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In This Issue

Forum on the Value of Honors

50th Anniversary Issue

with essays by James Herbert and by 39 college and university presidents

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The National Collegiate Honors Council is an association of faculty, students, and others interested in honors education.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

The next issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: March 1, 2016**) invites research essays on any topic of interest to the honors community.

The issue will also include a Forum focused on the theme “Research in Honors.” We invite essays of roughly 1000–2000 words that consider this theme in a practical and/or theoretical context.

The lead essay for the Forum, which has been distributed on the NCHC listserv and posted on the NCHC website (<http://nchchonors.org/jnchc-lead-essay-an-agenda-for-the-future-of-research>), is by George Mariz of Western Washington University. His essay—titled “An Agenda for the Future of Research in Honors”—calls for a more scholarly and professional approach to honors research that goes beyond a focus on individual institutions and provides measurably verifiable claims about the success of honors at the national and international level. He calls for a clear agenda of topics and methodologies that are most relevant to honors research.

Contributions to the Forum may—but need not—respond to Mariz’s essay.

Questions that Forum contributors might consider include: What are the major research questions that need to be addressed in future studies of honors? As NCHC publications have moved away from local and anecdotal accounts of success in honors, has the evolution been entirely salutary, or has anything been lost? While the research that seems increasingly to dominate in honors has become primarily data-driven, what do the humanities have to offer? Is honors a real discipline, like history or chemistry or engineering, or is it special in a way that requires a different concept of a field of research? Does research and publication in honors count toward tenure and promotion, and should it? What specific changes should be made in NCHC journals to accommodate the future needs of honors administrators and faculty for relevant research?

Especially enterprising authors may wish to look back eleven years to *JNCHC* 5.1 (spring/summer 2004) (<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nchcjournal/231/>, which was also devoted to the theme “Research in Honors.” That earlier issue of *JNCHC* itself looked back twenty years to see where honors research had been in 1984, so writers can potentially explore a thirty-year history of research in honors to see where it has been, where it is now, and where it might be going.

Forum essays should focus on ideas, concepts, and/or opinions related to “Research in Honors.”

Information about *JNCHC*, including the editorial policy and submission guidelines, is available on the NCHC website: (<http://nchchonors.org>).

Please send all submissions to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu.
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 adalong@uab.edu.

DEADLINES

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

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We accept material by email attachment in Word (not pdf). We do 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 strongly preferred, and the editor will revise all internal citations in accordance with MLA guidelines.

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

Accepted essays are edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for infelicities of style or presentation. Authors 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.
As we celebrate the fifty years that the National Collegiate Honors Council has served and promoted honors education in the United States and around the globe, we also rightly honor Bernice Braid, who has been essential to the organization for an almost equal number of years. If any one person embodies the highest values of honors education, that person is Bernice Braid, who has been a passionate innovator, sustainer, and supporter of all that is best in honors. She is a founder and presiding genius of the NCHC, setting the path not just of the organization but of honors and, to a large degree, higher education.

Bernice began her distinguished academic career at LIU Brooklyn in 1964 and started teaching honors courses in 1965, the same year as the founding of NCHC. She became the director of the LIU Honors Program in 1968, and she soon became a leader far beyond her own campus, serving as president of the Northeast Region of the NCHC in 1977–78 and as national president in 1979–80. She has served on the Board of Directors/Executive Committee a total of twenty-three years between 1976 and 2011, and during that time she has published some forty essays and books.
What everyone in the NCHC, in honors, and throughout higher education knows about Bernice is her pioneering role in experiential education and active learning. Through Honors Semesters, Faculty Institutes, City as Text™ excursions, journal articles, monographs, workshops, campus consultations, and daily infusions of her prodigious energy, she has created experiential education as a pedagogical strategy in honors and far beyond. She deserves the credit for what so many others have subsequently adopted and adapted.

Bernice has served as a consultant, evaluator, or workshop leader at over sixty colleges and universities in the United States and several more in other parts of the world such as Spain, Chile, Greece, the Netherlands, and the Czech Republic. Students around the globe have caught fire about experiential education, cultural studies, and public service through participation in one of the more than thirty Honors Semesters she has organized, and faculty have honed their teaching skills in more than twenty-five Faculty Institutes. Any member of NCHC during the last three decades knows Bernice as the founding mother and annual organizer of City as Text™. Thousands have experienced cities with Bernice’s maps, handouts, instructions, and insights as their guides, and hundreds have returned to their home campuses to adopt her learning strategies in their own programs and courses. Bernice was practicing and teaching active learning for at least two decades before the rest of the country caught up with her, and—in this as in all things—Bernice has kept the NCHC in the forefront of excellent education.

Bernice’s keen intellect and superhuman energy are the impetus behind many of NCHC’s finest achievements. She has not just contributed to our history; in many ways she is our history. In honoring the NCHC on its fiftieth anniversary, we also honor Bernice Braid for making the NCHC what it has been, what it is, and what it will be in its next fifty years.
EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION

Ada Long
University of Alabama at Birmingham

To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the National Collegiate Honors Council, *JNCHC* invited honors deans and directors to ask the president of their institution to submit an essay on the theme “The Value of Honors.” This special Forum was an opportunity for honors administrators to discuss honors with their presidents and an opportunity for presidents to reflect in writing on the value of honors at their institution and in the wider context of higher education.

The lead essay for the Forum, called “Thinking and Rethinking: The Practical Value of an Honors Education,” was distributed in advance to promote reflection on the theme. The author of the essay is James Herbert, who began his career teaching in a general honors program and went on to serve in positions at the College Board, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the European Science Foundation, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK), and the University of Cambridge. Herbert describes the critical and reflective practices he learned in honors and how these practices benefited his on-the-job experiences at the College Board and NEH.

“The stakes were huge” in many of the decisions that Herbert was charged to make, potentially affecting “school curricula, college admission and articulation standards, state graduation requirements, test specifications, and especially the goals for school reform efforts.” He writes that, as he worked with committees on this nationwide effort, “I drew on my experiences in honors.”

When teaching honors seminars, I had often asked participants to repeat the point made by the previous discussant before launching into their own comments. Sometimes we asked the previous discussants whether their comments had been accurately summarized. Such “reciprocal paraphrase” was intended, first, to encourage the students to listen to each other and to build their own thinking on that of others. Secondly, I hoped that the students, by learning to recognize differences among their own views, would come to differentiate between what they initially expected a text to say and what it would turn out to mean.
Teaching honors seminars taught him the strategies that were useful in working with the College Board committees: “I learned never to let an idea pass that I did not understand, always to interrogate it, paraphrase it, and try to work out a mutual understanding.” This kind of thinking and rethinking, a complement to “reciprocal paraphrase,” taught him the practical value of what he had learned in honors as a “potent basis for coming together.”

The values underlying Herbert’s essay find echoes many times over in the values that college and university presidents prize in their honors programs and colleges: critical thinking; problem-solving; collaboration; diversity of perspectives and opinions; and communities of trust, respect, and understanding. Like James Herbert, most see the practical benefits of such values at the core of what distinguishes honors education at every kind of academic institution.

The thirty-nine essays by college and university presidents selected for publication represent a diverse range of institutions, from two-year schools (Illinois Valley Community College) to flagship research universities (University of Nevada, Reno) and from small liberal arts colleges of under a thousand students (Emory & Henry College) to institutions with over 60,000 students (Broward College). The institutions span the globe from California (Orange Coast College) to the Netherlands (Windesheim University of Applied Sciences). They include HBCUs such as North Carolina A&T State University, faith-based institutions like Oral Roberts University, and at least one women’s college (Columbia College).

The presidents describe honors colleges and programs that are as diverse as their host institutions. The programs range in size from under 200 at Westminster College in Utah to over 2,200 at West Virginia University; they differ in age from 10 years old at Cal Poly Pomona to 52 at LIU Post; and they differ in their admissions and retention criteria, curricular requirements, methods of selecting faculty, extracurricular opportunities, scholarship offerings, and fundraising goals. From all this diversity, though, emerges remarkable unanimity about the value of honors in higher education.

**CRITICAL THINKING**

One value of honors identified by virtually every college and university president is critical thinking or, in the much fresher and more compelling phrase of James Herbert, “thinking and rethinking.” Like Herbert, the president of James Madison University affirms the practical as well as moral and intellectual value of this kind of thinking, which for him also had its roots.
in his honors experience as an undergraduate and which he has cultivated throughout his legal career. The benefit of honors at his university is that students learn “to be active citizens in an increasingly diverse democracy and to compete in a global economy” within a climate that encourages “diversity of thought and perspective.”

The presidents of two liberal arts colleges also affirm the validity of Herbert’s argument. The president of Columbia College picks up on what Herbert calls “reciprocal paraphrase,” or “rethinking one’s own or another’s thoughts,” to describe a characteristic of honors students that will resonate with most deans and directors: “They think and rethink, applying their own ideas while, as genuine honors critical thinkers, remaining open to the ideas of others and to the lessons of experience both inside and outside the classroom.” The president of another liberal arts school, Westminster College, also claims a central place in honors for the rethinking that Herbert describes “because we see anew through the eyes of others,” and this is “perhaps the most valuable asset we provide in education; it complicates and deepens our beliefs, forces us to see the world for the complex place it is, and helps us develop empathy for others.”

Honors at universities and colleges of all sizes and all demographics echoes the intellectual, moral, and practical value of thinking and rethinking. The president of Loyola University, for instance, writes, “We must graduate these students with the ability to listen to and engage with divergent opinions, to effect workable compromises and solutions, and with a moral compass tuned to the ethical implications of actions.” The president of Ball State University quotes Charlie Slavin, who in JNCHC described this kind of thinking as “intellectual risk-taking.” At Ball State, as at many other universities, this approach to learning is characteristic of faculty and staff as well as students so that honors serves as an ongoing resource for faculty development.

In a terse and eloquent summary of the value of “thinking and rethinking,” the president of the Community College of Allegheny County writes: “One overarching theme in honors interactions is that good ideas shared beget great ones. . . .”

COMMUNITY

A big part of what makes thinking and rethinking possible is a diverse community in which relationships can deepen over time, and honors provides just such a community on most campuses. This sense of community is a motif that runs through all of the essays on the value of honors. As the
The chancellor of the University of Illinois at Springfield says, “The honors program is a community with a culture all its own.” This culture then fans out into the institution to benefit the whole campus, a virtually universal phenomenon noticed and appreciated by all the presidents.

The community of honors starts with students and faculty, but a theme that presidents repeat over and over again is that this community extends out into the world, starting with the home campus and its surrounding area. All the students in the honors college at Wayne State University, for instance, dedicate a substantial effort as undergraduates to cultural involvement and social service in the metropolitan area of Detroit so that the city is a fundamental part of their education.

In a different context, the president of the University of Alaska describes the three campuses of the university and the distinct contributions that each of them makes to the state of Alaska. Each of the campuses has an honors program that suits the mission of its institution, and at the same time they all collaborate to share their strengths. As individual and also complementary programs, these three honors experiences disseminate the talents of their students throughout the state and help to retain these talented students in Alaska after they graduate.

Many presidents focus on the importance of place as fundamental to a sense of community. The new NCHC monograph Housing Honors provides detailed information about honors housing and community space along with numerous examples demonstrating the wide variety of approaches and resources. Several college and university presidents have also focused on the importance of honors space. The president of Grand Valley State University describes the Glenn Niemeyer Learning and Living Center, for instance, which “houses 450 students in well-appointed apartments and incorporates excellent classroom space as well as faculty and administrative offices.” LIU Post has an especially posh center of community, with honors offices and classrooms housed in the historic Winnick House, former home of Marjorie Merriwether Post.

**ACCESS AND DIVERSITY**

While many honors programs and colleges represented in this Forum attract cosmopolitan students who could easily be admitted to any university in the country, quite a few regional schools have the interesting opportunity to work with students who may never have traveled far from their hometowns and who have not had the chance yet to stretch their minds and horizons.
The particular pleasures of working with such students are fundamental to, for instance, the honors program at Eastern Kentucky University, where a student from Monkey’s Eyebrow (a real place in Kentucky) can emerge from college feeling ready “to compete on a national stage.”

Honors programs at colleges that welcome an underserved population of students typically cherish the opportunity to include this group of students in the honors community. The president of Stephen F. Austin State University, for instance, writes that, given the university’s make-up of 50% first-generation students, “we at SFA are able to help an underserved population whose success is central to meeting the local, national, and international challenges of the future. To meet these challenges, SFA encourages transformative learning experiences, a culture of engagement, undergraduate research, and a focus on lifelong learning. . . .”

The president of Cal Poly Pomona expresses a policy that her university shares with many others:

[Honors applicants] may not have had a privileged educational background during their primary and secondary schooling, and sometimes this is reflected in quantitative measures such as lower GPAs and test scores. Instead of relying heavily on just these quantitative measures, we seek additional evidence of characteristics such as passion, determination, openness to new ideas, and aspiration to succeed in their essays and during the admission process.

She goes on to write, “Although we would wish to provide this experience for everyone, and we surely miss some promising students, honors programs and colleges exist to do the best that a university can do within its means and limited resources.”

The president of West Virginia University adds another dimension to the question of access when he distinguishes between “elite” and “elitism”:

When honors colleges deliver on their promises, they are being anti-elitist. I know that many honors colleges and programs struggle with perceptions of elitism on their campuses, but we should never mistake an elite education for an elitist one. When you look at it from a different angle, at the way a strong honors college or program can affect the whole campus, especially one with a mission for access and service, you get a different result.
ACTIVE LEARNING

Long before the rest of higher education started to focus serious attention on active learning and experiential education, they have been hallmarks of the NCHC and honors education, primarily through the programs initiated by Bernice Braid of LIU Brooklyn starting in 1976, and they remain a prominent feature of honors programs and colleges today. Both campuses of LIU continue to be leaders in this area: the City as Text™ program created by Bernice Braid of LIU Brooklyn and the Partners in the Parks program created by Joan Digby of LIU Post are both staples on their home campuses as well as signature programs of the NCHC. These programs not only attract hundreds of students and faculty members to numerous sites around the country each year, but their pedagogy has been adopted, adapted, and stolen by countless honors programs and colleges not just in the U.S.—one example among many being Southeastern Oklahoma State University—but also in countries like the Netherlands.

Other forms of active learning, ranging from internships to study abroad to service learning projects, are integral to almost all honors experiences. Shaw University, for instance, has sponsored a ten-week residential internship at the University of the West Indies, where honors students study the attitudes, behaviors, and risk perceptions associated with prostate cancer and screening among Jamaican men.

INNOVATION

Often serving as incubators of new ideas on campus, honors typically is a place on campus that experiments with new courses, projects, and pedagogies. Interdisciplinary courses, team teaching, community service projects, peer counselling, cooperative student/faculty research: often these experiences take place first in an honors program and then radiate out into the university at large. One example is the Internship Initiative Program at Emory & Henry College, which first matched honors students with mentors from the Board of Trustees and then evolved into Project Ampersand, which matched current students with alumni and facilitated internships, externships, and mentorships for students across the campus. In this and other instances, “an honors program initiative revealed valuable opportunities that we could scale up to advance the education of all of our students.”

Virtually all presidents agree on the value that honors adds to the entire campus and community, not just to students in the program. Honors students
who have caught fire with new ways of learning then fan out across campus, enhancing the quality of courses in all disciplines.

The kinds of innovations that occur in honors colleges and programs typically blend tradition and new directions, combining awareness of historical roots with constant “thinking and rethinking” in the discovery of new contexts and applications for old knowledge. Georgia State University, for instance, was originally a business school and now taps into an entrepreneurial spirit to send students out into the community to do internships. Similarly, Iona College remains true to the tradition of the Irish Catholic Christian Brothers while adapting its curriculum to include the STEM disciplines and to prepare its students for the careers of the future. In such ways, innovation does not occur in a vacuum but honors its context.

INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Three of the many ways that honors advances the interests of the institution in which it is housed are retention, fundraising, and alumni relations.

High retention rates are typical in honors programs and colleges, often helping to increase retention rates institution-wide and also creating a financial benefit through the added tuition. For instance, at Loyola University New Orleans, the president reports a 30% higher six-year graduation rate for honors students than for the general undergraduate population, yielding a financial benefit to the university. The impact on retention rates is perhaps even greater at two-year institutions. At LaGuardia Community College, “the three-year graduation rate among the fall 2011 freshman [honors] cohort is 55% versus 12% of the baseline cohort.”

In addition to the indirect financial benefits of higher retentions rates, honors colleges and programs attract major contributions and endowments, and they can often set the pace for campus-wide fundraising efforts. The honors college at South Dakota State University, for instance, was the first college in the university to attract a named endowment and served as a model for the other colleges to seek and propose endowments. Valparaiso University has also documented higher levels of giving by honors graduates than by other alumni of the university.

Financial gifts are an important benefit of alumni involvement, but honors graduates support their colleges in many other ways as well, generally staying far more connected to their undergraduate institution than non-honors students. The president of Nova Southeastern University writes, “Each spring more than fifty honors alumni return to campus for our NSU Honors
Banquet, sharing stories of their experiences in college and the real world with current students. Our alumni have also started to give back to NSU by donating to support student scholarships, an admirable tradition that is well established at other honors institutions.”

In addition to financial donations, honors alumni provide a range of services to current honors students, providing mentoring programs and guest lectures at, among others, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, South Dakota State University, and Shaw University. Many presidents also cite the success of their alumni and their importance as role models for current students. One president—from Monroe College—demonstrated the value of alumni to his college by using their words to describe the honors program.

Honors colleges and programs often maintain an active relationship with their alumni, reaching out to them as well as inviting them back to campus, extending the honors experience into the future to make it genuinely lifelong. Valparaiso University’s honors college, for instance, organizes alumni reading groups in major metropolitan areas, providing syllabi that echo the kind of learning that graduates had done in their honors courses on campus.

**PRIDE**

A habit that is universal among honors directors and deans is bragging about their programs, a habit that they share with their presidents. Some presidents brag about high minimum SAT/ACT scores, as at Western Kentucky University, and at least as many brag about the broad access to honors that they offer to all students on their campus, as at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands.

Presidents and deans/directors take justified pride in their programs and especially in their honors students, often describing them as a way of praising their programs, as do the presidents of Broward College, Shaw University, and the University of North Georgia. In fact, the major editorial deletions that occurred in the making of this issue of *JNCHC* were aimed at reducing long, long lists of accomplished honors students and alumni.

Honors students benefit from this pride taken in them by learning to take pride in themselves. As the president of Texas A&M University – Commerce points out eloquently, being acknowledged as an honors student is already a validation of gifts that, in middle and high school, tend to be overshadowed by athletes and student leaders, who get all the accolades. Most honors programs not only bestow this special pride on students by admitting them but then nurture it throughout the students’ undergraduate careers. As the
president of LaGuardia Community College says, “Our honors philosophy of helping students own their learning process and educational experience gives students a sense of agency in their lives that builds their self-esteem and self-confidence and allows them to see their limitless potential.” She goes on to say, “Cultivating a community of support is essential in planting these seeds of excellence.”

TRANSFORMATION

One word that perhaps recurs more than any other except “honors” is “transformation.” Honors changes lives.

The president of Rogers State University describes the dramatic transformations that occur among honors students who, on arriving at the university, have never ventured far from their small Oklahoma hometowns but who become eager travelers after active-learning experiences that take them overseas, and the president at Northern Kentucky University describes the transformative experience of close personal relationships with peers and faculty mentors.

The president of Virginia Commonwealth University makes the point eloquently that the transformations we engender in honors students expand out to transform the global community for which honors prepares them: “The primary purpose of higher education, especially an honors education, must always be changing the world by changing lives. The ideas and innovations that occur on our campuses every day—in laboratories, clinics, studios, classrooms, and dorm rooms—are the catalysts that will transform humanity.”

At the heart of this transformation are the thinking and rethinking that take place in honors programs, the habit of reflection, the widening of horizons that comes from listening to other people, listening again, and learning to listen to yourself. In seminars, in group projects, in City as Text™ excursions and writings, in collaborative service projects, and even in committee work, honors students form an approach to the world that will have intellectual, moral, and practical value throughout their careers and lives.

* * * * * * *

The presidents’ essays expressed unanimity on a wide range of other specific benefits they find in honors education, such as interdisciplinary teaching and learning, leadership opportunities, and lifelong learning. In addition, they virtually all mention the features that the forthcoming 2015 Gallup-Purdue Index lists as harbingers of success after college: “Graduates fared better
if, during college, they did any one of these: developed a relationship with a mentor; took on a project that lasted a semester or more; did a job or internship directly connected to their chosen field; or became deeply involved in a campus organization or activity (as opposed to minimally involved in a range of things)” (Frank Bruni, “How to Measure a College’s Value,” New York Times 12 September 2015). Honors programs provide their students with not just one but all of these benefits to their lives both in and beyond college.

The wealth of knowledge and appreciation of honors expressed by the thirty-nine presidents in the essays published here are surely gratifying to honors deans and directors and to all the students, faculty, and staff as well as administrators who know firsthand the value of honors. Just as striking is the consensus about what produces this value, making this collection not just an affirmation of the role that honors plays in higher education but a road map to making honors as good as it can be—a map that helps to show the way for the National Collegiate Honors Council in its next fifty years.
Thinking and Rethinking:  
The Practical Value of an Honors Education

JAMES HERBERT
Formerly of the College Board and the National Endowment for the Humanities

(What follows is a significantly abridged and revised adaptation of an excerpt from James Herbert’s 2014 book, To Jonah When You Are Twenty-Five: Taking Jobs Seriously.)

While teaching in the general honors program of the University of Maryland (1970–1980), I passed on a version of the education I had received in history, philosophy, literature, politics, theology, psychology, anthropology, and the other liberal arts. As I moved into another career, my situation reversed the old chestnut: I couldn’t teach, so I had to find a way to do. I had often professed that a liberal education in honors was good preparation for life. My work life ended up testing that proposition and confirming it in unexpected ways that may be illuminating to those who are now supporting or administering honors education.

