Book of Margery Kempe*. The life of Kempe, who discovered affective piety long before Mel Gibson, always removes the adjective "docile" from students' stereotypical view of medieval women. A middle-class housewife, mother of fourteen children, businesswoman, mystic, and pilgrim, Margery Kempe underwent a mystical conversion which changed her understanding of herself, the world, and her relationship to God.[2] Her mystical experiences—both visual and aural—led to her unique religious vocation. Unlike a nun devoted to a religious order, Kempe did not live a cloistered life apart from the world, yet her desire for a celibate relationship with her husband, her spiritual marriage to Christ, her donning of white garments, her copious expressions of her gift of tears, and her pilgrimages to religious sites set her apart from the worldly. Whenever I teach Margery Kempe, my goal is to demonstrate that her behavior is not aberrant but firmly rooted in medieval spiritual traditions, as Clarissa W. Atkinson has so cogently demonstrated. Atkinson clearly places Kempe's work in the tradition of affective piety and the democritization of mysticism. She concludes that Kempe did exactly what the great Cistercian and Franciscan writers had directed the devout to do: she made an emotive connection to the humanity of the incarnate God. The aim of affective piety was "not so much to teach doctrine or offer formal worship as to move the heart of the believer" (Atkinson 129). Lynn Staley's Norton Critical Edition provides useful contexts for such an emphasis with its supplemental readings, especially the excerpts from Bridget of Sweden, and Jacques de Vitry's life of Marie d'Oignies. Moreover, Kempe makes a nice contrast to the visionary Hildegard. Hildegard provides elaborate analysis of her visions, analysis designed to teach doctrine and emphasize theological points. Kempe's response to her visions, on the other hand, is a purely emotive one. In addition to appealing to English majors, Kempe's work should also interest honors students in history, sociology, and geography.

Charity Cannon Willard's edition of *The Writings of Christine de Pizan* enabled us to examine not just *The Book of the City of Ladies* but selections from a range of Christine's poetry and prose, including her autobiographical *Christine's Vision* and *The Treasury of the City of Ladies*. Designated Europe's first professional woman author, Christine was responsible for a body of work that expresses concern for the position of women in society as it attempts to respond to a misogynist trend.[3] Married at fifteen and a widow at twenty-five, she found herself the sole support of her three children, her mother, and a dependent niece. As a result, she well understood the vulnerable social, economic, and legal position of women. Her writings often speak out against inequities in society and spring to the defense of women. Moreover, she is concerned about women in a range of social classes. In *Treasury of the City of Ladies* or *The Book of Three Virtues*, she addresses queens and other noblewomen, wives of artisans and agricultural workers, and even prostitutes, who she believes can be reformed. In *The Book of the City of Ladies* Christine, through interaction with her divine mentors, asserts the innate abilities of women and sees the inequality of their education as the reason for their lack of achievement. She addresses economic problems and domestic violence. She also directly deals with the accusations that women invite rape and that "No" really means "Yes." Through Christine's writing, students in the honors seminar recognized that many of today's gender issues are centuries old, as is women's recognition of and response to those issues. Her texts can be valuble to students of literature, history, sociology, psychology, and economics.

We next turned to Aemilia Lanyer's 1611 *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, a work that nicely reinforced our readings from both Kempe and Pizan. As Barbara Lewalski has shown, Lanyer's many dedicatory poems create an important community of good women. Through these dedications Lanyer constructs a miniature Book of the City of Ladies, but her ladies are very English and very Protestant.[4] The title poem, a long meditation on the passion and death of Christ, is certainly in the tradition of affective piety and is designed to elicit a decided emotional response from the readers. In this respect comparisons can be drawn to Kempe's work. Lanyer's meditation differs from others in this tradition, however, by insisting on the centrality of women in Christ's life, in his ministry, and in his death. In her dedication "To the Vertuous Reader," Lanyer notes that Christ was "begotten of a woman, borne of a woman, nourished of a woman, obedient to a woman; and that he healed women, pardoned women, comforted women: yea, even when he was in his greatest agonie and bloodie sweat, going to be crucified, and also in the last houre of his death, tooke care to dispose of a woman: after his resurrection, appeared first to a woman, sent a woman to declare his most glorious resurrection to *the rest of his Disciples*" (49-50; italics mine). Lanyer ultimately argues misogyny is unchristian, that the example of Christ should "inforce all good Christians and honourable minded men to speake reverently of our sexe" (50).

The last work we examined was Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam.* Stephanie Hodgson-Wright's Broadview Press edition of that work provides useful contexts through its supplemental materials. Extracts from Cary's main sources are provided as well as portions from selected didactic and polemic texts of the period. Cary's determination to learn in spite of opposition from her mother and then her mother-in-law and also the difficulties she experienced as a result of her conversion to Catholicism underscore the precarious position of women in seventeenth-century British society while at the same time suggesting the inner strength of character and conviction possessed by Cary. Like Kempe her religious experiences had a significant impact on family dynamics. For Kempe, visions led her to seek a life of chastity, something her husband only consented to after twenty years. For Cary, conversion to Catholicism brought her Protestant husband's disapproval, serious financial constraints, and separation from her children. *The Tragedy of Mariam* examines the various ways women deal with patriarchal power, from the subservient flattery but behind-the-scenes maneuvering of Mariam's mother to the sexual manipulation practiced by Salome, Herod's sister, to the ambivalence and then stolid opposition of Mariam that ultimately leads to her death.

In addition to their brief oral reports, honors students also focused on semester-long research projects. These were individualized as much as possible to accommodate students' disciplines: an art major/philosophy minor interested in mysticism read several works by and about women mystics and created several art works responding to the imagery in the mystical treatises she read; a young man began the semester wondering if women had any role in warfare and wrote a very detailed report on women warriors in the medieval period. Two young women, amazed that Margery Kempe convinced her husband to live chastely, collaborated on a project about sexual mores and marriage in the medieval period. An English major in the class investigated some early modern women poets, and a drama major focused on women and drama in the early modern period. The incredible diversity and range of experience of these women allows for numerous projects for students in many disciplines: A geography major might, for example, map the peripatetic Kempe's travels and consider the difficulties encountered by female pilgrims in the middle ages; an art major might examine the illuminations accompanying Hildegard's visions; a psychology major could explore the ambivalence or the jealousy inherent in *The Tragedy of Mariam*; business majors could learn about the economic position of women in earlier societies by focusing on Kempe or Pizan or Lanyer. Pre-law students and pre-medicine students would also find relevant issues in the lives and texts of these authors.

The Book of the City of Ladies engendered another course assignment. Students were to assume the role of a modern-day Christine de Pizan. Their task was to identify current stereotypes about women and, like Christine, provide concrete examples of women whose lives refute the stereotype. Like Christine, they could draw from a wide range of sources for their examples. Students covered diverse negative attitudes that have hindered women's full participation in military endeavors, sports, politics, business, and science. Some of their examples included public and notable figures like Benazir Bhutto, Madeleine Albright, Hillary Clinton, Winona LaDuke, then NSF director Rita Colwell, mathematician Emmy Noether, the Danish physicist Lene Vestergaard Hau, and Oprah Winfrey. Some, however, also wrote very well thought out and moving personal tributes to private individuals who had an impact on them—a sister, an aunt, a mother, a teacher—who through their actions had dispelled stereotypes about what was and wasn't possible for women. The assignment clearly engaged honors students in the act of re-visioning as they considered public figures and private lives.

For me one of the most difficult things about building this city of ladies with ASU honors students was the necessary exclusion of so many women from our study. The constraints of time and the prohibitive price of texts necessitate such exclusion. There are anthologies I had considered using to give students a greater sampling of writers: Katharina Wilson's *Medieval Women Writers* or Elizabeth Petroff's *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* for medieval materials and Randall Martin's *Women Writers in Renaissance England*, Betty Travitsky's *The Paradise of Women*, or James Fitzmaurice's *Major Women Writers in Seventeenth-Century England* for early modern British materials. Ultimately, however, I settled on our five texts and had students explore other writers individually and then present their findings to the class. While

I have regrets about the material we could not cover, a fully realized city of ladies cannot be built in a semester. A foundation for that city, however, can be established. With readings and assignments designed to stimulate honors students' analytic and critical skills and to develop their oral and written communications skills, an interdisciplinary honors course about early women can motivate students to re-vision the past and recognize the accomplishments of women from the twelfth through the seventeenth century, women who were neither silent nor submissive, women whose voice should be heard in our own time. As re-visioning a distant past replete with capable women encourages honors students to reflect on their immediate present, it could also direct them in shaping their future. Given the often-cited majority of women students in honors programs and colleges throughout the United States, recognition of the powerful roles of their forebears may have special relevance and value within the context of honors education.

NOTES

[1] For a fuller treatment of Hildegard's current popularity and the reasons for it, see Malpezzi, "Evergreen: The Enduring Voice of a Nine-Hundred-Year-Old Healer."

[2] Although not a guest at Chicago's *Dinner Party*, Kempe is included in the Heritage Floor of that work.

[3] Like Hildegard, Christine is a guest at Chicago's *Dinner Party*.

[4] Lewalski notes that while Lanyer does not imitate Christine de Pizan, she does provide "a comprehensive 'Book of Good Women,' fusing religious devotion and feminism to assert the essential harmony of those two impulses" (218). Since there was an English translation of *Book of the City of Ladies* by Brian Anslay in 1521, there is the possibility Lanyer was familiar with the work (396, n. 27). For the Protestant connections of her dedicatees, see Lewalski, 221.

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