In 1982, I went to work for the College Board when its Educational EQuality Project, a response to a long decline in average SAT scores, was stalled at a critical juncture. Hoping to clarify how students should prepare
for college, the College Board had consulted widely and issued a summary of the necessary “Basic Academic Competencies” (reading, writing, speaking and listening, mathematics, reasoning, studying) but had been urged also to address matters of content and to clarify how these competencies related to the subjects that students studied in high school, such as English, math, science, and history. The College Board had asked hundreds of people and organizations—parents, high school and college teachers, administrators, and disciplinary associations—what high school students should learn to be prepared for college. The process had been billed as a broad dialogue leading to national consensus.

When I arrived at the College Board’s offices in New York City, I found questionnaires, statements and summaries, and many engaged, excited people, but no consensus statement summarizing what students needed to learn to prepare for college, no concise companion to the statement of Basic Academic Competencies. Hundreds of contributors were mainly interested in whether their own bit of advice would be reflected in the summary. Teachers tended to be concerned with their own subjects and to neglect others. Organizations advanced positions that favored their own interests. At that time, the College Board’s SAT, then called the Scholastic Aptitude Test, was being criticized as content-free whereas the Board’s rival, ACT, presented its college entrance exams as content-based, so the issues were complex and the stakes were high for the College Board. If all the suggestions and lines of thought were not woven together into a harmonious whole, the fault would lie not with the many messages but with the messenger, and I had barely thought about the high school curriculum since I had taken it.

In that situation, I grabbed for whatever resources I had at hand. Each of the College Board’s six academic advisory committees had custody of one subject, and, as liaison to the committees, I inherited responsibility for the subject statements. In each seven-member committee, one or two members had begun to draft a preliminary statement, thus raising questions about the consistency of their draft with all the conversations that had gone before it. Here I relied on my honors experience in close reading of texts. I threw myself at the large corpus of transcripts, summaries, correspondence, and formal written submissions in each subject area in order to identify their key issues and major differences. Then, in reviewing its draft statement with each committee, I tried to raise all these issues and ascertain how the committee members thought the differences should be resolved.
As in an honors seminar faced with tackling complex texts, our work was just beginning. Members of a group do not automatically agree with each other or speak the same language, and specialized sub-groups can be incomprehensible to others in the large group. Moreover, no one already involved in this process had reason to think that I, an outsider and newcomer, knew what they were talking about or, for that matter, what I was talking about. The stakes were huge: these statements would potentially find their way into school curricula, college admission and articulation standards, state graduation requirements, test specifications, and especially the goals for school reform efforts. Entrusted to apply the work of all these committees to a nationwide effort, scheduled to last for the entire decade, I drew on my experiences in honors.

When teaching honors seminars, I had often asked participants to repeat the point made by the previous discussant before launching into their own comments. Sometimes we asked the previous discussants whether their comments had been accurately summarized. Such “reciprocal paraphrase” was intended, first, to encourage the students to listen to each other and to build their own thinking on that of others. Secondly, I hoped that the students, by learning to recognize differences among their own views, would come to differentiate between what they initially expected a text to say and what it would turn out to mean.

Under pressure to get right what the College Board’s academic advisory committees wanted to communicate, I cast myself as the second student in the process of reciprocal paraphrase. At every important juncture in a committee’s deliberations, I tried to slow the pace of discussion and repeat what I thought a committee member had meant, often asking for explicit assent. This strategy was not particularly comfortable. Good discussions race along with their own dynamics and do not welcome interruption. Moreover, by interrupting only in order to repeat what had already been said, I risked being taken as slow or ignorant. To this day I bristle when I recall the elaborately patient efforts of one committee member to explain to me the difference between a “model” and a “simulation.” But my approach worked: reciprocal paraphrase generated increasing confidence that we actually did understand each other. Moreover, it turned out to be an effective way of identifying actual disagreements and of seeking compromise.

The experience was scary but also thrilling as I appeared intellectually naked before groups of experts and tried to convince them that I understood and could communicate what they meant. As threatening as the world could
seem, this one way of interacting brought a bit of confidence and gradual solidarity. I became aware of the possibility of creating policy by rethinking what the others were thinking.

R.G. Collingwood, in *The Idea of History*, argued that the historian takes the testimony of a witness into his own mind in order to judge its coherence and plausibility: the historian rethinks such testimony. Collingwood went further to insist that the proper business of the historian is to think again the thoughts and motives of the historical actor. For instance, despite all the differences between Euclid and me, when I think that the two angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal I am thinking the very same thought that Euclid thought. “The truth which I recognize, or the proposition which I assert, is the same truth which Euclid recognized, the same proposition which he asserted” is how Collingwood put it, and also he wrote “if I not only read [Plato’s] argument but understand it, follow it in my own mind by re-arguing it with and for myself, the process of argument which I go through is not a process resembling Plato’s, it actually is Plato’s, so far as I understand him rightly.” The philosopher of history had taught me to try to apprehend “the argument simply as itself . . . as it can be developed in Plato’s mind or mine or anyone else’s . . .”

Of course, my work on Educational EQuality Project was easier than Collingwood’s on Roman Britain. The people I was trying to understand were there in the room with me; I could ask questions of them, and they could approve or amend my paraphrase. Other people were also present who could witness and confirm our shared understanding. Even with these advantages, the “rethinking” approach may seem unnatural. Most people assume that ideas are like things and that, if an idea is in one person’s mind, something else must be in other people’s minds. That is exactly the assumption I would reverse. Ideas are not like things, and it is quite possible for them to be in more than one mind at once. In fact, rethinking ideas is normal, and I found reciprocal paraphrase increasingly useful and effective throughout my work life. Working with the College Board committees, I learned never to let an idea pass that I did not understand, always to interrogate it, paraphrase it, and try to work out a mutual understanding.

Rethinking the ideas of others is a potent basis for coming together. I began to think of it in terms of a maxim I had learned from my constitutional history professor in graduate school, who insisted that, beneath every constitutional conflict, one could find a political conflict. I was turning this maxim inside out. When I encountered conflict in a group, I tried to suspend or push
past political differences in order to focus on the core point of disagreement. Often it turned out that agreement was relatively easy to achieve and could calm other kinds of differences. People who agree about what a certain document should say are less likely to quarrel over who gets to draft it. Jane Addams reputedly held that all conflict arises from misunderstanding. I wouldn’t go that far, but I do think that people should seek mutual understanding as an alternative to conflict in almost every case of disagreement.

Years later, when I went to work for the National Endowment for the Humanities, I again found that a key assignment had been identified for me. The Endowment had promised to undertake an initiative to support foreign language education, and my assignment was to design that initiative and make it a success. I promptly began drafting what became NEH’s “Special Opportunity in Foreign Language Education.” In working out this initiative, I turned again to the “rethinking” approach that I had learned to trust. I situated myself between two partners—one a language professor and the other my boss at the Endowment—with whom I reviewed every word of the emerging plan. I worked closely with each, being careful to do so separately.

At first I didn’t pay much attention to the panel review process for grant applications to the National Endowment for the Humanities. Of greater concern was the subsequent—vertical—review process in which panel and staff funding recommendations were considered by committees of the National Council on the Humanities, the Council itself, the Chairman’s staff, and finally the Chairman, who was responsible by law for the ultimate decision.

I usually enjoyed this vertical review process. It put our work on parade, gave staff members an opportunity to engage intellectually with members of the National Council, and occasionally led to improvements in a funded project or in the review process itself. Some people criticized the vertical review process as ordaining members of the National Council or of the Chairman’s staff as “super-panelists” empowered to overrule specialists on the basis of some imputed greater knowledge. My confidence in the possibility of rethinking the thoughts of others made this criticism almost always seem beside the point. I welcomed the opportunity to rethink proposals with our higher-ranking colleagues at NEH to achieve a fuller mutual understanding of them, the same kind of result that my early experience with reciprocal paraphrase had led me to expect. Knowing that we don’t have to know more geometry than Euclid to follow his arguments, I was confident that we could explain, justify, or accept improvement to the panel and staff recommendations without having to sneak anything past our bosses.
In the panel meetings themselves, the staff chair played only a procedural role: essentially to ensure that each application was taken up and fully addressed in turn. The chair’s initial concern was that the panelists understand each other’s judgment of each application. Here the chair, as well as the panelists, deployed the arts of rethinking on which I had learned to rely. When we carefully elicited the judgments of each panelist, when we summarized, paraphrased, and compared statements, when we retrieved neglected comments, we were trying to make sure that the panelists understood each other. Since that time I have been part of other panels, such as those of the European Science Foundation, in which English was not the first language of all panelists so that we had to make even more careful use of the auxiliary tools of paraphrase, reiteration, and summary to ensure mutual comprehension.

The NEH professional staff members also were responsible for preparing written summaries of the panel proceedings for subsequent participants in the vertical review process. In writing these reports, we had to resist an inevitable inclination to build up proposals we favored and to undermine others. Here, as in writing for many honors seminars, the key skill was being able to write without embellishing or editorializing, to act on the principle that we can rethink and paraphrase the thoughts of others.

An important point about thinking and rethinking is illustrated in a story about Tom Foley, who, before becoming Speaker of the House, served as Majority Leader of the Democratic members. As a vote was getting underway, a colleague approached on the floor to ask why he should vote for the measure being considered. Foley explained a first reason, then a second, and then a third. The colleague voted for the measure and was then astonished when Foley voted against the bill and asked why, to which Foley responded that he had not been asked for reasons to vote against the bill. Work life—even in Washington—often calls for skills more substantive than advocacy or spin.

In a threatening and turbulent world, it is encouraging to realize that we can know, pretty well, that we are thinking the same thought as another person, who can also know what we are thinking. Recent intellectual fashions notwithstanding, thoughts actually are something that people can have in common. This commonality is a basis not only for human sociability but for effectiveness in the workplace. That people ordinarily rush past mutual understanding or that it is often difficult to achieve, frequently imperfect, or imprecise should not obscure the central reality that so much meaning does come through to be held in common. That we all can think and rethink
another’s thought is what I learned in honors education and what turned out to be essential in my work.

The author may be contacted at jcherbert33@gmail.com.
The Catalytic Impact of Honors

Paul W. Ferguson, President
Ball State University

Honors Dean: James S. Ruebel

As president of two public research universities (University of Maine and Ball State University), I have had the pleasure of working with excellent, long-standing honors colleges. At each institution, the honors college has earned a place of distinction as the intellectual heart and soul of the university. That place of distinction has much to do with an evolution of honors culture at each campus. I learned a great deal about honors and honors culture from my colleague Charlie Slavin, the iconic Dean of the UMaine Honors College. In 2008, Charlie, who was a close friend, wrote an essay called “Defining Honors Culture” for the Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council focusing on the role such an experience can have on developing a mindset of “intellectual risk-taking.” As Charlie wrote about honors students:

Students in honors are willing to take intellectual risks both in their discipline and outside of it: they enjoy the challenge. They are the exceptional English students who revel in discussions of quantum mechanics and the outstanding engineers who can't read enough...
history. Their personal economies guide them to get the most out of their undergraduate education. . . . they are willing to explore and often find themselves surprised at their interest. They’re willing to take the risk. (16)

As we chart a refreshed course at Ball State University through a new strategic plan, “The Centennial Commitment (18 by ’18),” in anticipation of the hundredth anniversary of our institution, Dean Jim Ruebel has been a vital partner in enabling the Ball State Honors College to fully explore and exemplify the new vision:

Ball State University aspires to be the most student-centered and community-engaged of the 21st-Century Public Research Universities, transforming entrepreneurial learners into impactful leaders—committed to improving the quality of life for all.

This concept of the twenty-first-century entrepreneurial learner follows upon the premise of John Seely Brown, who artfully describes a new paradigm of learning as an active sport and one that is characterized by learning in an environment of creativity, nurtured risk, and student success.

Traditionally, discussion about the value of honors education focuses on the outcomes for students: enhancement of skill sets that are (a) academic, (b) social, (c) leadership-oriented, (d) personal, and (e) vocational or professional. These are all real outcomes, but they can also be achieved outside honors. What makes honors special is that it provides a place, a program, and the resources for nourishing these outcomes in the company of other high-achieving students who are undergoing the same transformations and who show respect for these high ambitions in their peers.

Less widely discussed are the effects of honors education on faculty development. Honors involves commitment to a pedagogy that is new for most first-time honors professors, requiring that they “let go” and place more responsibility for the success of the class on the students: to inquire, to explore, to discover, to collaborate, to create, to take risks. The great temptation is to short-circuit these processes by injecting faculty control in the form of overt or implied correct answers or in directed assignments where the outcome follows from the direction. This faculty intervention is sometimes disguised as “rigor” or “high standards.” When faculty give up this desire to control the process and outcome, we discover that students respond enthusiastically to being treated as an adult—as a true participant and as a leader rather than as a follower—for the first time in their academic lives. A class can begin with
a question rather than with a set of determinate exercises or a lecture. Once having opened that dangerous-looking door, faculty find it difficult to close; their teaching changes permanently.

Just as students can achieve their goals outside honors, faculty can also discover this pedagogy outside honors: it just happens more effectively and more often within an honors environment. Inspired by their work in honors, faculty frequently begin to develop new courses, perhaps tangential to their own disciplines. An English faculty member offers an honors colloquium on the Holocaust; a professor of landscape architecture offers an honors colloquium on sustainability as reflected in science fiction; a history teacher develops an honors colloquium on philanthropy; a journalism instructor teaches an honors colloquium on the Beatles. Sometimes these somewhat experimental courses lead to permanent or frequent offerings in the faculty member’s own department. Sometimes they continue to be offered only through honors. In either case, the curriculum and the students are enriched in previously unexpected ways from taking such an intellectual risk. In addition, faculty members may find that they have a new strand of scholarship to pursue that can lead to publication and other forms of peer recognition.

A less frequently documented value of honors comprises the institutional benefits gained by having such a program on campus. Honors students populate majors across the campus and enrich those programs while they are themselves being enriched. All honors students are also someone else’s students. The common wisdom is that a successful honors program attracts high-achieving students whether or not they choose to participate in the honors program; the better the honors program, the more attention it will attract from such students. The notion that honors-like students are attracted by a thriving honors college or program seems confirmed, at least in the limited sample of Ball State, by the stimulus for honors at key points in the university’s history: the foundation of the program in 1959, the creation of the signature programmatic scholarship in 1976, the progression to a college in 1979, and the “leading with honors” initiative in the 1990s as part of a university-wide goal of increased admissions standards. Although the actual percentage of incoming students participating in the Ball State University Honors College has not risen above 9%, the number of students matriculating to Ball State who were honors eligible rose to 12%, with one fourth of these students distributed across the university.

Thus, a true value of honors is the catalytic impact such a learning experience has on honors students and in turn on their peers, their faculty, and
even their administrators. A culture of intellectual risk-taking, which at Ball State we associate with entrepreneurial learning, can permeate the institution, inspiring it to engage and achieve at higher degrees of rigor, expectation, outcomes, and performance. Performance can be improved not only in the academic and research agendas but in the other divisional agendas of business affairs, student affairs, enrollment services, and strategic communications—all advancing the stature of the institution.

Students make a choice whether or not to do honors, and after having chosen, whether to persist. Those who persist to the honors diploma have demonstrated a commitment through choice and action; at any point, it would be easier or more convenient to stop, but those who choose to go on will integrate their academic and co-academic experiences into transformative self-realization. They will experience the impact of honors culture that Charlie Slavin described as a “culture of individuals who take intellectual risks and who participate in this community only because they choose to” (18). This is a value well-conceived.

REFERENCES


President Ferguson may be contacted at pferguson@bsu.edu.
The Unique Role of Two-Year Honors Colleges and Programs

J. David Armstrong, Jr., President
Broward College

Honors Director: Sheila Jones

As President of Broward College, I am proud of the honors education we have been offering our students since 1982. As we commemorate the important fifty-year milestone in the National Collegiate Honors Council’s history, we celebrate the value of honors by recognizing the impact that our work has on our students. Simply put, it is transformational.

Two-year colleges play a crucial role in higher education, having experienced extensive growth in the past few decades and with honors as an important part of that growth. Broward College was founded in 1960 to support the rapid development of the local community, and today we remain committed to that mission, providing accessible, affordable, and high-quality education to more than 60,000 students annually. For many in South Florida, Broward College offers a clear pathway to a college degree and a better future, and we believe that an honors education should be available to anyone who wishes to have it. Honors represents much more than an academic curriculum:
it is an experience, an opportunity; and a community. We are proud to be able to offer our students access to a world-class curriculum, dedicated faculty, and financial support through the Robert “Bob” Elmore Honors College.

Like many honors programs around the country, ours has attracted the attention and support of major donors, who appreciate our unique mission, which in our case includes serving students who might never have thought of themselves as honors students. Our honors college is named for the late Robert “Bob” Elmore, a Fort Lauderdale business owner and philanthropist who, along with his widow, Joan, became our program’s benefactor in creating scholarship endowments for our students. They were moved by the benefits our honors college provides in helping students, many of whom had at first thought that earning a college degree, let alone an honors education, was out of reach. One of their scholarship funds supports part-time honors students who often work to support their families while completing their coursework. Along with Honors District Director Sheila Jones, I take this legacy seriously and remain committed to inspiring all of our students to consider honors and the unique way our program supports and encourages students, serving as an important foundation for their future.

When speaking with our outstanding students and hearing their stories, I see this legacy in action firsthand. One of our sophomores relies on our scholarship funding for his education and has excelled during the short time he has been at Broward College; currently, he is completing an internship at the Small Business Administration’s Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington, D.C., through the Capital Semester’s public policy program. He is one of the very few sophomores admitted to the program and is the first of our students to have this experience.

I have also recently met a young international student who took the initiative to conduct her own interdisciplinary research project on the sociological and psychological factors that influence international students’ educational experiences here in the United States. Our honors college provides the access for these students to fulfill their goals.

We also look to the stories of our recent alumni to measure the value of our honors education. One of our 2008 Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship winners transferred from Broward to New York University and recently completed a master’s degree at Harvard University. Now she is working for Facebook as a product designer.

I think that all of these students would agree with one of our May 2015 honors graduates, who explained that “attending Broward College was the
best decision” he ever made and that our honors college “greatly helped to mold [him] into the exceptional student and leader that [he] is today . . . with people who have supported [him] throughout [his] entire life journey.”

Given these comments, I must stress that our honors faculty are at the core of what we do. We have seventy-five honors faculty members who are dedicated to our honors college, spending countless hours helping our students succeed inside and outside of the classroom. The courses they teach are rigorous, small, seminar-style classes that prioritize interdisciplinary thinking and original research. Our faculty, many of whom hold PhDs, are dedicated professionals who regularly publish in their fields and receive awards for teaching excellence. Among them are faculty members who have also served NCHC and the honors community at large, publishing articles in NCHC journals, presenting sessions at conferences, and holding offices at the state and national levels.

What is most exciting from my vantage point is seeing how students are transformed by their experiences at state and national conferences. We recently heard from an honors graduate whose story is representative of many of our students who are the first in their family to go to college. She was a shy sophomore who pushed herself to present at the 2012 NCHC conference, graduate from Broward College with an Honors Certificate, and then enroll at her transfer university’s honors college. She recently returned from a study abroad trip and credits the Broward College Honors College with giving her the confidence to pursue goals that she had previously believed were unattainable.

As an open-access institution, everyone at Broward College takes seriously our responsibility to provide an education for anyone who has the desire to succeed. Recipients of our first-year Irm’s Honors Scholar Award, named for former honors director and NCHC Fellow Irmgard Bocchino, receive full tuition waivers plus a book stipend that allows them to finish their Associate of Arts degree and earn their Honors Certificate at no cost. For students who do not qualify for this award upon their high school graduation, we offer a path to honors admission and additional scholarships through the Elmore fund as well as funding from other generous donors. In all, we award over half a million dollars in tuition waivers, book stipends, and scholarships each year. We also have different pathways for students to qualify for honors admission and earn their Honors Certificate directly out of high school or after taking a few college courses; these multiple pathways serve our college’s mission of inclusion, diversity, engagement, and empowerment. More importantly, they
offer any student a chance to become an honors college graduate and take advantage of the life-changing experiences we offer.

Honors offers numerous benefits to our students. They receive specialized honors orientation programming, tailored advising, and guided assistance as they plan their transfer degree. They are part of a vibrant community where students are engaged in such activities as leadership retreats, on-campus colloquia, study abroad, and community service. Honors students have been recognized as award winners at our state conference and have worked with faculty on research projects. Through the work of the Honors Student Committee and representation on the Faculty Honors Committee, they also make their voices heard and play a role in the future direction of our program. In addition, the success of our honors college is evident in the fact that sixteen Broward College honors graduates have received the prestigious Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship—the second highest total in the nation.

Whenever I get the chance, I boast about our honors students and the value of the education provided by Broward College’s Robert “Bob” Elmore Honors College, which represents a community of over 1,200 of the best and brightest young minds at our campuses and centers in South Florida as well as our international partnership centers in Sri Lanka, Peru, and India. Our honors students graduate as critical thinkers in a global society with an appreciation of and enthusiasm for their role in shaping the future. They inspire us and remind us that everyone involved with honors education helps to build our students’ confidence and open doors to new dreams and possibilities.

President Armstrong may be contacted at
president@broward.edu.
The Egalitarianism of Honors at a Polytechnic University

Soraya M. Coley, President
Cal Poly Pomona

Honors Director: Suketu P. Bhavsar

The Kellogg Honors College (KHC) is a distinctive community within Cal Poly Pomona (CPP), a public university in Southern California and one of twenty-three universities in the California State University (CSU) system. With over 22,000 students, CPP is the second-largest polytechnic university in the United States. Our university’s goal is to provide a quality education that is accessible to California’s general population. We are known for academic excellence, hands-on education, and affordable fees. Consequently, CPP is a destination for motivated and talented students from a diverse local population.

Honors students choose CPP instead of more elite, less accessible schools for a variety of reasons that include strong ties to the region, family responsibilities, and lack of financial resources. They come seeking opportunities and a better life, and they feel comfortable committing to an inclusive, diverse university that they have known about for much of their lives. The CPP student
body includes many first-generation college students, children of immigrant communities, some undocumented students, and many economically challenged but highly motivated learners.

At CPP, we hold egalitarian values dear. We interpret this ideal beyond equal opportunity for everyone; for us, an egalitarian education means providing the maximum opportunity and experience that we can, within our power and resources, for each student so that all can reach their full potential. Honors contributes to CPP’s egalitarian ideal because the Kellogg Honors College provides the rich academic experiences that our high-potential, low-resource students deserve but could not access at more expensive schools.

The word “honors” often invokes ideas of exclusivity and meritocracy. This is an unfortunate misconception, far from the reality of honors education in general and especially for the Kellogg Honors College. Students are selected to honors by a separate application on the basis of the best we can determine of their potential, willingness to be challenged, growth mindset, and persistence. They may not have had a privileged educational background during their primary and secondary schooling, and sometimes this is reflected in quantitative measures such as lower GPAs and test scores. Instead of relying heavily on just these quantitative measures, we seek additional evidence of characteristics such as passion, determination, openness to new ideas, and aspiration to succeed in their essays and during the admission process. Although we would wish to provide this experience for everyone, and we surely miss some promising students, honors programs and colleges exist to do the best that a university can do within its means and limited resources.

CPP’s motto is “learn by doing.” At a polytechnic institution the distinctive hands-on training students receive stands out as a unique feature; employers and institutions value the many technical majors and applied fields a polytechnic university offers. Our graduates from colleges of engineering, hospitality management, business, agriculture, and environmental sciences are highly sought after. We also have excellent faculty in the humanities, the pure sciences, mathematics, the social sciences, and the liberal arts, which both serve their majors and provide essential nontechnical education to students in technical fields.

The culture of an honors education stresses the importance of being both well-trained and well-educated, an important goal for students at any university. The traditional departmentalization of disciplines often leads to students who are well-trained in their disciplines but not well-rounded, widely literate, or broadly informed. The values and philosophy that honors engenders
creates a synergy between these endeavors. Honors provides the framework and opportunity for a rich scholastic experience with its seminar-style classes, distinctive pedagogy, cohort of reflective, critical students, and physical space to grow as scholars among peers.

Honors students experience the best of both worlds, the enriching personalized experience of a small college and the numerous and varied opportunities only a large university can provide. Kellogg Honors College students start their first-year university experience with a three-day retreat prior to the beginning of classes, during which they ponder and discuss what it means to be well-trained, what it means to be well-educated, and how these concepts are linked. While sharing their thoughts and ideas, discussing and interpreting their common summer reading and spending social time, they form valuable bonds. For some, the exhilaration of engaging in intellectual discovery with fellow students is a new experience. It is fortunate that a specialized program like honors can encourage as well as provide the space, time, and structure for them to engage in intellectual discovery for themselves and with their peers.

No single characteristic distinguishes honors education. For some the intellectual habits formed become a way of life. Many discover through honors the joys of the life of the mind and find their intellectual home. They learn to appreciate that acknowledgement of our ignorance is as valuable as the surety of our knowledge. Most are yet too young to know the numerous ways these discoveries will enrich their lives and empower them in the years to come. Many honors students who had never heard of graduate school and some who imagined college as a faraway goal go on to PhD programs, law and medical school, well-paid positions of responsibility, and all manner of significant work and life experiences.

Our honors college makes an important contribution to our campus life as a whole in addition to serving the honors students. Participants serve in campus leadership roles and as student ambassadors on campus, and they represent the campus in an array of national, regional, and local competitions and events. Equally important is the benefit faculty and staff derive as a result of their engagement with these students in a multitude of academic and co-curricular activities.

The Kellogg Honors College is young, only in its eleventh year, but is already evincing the truth of anecdotal evidence that the influence of an honors education and mindset are felt throughout one’s life, often with greater impact as one matures; this is the greatest value of honors, at any institution
but for sure at a polytechnic, where being well-trained is of utmost importance to the disciplines. Honors supplements and complements that excellent training, providing the structure and outlook to spur lifelong learning and self-realization, the true and full purpose for any university.

President Coley may be contacted at 

president@cpp.edu.
Dancing with the Stars:  
Stepping Up and Stepping Out in Honors Education

ELIZABETH A. DINNDORF, PRESIDENT  
Columbia College

HONORS DIRECTOR: JOHN ZUBIZARRETA

One of the most profound statements in James Herbert’s lead essay—simple as it seems at the very beginning of his piece—concerns his discovery early in his career that “a liberal education in honors was good preparation for life.” At Columbia College, where I have the privilege of serving as President, such a statement is life blood, and our honors program is at the front of our efforts to maintain a strong emphasis on the value of liberal learning while addressing the many challenges all of our institutions face today in the changing landscape of higher education. Liberal learning and the liberal arts are, indeed, at the core of our mission while we also strive to prepare students for life after college, whether they decide to pursue other degrees, begin a professional career, enter the job market, serve their various communities, or even backpack around the world. We ask our students to step up as
learners and leaders and step out as individuals with a strong sense of identity and purpose. We want that stepping to occur in all our efforts, but we know that in our honors program we are dancing with the stars, the kinds of motivated, high-achieving, creative, and talented young women unafraid of taking risks and accepting challenges in order to make the program and our college proud. Liberal education as “preparation for life” is what honors is about, and our program is one of the college’s crown jewels in making such rich and practical learning a reality.

Stressing the importance of what he calls “reciprocal paraphrase” and rethinking one’s own or another’s thoughts, Herbert lands on a quality of honors learning that I have observed among our honors students, a quality that I imagine comes from the exciting and effective teaching they experience in their honors courses, senior seminar, and independent projects. I am early in my tenure as president of the college, but I have already seen ample evidence of our honors students’ enhanced thinking, leadership on and off campus, amazing record of scholarly presentations at many academic conferences, and dedication to service—all stemming from a basic respect for ideas and for sharing of knowledge with others in a way that benefits everyone’s learning. They think and rethink, applying their own ideas while, as genuine honors critical thinkers, remaining open to the ideas of others and to the lessons of experience both inside and outside the classroom. Perhaps nowhere is the latter point better represented than in the impressive number of presentations our honors students make every year at regional and national honors and other academic conferences and events. Some of them even have had their work printed in national honors publications. Probably on the strength of such wide involvement in honors, one of our students was a runner-up for the NCHC Honors Student of the Year award in 2003 and two others won the prize in two consecutive years, 2009 and 2010. You see what I mean about dancing with the stars!

Herbert’s essay is full of keen observations about the meaningful learning that comes from the honors experience in college. He obviously carried his own honors faculty habits into his work for the College Board and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Another lesson that I gather is key in honors education is the tempo appropriate for deeper learning. We have to slow down. We have to listen. We have to reflect. We have to focus on how we learn differently in more transformative ways, as opposed to rushing to judgment and simply storing more information faster. I know that our honors program articulates such values in its mission, and it is clear to me that
honors education works at our institution. The faculty teaching our honors courses understand the program’s motto: *non magis, sed melior*. They dedicate themselves to helping our honors students not just learn more but learn more thoughtfully, deliberately, so that once they have stepped up to the challenges of honors they can more confidently and successfully step out into the world as liberal learners prepared for life, as Herbert has said.

Am I proud of our honors students? You bet. Do I support all that the honors program does to help strengthen the reputation of our college? You can count on it. Do I believe in the value of honors education in enriching the lives of our talented students? Absolutely. I wish all college and university presidents were as lucky as I am to be dancing with such stars.

President Dinndorf may be contacted at bdinndorf@columbiasc.edu.
Valuing Opportunities to Learn

QUINTIN B. BULLOCK, PRESIDENT
Community College of Allegheny County

HONORS DIRECTOR: JULIA FENNEL

With community colleges in the national spotlight as never before, a lot of talk has focused on the excellent work that community colleges are doing to help students succeed, especially the inroads that community colleges are making among their most academically vulnerable students. Thanks to the efforts of hard-working, dedicated faculty and forward-thinking college leaders, test scores, grades, and completion rates are making slow but steady progress while achievement gaps are diminishing. These results have been the reason for cautious optimism, and rightly so. Students on the other end of the academic spectrum deserve our attention as well: students who choose to enter our doors when colleges with ivy on their buildings and in their leagues—Harvard, Princeton and Yale come to mind—would be more than happy to offer them a spot. Community colleges are also addressing the educational needs of these academically gifted students.

For many community colleges, including the Community College of Allegheny County in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the answer has been the addition of honors-specific programming. Besides offering academically rigorous
courses, these programs work to actively engage intellectually curious students both in and out of the classroom, immersing students in a stimulating learning environment that fosters critical thinking and reasoning, cultural literacy, independent investigation, and collaborative learning. At CCAC, students accepted into the college’s honors program have the opportunity to take honors courses with their peers; change any course into an honors program course with the support of faculty; receive in-county tuition re-imbursement; apply for honors-based scholarships; participate in extracurricular enrichment activities (e.g., field trips, speaker series, social and cultural events, regional and national honors conferences, and international study); receive priority registration; and experience the benefits of additional opportunities to learn from and interact with faculty.

The opportunity to interact with faculty in various ways—in the classroom, during one-on-one mentoring opportunities, and during field trips and service projects—as well as at various venues—conferences, forums, campus activities, and charitable events, to name just a few—is one of the principle reasons students value CCAC’s honors program. Through these interactions students often grow to understand and appreciate the teacher-student relationship in new ways that in turn enable them to invest more fully in their education. By not only working on assignments but collaborating with their professors in the creation of honors-based projects, students develop the respect necessary for a learning process that demands the utmost levels of discipline, dedication, and creative reasoning.

This kind of learning process is difficult and challenging but well worth the effort. The learning that takes place in an honors-based education paves the way for personal and professional success. Research suggests that students who are routinely exposed to complex issues that require higher levels of intellectual investigation and problem-solving develop the skills necessary for careers that require nonconventional approaches and original thinking. These skill sets are crucial in our increasingly complex and changing society, and they are exactly what an honors education seeks to deliver.

Of course, students could not achieve these skills without the resolute dedication and commitment of faculty involved in honors education. At CCAC, the faculty have not only fully embraced the principles of honors education, but they have taken them to a level that stands as a national example of what can be achieved through creative and determined leadership. Overseen by English professor Julia Fennell, who has served as CCAC Honors Program
Director since 2005, the program has grown substantially every year, with more and more students realizing the value of an honors-based education.

Under her skillful direction, and with the assistance of many dedicated colleagues, the program has achieved important goals, including articulation agreements with five regional colleges; establishing honors credit tuition reimbursement for all students taking honors classes and participating in honors contracts; developing assessment rubrics for all program learning outcomes; creating an honors handbook and newsletter; offering an annual Honors Forum; and increasing participation in the CCAC Honors Program from 28 students in 2005 to more than 400 in 2014. In recognition of her efforts both here at CCAC and at the national level, Fennell received one of two inaugural NCHC Ron Brandolini Awards for Excellence at a Two-Year Institution. This award stands as a testament to what can be achieved by faculty members strongly committed to the pursuit and advancement of academic excellence. They change lives.

Time and again, individuals who have participated in the honors program have spoken of its transformative nature. Both faculty members and students have shared how involvement in the program has enriched their lives and provided a new level of insight into the learning experience. Uniting outstanding students with outstanding faculty advances academic excellence on both sides.

One overarching theme in honors interactions is that good ideas shared beget great ones; this is one of higher education’s guiding principles in the pursuit of excellence. The values that make honors education great—learning to be open to new and diverse groups of people; learning new ideas and new ways of thinking; learning to challenge and question one’s values and beliefs; and learning from the past in order to pursue a higher and more perfect ideal—will serve our honors students well in lives that will present an untold number of successes and challenges but will always present opportunities to learn. Cherishing these opportunities is perhaps the greatest benefit of an honors education.

President Bullock may be contacted at qbullock@ccac.edu.
Even with America in the midst of the Great Depression in the 1930s, Herman Donovan, then President of Eastern Kentucky State Teachers College, refused to cut corners on quality or make excuses. Bear in mind that our region contains what are to this day some of the poorest counties not just in Kentucky but in the entire nation. In that era, many students arrived at our Richmond campus with not much more than a knapsack and a dream.

As it turns out, President Donovan had a dream as well. He desired a student union facility that would not only serve the physical needs of Eastern students but also awe and inspire them and enrich their spirits. He wanted a building so grand that, regardless of where life took them, they would never feel out of place or intimidated by their surroundings.

Financed in part by a Public Works Administration grant, the Keen Johnson Building with its colonial Williamsburg exterior and art-deco interior—especially evident in its spacious ballroom—continues to awe and inspire today, though it long ago assumed other uses. Dozens of buildings of all types—some grand, others merely functional—have expanded our campus
skyline in the ensuing decades. Nonetheless, like a dream that will not die, the Keen Johnson Building remains to this day an institutional landmark, the one building that students, alumni, and townspeople alike most identify with what is now Eastern Kentucky University.

And so it is with a quality honors program, here or anywhere else. Just as the measure of these stately edifices far exceeds their brick and mortar, the value of an honors program lies not only in its curriculum but in the dreams it inspires. To this day, many students come to our honors program with little exposure to history’s great thinkers, to cultural attractions that some take for granted, or to our magnificent large cities. Many arrive from the small towns and countryside that dominate much of Kentucky, every bit as bright as their big-city counterparts but unsure how they might measure up. Like those Eastern students who left here years ago confident that few buildings they would enter could ever top their own student union for grandeur, today’s honors students know they can compete on a national stage with the best this country has to offer, whether they came from New York City or Monkey’s Eyebrow (yes, that is an actual town in the Commonwealth of Kentucky).

As could be said on many campuses, the EKU Honors Program has become a point of pride, a touchstone of excellence with which we gratefully identify. As I see it, the true value of an outstanding honors program rests in four key areas:

1. It helps students learn not only how to think critically and creatively for themselves but also to work in teams. As students learn to dig deep within themselves to discover hidden talents, they also come to cherish, learn from, and even revel in the diversity all around them.

2. It is home to skilled and dedicated professors who can make any subject come alive in the classroom and then mentor their students in research projects to be presented at regional and national conferences, where students also participate in eye-opening and mind-expanding cultural excursions while building the camaraderie that long cross-country trips foster.

3. It helps students connect the dots through interdisciplinary study and then propels these students to help others do the same, making connections not only between diverse areas of study but also between thought and deed; this is why so many of our EKU Honors Program students are also leaders on our campus, go on to preeminent
positions in their workplaces and communities, and give back in turn
to the university.

4. It benefits more than just the participating students. Faculty benefit
from students who bring out the best in them, the university benefits
in myriad ways from attracting more of the best and brightest students
to its campus, and the surrounding communities and states benefit
from graduates who are already good citizens and are supremely pre-
pared to help tackle a wide array of workplace and societal challenges.

The Keen Johnson Building is symbolic of Eastern’s historic role as a
School of Opportunity. It is a place that has inspired generations of students,
many from disadvantaged backgrounds, to dream big dreams. As architect
Daniel Burnham once said, “Make no little plans.” It is only fitting that the
EKU Honors Program has for twenty-three consecutive years led all its peers
in the number of student presenters at the annual National Collegiate Honors
Council Conference; this is what a true School of Opportunity does.

The true value of this or any other quality honors program, though, can-
not be measured in its longevity, its numbers, or even its awards. Nor can it be
reduced to coursework, conferences, or culture; it rests in its ability to awe its
students and inspire them to greatness, to enrich their spirits and make them
feel that wherever life’s travels take them, they are always in the right place to
make a positive difference.

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President Benson may be contacted at
michael.benson@eku.edu.
As a college president for over twenty years, it has not escaped my attention that sometimes investments in an honors program or college are decried as “elitist”: as unnecessary investments in already privileged students with little wider institutional payoff. We have heard the familiar refrain at Emory & Henry at times, but our work building on, expanding, and constantly revisiting and revising the pedagogical innovations that come out of our honors program refutes the idea that this work benefits only a few. Our college has demonstrated that honors, far from being elitist, benefits all the students on campus.

The faculty of Emory & Henry College established the honors program in 2009 to provide an enhanced academic experience for the college’s best students. The program inducted its first class of sixteen students in the fall of 2009, and the first cohort graduated with College Honors Diplomas in May of 2013. I arrived at Emory & Henry soon thereafter in August 2013, when the honors program was already establishing itself as a success. In fact, Kyle Boden—an honors student, a double-major in biology and chemistry, and
quarterback and captain of the football team—was a member of the search committee that selected me. Imagine my delight at getting to announce at my very first Board of Trustees meeting that, thanks in part to the advising provided by the honors program, Kyle was selected as Emory & Henry’s first Rhodes Scholar finalist in a hundred years.

The faculty had several goals in establishing the honors program. The founding documents of the program name several of them:

- **Increase** the college’s population of exceptionally talented, intellectually curious students.

- **Provide** those students with special experiences, a more flexible and challenging core curriculum, intense academic advising, and intellectual challenges that will retain them at Emory & Henry through graduation.

- **Challenge** our intellectually talented students to exercise their curiosity and to design their own courses, internships, and learning experiences.

- **Place** our scholars in a challenging cohort of similarly ambitious students who will push each other to do their very best work.

- **Encourage** students to take what they are learning at Emory & Henry out into the world and to bring what they learn out in the world back to share at Emory & Henry.

- **Provide opportunities** for students to engage with Emory & Henry’s premier faculty by placing some of the best teachers in the country in small, cohort classes with the best students in our region.

When I arrived, the data suggested that we were succeeding in those goals. Where Emory & Henry had struggled in the mid-2000s to maintain our national test score averages, the academic profile of our top quartile stabilized and started to rise. Where we had recently suffered high attrition among our top academic performers, honors students were now persisting at the college at nearly a 95% four-year graduation rate. The intellectual energy and accolades they were bringing Emory & Henry were noticeable on any walk across campus and in the pages of our alumni magazine and admissions materials. Our honors scholars were studying abroad in record numbers and presenting their work in undergraduate research forums as well as at professional meetings. Their seminars were fast-evolving into dynamic and cooperative
workshops in which students were playing the lead role in selecting questions and problems to study and in reaching out to draw a wide circle of faculty into complex, sometimes heated, discussions of multidisciplinary problems that might have been neglected by individual major-focused departments.

All of these successes might make for a vibrant and exciting honors program, but if these educational benefits were limited to a select group of students, we would have missed much of the value of what was happening. Fortunately, though, the conversations spread across our campus, and ultimately the honors program performed a more profound service for Emory & Henry that was perhaps not expected at all.

When I became president in 2013, I convened a group of faculty, trustees, alumni, and staff to talk about what made Emory & Henry distinctive and special. That group kept returning to our ability to help students realize their ambitions and “be the change they want to see in the world.” Many of the same student exemplars were discussed in meeting after meeting as examples of what E&H did best.

Colin Christensen brought a terrible personal tragedy to college: a friend had been fatally shot in a tragic accident. Colin organized his concerns about gun violence into the core of his college education, helping to organize a new major (philosophy, politics, and economics) to gather the information he needed to understand and solve this complex problem. He founded a non-profit organization to help deal with the causes and consequences of gun violence in the commonwealth, wrote a law review article on new developments in second amendment law, and ultimately enrolled in a prestigious joint JD/PhD program with the goal of becoming the world’s foremost expert on the laws of gun ownership and use.

Ruthann Froberg came to college reeling from a beloved grandmother’s descent into Alzheimer’s dementia. Ruthann’s efforts to deal with this family tragedy led her to study pre-medicine, but she also explored the consequences of the growing prevalence of dementia in other ways as well. She wrote essays on how the horror of losing our minds is explored in the popular genre of zombie movies and on the sociological consequences of eldercare for families. Soon, inspired by discovering Andrew Solomon’s *Far from the Tree*, she was working on a major multimedia project on the ways our awareness of and fears about dementia permeate our modern lives, a project that was advanced by papers, posters, and interviews produced in multiple classes on everything from biology to Coleridge.
Ali Hillman followed her interest in autism to bring a new and unexpected section of readings and discussions into her first-year honors seminar Meanings, Minds, and Moralities. She worked with a number of professors to design her own major in cross-cultural psychology and constructed her own study abroad experience to advance an honors thesis on the ways that different cultures understand and celebrate neurodiversity.

We discovered that what all these students had in common was their participation in the honors program. In our campus-wide conversations, the honors program proved to be one of the key inspirations for our Big Idea: an institutional initiative that we call “Project Ampersand.” The honors program was, it turns out, serving as a laboratory that incubated new approaches to education and pedagogy, providing the college with prototypes for constructing classes where student interests direct new approaches to classic texts as well as advising student research and activism. As we began to talk about facilitating, funding, and assessing long-term projects and tangible results that might not be neatly contained in one-semester classes, we decided to expand on models that the honors program had pioneered and to find new ways to integrate internships into the curriculum as an essential part of classroom learning, not a temporary break from it.

David Haney, Dean of Faculty, sometimes refers to Project Ampersand’s ambitious goals for bringing project-based learning to our general population as “mainstreaming the Honors Program.” In providing some resources and a great deal of flexibility to our best students through the honors program, we allowed noteworthy examples of what our students and faculty do best to rise to the surface and be recognized. In the process, we rediscovered and rededicated ourselves to the real purpose of institutions like Emory & Henry.

We tell students to ask themselves big questions and to invest themselves in finding answers to them: in both ancient texts and modern experiments, in both semester-long studies and in multi-year research forays, in both the classrooms where we study and the communities where we live.

In fact, two of the exemplary honors students whom we cited earlier joined several of their peers in honors to create their own course in which students are inviting a wide range of guest lecturers on the topic “Global Health Care and Culture” to campus. This course is being partially funded by a Mellon Foundation planning grant that we have received for Project Ampersand. Each week a new expert on the intersections of modern health care and the cultural dimensions of our interconnected world speaks to the class, sometimes in person but often by Skype. The students identify the speakers they
want, invite them to campus, and make the arrangements for their visits. When possible, our guest speakers have dinner with the class participants before speaking to a broader campus audience. Meanwhile, the students each work with their faculty advisor to complete an individualized research project that reflects their career interests in healthcare while drawing on the expertise of both faculty members and guest lecturers. We are actively monitoring this class as a model for more innovative seminars to come. We think it offers a template for rethinking courses across our curriculum to better challenge our students and to connect them to the contacts they need to succeed in graduate school and their professions.

Another example of seeding curricular innovation comes from the program’s Internship Initiative Program. In its early stages, the honors program worked to match honors students with mentors from our Board of Trustees. Business majors were matched with successful entrepreneurs; prelaw scholars clerked with sitting federal judges; aspiring diplomats shadowed a corporate vice president of intergovernmental affairs on his trips to speak with the European Union Parliament. Now, as part of Project Ampersand, we have begun building a database of all our alumni that is sortable by a wide range of professional experiences and avocational interests. As students undertake research or community service projects in their particular areas of study, this database will allow us to facilitate a wide range of internships, externships, and mentorships for students across campus. Once again, an honors program initiative revealed valuable opportunities that we could scale up to advance the education of all of our students.

Our honors program has made it possible for us to raise the level of discussion in classes across the curriculum and has revealed opportunities for investing all of our students in projects that will widen their horizons and allow them to contribute to positive social change. Honors education at Emory & Henry has created a commitment to re-energizing the liberal arts for solving modern problems and to challenging all of our students to see how they can make their world a better place. In doing well what we do best, and often doing it first, the honors program has become a prototype for our college’s core curriculum and a source for inspiration to departments, professors, administrators, and students across our campus.

President Schrum may be contacted at jschrum@ehc.edu.
Tradition and Innovation

MARK P. BECKER, PRESIDENT
Georgia State University

HONORS DEAN: LARRY BERMAN

Honors programs and colleges are sources of innovation and risk-taking, but they often maintain some roots in the origins of their home institutions. From its founding in 1913, when a small group of businessmen gathered to formally study business, to 2015 when that Evening School of Commerce had grown to a vibrant 32,000-student research university with students from every state in the nation and most countries in the world, Georgia State University has consistently displayed an enterprising and independent spirit along with a staunch commitment to ensuring that students from all backgrounds can achieve their academic and career goals. The GSU Honors College, established in 2011, is a vital part of this mission, a place where the most intellectually curious and intensely motivated undergraduates explore a challenging interdisciplinary curriculum, engage with outstanding faculty, conduct research with top scientists and scholars, and graduate ready to embark on a lifetime of achievement.

Many honors colleges offer the qualities of a liberal arts atmosphere within a larger research university; an honors education, however, must
encompass more than just classroom and lab experiences. The honors experience at Georgia State is the product of synergistic, integrative experiences that connect the college and the university to the Atlanta community and the rest of the world. An honors education emphasizes risk-taking, creativity, intellectual entrepreneurship, and adventurousness that those long-ago night school students would certainly recognize. Our honors college is a laboratory known for embracing new initiatives, experimenting with curriculum, and encouraging the kinds of outside-the-classroom experiences that drive personal growth and accomplishment.

This past summer, I led a team of students on a climb of Mount Baker in Washington, a challenging experience for us all. The group drew on previously undiscovered resources, overcame obstacles, and pushed themselves far out of their comfort zones. We all returned the richer and wiser for the struggle and effort. So, too, does the honors student push his or her intellectual boundaries to enroll in the honors college’s interdisciplinary seminars like The Concept of Zero, Living and Serving with Homeless People, and The Integration of Technology, Pedagogy and Philosophy. Full of curious students from dozens of degree programs, these seminars push students to examine their worldviews, banish complacency, and challenge themselves to move beyond their chemistry or art classes to embrace what might be uncomfortable or difficult. The view from the top of the mountain, at the end of the long climb, is worth the struggle and effort, but the journey up is where we discover who we are and what we’re capable of.

Recently, the honors college offered a seminar on the legacy of Alonzo F. Herndon, in which honors students both learned about risks and took a few themselves. Atlanta’s role as the center of the Civil Rights Movement makes it an ideal laboratory for honors students to study vital, present-day, human rights issues. Notably, not one student enrolled in the course was a history major. The students—who came from neuroscience, film, art and design, marketing, psychology—left their comfort zones to crawl through property records, dust off archival documents, and learn new ways of developing knowledge. Initially wary of how their research would come together and how it would be used in this experimental seminar, students learned to become comfortable with ambiguity and allowed an organic process to lead the course. The professors who taught the course, one historian and one community psychologist, modeled risk taking: not knowing how well students would embrace the fluidity of the course and tolerating uncertainty of the course’s outcome.
Honors faculty certainly don’t shirk the challenges and opportunities of twenty-first-century education and are ready to push themselves out of their comfort zones as well. A dedicated group of them are piloting the Digital Literacy Initiative in the honors college and incorporating new tools, techniques, and projects into the core honors curriculum. They’re examining their preconceived notions of what a history or English course must look like and adding visualization, mapping, and coding to their curricular plans.

While an honors education often begins in the classroom, where high-achieving students feel safe and comfortable, the LEAD with Honors Certificate program, which cultivates leadership skills and abilities, doesn’t end there. Beginning with a seminar in leadership during which students interact with leaders across many Atlanta sectors and continuing with practical opportunities and courses to further leadership skills, the program culminates in a year-long internship followed by a thesis related to a leadership issue encountered during the internship. This combination of coursework, practical skill development, work experience, soft skills, and research moves students far beyond the four walls of a classroom and is well worth the journey.

Not just beyond the classroom, an honors education is an experience beyond university boundaries. National and international conferences for presentation of research, internships in town and abroad, summer research programs and service opportunities: all are valuable additions to an undergraduate education and offer students the opportunity to experience the world from a different perspective. Honors students who take advantage of these opportunities learn to solve problems, think critically, and embrace a global mindset, all qualities that prepare them for the years after college.

The value of an honors education is more demonstrable today than ever before. By combining the best aspects of a more traditional liberal education with the applied practice of skills and experiences, the honors college gives students the ability to put their knowledge to work in the world. The challenges students face as they attempt difficult or uncomfortable tasks help them build and then use the real-world skills they’ll need when they come up against obstacles in their lives after college. Their adventures—whether in graduate school, service for a non-profit, or a career—have already, confidently, begun.

President Becker may be contacted at mbecker@gsu.edu.
Relevance, Rigor, and Return on Investment: How Honors Enhances Education

THOMAS J. HAAS, PRESIDENT
Grand Valley State University

HONORS DIRECTOR: JEFF CHAMBERLAIN

In my opening address to the university community a few years ago, I set out three key concepts (three contemporary Rs) to guide our thinking as we grow and develop our institution. They all have to do with student success: relevance, rigor, and return on investment. The education we provide must be relevant and address the needs of the region and the world now and in years to come; it must be of the very highest quality and impart to students the best concepts and the greatest skills; and it must be a good value that pays off handsomely for the student and for all whom she touches. The Frederik Meijer Honors College at Grand Valley State fulfills those Rs admirably and helps the whole university live up to them. Importantly, the college strives to create an honors experience in which students “thrive”: it maximizes their experience by engaging them deeply in learning to succeed in their academic and vocational goals; by establishing positive relationships with their faculty, peers, and others; by fostering their active citizenship on campus, within our
surrounding communities, and across the globe; and by encouraging a positive outlook on circumstances and life (Propst Cuevas; Schreiner).

First, the Frederik Meijer Honors College delivers relevant education and adopts new pedagogies as learning styles change. At Grand Valley, the honors college fulfills the university's general education requirements in a way that prepares students extraordinarily well. In team-taught interdisciplinary courses, students learn through multiple lenses and develop skills that cross disciplinary boundaries. In course sequences such as Food for Thought, Social Product Innovation, Theory and Practice of Rights, and Urbanism, instructors focus on developing skills of writing, critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving, even in freshman courses. These are the skills and abilities that are needed most in our fast-paced world, and because of the depth of their educational experiences, honors students become highly competitive in many fields. Alumni often report back to us that they were extremely well-prepared for graduate school or a career because of the deep training in those skill sets. One student who was studying abroad recently wrote that she was in a program with students from “really good schools” (i.e., Ivy League) and that she initially felt a bit intimidated by them, but she quickly realized that she was “just as prepared or more so academically.”

Honors co-curricular activities get students involved in sustainability, civic life, non-profit organizations, and healthcare. Honors is also entrepreneurial: the Meijer Endowed Chair of Entrepreneurship and Innovation teaches Design Thinking and mentors students on how to address needs in society and industry. Seniors often address real-world issues in honors senior projects and make connections between research and practice. The projects vary from high-level laboratory research on potential cures for cancer to improving water purification systems in developing countries, developing effective pedagogies for twenty-first-century secondary students, or creating computer programs and smart-phone applications for the modern world. One example of students forging connections through honors is a graphic design major who went on the honors service learning trip to Ghana and then, for her senior project, produced a beautifully designed coffee-table book about the trip; the book became a significant part of the portfolio that helped her secure a job at a prominent communications firm.

Grand Valley expects a lot from honors students, and they in turn help raise the bar across campus so that the honors college has a very significant effect in promoting rigor in education. Many students who matriculate in the Meijer Honors College could go to college virtually anywhere, but three
quarters of them choose Grand Valley as their first choice because of the welcoming environment in honors, the personal relationship with faculty, and the excellent facilities and opportunities. These students help raise the overall profile of students at Grand Valley (which now ranks second in the state of Michigan), and it is no coincidence that as honors has grown, so has the student profile. Our honors college has a healthy balance of challenge and support—faculty demand a lot of students and ask them to perform at a very high level while at the same time encouraging and affirming them. A lot of the support comes from the rich living/learning environment in honors. The Glenn Niemeyer Learning and Living Center houses 450 students in well-appointed apartments and incorporates excellent classroom space as well as faculty and administrative offices. The collaboration between faculty, administration, and housing staff is very strong and allows for true holistic learning, actualizing the Meijer Honors College motto, “Live, Learn, Lead.” The living/learning model has been so successful that Grand Valley is currently building a new freshman living center to extend to the general undergraduate population the same kind of rich academic community.

With such challenge and support, honors students rise to the occasion, with not a few freshmen presenting research in our annual Student Scholars Day as well as local and regional conferences. Some even publish in their first year, setting them up for success early on and helping them perform extraordinarily well. Among those honored by Phi Kappa Phi, for instance, 40% of the freshmen honorees and 56% of the inductees this past year were honors students when honors comprises less than 8% of the undergraduate population, and 42% of the most recent departmental awards across the university went to honors students. Honors students also average a significantly higher cumulative GPA than students who are eligible for honors but do not participate, demonstrating that prior success and ability alone do not prompt students to achieve but that the environment must challenge and support them.

The success of honors students translates into success for students more broadly because they perform well in non-honors and major classes, too, thus raising the curve all over campus. They not only raise the curve but also bring excitement about their learning to all their classes. The director of our honors program tells me that not a day goes by that he doesn’t talk to students who are passionate about their research, their study abroad program, their internship, or their service learning. Their eagerness is infectious, and it infuses the whole university—faculty, staff, and other students—with the joy of learning. Furthermore, they are invested in helping other students succeed, honors and
non-honors alike: over 40% of the consultants in peer writing and research and the tutors in math and science are honors students, so they are a vital part of the support structures for all students. Honors students model, promote, and support excellence throughout the whole university.

The Meijer Honors College promises a wonderful return on investment. To be sure, the students’ investment of time, effort, and money is sizeable, but the payoff is great. Honors students can be assured of gaining vital knowledge and skills and dispositions that will help them prosper in this fast-paced world. They graduate in good time and are eagerly sought after when they do. They go on to graduate programs in some of the most prestigious universities in the country and the world, often having to make difficult choices between extraordinary opportunities. Because of experiences they have had over their academic career, they are good candidates for Peace Corps, Teach for America, Americorps, City Year, and competitive fellowships such as the Fulbright. Furthermore, those who elect to go into the workplace find excellent opportunities with world-class companies. This past year alone, graduates received offers from General Motors, Hewlett Packard, Spectrum Health, Arirang TV (a major Korean Broadcast network), Dematic Corp., Deloitte, etc., and a few are involved in start-ups such as RefuTea, a retailer of tea and a tea shop to benefit refugees in West Michigan.

The return on investment for the institution is considerable. The honors program is one of the most expensive in the university, but the value it has brought more than compensates for its cost. The Meijer Honors College has markedly enhanced the reputation of the university, increased its ability to recruit the brightest and most capable students, improved student outcomes, and helped boost the metrics so that they are the envy of most other institutions in the state.

The Meijer Honors College, then, has added very significant value to Grand Valley and to the students it serves. Let me conclude with an illustration of just one student. In 2012, Leah Beaulac was attracted to Grand Valley largely because of the Meijer Honors College. She is a biology major and expects to go to medical school when she graduates. In her freshman year she took the year-long Honors Foundational Interdisciplinary Sequence on the Islamic Middle East and was so fascinated by the topic that she added a double minor in Middle East Studies and Arabic. She heard about opportunities to apply for fellowships to study abroad and was assisted in her application by the Meijer Office of Fellowships (a service provided through the Meijer Honors College). She received a Boren Scholarship and will study in Jordan for
the 2015–2016 academic year. This experience will dramatically enhance her application to medical school, and her medical expertise will be of significant value to the government, to which she will owe some service as a condition of the Boren Scholarship. Leah is a poster child for student success: her education has been relevant and rigorous, and it is already yielding a wonderful return on her investment. Leah is only one among hundreds of examples, but she demonstrates the value of honors. We believe that through a relevant and rigorous honors experience, the return on investment will pay off for our students and alumni for years to come as they build on their foundation at Grand Valley toward a future of great consequence.

REFERENCES


President Haas may be contacted at

president@gvsu.edu.
Every year we tell our students at the annual new student convocation to work hard, stay focused, and push themselves; if they follow that simple advice, they will soon be participating in our commencement program as proud graduates of Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC). By the same token, if college personnel do not challenge themselves to think critically and subscribe to the principles of continuous quality improvement—always striving to be better tomorrow than we were today—then we can hardly expect our students to excel in college, much less in a global market where other countries are surpassing the United States in degree attainment.

The IVCC Honors Program mission is to “promote the identification and achievement of education and/or career goals for its participants by offering specially designed honors curriculum, by providing stimulating academic and social program events, and by facilitating and recognizing student pursuits in community involvement, campus leadership, and experiential learning.” Most students join the honors program to gain more than a traditional college experience. As a community of educators at IVCC, we are convinced that
our honors program is a great first step for those students who want to excel in college and beyond. Members enjoy personalized attention from talented and dedicated instructors—the hallmark of our institution—who challenge their students to get involved in a variety of active-learning experiences.

Additional benefits include “tuition waivers, career guidance, resume boosters, enriched course work, field trips, recognition at graduation and on transcripts, collegiality with honors peers, personal exploration, [and] transfer opportunities.” As a result of these practical benefits, enrollment in the IVCC Honors Program has doubled over the last few years, a significant statistic when one considers that enrollments across the college (across the state and nation, too), have been in a downward spiral for the last three years.

Since 1924, the college’s reputation for providing affordable, high-quality, in-demand programs and services has been consistent, resulting in over 30,000 graduates being well-served. Each year’s incoming class includes many of the district’s top-tier students, and the honors program provides them with an opportunity to continue to challenge themselves academically and contribute to the community in the process. Our message for quality is being heard, often resulting in gifted students making the wise choice to attend IVCC before moving on to a university. This fall semester, the incoming class includes 5 valedictorians, 1 salutatorian, and 1 student in the top 2% of her class. Over the past eight years, we have successfully recruited 38 valedictorians, 25 salutatorians and 13 students in the top 2% of their class. Once apprised of the opportunity, academically gifted students enroll in our honors program because they want something more than just a degree.

In order to earn honors recognition, students must complete four honors courses: Honors Orientation, Honors Project, Honors Portfolio, and a general-education course designated as an honors section. Students complete coursework and at least one service-learning capstone project. The students’ successes are celebrated each semester at a campus-wide Honorspalooza event. An example of a recent capstone project that was showcased for the college community involved a group of students who wanted to know how to improve childhood literacy rates. These students discovered that the best way to increase literacy was to get books into the hands of youth in economically disadvantaged homes. They held a highly successful book drive and then donated over 600 children’s books to Bernie’s Book Bank, a charitable organization that provides literature to children in low-income communities.

Another project involved a group of students investigating drug use among college students. They discovered that, while Drug Abuse Resistance
Education (D.A.R.E.) and similar programs are common in K–12 settings, the focus on drug education tends to decrease in higher education. To solve this problem at IVCC, the team wrote and distributed pamphlets about the dangers of drugs to their peers across campus, and they created a sign featuring a promise not to do drugs that many students, staff, and faculty signed. One of our local papers learned of this team's project and featured a story about it on the front page.

One final example of the many such projects conducted by honors students involved a student who wanted to study spectrometry in depth for his Honors General Chemistry I course. He built a spectrometer, a device for measuring light, and planned to donate it to an impoverished school in Africa. Projects like these teach students that there is more to a college education than academics. They can and should use college to develop career and educational goals, but under ideal conditions, the experience of a higher education would also enable students to view themselves as important members of their communities who can make a positive impact on the world, and this is what our honors program helps students to achieve.

The IVCC Honors Program is a source of pride for the institution. Our honors faculty and students are alike in a number of ways: they have high expectations of themselves and others; they are highly engaged in the campus community; they are critical thinkers who enjoy working together to solve problems; and, rather than asking what's in it for them, they aspire to share their knowledge with others for the betterment of society. Both students and faculty in the program are transformational leaders with a shared vision and common goals. The honors program complements the college's mission statement: IVCC teaches those who seek and is enriched by those who learn.

President Corcoran may be contacted at jerry_corcoran@ivcc.edu.
Tradition and Change

Joseph E. Nyre, President
Iona College

Honors Director: Kim Paffenroth

Honors programs, like the institutions that host them, need to exercise constant re-examination to remain effective and to serve their students the best they can. As a private, liberal arts institution, in the tradition of the Irish Catholic Christian Brothers, Iona College provides many avenues to enhance student learning, and paramount to our ability to offer a differential learning experience for our students is the cultivation of a robust honors program. When Iona first began developing its honors program in 1958, the program was “designed to aid the superior student in receiving the fullest possible benefit from the intellectual and cultural resources of the College.” While these sentiments continue to hold true, the ever-changing dynamics of higher education have resulted in multiple transformations and enhancements of the honors program since 1958, including a heightened focus over the past several years.

In 2011, a representative steering group was charged with developing a college-wide, five-year strategic plan—Advancing our Legacy, Defining our Future—that calls on the community to advance the college in six major areas,
including student distinction. One goal of the plan is to “Revise the Honors Program to be distinctive and innovative, and to attract high-achieving students to Iona College, with an increasing percentage of each incoming class being served by the Honors Program” as well as to “Examine the feasibility of student-designed majors and options for disciplinary and interdisciplinary tracks; [and] reaffirm the humanities base while strengthening the science, technology, and math components.”

Our faculty and staff who led the steering group readily recognized the value of the honors program in attracting and retaining exceptional students to our college. Through this program we are able to academically challenge and inspire motivated students through a stimulating and creative curriculum. The Iona Honors Program boasts a dedication to the centrality of reasoned discussion and active learning; the deliberate inclusion of both specialization and breadth in education; and the careful balancing of the needs of the “superior student” as an individual with those of the larger communities of which s/he is a vital member.

The cultivation of this program has resulted in an outstanding experience for our students and for the faculty who work with them each day. This past spring I was fortunate to attend one of my favorite campus events, the annual “Honors Thesis Day.” Our students presented on a wide range of topics, highlighting the many avenues they were able to explore during their time at Iona. For example, Ryan DelMonaco, presented “Complexity vs. Formulation: An Exploration of Sports Scheduling through the Use of Graph Theory and Linear Programming,” and Michelle Muzzio presented “Advances of the Droplet Interface Bilayer (DIB): Modeling the Biological Membrane and Beyond.”

Our honors program allows students to be as creative and inquisitive as their imaginations will allow and is essential to elevating our student experience. The four-semester Honors Humanities Seminar is a great books seminar running from antiquity to our post-modern world and focused on improving our students’ abilities to analyze ideas in increasingly subtle prose. This seminar reaffirms our commitment to the humanities and remains the center of the curriculum as a unifying, academic experience for our honors students.

As we continue to refine our honors program and its curriculum to include student-designed majors, service and experiential learning, and study abroad components, we hold true to centering our vision on the humanities, from antiquity to the present, as it is expressed in the Catholic intellectual
tradition, grounding our honors students in the tradition at the same time that we prepare them for careers in our contemporary world.

President Nyre may be contacted at
joseph.nyre@iona.edu.
Building an Honors Education for the Twenty-First Century: Making Connections In and Outside the Classroom

Jonathan Alger, President
James Madison University

Honors Director: Bradley Newcomer

When I was sifting through stacks of brochures from colleges as a high school student (in the days before the Internet and college web sites), I had a vague sense that I wanted to find a college with an honors program in which it was “cool” for students to develop close mentoring relationships with faculty and where students were encouraged to seek both breadth and depth in their education. While I enjoyed my public high school experience, I knew that I wanted to go beyond memorizing facts and preparing for standardized tests. I could not fully articulate my educational goals or the reasons for them at that time, but in hindsight I realize that I was seeking a significant opportunity to participate in an environment marked by high-impact learning practices, a focus on the big issues facing humanity, and lifelong learning.
I had the good fortune to enjoy such a life-changing experience in college, and as a university president I now strive to create similar opportunities for the next generations of students.

I wound up selecting Swarthmore College in large part because of its unique honors program. When I was at Swarthmore, students in the honors program were required to participate in six intensive seminars (in a major and a minor) during the last two years of college. These seminars generally met once a week for several hours and were marked by very close faculty-student interaction. Students took turns writing papers to share with their classmates. Those who wrote seminar papers read additional material beyond what the other students read for that week and were also responsible for leading the discussion on that topic. Seminar professors served as guides and mentors but did not lecture. They also didn’t give tests or hand out grades because, at the end of a student’s senior year, external examiners came from other colleges and universities across the country to administer oral and written examinations of their own making (with only the seminar syllabus as a guide).

This student-centered approach to learning (modeled on the tutorial system at Oxford) required participants to take an active role and created a strong sense of community. You learned from and with your classmates, and you relied on them to write useful papers and to lead quality discussions. Students spent less time trying to impress their professors with answers they thought the professors wanted to hear—since their classroom professors were not the ones ultimately responsible for their evaluation in the program—and more time grappling with big questions and issues.

We honed our critical thinking and communication skills through our discussions and debates, and we often continued the conversations outside of class in the residence halls, in the dining hall, or on the quad. The program forced us to take initiative, and we had freedom and flexibility to be creative and innovative in our approach to learning.

In preparing for the external examinations at the end of my senior year, I also found myself making connections between different courses and disciplines that I had not grasped or appreciated when I first engaged with the material. I especially remember how the seminar American Intellectual History, which had seemed initially like a hodge-podge of disconnected strands of thought, finally started to make sense as I began to see the interrelationships among developments in science, politics, philosophy, culture, and the arts.
Reflecting on my career since that time, I can see how I have internalized and utilized elements of my college honors experience in a variety of professional settings. As a young lawyer in private practice, I often found myself seeking to look beyond any one strand of case law to make connections between different branches of the law—and in doing so to try to develop creative solutions to conflicts that at first seemed binary or perhaps even intractable. Later, as in-house counsel at two large research universities (Michigan and Rutgers), I relished the opportunity to work with faculty from many different fields as we learned to communicate across the boundaries of our respective disciplines. By working together and engaging in active listening, we were able to share different perspectives on difficult situations and challenges and ultimately to identify, articulate, and build connections between our fields in ways that helped us to avoid or minimize legal and practical risks.

My college honors experience taught me the importance not just of interdisciplinary connections, but also of personal connections and relationships as a key to intellectual stimulation and growth. As a result of my college honors experience, I have found myself repeatedly seeking to create smaller learning communities within the larger institutional contexts in which I have found myself. At Michigan and Rutgers, for example, I developed and taught seminars and led independent studies that I modeled deliberately on my Swarthmore experience.

As president of James Madison University (JMU)—a large public comprehensive institution—I continue to participate in the honors experience to build such relationships with future generations of students and to enhance my own lifelong learning. In JMU’s honors program, I currently co-teach a seminar on leadership in which we intentionally adopt a variety of high-impact learning practices such as individual and group presentations, debate, case studies, and community service learning. As we wrestle with difficult leadership decisions in the seminar, my own thinking about leadership continues to evolve based on what I hear and learn from our amazing and passionate students. I can only hope that the students are learning as much as I am along the way.

JMU is now seeking to transform its honors program into the Madison Honors College, drawing inspiration from the Father of the Constitution for whom we are named. James Madison was one of our nation’s foremost lifelong learners. Madison studied with influential teachers and mentors who
exposed him to the great political and philosophical works of the ages. He continued to take the initiative to read voraciously throughout his lifetime. He also learned from prolonged and multi-faceted debates with his peers and was known to have changed his mind on critical issues (such as the need for the Bill of Rights) after experience and reflection.

Personal mentoring and collaborative relationships were at the heart of Madison’s learning just as they were the foundation of my college honors experience. Technology may give us new tools to augment teaching and learning, but we are inspired and encouraged to grow by people, not machines. Perhaps the most important lesson I learned from my own honors experience was how to engage with other people in deep, meaningful, and civil discourse as we struggle to find common ground and identify potential solutions to complex problems.

In serving as a leader on governing boards, task forces, and committees, I often seek to go around the table to ensure that all participants have the opportunity to express their perspectives and to take into account all of the angles and possibilities before making tough decisions. I know that I make better decisions when I first listen carefully to others’ points of view. In fact, I have found that some of the most productive and satisfying meetings are those at which I have changed my mind based on a thoughtful discussion in which I was persuaded by new information or cogent arguments.

My hope is that the honors college at JMU will provide similar opportunities and experiences both in and outside the classroom. Our new JMU vision statement calls upon us to become “the national model of the engaged university: engaged with ideas and the world,” and the honors college has a critical role to play to help bring that vision to life. The honors college is therefore grounded in key elements I encountered in my higher education that focused on relationship-building, including small classes and faculty mentoring. It also emphasizes the importance of taking initiative for one’s learning through independent scholarship.

The model of honors education we are creating for tomorrow needs to build on the fundamental and time-tested strengths of existing programs, but it can and must also evolve to meet the demands of the twenty-first century. At JMU, this evolution is reflected in the requirement that students select one of several tracks or areas of emphasis—in creativity, global studies, leadership, research, or service—that are deliberately designed to integrate learning across disciplinary boundaries. As our students prepare to be active citizens in an increasingly diverse democracy and to compete in a global economy, the
JMU program also features an enhanced focus on diversity of thought and perspective. This approach will strengthen the ability of students to understand, relate to, and work with people from many different backgrounds.

In this high-tech era when attention spans are limited and people are exposed to vast amounts of information that is often a mile wide and an inch deep, students in honors at JMU are also required to develop senior honors projects. Not only do such longer-term projects build relationships among faculty and students, but they can also develop written and oral communication skills that are essential for success in every type of workplace and organization.

While I applied the tools and lessons of my honors experience in the workplace after I graduated, JMU honors students now have opportunities to test and apply their theoretical insights in real-world situations through study abroad and experiential practicums before they graduate. These types of hands-on experiences were sometimes frowned on in the past by those who preferred a pure “ivory tower” approach to higher education, but they can be a critical ingredient in broadening perspective and deepening understanding.

These practices and approaches are based on sound pedagogical research, but even so we cannot rest smugly on our assumptions about their actual impact on student learning. For this reason, at a time when many people have called for greater accountability in higher education, we must be prepared to articulate and assess student learning outcomes much more clearly than we have in the past. We take this challenge seriously at JMU, which is why we have one of the nation’s leading centers of assessment. We intend to shine a laser-like spotlight on each of the elements of our honors college so that we can continuously improve what and how we teach. This accountability is reinforced with a careful emphasis on individualized academic advising as well as with guidance and oversight from an external Honors Advisory Council that consists largely of alumni who represent a wide variety of undergraduate majors and professional backgrounds.

A robust honors college within a university can have a large impact not just on the students in the program but also on the entire campus community. Honors students can serve as role models for their peers and encourage other students to push themselves beyond the formal requirements of their coursework. They can spread their love of learning in ways that are far more effective than any academic requirements. I believe the students in Swarthmore’s honors program played that role when I was in college, and I see it happening at JMU today. Support from the top for a strong honors college is
thus an important investment in all of our students as we seek to prepare them for the uncertainties and challenges of the future.

President Alger may be contacted at algerjr@jmu.edu.
At LaGuardia Community College, we have a saying: Challenge expectations. As fitting as these words are in an essay on the unique value of an honors program at a community college, they also reflect the creation, growth, and ultimate goal of our program and its amazing students, faculty, and staff, who embody these words every day.

That an unprecedented widening and deepening of students’ knowledge takes place in honors courses is a given, but the singularity of the LaGuardia Community College Honors Program centers on expansion of our students’ conception of themselves as more than intellectuals. Our honors philosophy of helping students own their learning process and educational experience gives students a sense of agency in their lives that builds their self-esteem and self-confidence and allows them to see their limitless potential.

Cultivating a community of support is essential in planting these seeds of excellence. We engage not just past and present students of the program but also bring the talents and skills of faculty and staff from every area of the college to bear in myriad ways. The result: our students become leaders, empowered
to organize for themselves and their peers on the topics of transfer, scholarship, research, civic engagement, and diverse co-curricular activities.

For the honors students at LaGuardia, the shift in self-awareness and positive image is life-altering, going far beyond the average student’s expansion of intellectual capacity. The change has the power to raise the bar on the goals they set and achieve: from an accountant with an associate’s degree at a local firm in Queens, NY, to an MBA working at one of the top three financial institutions in the country.

“Honors” is typically associated with a self-selecting group of polished, academically accomplished, focused, and/or privileged students who arrive merely needing to be nurtured and mentored to reach their full potential. One assumes that honors students are not “at risk” and they don’t need much support. However, community college students provide a different story about the meaning and value of honors; they demonstrate that—counter-intuitive though it may be—open-access community colleges need programs like honors to fulfill their mission of serving students who have been underserved and are under-represented in higher education. This is the population we serve at LaGuardia, and seemingly the odds are against them. Not the least of the obstacles to their success are financial, making it difficult to afford tuition, commuting costs, and textbooks and often necessitating such choices as whether to pay the rent or register for classes next semester. An honors program at an urban, commuter campus serving low-income, under-represented, first-generation community college students can seem beyond pie in the sky.

LaGuardia has always excelled at precisely this kind of challenge. The college was founded in 1971 in response to the City University of New York’s query, “What if we made CUNY’s founding principle—opening the doors of higher education to all—a reality?” The college was named after one of New York’s most courageous and idealistic leaders, Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia, a champion of the underdog. Now, over 160 countries are represented among LaGuardia’s full-time students with 111 native languages. The results speak for themselves: family income for LaGuardia students climbs 17% upon graduation, and LaGuardia graduates transfer to four-year colleges at a rate 20% higher than that of their peers at community colleges nationwide.

An imperative for innovation has led us to shatter misperceptions of community college students’ academic and professional abilities from the moment we opened our doors over forty years ago in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement. This same drive is what has helped us to push boundaries in order to expand the traditional conception of honors programs as “elite,”
showing us how they can be, and at our institution are, engines to increase accessibility to higher education and the workforce. In fact, our challenges—how to tailor honors education to the needs of first-generation, low-income, often academically under-prepared students for whom, regardless of immense native talents and enormous personal ambition, college and academic culture is foreign, and how to foster a culture of support on an urban commuter campus—have become the key ingredients in our success.

The honors program has grown from its first honors course in 1994 to now offer over twenty honors sections each semester in all disciplines from literature, social sciences, humanities, business, and STEM courses, serving 350–400 students. The program now also has an honors student advisory committee (HSAC) and an honors house that serves as a student-centered hub for peer- and alumni-led advisement, mentoring, and organizing.

The honors program balances selectivity, by virtue of a minimum 3.2 GPA requirement, and accessibility through the creation of an inclusive student community for co-curricular programming. “The Program’s philosophy is that Honors students are not so much born but made,” Honors Program Director Karlyn Koh explained to me. “This means that we offer individuals an opportunity to become ‘Honors students’—courageous, curious, and motivated students who seek intellectual challenge, and who also use their academic strengths to transform their lives and, more importantly, the lives of others,” she said.

This experiential learning philosophy provides students with a chance to stretch their intellectual muscle in the classroom and through such research opportunities as LaGuardia’s first Interdisciplinary Student Research Conference in May 2015. This event drew students from outside of the program as well as inside and served as the launch celebration of the Honors Journal, which gave students a chance to experience the academic editing and publication process.

Our alumni’s successes testify to the enduring impact of their honors experience at LaGuardia. “To be mostly students of color from lower class backgrounds, working multiple jobs, literally sustaining family systems whether with children or not, while also striving to achieve a formal education hardly allows room to cultivate solidarity in pursuit of success, and is oftentimes a lonely endeavor,” said LaGuardia honors alumna Freda Raitelu (now at Smith College), who was named the NCHC Student of the Year in 2012 and also served on the executive board of the Northeast Regional Honors Council (NRHC), on which Dr. Koh also serves. Raitelu continued, “Yet,
the Honors Program and HSAC facilitate solidarity through concrete initiatives like essay writing, financial aid and scholarship literacy workshops, and community building activities.”

This engagement of students both in and out of the classroom is a signature element of LaGuardia’s honors program and is instrumental in its success. HSAC students and alumni have—with the support of honors faculty and staff—put together “fireside chats” during which faculty discuss their research and civic engagement events like a fundraiser for victims of Hurricane Sandy in 2013 as well as regular transfer and scholarship workshops and off-campus events that support student research. This involvement allows students to gain ownership of what they want from their time at college.

The LaGuardia Honors Program has been active at the regional and national level as well. Students and alumni routinely make the news with their transfer, scholarship, and post-graduation successes. For example, Wai “Kat” Lam won the 2013 NCHC Best Poster Presentation for Math and Science. After graduating from LaGuardia, she transferred to Johns Hopkins University as a science major. All five of LaGuardia’s Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Scholars have been honors students, and program graduates have been accepted to a wide range of selective four-year colleges, including Columbia, Brown, NYU, Swarthmore, Amherst, and Sarah Lawrence; they have also gone on to work at such organizations as the United Nations and Teach for America.

The honors model of small, student-centered classes lends itself well to the community college setting as it provides students with a strong network from which to get multi-level support: peer, faculty, and alumni. By clearing the space for them to form community, which is hard to cultivate on an urban, commuter campus where students do not have four years to develop relationships, the honors model at LaGuardia has helped create a strong, sustainable alumni-student network. Alumni of our honors program are empowered learners who have set and achieved important goals, often ones that seemed impossible given who they are and where they came from. They serve as powerful role models who return to share their triumphs with the next group of students willing to take on the honors challenge. “A private four-year university was not even considered as a school I could transfer to when I first got to LaGuardia, but the revelation that various past alumni who were in the Honors Program have transferred to several prestigious four-year universities made me challenge myself and expand my horizons,” said 2012 honors alumnus Tremaine Wright, who graduated in June from NYU with a Bachelors
in Applied Psychology. “From my experience in the Honors Program and HSAC, I extended my target four-year schools to include prestigious private universities such as Columbia University and NYU, no small dream for the average community college student.”

There is no denying that remediation and graduation rates remain priorities at two-year colleges, and it may seem that “honors” and “community college” are incompatible, but the stories of our students demonstrate the efficacy of honors in supporting and fulfilling the college’s mission. Although 54% of students who took honors courses between the spring of 2007 and fall 2014 were required to take 1–3 remedial courses in writing, reading, and/or math, the graduation rate of students who have taken honors courses routinely exceeds that of the baseline group at the college; our three-year graduation rate among the fall 2011 freshman cohort is 55% versus 12% of the baseline cohort.

“The incredible support I received from the entire Honors community while at LaGuardia pushed me to believe in myself and never run away from a challenge,” said Rafael Tejada, honors program alumnus of the class of 2013. Rafael felt restricted and ashamed by his remedial status and subsequent low grades, but, driven to achieve greater goals, he persevered until he found the honors program. “Most importantly, I’ve learned that I can accomplish anything I want no matter how many times I may fail,” said Rafael, who is now pursuing a joint NYU/Sarah Lawrence master’s degree.

This is a special moment in time for community colleges. The relevance and value of honors education at community colleges has never been more salient than it is now, given President Obama’s call for grassroots action to make two years of community college free through the College Promise Campaign. The national conversation now taking place recognizes that community colleges are the gateway to the middle class in America. I can attest to this important mission of community colleges, and as we’ve seen at LaGuardia, honors programs advance the mission by breaking down barriers to higher education and upward mobility. Our program has changed students’ and their families’ lives beyond what they ever imagined possible.

President Mellow may be contacted at
GMellow@lagcc.cuny.edu.
LIU’s honors programs were founded during a decade that gave rise to honors programs nationally. The LIU Post Honors Program was one of the first in 1963 after the University of Michigan LSA Honors Program in 1957 and the Echols Scholars Program at the University of Virginia in 1960; the LIU Brooklyn University Honors Program followed in 1965. The establishment of honors colleges at LIU Post and LIU Brooklyn for the 2015–2016 academic year provides an ideal opportunity to reflect on more than five decades of honors education at the university and to examine the value of honors.

A discussion of honors education naturally calls to mind academically exceptional students, a vibrant intellectual community, and distinguished learning environments like Winnick House, the former home of Marjorie Merriwether Post, heiress and founder of the General Foods Corporation, where LIU Post’s honors college is housed. The essence of honors education
goes beyond historic buildings, however, and even beyond the academically elite students who populate honors colleges and programs. Former Swarthmore College president Frank Aydelotte envisioned honors education as “a more individualized educational experience . . . focused on the creation of knowledge more than its mere reproduction” (Carnicom 49).

The honors programs at LIU Post and LIU Brooklyn have inspired students in the creation of knowledge for more than half a century, led by thoughtful and passionate educators like LIU Post honors director Joan Digby, author of *Peterson’s Honors Programs and Colleges* and a past president of the National Collegiate Honors Council, and LIU Brooklyn honors director James Clarke, a philosopher and National Endowment for the Humanities grant recipient. Digby, Clarke, and their predecessors have established models for honors education that have contributed to the National Collegiate Honors Council at the national level, and their rich ideas have also guided many of our best directions at the university. LIU’s commitment to engaged learning applies the principles of honors to the whole university by enabling students to further create knowledge through their own experience, and LIU’s honors colleges set a strong example in this effort to change the paradigm of what a university is.

Joan Digby originated the concept of Partners in the Parks, for instance, which has grown into a hallmark program for the National Collegiate Honors Council, creating transformative experiences for honors students through immersion in our national parks. These students find the meaning of Thoreau’s *Walking* in the woods of Maine’s Acadia National Park, conduct geology research at Parashant National Monument, and use their experiences in the parks as inspiration for studies in their own chosen academic disciplines. Partners in the Parks also provides a replicable model of an intensive learning experience that develops students’ ability to work in a collaborative environment, and the growth and successful adaptation of Partners in the Parks “demonstrates the way that colleges and universities can use NCHC resources to inspire new educational opportunities on their campuses” (Digby and Nolan 23).

Partners in the Parks also offers development opportunities for the professors who lead the seminars as the inter-institutional team-teaching experience facilitates an exchange of ideas about how to approach course material and structure learning opportunities in a way that engages students. Digby experienced this value during a 2010 Partners in the Parks program, observing that
“the synergy and cross-fertilization that arise from such collaboration can reenergize teachers and inspire students” (Digby and Nolan 31).

LIU Brooklyn’s contribution to the larger honors community is City as Text™ (CAT), a brainchild of former honors director and National Collegiate Honors Council past president Bernice Braid. CAT has been a staple of the NCHC’s national conferences, Honors Semesters, and Faculty Institutes since 1976. The technique of organizing readings and class sessions around site-specific explorations is a natural fit at LIU Brooklyn, where students benefit from a rich cultural landscape that offers numerous starting points for academic exploration, and the principles of City as Text™ have served as the foundation for many of LIU Brooklyn’s advanced honors seminars. A water-themed seminar saw honors students exploring the Hudson and East Rivers with the help of the non-profit Riverkeeper organization, while a seminar on the literature of Coney Island included not only a discussion with author Kevin Baker about his 1999 novel Dreamland but also an exploration of the area where the eponymous amusement park once stood.

LIU’s honors colleges have left their mark on honors education through the contribution of signature NCHC programs, but the core principles of honors education allow honors colleges and programs to lead and inspire a university every day through the work of students and professors. The LIU Post Honors College has exemplified this leadership in a commitment to fostering undergraduate research, most notably through the yearlong tutorial and thesis that serve as the capstone honors experience at LIU Post. The thesis can be traditional, library-based research in the humanities or laboratory experiments in the sciences, but it can also include curriculum designs for K–12 education, original films, theatrical productions, concerts, or corporate advertising campaigns. The echoes of this research can be seen in engaged learning opportunities across both LIU campuses, from the venture-focused education of LIU’s student-run businesses to the achievements in service learning that have placed LIU Post and LIU Brooklyn on the Presidential Honor Roll for Service.

The LIU Brooklyn Honors College enriches the entire university through the bonds it fosters among the faculty. Honors at LIU Brooklyn begins with the Freshman Sequence, a yearlong cluster of literature, history, and philosophy courses that are integrated by theme and content. Joram Warmund, chair of the LIU Brooklyn Department of History, has remarked that “Honors is as great a learning experience for the faculty as it is for the students.” The lessons
that faculty members draw from the honors experience in turn enhance the academic experiences of students throughout the university.

Honors education has traditionally enriched the lives of its students through study abroad experiences, and LIU Brooklyn has made these transformative experiences available to students through its spring-break Honors Travel Seminars. The weeklong, credit-bearing travel seminars are ideally suited to students who are unable to accommodate semester-length study abroad programs in their curricula and have allowed LIU students—including many who had never traveled outside the United States—to explore Dublin, Paris, Rome, Venice, Madrid, Barcelona, and Seville.

The mission of a university is education, and education that comes through the creation of knowledge is where the life of a university is found. The honors colleges at LIU have a five-decade legacy of immersing students in that life, having a significant impact on the larger university community and the NCHC as well. The model that honors education provides for enriching the student experience is central to our institutional aspirations, and the distinction with which honors at LIU has exemplified and added to that model continues to inspire as we look toward the future.

REFERENCES


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President Cline may be contacted at

president@liu.edu.
At a time when higher education is more expensive than ever and the value of the liberal arts has been called into question, it might seem paradoxical to argue that honors—generally offering its students’ large merit scholarships and small classes—is an asset to the university. However, the prestige of a university benefits both from the high test scores and GPAs of honors students at admission and from the national scholarships or professional and graduate school acceptances awarded them upon their graduation. In addition, universities benefit financially from the high retention rate of honors students. For example, at Loyola, the six-year graduation rate is almost 30% higher for honors students than for the general population. Moreover, not just affluent students are being retained. A distinguishing feature of Loyola’s honors program is that, although over 24% of our honors students are the first in their families to attend college, first-generation status is not a factor in graduation rates, probably because the benefits of holistic attention that are standard features of honors—small class sizes, sustained relationships with advisors and
professors, themed living, community engagement—are also important factors in improving retention for first-generation students.

From my perspective as the president of a Catholic, Jesuit institution, as a professor in the Loyola University Honors Program (I teach biomedical ethics each year), and as a Jesuit priest, the value of our honors program lies in its mission: to provide an enriching academic environment that fosters a strong sense of community and challenges our student to use their gifts to become men and women for and with others.

We call our Loyola honors students “scholars for justice in the heart of New Orleans.” Through both their coursework and their engagement activities, they seek to address some of the biggest challenges facing our community: lack of access to quality education; hunger; hyperincarceration; gun violence. However central these issues are to our city, they are equally important beyond the confines of Louisiana. The role of honors, first and foremost, is to encourage students to think critically and creatively and then to discern how to transform their thoughts into action and justice.

A central value in Ignatian education is “finding God in all things.” At the 2000 Justice Conference at Santa Clara University, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, gave the keynote speech, titled “The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education.” He said, “Students, in the course of their formation, must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively.” Honors students have an obligation to use their intellectual, emotional, and other gifts to develop an understanding of the world in its complexities and its beauty. We must graduate these students with the ability to listen to and engage with divergent opinions, to effect workable compromises and solutions, and with a moral compass tuned to the ethical implications of actions.

We must fight rigorously, as well, to oppose those who would measure the value of education based on a graduate’s salary. At Loyola, we are especially proud of our many honors alumni participating in programs such as the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Teach for America or Teach NOLA, Americorps or the Peace Corps. While we rightly laud our students’ graduate school acceptances and academic awards, we are equally proud of the many who receive awards for leadership, community engagement, and service.

In addition to the NCHC’s hallmark “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program,” the Honors Consortium of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) has articulated the “Essential
Characteristics of a Jesuit Honors Program” [http://academicaffairs.loyno.edu/honors/essential-characteristics-jesuit-honors-program]. For example, we encourage the development of not only a distinct honors community but one where all members of the community care for each other holistically and where “personal and intellectual relationships will reinforce each other as the community’s diverse members grow in friendship and compassion. Such a community will also be distinguished by its inclusion of and respect for individuals from a variety of backgrounds and points of view.” We explicitly encourage the development of compassion along with wisdom, and we maintain goals of forming well-educated men and women of intellectual depth who embody a solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, a firm commitment to a faith that does justice, and a life of servant leadership with and for others.

The key to the success of our—and, indeed, any—honors program is that we strive to be a community of relationships rather than a checklist of activities and experiences. It is my great privilege to be in community with these outstanding individuals.

President Wildes may be contacted at pres@loyno.edu.
Unique Academic Skillsets

Stephen J. Jerome, President
Monroe College

Honors Coordinator: Kathryn M. MacDonald

For the past eighty-two years, Monroe College has been committed to being a national leader in urban and international education. Established in the fall of 2004, the honors program has been transformative for the college, bringing together a wide range of professionals from across disciplines to provide innovative academic offerings. The program has had a significant impact in helping the institution meet its mission of providing wide access and strong outcomes to both local and international students, and at an institution whose mission is to provide career-oriented education, the honors program has energized our liberal arts and sciences offerings.

The first honors class had thirty-seven students, and the first course offered focused on the hundredth anniversary of the New York City subway system and was heavily based in experiential learning. In 2005, the first class of ten students graduated with honors, and since then over 250 students have earned their honors diplomas.

The best way to describe the value of honors at Monroe is in the words of our graduates, from whom three themes emerge: the challenging nature of
earning an honors diploma, the fond memories of field trips and social activities, and the sense of pride in being part of a special community.

SELINA SUAREZ, CLASS OF 2005

“I joined the Honors Program because I wanted to take advanced courses, I wanted a challenge,” says Selina Suarez, a graduate in business management. Selina was there when it all started eleven years ago and was part of the first official class of students to graduate with an honors diploma. While a student, she began her career in the education sector by working at Monroe College. She gained an understanding of how a college works from top to bottom while taking honors courses that she says allowed her to “branch out.” Today, she is a successful entrepreneur who runs Glasswing Solutions, a venture that creates education technology to help schools succeed. “I started my company in May 2013 and now our product is in 32 schools and programs.” To get to this career landmark, Selina earned her MBA from St. John’s University Tobin School of Business, where she studied management and computer science statistics. Her introduction to computer science came in the honors program. “The Web Design course I took for Honors allowed me to branch outside my major and exposed me to this field, which has ultimately given me an edge.” For her, honors “opened the door” to a successful life and career.

OMAR NEWELL, CLASS OF 2007

Omar Newell graduated from the honors program with a bachelor’s degree in business management. He went on to earn his law degree from Northwestern University in 2011 and has had a distinguished career since graduation. One of his many achievements has been starting NCG Legal. Omar networks with multiple law firms throughout the United States, including one in New Rochelle, and assists these firms in cost-effective legal management. At the same time, Omar is a humanitarian. Serving his community is, as he says, “second nature.” Today, he serves as Director of Community Services for the National Youth Service in his home country of Jamaica. When asked about his honors experience, he says it was “transformational”: “Honors allowed me to interact with so many people. And my experience in HN250 [the American Presidency] really impacted my own perception of what makes a leader. I believe leaders create situations and not the other way around.” Omar also attributes his fondness for public speaking to honors and urges current students to develop and hone their public speaking skills.
Johann Mendoza radiates gratitude for all that the honors program exposed him to when he was a student. Johann earned his bachelor’s degree in business management with a minor in hospitality management. “HN150 allowed me to learn so much about New York City. The course allowed me to better understand the area where I was making my home while in college.” The native of Trinidad and Tobago went on to say, “Honors provided me with an exciting challenge. I was surrounded by intelligent people and I wanted to prove myself and stand out.” And stand out he did. After graduating from Monroe, Johann went on to earn his MBA in operations management from the University of Toledo. He has had a robust career in the food manufacturing industry and now serves as a warehouse manager for Holiday Snacks Limited in Trinidad and Tobago. Johann says that honors allowed him to develop his creativity, particularly in how he sees and solves problems, which is important in his professional role.

THRUPTHY KRISHNAN, CLASS OF 2014

Only a few short months after graduation, Thrupthy Krishnan was offered a full-time position at KPMG, LLC as an audit associate. The skills the program developed that she finds invaluable are proper writing and precise communication. These skills were developed during her preparation for several NCHC and NRHC conferences where she represented the honors program. Thrupthy has earned her chartered financial analyst (CFA) certification recently and is currently enrolled in New York University’s MBA program. She is also embarking on new adventures: she will be traveling to Dublin for six months to audit for KPMG and then will make her new home with the company in the Bahamas. Thrupthy says that honors has been “motivational.” She adds, “Nothing is impossible; every challenge can be met.”

The Monroe College Honors Program has built a legacy that continues to thrive because of its student members. As the above graduates have noted, honors brings out the best in our students. With careful guidance from faculty and staff, honors students develop unique academic skillsets, learning much about their own abilities along the way. Their efforts and dedication lift up not only them but Monroe as well.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We are grateful to Executive Vice President Marc Jerome, who was a major contributor to this essay.

President Jerome may be contacted at
sjerome@monroecollege.edu.
“I t is imperative that we offer some of the university’s most academically motivated students additional opportunities for enrichment through enhanced curricula and intellectually stimulating activities.” These words marked the beginning of the North Carolina A&T State University Honors Program in 1998. Soon thereafter a committee started meeting to explore the feasibility and implementation of an honors program. The committee worked strategically to create the necessary curricula and programming content and accepted the first honor students that fall. The program has rapidly evolved, along the lines of honors programs nationally, to implement academically challenging coursework and co-curricular programming to supplement honors students’ traditional studies.

By the program’s seventh year, multiple pathways to earning honors credit for graduation had been developed. Criteria included maintaining a 3.5 cumulative grade point average in addition to attendance at lectures and cultural events as well as performing at least ten hours of community service each semester. At that point, the program numbered five hundred students.
A more rigorous application and selection process was implemented in 2011, when the university adopted a bold strategic plan, A&T Preeminence 2020. With increased enrollment standards and program growth now a priority, the new director and his staff had as a goal the facilitation and encouragement of honors students’ applications to graduate programs as well as national fellowships and scholarships. As the director has told students, ambitious applications create pressure to develop a corpus of work or that makes you focus on what you’ve done, why you did it, and what you’ve learned in order to present yourselves successfully for future jobs and graduate study.

As the program has grown now to six hundred students, it has also seen its graduates achieve the kind of success the director encouraged. In 2013, Emmanuel Johnson, an honors graduate, used his Fulbright post-graduate award to study at Birmingham University in England. In 2014, honors graduate Destenie Nock became the first student from a historically black college or university to receive a George J. Mitchell Scholarship. Others have been named National Science Foundation fellows; Science, Mathematics & Research for Transformation (SMART) Scholars from the U.S. Department of Defense; and Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholars. “These successes are a testament to the talent and the capabilities of our honors students,” said honors director Michael Cundall. “Their achievements have served as motivation for our current students to continue their personal journeys to preeminence.”

This fall, the honors program admitted one of the largest classes in program history with more than 160 students. “The size and the academic talents of this class show that we are drawing to A&T more of the world’s most high-achieving students, and that is what preeminence is about,” Cundall said. Meanwhile, the enriched academic experiences available through the honors program continue to help prepare A&T students for graduate studies as well as the early stages of their respective careers. Over the years, students from this program have been selected as Campus All-Stars for the White House Initiative on HBCUs and have held such campus leadership positions as Student Government Association president, vice president and Miss A&T. Honors students have also participated in such campus activities as university team football, baseball, and bowling.

Although a young program, the North Carolina A&T Honors Program illustrates how quickly and successfully honors can achieve its goals of providing a quality education to its high-achieving students and how these
students can benefit academically and personally from the experiences that honors provides for them.

Chancellor Martin may be contacted at chancellor@ncat.edu.
A Personal and Professional Perspective on an Honors Program

Geoffrey S. Mearns, President
Northern Kentucky University

Interim Honors Director: Belle Zembrodt

Three decades ago, I had the good fortune of attending a highly selective, private college. At Yale, I received an excellent education because most of the classes were taught by tenured faculty who were experts in their respective fields. The relatively small class sizes and the wide variety of other educational opportunities ensured that each student received personal attention, encouragement, and support.

Today, I have the privilege of serving as the president of Northern Kentucky University, a comprehensive, public university located just five miles south of Cincinnati, Ohio. At NKU, we aspire to provide a personal educational experience to the more than 12,000 undergraduate students who enroll each year. Given the demographics of our undergraduate student body—more than 50% are first-generation college students and 40% are eligible for Pell grants—the education we provide is truly transformative.
A few years ago, Felipe Fernández-Armesto wrote about the ability of regional, public universities to change the lives of their students:

To find places that make an alchemical difference—that ignite unsuspected genius, enchant Cinderellas into princesses and magic modest ducklings into very fine swans—you have to look at the truly heroic local and regional universities. These institutions have shoestring budgets and few or no historic advantages, but make up for their deficiencies by the commitment of the teachers, the ambition of the students and the zeal of the communities that surround them.

Northern Kentucky is just such a regional university.

One of the ways that we deliver on our commitment to our students is through our excellent honors program. The NKU Honors Program, which has grown to more than 500 students, enables these students to take special seminars and to conduct research projects with our senior faculty. The program focuses on developing the analytical skills that are vital for success in our dynamic and competitive economy. Because of the demographic profile of the students both in the honors program and at our university, our honors students are exposed to diverse perspectives and experiences. These experiences are critical for success in our country, where public, comprehensive universities educate 63% of all African American students, 47% of all Latino students, and 50% of all Native American students.

Based on my own educational background and my professional experience, I believe that an honors program at a large, diverse, public university is an excellent choice for an ambitious, high-achieving student. As Frank Bruni wrote recently in The New York Times, an increasing number of outstanding students are choosing to enroll in an honors program or an honors college at a public university. According to Bruni, these students can enjoy specialized programs and small classes while also being able to take advantage of the resources and expansive programming of a large, public university—benefits that honors students often tell me are the reasons that they decided to attend NKU.

My daughter Clare, who contributed to this essay, chose to attend NKU in large part because of our honors program. During her senior year in high school, Clare applied for admission to nine institutions, including a few private colleges and several nationally prominent universities. After a few months, she received acceptance letters from several of the more selective intuitions, the kind of colleges that her family and friends expected her to choose.
Throughout her decision-making process, though, NKU continued to spark her intellectual curiosity and to engage her emotional aspirations. During an honors recruiting event, Clare heard students and faculty describe with enthusiasm and passion the various project-based courses that are common in our honors program. They also described how each student does a two-semester-long project on a topic of his or her choice, providing an opportunity that prepares students for graduate school and professional careers. Clare chose to enroll at NKU because of such opportunities, and, at the end of her first year, she was chosen to present her paper at the annual honors program banquet. Clare had conducted research on the causes of the Rwandan genocide and the continuing challenges the people of Rwanda still face.

When she was considering her options, Clare was also attracted to the small classes where she would receive individual attention. During her first year in our honors program, Clare was regularly challenged to express her views in class, and she relished the prompt, thorough feedback that she received from our faculty on her written work. These experiences improved her oral and written advocacy skills, and they enhanced her self-confidence.

Our honors program also features mentoring by faculty members. Because of the smaller class sizes and the seminar format, honors students have the opportunity to know their professors very well. In her first year in the program, Clare was mentored by an inspiring professor who facilitated important discussions on sometimes sensitive, thought-provoking, and important topics. This professor pushed Clare and her classmates to work hard and to expand their intellectual curiosity. As a result of these personal relationships, Clare and her peers grew rapidly as students and scholars. Even after the semester was over, Clare’s faculty mentor continued to meet with her on a regular basis to assist her in furthering her thoughts and ideas on her research topic.

We all know that technology is changing higher education. Notwithstanding technological innovation, I still believe that one of the most important educational experiences—if not the most important—is the personal, human relationship between a student and a faculty member. Our honors program facilitates and expedites these transformative relationships.

Our honors program also includes a peer mentoring program. In this program, an experienced student regularly attends the freshman introductory class. The peer mentor provides support, advice, and encouragement to our new students. After her freshman year, Clare was asked to serve as a peer mentor. She has quickly realized that being a mentor is an enriching experience.
She has learned that, by serving other students, she is developing leadership skills and reaping many other rewards.

For Clare and so many of our outstanding students, the honors program demonstrates NKU’s commitment to our collective vision. We aspire to prepare our students to have successful careers and to lead meaningful lives. Our core values include a commitment to excellence and inclusiveness. Our honors program provides a personal educational experience that challenges our students to achieve their own personal dream. Our honors students do not come to our university with a sense of entitlement; rather, they arrive on our campus with the ambition to learn and to serve. Our honors program fans that flame: it fuels that innate passion for greater knowledge and understanding.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to thank my daughter Clare L. Mearns, who is a sophomore at NKU, for her contributions to this essay.

REFERENCES


President Mearns may be contacted at mearns@nkuedu.
Advancing University Core Values by Developing an Honors College

GEORGE L. HANBURY II, PRESIDENT
Nova Southeastern University

HONORS DEAN: DON ROSENBLUM

The mid-1960s were a time of historic social and cultural change, creating a perfect climate for a small university with a handful of students and some revolutionary ideas to take shape. During that dynamic era, Nova Southeastern University (NSU) was founded in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. In 2014, NSU celebrated fifty years of growth, innovation, and inclusive educational opportunities; today it is the largest, not-for-profit, private university in the state with approximately 26,000 students. Just twelve years ago, the university’s undergraduate honors program was initiated, and this past summer we elevated our commitment from a high-impact honors program housed within a traditional college of arts and sciences to a multidisciplinary honors college. The new honors college is one instance of an institution that, true to its dynamic origins, is constantly changing to suit the times. As the university’s sixth president, I serve to usher in a new era and a renewed vision of core values for this young and aspiring institution.
The establishment of the Farquhar Honors College reflects the importance the university places on promoting excellence across all degree levels and disciplines. NSU takes pride in becoming one of the approximately two hundred U.S. universities out of more than four thousand colleges and universities to house an honors college. The honors college was born out of our recognition that high academic performance is coterminous with leadership and out of our desire to acknowledge publicly the premier scholarship demonstrated by our students. Our honors college is designed to unleash a crucial potential in all students: the ability to lead.

A CLEAR VISION

In pursuit of defining the NSU of tomorrow, in 2010 I collaborated with each of our constituent groups, including student leaders and community members (more than 5,000 individuals in total), to create a single, shared vision. NSU’s Vision 2020, our new mission statement, and a new set of core values have collectively guided our decisions, including the establishment of the NSU Honors College. As both NSU and the National Collegiate Honors Council mark our fifty-year anniversaries, reminding ourselves of our values is central to us all.

NSU’s Vision 2020 declares, “By 2020, through excellence and innovations in teaching, research, service, and learning, Nova Southeastern University will be recognized by accrediting agencies, the academic community, and the general public as a premier, private, not-for-profit university of quality and distinction that engages all students and produces alumni who serve with integrity in their lives, fields of study, and resulting careers.” Our statement is audacious because we believe NSU—like our peer institutions—is an important contributor to the future of education. The creation of the honors college is advancing our goals by giving honors a greater impact among undergraduate and graduate students, honors alumni, faculty and staff members from all disciplines, and our community at large. Making connections between undergraduate and graduate students is especially valuable at NSU as we have a proportionately larger graduate student population that can help transition and inspire undergraduate students as they enter the next phase of their studies.
A FOCUSED MISSION

Honors colleges exemplify university missions in action through their unique and challenging seminars, travel study in domestic locations and abroad, scholarship support, and faculty mentorships for students pursuing research and international fellowships. Honors educators also provide events that generate productive discussions and collaborations across the disciplines. NSU’s honors college, like many others, hosts events open to the entire university and the community, bringing together learners, educators, and inquisitive minds from various academic backgrounds, industries, and organizations.

CORE VALUES

Bringing a new shared mission and vision to reality requires shared values. Students need to know what we stand for: what values we hold sacrosanct and will not compromise for expediency. Therefore, NSU established eight core values to support the university’s renewed vision and mission.

1. “Academic Excellence” is the provision of highest-quality teaching and learning experiences provided by the most academically and professionally qualified instructional faculty and staff, opportunities for contextual learning, state-of-the-art facilities, beautiful surroundings, and the resources necessary to support learning at the highest level. Additionally, academic excellence reflects the successful relationship between engaged learners and outstanding instructional faculty and staff.

Students come to NSU and remain because of inspiring faculty. Likewise, faculty members are inspired by enthused and engaged students. This relationship is the foundation of academic excellence and is the heart of the honors tradition. In addition to teaching honors courses, honors faculty provide talent identification and support for students pursuing national and international fellowships and scholarships; lead honors workshops and travel study trips; serve as advisors for multidisciplinary academic honor societies; and mentor honors students engaged in research, creative projects, and other forms of scholarship.

2. “Student-Centered” education is the focus of our institutional priorities, resource decisions, and planning. We are stewards of students’
needs and advocates for their academic success and professional development. We challenge all students to take full advantage of the entire college experience; to exercise passionate curiosity; and to interact in and outside of the classroom. In return, we promise to offer comprehensive collegial experiences that prepare them for a lifetime of learning, professional success, and social responsibility. At NSU, part of fulfilling this promise was the establishment of the honors college.

The social component of honors, which includes group visits to museums, murder mystery dinners, theatre, and opera as well as kayaking and horseback riding trips, fosters peer support. Honors students see themselves as part of a team rather than as competitors with one another—a quality that may be rare among groups of high-achieving, highly motivated students but that we know to be particularly important to future employers and colleagues.

3. The Core Value of “Integrity” naturally hinges on honesty and fairness, consistency in instruction, ethics of scholarship, freedom of inquiry, and open and truthful engagement with the community through effective communication, policies, and practices.

Wherever honors students find themselves, they are expected to act with integrity as representatives of their university and as a reflection of their personal value systems.

The NSU Honors Pledge also speaks directly about academic integrity, challenging students to be leaders and role models in all aspects of their lives. When we charge honors students to look at their new peers as part of a future professional network, it makes a positive difference in their interactions and relationships.

4. “Innovation” is defined by NSU as the creative and deliberate application of teaching, research, scholarship and service for effective education and the development of useful products or processes providing added value to the community.

Honors education champions innovative educational models, which may include team teaching; group assignments; an emphasis on small and interactive classes focused on unique and timely topics and themes; professional networking opportunities; and undergraduate research potentially leading to an honors thesis, national publication, or presentation at conferences.
5. “Opportunity” fosters the possibility for anyone associated with NSU to acquire an education or an educational experience through creative, sound pedagogical programs.

In an honors environment, opportunity has no boundaries. Honors students are supported through scholarships, invited to combine disparate areas of study, and encouraged to pursue experiences beyond the ordinary. Honors faculty can set higher standards and allow for greater flexibility.

6. NSU’s “Research and Scholarship” products are disseminated and evaluated through intellectual discourse, application, assessment, and other mechanisms of the relevant peer community.

Honors colleges house various initiatives that help our undergraduate students develop, test, and share their research and scholarship. At NSU, the Undergraduate Student Symposium is entering its fifteenth year, encouraging students of all majors to challenge their own assumptions and hypotheses in order to uncover new ways of interpreting the world around them. Past symposium winners have explored their family genetics, deconstructed a great American novel, analyzed the thought behind free-form dance, and sought to contribute to cancer research. Through such programs, honors education empowers students to experience firsthand the process and rewards of discovery.

7. The core value of “Diversity” includes but is not limited to race, ethnicity, culture, religion, philosophy, gender, physical, socioeconomic status, age, and sexual orientation. Differences in views, interpretations, and reactions derived from diversity help prepare individuals to live, love, work, and compete in a global economy. I am proud of the fact that NSU is a minority-majority university and recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institution that perceives diversity as a strength.

The honors community has an even broader diversity as our collective student bodies represent all majors, many countries, many faiths, and other identifying qualities. Honors students across the country are likely to engage and become friends with students of different backgrounds and experiences. Intellectually, students are challenged in honors classes to strengthen critical thinking by considering positions other than their own.
8. NSU is a “Community” with a common identity and purpose that engages with the external community through diverse services, clinical programs, and community-based research and resources. Our community extends into professional, intellectual, and geographical domains that both support and are the focus of our educational mission.

Honors colleges have a history of involvement with community outreach programs. NSU is committed to making an overall contribution to the future of our community and its capacity to compete globally for business, talent, and culture. In my opinion, it would be irresponsible for us, as university leaders in a knowledge-based economy, not to consider how to leverage our resources for the benefit of community residents.

**HONORS OUTCOMES**

NSU’s vision, mission, and values are consistent with those of an honors education. To help bring our university’s goals to fruition, the honors college dean, honors faculty, and university leadership established core outcomes that reflect the well-established successes of honors colleges nationwide.

Honors college initiatives and projects are aligned to these outcomes, which are expected for all honors students. Students develop a four-year program to enhance strengths in five domains, and honors faculty are highly vested in these outcomes, mentoring students to develop and advance their plans.

1. “Inquiry”—Students will demonstrate skills in scholarship and research necessary to succeed in graduate or professional school and/or the workforce.

2. “Innovation and Creativity”—Students will recognize and apply multidisciplinary approaches to analyzing and solving problems.

3. “Global Awareness and Sensitivity”—Students will discuss international matters and engage with cultures from around the world.

4. “Art and Culture”—Students will analyze and appreciate cultural artifacts.

5. “Ethics and Engagement”—Students will demonstrate a commitment to ethical principles through engagement in the community.
THE HONORS INFLUENCE

Prospective and current students see such outcomes as attractive, distinguishing qualities of an honors education and a primary reason to enroll and remain at our institutions. Achieving these outcomes also serves as a source of pride and influence for our institution. Honors student success is historically impressive, with high graduation rates and significant engagement in college athletics, campus leadership roles, and community service.

Other signs of success for honors on our campus include the use of honors course structures and approaches in non-honors classrooms. At NSU, for example, faculty are adopting practices such as problem-based instruction, student-led discussions, and novel-reading seminars in their regular courses. Honors alumni engagement is also comparatively strong and serves as a role model for fellow alumni. Each spring more than fifty honors alumni return to campus for our NSU Honors Banquet, sharing stories of their experiences in college and the real world with current students. Our alumni have also started to give back to NSU by donating to support student scholarships, an admirable tradition that is well established at other honors institutions.

We have made it clear through our commitment to the Farquhar Honors College—and all that it embodies—that an honors education is not an isolated phenomenon: it reflects the broader university and the global community. NSU’s new Farquhar Honors College is yet another reason our students and more than 170,000 alumni in all fifty states and more than sixty-three foreign countries remain engaged with their alma mater. On behalf of NSU, I am proud to be part of the Farquhar Honors College and the evolving honors tradition that contributes to the advancement of the academy and our civic society through education.

________________________________________________________

President Hanbury may be contacted at
Hanbury@nova.edu.
Honors as Whole-Person Education

William M. Wilson, President
Oral Roberts University
Honors Director: John Korstad

The Oral Roberts University Honors Program attracts a significant number of students each year, both as incoming freshmen and currently enrolled students, seeking a richer academic experience. While the honors program offers a higher-level academic challenge, its value lies beyond what is simply learned in the classroom. The program contributes to the intellectual, social, and spiritual development of its students, but its greatest value lies in its ability to synthesize these components into a whole-person education that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Statistics show that potential honors program students are more prepared for the rigor of college coursework; on average, incoming HP students’ high school GPA is 0.5 points higher than the GPA of non-honors students, and they score almost 300 points higher on the SAT and 10 points higher on the ACT than do matriculating non-honors students. Designed for this well-prepared set of students, the academic division of the honors program functions on three primary levels: Freshman Honors Seminar, honors sections of standard courses, and the Fellows Seminars. Required for all HP students,
Freshman Honors Seminar (FHS) is many students’ first introduction to the program, taken in either the first or second semester of their undergraduate education. This discussion-based seminar is led by upper-division honors students who are selected and supervised by the honors directors, and it offers an introduction to the format of the ensuing Fellows seminars. Since FHS is a zero-credit course, it offers a safe environment for students to hone their skills in critical thinking and civil debate before they are tested in higher-division courses.

An important value of honors is the opportunity it offers students to stretch their worldviews and expand their perceptions through moderated debate and discussion. Most years a book is chosen for Freshman Honors Seminar that is either controversial or intellectually stimulating, requiring analysis from multiple points of view. These discussions can include gender, race, American culture, class, or the disillusionment of the postmodern millennial. Guest speakers introduce subjects stretching from science to business to literature. The guests include HP alumni who have recently gone on to postgraduate studies or professions and who motivate current students to excel in their areas of study, learn more about other career fields, and get involved in the HP. The skills and wisdom learned in FHS are vital to students’ success in later honors courses.

The ORU Honors Program is divided into two classifications: Fellows and Scholars. Upon enrollment, the top 16–18 students are selected as Fellows based on ACT or SAT composite score, class ranking (if public high school), recommendations, and a personal essay; the remaining applicants are offered a Scholar’s position. Fellows receive a larger scholarship and are required to take five of the six Fellows Seminars, which form the creative backbone of the honors program. Fusing two different disciplines—such as mathematics and history, English and science fiction, or theology and science—these six courses offer students and faculty a chance to pursue interdisciplinary studies. Despite their name, five of the six Fellows Seminars are open to all honors students; Artistic Expression is the exception, open only to freshman Fellows. Through these courses, students not only pursue a higher level of academic study but develop skills in creative thinking, integrating the content learned from various disciplines into a cohesive general education. The Fellows Seminars substitute for general education requirements, allowing students the freedom to pursue academic challenges without overburdening their course load. These seminars provide an academic challenge and contribute to students’ social and spiritual development, encouraging students to discuss
weighty or controversial topics that require skills in communication, critical thinking, and wisdom. Students not only learn to integrate their academic knowledge with their spiritual conscience but to communicate their views with maturity and tact to peers who hold differing opinions.

Through the Fellows Seminars, the HP contributes significantly to the development of a whole-person education. Students develop a community of peers encouraging and developing each other in a quest for knowledge and wisdom, guided by their faculty. In a recent study evaluating the effectiveness of the Fellows Seminars in developing an educated, spiritually informed worldview, students consistently reported that these courses pushed them to integrate their academic and spiritual development in the formation of a holistic worldview. Students carry these skills forward into their fields of study and research as they continue to innovate and to integrate their academic interests with social and spiritual concerns.

Outside the classroom, honors students maintain a close-knit community. The honors wings (dedicated floors in two men’s and two women’s dormitories) foster a community complementary to that formed in the classroom. As students study and live together, they continue to form relationships that will carry through the remainder of their undergraduate careers and into the post-graduate world. These floors primarily serve freshmen, with a handful of upperclassmen remaining to pass down the distinctive culture of the individual wing. New students thus have a sort of “home base” as they adapt to the new environment of university life and the challenges of honors coursework. The honors wings are the catalysts for a variety of the annual social events that constitute an honors culture, such as the HP retreat, game nights, masquerade ball, honors chapels, and Christmas parties that flourish in addition to academic honors program events (Sweeney et al. 221).

The honors wings contribute to students’ social development, mitigate elitism, and promote future leadership by opening access to non-honors students who request to live on an honors wing if space is available. Many honors students choose to participate in student leadership after their freshman or sophomore year, resulting in a diaspora of honors students who hold offices and leadership positions in the ORU Student Association and in the Chaplain, RA, and APA programs. Allowing non-honors students to fill empty rooms on honors floors discourages the formation of an isolated or exclusive culture. Instead, honors students live and form close friendships with students from outside the program, who are welcome to participate in various honors events and become a part of the HP family.
As a Christian institution, Oral Roberts University stresses the importance of religious faith, and the honors program stresses the value of faith to a whole-person education. Alyssa Gerick, a sophomore Fellow in the honors program this year, writes:

The Honors Program at ORU serves a vital role in reminding students that as Christians we are called to dedicate our every commitment and action to God. The program accomplishes this by teaching students that their performance at the academic level can and should be used to glorify God. Each person is gifted with a different ability that is to be used in building the kingdom of God, and the HP helps groom those who are called to dedicate their minds to God’s kingdom. Additionally, the HP provides students the opportunity to utilize their full intellectual capacity. In doing this, the HP is acting as a vehicle for students to obey the great commandment to love God with all of their heart, soul, strength, and mind. As a student in the HP, I can personally attest to the ever-present temptation of neglecting the stretching and growing of my own personal education. Striving to go beyond the expected performance and commitment requires accountability and encouragement, both of which the HP [helps cultivate] for an involved member. The fellowship that proved to be so vital in the early church and continues to be vital today is yet another benefit of the HP. As an incoming freshman [last] year I was immensely grateful for the group of students that I was automatically acquainted with because of the HP. Because of the shared Christian faith in the HP, I was privileged to experience Paul’s description of how members in the body of Christ need to strengthen each other. This experience consisted of friendly competitions at HP events which built teamwork skills, study groups to enhance academic performance, and special friendships which allowed personal discussions. The HP is an effective instrument in developing Christians who are willing to rely on each other and who are ready to bring change to their academic sphere of influence.

As a Christian school, ORU holds biweekly chapels for the entire student body on Wednesdays and Fridays. Twice a semester, the HP hosts its own chapel, with student-led worship and a short message by either the Honors Student Council Chaplain or an invited guest speaker. These messages vary
widely by topic, but generally encourage students to put their academic skills and learning to service in their faith.

In recent years, honors students have begun a volunteer weekly Bible study and prayer time, meeting before classes to study and discuss issues of faith, service, and learning. These meetings are a fine example of the way that the Oral Roberts University Honors Program unites intellectual, social, and spiritual development into a whole-person education: students, united by friendships formed through classes and social events, apply the knowledge and skills learned in their academic work while always seeking a deeper spirituality.

REFERENCES


President Wilson may be contacted at president@oru.edu.
An Integrated Learning Experience

DENNIS R. HARKINS, PRESIDENT
Orange Coast College

HONORS COORDINATOR: KAREN BAKER

Defining the practical and theoretical context of honors programs and courses in today’s complex educational climate is challenging. Many institutions have used budget shortages to make decisions to reduce honors offerings that are not in the best interest of the students. Funding for honors programs may seem to be extraneous, but these programs provide a pathway for students to excel academically, establish a higher academic bar, and pursue their personal areas of interest while distinguishing themselves as unique learners. Honors programs allow highly motivated students to navigate across the curriculum and to integrate subject matters at a higher level of intensity. Honors classes provide the student a more personal connection with faculty members, flexibility in defining goals, and the ability to exceed beyond normal course standards.

Community college honors students broadly reflect the local and global environment, bringing together talented students with unique backgrounds and great potential. As stated in our college catalogue, “The mission of the Orange Coast College (OCC) Honors Program is to create a growing
community of scholars in which highly motivated students and faculty engage in enriched academic and co-curricular experiences where students enjoy enhanced scholarship and transfer opportunities.” The OCC Honors Program is also recognized for its continuous outreach to the community in varying service learning activities.

The connection between teachers and students in the honors program is one where all the students are challenged to follow their natural curiosity and to go beyond the scope of an assignment or project. In the OCC Honors Certificate Program, students are required to complete fifteen credits from across three different disciplines and to fashion an interdisciplinary approach in their study. Their honors classes afford students the opportunity to pursue individual interests, structure their own experiences, and have a specialized, valuable learning experience. To this end, the program attracts students who are self-directed and self-regulating.

The honors program at OCC has been described as a “college within a college” with a focus on developing and expanding educational opportunities for highly motivated individuals and improving their prospects of transfer to the most competitive universities in the nation. The honors program does not exist in a vacuum and has strong ties with the Association of Core Texts and Courses, Honors Transfer Council of California, Western Regional Honors Council, and National Collegiate Honors Council. OCC honors students also participate at the state honors conference held close by in Orange County at the University of California, Irvine.

As educators, we strive to create an environment where students thrive and grow to maximize their potential. In community colleges, students can find a personally regulated, best-fit environment that combines instruction in general education as well as the applied arts. The honors program can provide integration in applied and non-applied pathways for students to expand their knowledge beyond what is required in program and course requirements. This diversity of opportunities is reflected in the program’s curriculum, which includes courses in the following disciplines: anthropology, architecture, art, astronomy, biology, business, English, French, geography, geology, history, humanities, Japanese, mathematics, marine science, photography, political science, psychology, sociology, and Spanish.

Our honors program allows students from diverse backgrounds an avenue for community building, thus teaching students how to live in a globally dynamic world. Students here are admitted to the program based on academic achievement or by the recommendation of a faculty member who may
weigh the ability of the student in a more holistic manner. In addition, students who do not have the required GPA for the program can enroll in honors courses in order to be challenged at a higher level and interact with some of the highest-achieving students at the college. Our experience at Orange Coast College has shown that students are reasonably good at assessing their own academic talent, and when they feel restricted within the normal educational experience, they may pursue honors sections of courses as long as they meet prerequisites. Recognizing that there are many kinds of intelligence, our honors program gives students room for creativity and discovery.

With many international students in the honors program, students have an added cultural and global experience in examining academic and global issues, enhancing the critical thinking and the analysis of divergent points of view that occur in honors seminars. Other activities that are integral to creating a broader perspective for students include guest speakers and trips to local lectures, galleries, and museums.

Presidents can sometimes be skeptical, as I was when I first became involved with the honors program. Certainly all teachers should be creating learning opportunities for students that challenge them at their highest level of achievement, so academically advanced students shouldn’t really need smaller classes or special opportunities. However, after becoming more connected with the faculty, seeing their passion, and listening to students describe their experiences, I am convinced that honors programs are not an add-on but a critical element of a comprehensive college experience for both students and faculty.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks to Teresa Scarbrough, Orange Coast College Honors Office Coordinator, for her contribution to this essay.

President Harkins may be contacted at dharkins@occ.cccd.edu.
The development of an honors program at Rogers State University a decade ago brought about significant positive changes to our campus, where more than three-quarters of our students are the first in their families to attend college. Throughout the years, these young scholars have elevated academic discourse across campus and delivered an impact felt well beyond their honors classrooms.

As we consider how an honors program has benefited our university, it is important to provide some context to our unique history. Rogers State University holds the distinction of being Oklahoma’s newest regional institution of higher education, but it has roots that go back to shortly after Oklahoma’s statehood. For most of our history, we operated as the Oklahoma Military Academy, with an on-campus high school and junior college. In the early 1970s, the military school became a community college that operated for more than a quarter-century. From that community college, the Oklahoma
Legislature in 1999 created Rogers State University to address unmet educational needs for the state's second largest metropolitan area.

Our service area includes some of the poorest communities in a state where one in six people live below the poverty line. Even with one of the nation's lowest in-state tuition rates, 84% of our students require some form of financial aid to attend college. We also find that the majority of our students are not fully prepared for college, with more than 55% requiring some level of remediation in English, math, reading, and/or science.

Our campus leadership soon determined that adding an honors program would be crucial to our growth as a regional four-year university. The creation of the RSU Honors Program in fall 2005 served purposes both practical and idealistic. With its full scholarship that included room and board, it provided an enrollment incentive to attract accomplished students, while improving the quality of our academic enterprise through the addition of some of Oklahoma's best and brightest students.

Quite frankly, the move allowed RSU to attract outstanding students who might not have otherwise given a second look at a regional university that had recently transitioned from a community college just five years earlier. Further, the generous scholarship package opened doors for many students who had academic credentials to attend larger or more established schools but nevertheless chose to attend RSU. About 90% of our honors program students are from Oklahoma, with most living a short drive from our main campus in Claremore.

The RSU Honors Program was built on the high-impact educational practices developed by George Kuh, the founding director for the National Survey of Student Engagement. Built on the foundation of the honors program's learning community, the program also includes enriching activities like service learning, internships, and study-at-large (study abroad). Most RSU bachelor's degree programs include an intensive senior capstone project, which is a recommended practice from NSSE. These features, when taken in combination, help broaden student perspectives and strengthen the academic experience.

The honors program was designed around learning communities of academic high-achievers enrolled in a small number of designated honors courses. Students in the RSU Honors Program typically take about a third of their classes within the program, with the majority of their studies taking place in classes where they mingle with the entire student population. Soon
after the honors program launched, longtime faculty noted that honors students helped spark more in-depth conversations and elevated discussion among students of all levels.

In its honors curriculum, RSU eschews traditional lecture classes. As a result, the development of the curriculum is complex, yet we have found that both faculty and students enjoy a richer classroom experience as a result of the active learning styles adopted in our honors classrooms. As the program gained traction, an increasing number of our faculty volunteered to teach honors courses and reported experimenting with how they approached teaching the subject matter. As a result, many faculty members have been able to refine their curriculum in traditional classes based on the outcomes from teaching a related honors course.

The implementation of service learning has been a growing trend among honors programs nationwide and has been a feature of the honors program since its inception. We require our honors students to complete at least twenty-five hours of volunteer service each semester, and we find that many of our honors students go beyond the minimum requirement, which should not be a surprise for those who have worked closely with high-achieving students. The addition of service learning activities has opened the lens with which students view their communities and fulfills our institutional mission to prepare students for service in a diverse society.

We have had several entering students who were academically advanced but had led relatively sheltered existences, never traveling far beyond their small Oklahoma hometowns. As these students matured in the honors program, their confidence increased, and they explored new opportunities that stretched their boundaries, including traveling overseas to participate in RSU’s study-at-large opportunities. We have witnessed the transformation of students who were apprehensive at the beginning of their study-at-large session but then returned from the experience eager to participate in another travel program.

Although I have concentrated on the benefits of our honors program, I would also like to take the opportunity to mention our President’s Leadership Class, a four-year scholarship program designed to develop student leaders. The RSU Honors Program and the President’s Leadership Class were established during the same period. Through the past decade, the two academic enrichment programs have worked in unison to attract a thriving group of academically advanced students with leadership skills. In fact, some students
have participated in both programs; this year six students are members of both programs, which together serve as flagship programs that cultivate academic talents within a generation that needs new leaders.

Like most universities, Rogers State University continues to develop well-rounded graduates who are capable of independent, critical thinking while being actively engaged within their communities. While each of our academic programs seeks to deliver us to that point, I believe that the RSU Honors Program deserves special recognition for increasing student quality at a critical juncture in a young university’s history. I look forward to seeing what the next ten years of this remarkable program will bring to the university and to our state.

President Rice may be contacted at lrice@rsu.edu.
Innovation Labs:  
A Professional Approach to Honors

RON BORMANS, PRESIDENT  
Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (the Netherlands)

HONORS DEAN: RON WEERHEIJM

THE VALUE OF HONORS EDUCATION

Honors education at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (RUAS) focuses on students who are willing to invest more in their study than the average student. Selection criteria are the students’ willingness to develop beyond what is offered in the regular curriculum and are not based on previous accomplishments. By using these criteria, we made the honors program broadly—but not freely—accessible. The task we set for all students is “Surpass Yourself!” The additional challenge of the honors program lies in its multidisciplinary teamwork. Students say that the program teaches them to appreciate different perspectives on issues and to integrate these with their own perspectives (Lappia, Weerheijm, Pilot, and Van Eijl). We stimulate honors students to get the best out of themselves and to develop themselves as junior innovative professionals. Our honors students “work with others to..."
achieve innovative solutions that are of practical value and appropriate to be adopted in socially relevant issues” (Hogeschool Rotterdam).

The desired learning outcomes of the RUAS honors programs are the five competences included in our profile Learning to Innovate, which describes an excellent professional as one who can:

1. focus on innovation (innovation-driven);
2. focus on the context in which (s)he works (demand-driven);
3. work closely with important disciplines in this context (cooperatively multidisciplinary);
4. arrive jointly at a solution to an issue, provide arguments in favor of the solution, and share ideas (co-creative in knowledge generation); and
5. manage his or her own development (capable of interactive learning).

These competencies focus on the student’s individual development as an innovative professional and provide emphasis on the student’s intended profession. In this way, RUAS aims to educate resilient professionals who are comfortable and well-prepared. We challenge students to work independently and as members of teams on reliable solutions to extremely complex and multidisciplinary issues drawn from current practices. Our aim is to achieve the highest possible level of student participation by integrating honors programs within eighty different curricula with the idea that all students should have access to at least parts of these programs. At the same time, lecturers have to operate on the notion that quality is characterized by considerable differentiation, sometimes in relation to level or profession and always in relation to specific learning needs of the individual student. The ever-changing world of professional practice will require future innovators who have sharp social insights, flexibility, and new forms of cooperation.

The way we design our honors programs in so-called “Innovation Labs” can best be described by a former student.

AN HONORS STUDENT’S STORY, BY BOO VAN DER VLIST
STUDENT IN THE FINE ARTS PROGRAM AT WILLEM DE KOONING ACADEMY
AND POLITICAL SCIENCE STUDENT AT UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

Challenge

“I heard about the honors program from my lecturer. During my study in fine arts I was looking for challenges, including a second study, political
science. As an artist I was also looking for a link to society. The Innovation Lab, *Co-creation in the Public Domain*, a multidisciplinary honors project, linked to this interest. The aim was to carry out a project in a neighborhood of Rotterdam and in doing so to cooperate in multidisciplinary teams. An artist often works alone, and I wanted to change this. Artists are important when it comes to thinking about society, which is essential for innovation. The five competencies of an innovative professional that we acquired during the honors program added value compared to the regular fine arts curriculum. Not only the topic but also the way of working and cooperating were essential for artists who wish to be at the center of society. Compared to students who do the regular program, my fellow students in the honors program think beyond their own disciplines. They are curious and have a drive to understand how things work.”

**Authentic Learning Environment**

“I worked in the neighborhood of Kralingen-Crooswijk, an exceptional neighborhood in which rich and poor, young and old, and all sorts of nationalities and backgrounds live in close proximity to each other. Fascinated, I carried out research into this diversity. We set ourselves the task of bringing these people together and understanding what was already happening and why. On one level, there was little interaction between the different groups, but a link existed without being noticed. Everyone wore the same Uggs boots! Everyone from hockey girls to gangster ladies, from DJs to grandmothers, from babies to tough boys—everyone in the neighborhood wore Uggs! We carried out a project based on this odd commonality, and it emerged that everyone had their own story. All the people turned out to be sources of information, inspiration, and creativity, but approaching people and asking the first question was an enormous challenge.”

**Issue**

“The multidisciplinary issue drawn from actual practice was the absence of contact between social groups within a neighborhood. I chose this issue myself, but the residents of the neighborhood were the problem owners. What struck us was that there was so little interaction between social groups. While this isolation might have been valuable in some way, it was a great challenge. In dealing with the practical problem, I could not draw on theoretical knowledge from my art education, but I could draw on political science, and I was able to make use of my skills as an artist. I cooperated with another fine
arts student, and we held numerous discussions with groups from other disciplines within the Innovation Lab. Our project received positive responses. In my Innovation Lab I learned above all that I would like to cooperate closely with all those involved and to ensure that ideas are brought together in a way that bears fruit.”

**Supervision**

“The coach who supervised me had considerable knowledge and showed that it was possible to go much farther than I imagined. He motivated me to approach people and test my ideas. In addition, another professor of applied sciences assisted me with different approaches and stimulated me to achieve excellent results. I could make my own contribution to my Innovation Lab, and there was considerable scope for my ideas so that I could focus on my own design. It was a challenge to look for my specific research niche. A real ‘flow moment’ occurred when I went into Rotterdam to try out my ideas. The type of supervision, work, and feel of this project was different from the regular curriculum: it focused on real cooperation and multidisciplinarity.”

**Reflection**

“Writing a portfolio for the final assessment was valuable because it forced me to spend more time on reflection. Honors students must be aware of their weaknesses and strengths, and I acquired a new perspective on myself, in particular through the valuable concept of co-creation. As an artist one has the inclination to be directive, but co-creation stimulated me to ‘let go’ an idea so it could take root with others, and this was an eye-opener for me. The Innovation Lab contributed to my personal development in teaching me that one has simply to take the first step to achieve something and the rest will just happen.”

**HONORS EDUCATION: SMART INTERVENTIONS**

Within the RUAS we developed honors programs with an initial subsidy from the Ministry in the period from 2009 to 2014. An important part of this development was the focus on “quality,” a topic of discussion that took place throughout the RUAS. Although this discussion has been taking place since 2004, we have only now reaped its fruits so that our insights into the “quality” contribute effectively to the professional and personal development of honors students.
The evaluative research of Lappia, which will be published later this year, shows the acceleration in our development of value in honors. The innovation that had begun in 2004 occurred mainly from the perspective of the organization: efficient programs, parallel programming; simpler exchanges; and agreements on modules and final competence levels. These were good decisions in themselves, but obtaining support for them within the institution proved to be no easy task, and the expected results related to the intended competency levels; student and employer satisfaction were low. In recent years we have focused on quality more from the inner perspective of what teams of lecturers expect from their curricula, their pedagogical competence, and their students. We focus first on what we wish to achieve as a team, and only then do we determine how to organize it. The discussions within the teams of lecturers cause a stir but also result in a greater sense of responsibility and a growing realization of what each team’s own “quality” is. In this context, honors education grows and stimulates the discussion.

Lappia’s evaluative research resulted in a design matrix in which honors programs can develop optimally. We distinguish between three levels at which learning takes place: the individual, the team, and the community. Community is the level at which cooperation occurs with external experts and employers in local communities in relation to the professional activities and knowledge co-creation within the honors programs. Lecturers arrange the learning processes within honors programs in relation to these three levels.

The process of honors program development takes place roughly within four iterative steps: focusing on the intended final results; detailed design by the lecturers; determination of how the program is perceived by students and external experts and whether implementation reflects intentions; and finally the actual learning outcomes. For the students, the outcome is “being more capable”; for the team it is “knowing more”; and for the local community it is “having more.”

The lecturer is the crucial factor in the process. If discrepancies occur in the succession of phases, friction arises in the learning process, and students and lecturers might revert to the old, familiar routines. In 2004, this human factor—the lecturer—probably received too little attention. We learned that lecturers need to take an active part in programs in the interest of faculty development on a continuous basis; it is necessary to discuss, calibrate, and further develop the quality of the honors programs, with appropriate interventions, to effect Learning to Innovate as the (intended) learning outcome. We will therefore continue to invest in this area.
This development process relates to Pilot’s description of the conditions that have to be present for successful innovation in education. These three conditions are Infrastructure, Authority, and Consensus (IAC). With regard to Infrastructure, the issue is whether lecturers have suitable knowledge and skills to implement new educational models effectively. Infrastructure also involves a balance between fixed agreements and flexibility: a balance between fixed values, such as regular curricula or the intended competencies of Learning to Innovate, and the freedom that is necessary to make cooperation between experimenting programs possible.

Authority relates to the informal authority of lecturers and managers, not to the directive power of managers to carry out what is intended. Teams need to have the right kind of people to initiate discussion among lecturers and to bring about shared values on the basis of their own authority. Herein lies the power of authority: the mutual bond and adaptability that have a productive effect on the quality of education.

The concept of Consensus implies striving to achieve the same objectives together so that everyone is heading in the same direction in how we teach and approach students. This consensus should be twofold: that Innovation Lab is an appropriate form of challenge and that the profile Learning to Innovate has added value for innovative professionals. Being a University of Applied Sciences, the consensus in RUAS should exist not only within teams of multidisciplinary lecturers but also among experts and employers. Students, after all, will work within the professional community during and after completion of their education.

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The primary focus of our approach is always providing the best possible education and career preparation for students. Boo’s story illustrates how a student views her honors experience and indicates that we are on the right path. We are proud that at least one university in the U.S., the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, was inspired by our program when they were developing theirs. Our aim remains to offer optimal education to our students given the considerable diversity in their backgrounds. The city of Rotterdam, and therefore also our university, is a melting pot, so quality means something different to every student. As a challenging form of education, the honors program makes an optimal contribution to this diversity and offers opportunities for students to develop further. In this way we can say now and in the future, “Surpass Yourself!”
REFERENCES


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President Bormans may be contacted at
m.j.g.bormans@hr.nl.
An Epic Mission

TASHNI-ANN DUBROY, PRESIDENT
Shaw University

HONORS DIRECTOR: KIM Q. B. LEATHERS

For some students, intellectual curiosity and leadership are innate. For many, it must be nurtured. The Shaw University Honors College is an academic center of encouragement, interaction, and care for a diverse population of students. Many of them would otherwise never conceive of the marvelous opportunities and experiences they share during their college sojourn and later in their adult lives. Even though the hundred or more historically black colleges and universities do not all have honors programs, Shaw University has made this commitment to transform the lives of its scholars.

Support of the honors college initiative and affirmation from the university’s leadership are crucial to its success. As the new president of Shaw University, I believe strongly in honors education and work collaboratively with our faculty and staff to extend its mission. As one of my first actions, I have recommitted the university to tangible financial support of students who show their commitment to the honors college, providing significant scholarships for them so that students who demonstrate academic excellence can once again be the heart of our program. I have taught many of the students
who have participated in the program and know firsthand the value of the experiences from which they have benefitted. One such experience has been the university’s Shaw in Jamaica Minority Health International Research Training Program, which is part of the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities Project (Jamaica MoN Project). This ten-week residential internship at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, in Kingston, Jamaica, allowed students to spend the summer researching the attitudes and behaviors of Jamaican men. Research ranged from studying the population’s awareness, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and risk perceptions related to prostate cancer and screening.

For over 150 years, Shaw University has provided opportunities for promising students, and since 2001 the honors college has created a sense of community and belonging among such students. The college has supported, challenged, and encouraged students to think outside the box and seek opportunities that lead to strong networks of support. We know that finding a niche and a sense of belonging in college leads to student success, commitment, and perseverance; it positively influences our ability to recruit, retain, and graduate students who are invested in their own educational experience from the beginning of their college career. With eleven years at the helm of the program, our director has worked tirelessly to keep students and graduates connected to one another and the university. Stability in and commitment of the leadership of the program has provided a connection to the university that provides multiple dividends: a commitment of our younger alumni to the university, their persistent participation in the life of the university, and their support of students following in their footsteps. Social media have allowed alumni of the program to share their accomplishments, connect with current students, and provide new opportunities for current students, essentially paying it forward.

A wide diversity of activities is found especially within HBCU honors programs that, on the surface, would seem to be different from typical honors offerings. These activities are geared towards strengthening and expanding necessary life skills for college students who may need social reinforcement. Underlying our program are the “five wells” expressed by Robert M. Franklin, former president of Morehouse College: well-balanced, well-dressed, well-read, well-spoken, and well-traveled (if even virtually, understanding world dynamics). Several of our honors colloquia emphasize African American philosophy and ethnography, providing a cultural grounding and milieu that awaken students to their heritage. Shaw University has a natural linkage to
this heritage, being the place where the civil rights organization SNCC—the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee—was founded in 1960. While we focus on heritage, we also look to the future. We work collaboratively with the Center for Experiential Learning and Career Development to extend opportunities for personal preparation for graduate and professional school, internships, and the job market. We continue to value NCHC’s guiding principles and the advice, support, and ideas of countless members of the honors community to give our students our best efforts.

Our students are expected to be involved in campus life at every level and in many dimensions. Students are taught the five practices of exemplary leadership: modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. They are expected to enact these practices through opportunities to study and exhibit transformational, servant leadership, starting with leadership of the honors college through the Honors Scholars’ Association. Their activities are educational, service-oriented, entrepreneurial, practical, and fun, providing motivation for the entirety of the campus.

We are proud of the dimensions of leadership our students have exhibited, particularly our young women, as ambassadors of the university spirit in recent years. Eight of the last eleven women to serve as Miss Shaw University have been honors college members. While serving as Miss Shaw during 2013–2014, Dominique Lewis made history, becoming the first Shaw University female student commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in the United States Air Force. Two have served as Miss Homecoming. Student Government Association President LaMarcus Davis distinguished himself as a leader during his tenure and completed a master’s in surgical assisting at East Virginia Medical School. He is now pursuing a doctorate in health services and health care administration from Waldon University. Another of our honors graduates, Rachel Oliver, was singled out by coach Noel Myricks as one of the best students he had worked with in his many years as the coach of the University of Maryland’s legendary mock trial teams. She went on to earn her juris doctorate at Chicago–Kent College of Law and is a practicing attorney. She credits her support through the Shaw University Honors College and mock trial experience for her preparation for law school and continued success.

The ultimate result has been the transformation of lives. We have many success stories of students who, regardless of their circumstances, have reached heights of academic achievement, social involvement, and career possibilities. Many students have moved out of their comfort zones to challenge themselves
and seek life-changing experiences. Na’eeem Wilkins, a senior majoring in education, received the 2015 U.S.-China Student Summit “Best Delegate Award” from among four hundred college students nationally. Senior computer science major Lionel Morgan did an internship at Fidelity Investments that led to an invitation to their LEAP program upon graduation. Senior chemistry major Jordan Galloway’s co-op with NASA at Langley Air Force Base is leading to multiple possibilities for the future, including the pursuit of a PhD.

Our students are able to compete at major universities across the country. More than one student who dreaded the infamous senior project has been thankful for the experience, feeling far more prepared for graduate study. Many of our students are following the example of Shaw faculty and choosing academia as a profession, providing diversity in higher education. Oyindamola Oki received her doctorate from North Carolina State University in bioinformatics. Serign Lowe, while completing his PhD at the University of North Carolina Greensboro in nanoscience, is now teaching physics and mathematics at Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University in Saudi Arabia. Kimberly Kitchens, who majored in international relations and traveled to Japan and the Netherlands while at Shaw, completed her MPA in international affairs at the Andrew Young School of Public Policy at Georgia State University and is now serving in the Peace Corps in Moroni, Comoros. We are exceptionally proud of Evingerlean Blakney, who has returned to Shaw University as the director of first-year programs and who is already beginning to mold and shape new scholars; she is the first in her family to graduate from college and will be the first in her family to receive a doctorate. We have numerous other PhD, MBA, JD, MDiv, MSW, and master’s recipients, and even more students are currently in graduate or professional school fulfilling their dreams. Their trajectory of excellence was cultivated in the honors college and by a dedicated faculty and staff.

Shaw University’s mission is straightforward: “Shaw University exists to advance knowledge, facilitate student learning and achievement, to enhance the spiritual and ethical values of its students, and to transform a diverse community of learners into future global leaders.” The Shaw University Honors College is a tangible demonstration of our commitment to fulfilling this epic mission.

President Dubroy may be contacted at
tdubroy@shawu.edu.
The Above-and-Beyond Experience

DAVID L. CHICOINE, PRESIDENT
South Dakota State University

HONORS DIRECTOR: TIMOTHY J. NICHOLS

A discourse on “The Value of Honors” opens a window of review and reflection, an opportunity to shine a light on how honors programming has become a differentiating attribute of South Dakota State University, an enabling contributor to the university’s strategic direction, and a living example of the land-grant mission of educational opportunities for all people. The presence of the Van D. and Barbara F. Fishback Honors College can be seen across the university and across the various stages of the student life cycle at South Dakota State—from recruitment and retention, to student leadership, to faculty growth and development, to innovation and excellence.

Talented, motivated young people make decisions about where they will pursue a degree based, in part, on the portfolio of programs, the co-curricular opportunities, and the lifestyle amenities presented to them by competing universities. Today’s young people are sophisticated consumers in the higher education marketplace. They are seeking “above and beyond” academic experiences such as study abroad and undergraduate research. They are looking for a personalized academic experience, and they aspire to be in community
with others who share a similar sense of purpose and drive toward success and personal fulfillment. The honors college thus becomes a lead card in this recruitment process, packaging and highlighting the components expected by some of today’s most discriminating college shoppers.

The value of honors only begins with the recruitment process. It continues with retention and completion rates and measures of student engagement and achievement—all important institutional metrics. Students pursing honors designations complete general education, upper-division and interdisciplinary courses, research projects, and creative and scholarly endeavors. This developmental approach engages honors students at every level of their academic experiences and adds breadth and depth to their studies. Internal research also indicates that these undergraduate experiences prepare honors graduates for prestigious graduate and professional schools and provide them with rich, value-added competitive edges as they enter their careers of choice.

The honors experience develops tomorrow’s leaders. Approximately seven percent of undergraduate students participate in honors courses, yet a disproportionately high percentage of these students lead student government, discipline-specific student organizations, academic competition teams, and university-wide community service programs. Undoubtedly, these programs benefit and thrive from the special abilities, drive, diligence, and higher-level thinking of honors students. Quite simply, honors students bring high expectations to their classes and co-curricular experiences, thus elevating the learning environment and volunteer value for everyone.

The presence of honors at South Dakota State also adds value to the experiences of our faculty from across the university. These faculty teach smaller honors sections of general education courses, collaborate on interdisciplinary theme-driven courses, and guide students’ undergraduate courses as mentors. One honors faculty member found in a recent survey that most faculty describe their honors involvement as “highly satisfying.” Anecdotally, many honors faculty share stories about the challenge, fulfillment, stimulation, and joy they derive from working with honors students.

At SDSU, the honors college also serves as an institutional driver of innovation and excellence, starting in the classrooms and extending beyond the walls of the academic disciplines. When faculty experiment with new pedagogical approaches in their honors classrooms, their innovations are often adapted more broadly across the curriculum and reach a larger portion of the general student body. The inference can be made that these teaching
approaches, applied across the university, enhance the academic experiences of all students.

The Fishback Honors College and its faculty lead the university’s Common Read, undergraduate research, and student leadership development initiatives, efforts that reach far beyond the honors student body. In addition, Honors Hall is now home to the university’s only residential living and learning community, featuring an on-site dean’s office and honors-specific classroom. The honors college is also the first college at this university to secure a named endowment. These distinctive characteristics have enriched the university and have provided examples for other academic units to consider and to propose endowed positions and programmatic initiatives.

The impact of honors programming and its numerous influences at South Dakota State are hard to quantify. However, the ripple effects are noteworthy. Through broad engagement in the life of this university, honors students and faculty add value to SDSU far beyond the walls of their individual classrooms, laboratories, and residence hall rooms.

As president of South Dakota’s 1862 land-grant institution, I take very seriously the commitments to educational access, academic excellence, research and discovery, and service and outreach to people in this state and region. The Fishback Honors College at SDSU provides world-class educational and undergraduate research opportunities and engages some of the country’s brightest minds in disciplines such as agriculture, engineering, nursing, pharmacy, education and human sciences, and the traditional liberal arts. These honors experiences open wide the doors of opportunity to hundreds of talented, motivated students, many of whom come from low-income and first-generation college families. These important dimensions of the honors value proposition align with the original intent of the Morrill Act: to provide access to higher education for the sons and daughters of the working class who otherwise would be excluded from realizing their potential.

The late economist Theodore W. Schultz, the lone Nobel Prize laureate among SDSU alumni, was an eastern South Dakota farm boy who first described the theory of human capital. One could argue that the development of human capital among faculty and students is the greatest value honors brings to contemporary higher education. I share a common background with Schultz: eastern South Dakota farm roots, a degree from South Dakota State, and a passion for economics. It would be natural for an economist to study the transactional nature of higher education, to seek more clarity on the value of the degree. The value of honors, however, might be best understood...
as a transformation rather than a transaction; it extends well beyond the completion of a degree or the awarding of a medallion to students who complete a rigorous undergraduate curriculum. Rather, the transformations are made real in the individual and collective work and impacts of students and faculty—empowered with knowledge, experiences, and relationships—who are well-positioned to make positive differences in the lives of universities, communities, and even nations. At South Dakota State University and across the higher education landscape, this transformation—the above-and-beyond experience—is the true value proposition of honors.

President Chicoine may be contacted at SDSU.Office.of.President@sdstate.edu.
Serving Stakeholders at a Small Regional University

SEAN BURRAGE, PRESIDENT
Southeastern Oklahoma State University

HONORS DIRECTOR: LISA L. COLEMAN

The Southeastern Oklahoma State University Honors Program serves a unique role in a small, rural setting such as Durant, Oklahoma. The honors program has a traditional mission in a university that offers a non-traditional setting and history within the context of higher education. The program thus offers special rewards to its students and to the university.

Southeastern, founded in 1909 as a teachers’ training college, is a public, regional university with an enrollment of 4,000 students. Although the university is located in a small community (population: 17,000) just north of the Red River, it is uniquely positioned 90 miles north of the bustling Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex and 151 miles south of Oklahoma City. The university is also located in the region of The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Dating back to its founding, Southeastern is known for its academic programs in teacher education but more recently has received national recognition for excellence in its aviation sciences and occupational safety and health degree programs.
In educating its students, Southeastern faces numerous challenges. For instance, 85% of the school’s students receive financial aid; 41% of the most recent graduating seniors were first-generation college graduates; and 30% of the total enrollment is Native American. The university attracts the majority of its students from the geographic service region in southeastern Oklahoma, but it is also home to international students and students from neighboring states such as Texas. In addition to its main campus in Durant, Southeastern has a branch campus in Idabel, Oklahoma, and delivers various academic programs at seven additional sites, including two in north Texas.

The Southeastern Honors Program was built on the foundation created by the Parsons Scholars Program, which dates back to 1978 when it was endowed by a 1928 Southeastern graduate. Today, the honors program is committed to the ongoing growth and development of a culturally diverse and academically talented group of honors students. With a focus on educational excellence as well as cultural and technological literacy, the honors program challenges high-caliber students with special talents and outstanding academic abilities to develop local and global awareness and achieve their full potential.

Our honors program is much like a learning laboratory where we implement new teaching ideas and strategies and then share with others. We have recently developed a new honors curriculum, which includes the City as Text™ approach as well as a team-teaching format. In turn, our honors director and professors have disseminated this information at various conferences as well as at the Southeastern Faculty Symposium, which is held each year prior to the beginning of the fall semester. Our students are also very visible in and outside our area, making presentations at regional and national conferences that not only broaden their education but expand the reach of the university through meaningful engagement and recognition.

Although the Southeastern Honors Program is relatively young, it has produced numerous success stories. Two prime examples are Cordell Adams and Sharla Frost, both of whom have been recognized as distinguished alumni by the university. Adams, who graduated in 1982, is an ophthalmologist in Dallas, Texas, with a subspecialty in glaucoma. An East Texas native, he is also an accomplished novelist. Frost, a 1984 graduate of Southeastern, is a partner in the Tucker Ellis Law Firm’s mass tort and product liability practice group, based in Houston, Texas. Originally from Frogville in Choctaw County, Oklahoma, Frost is a renowned national trial lawyer who defends clients in high-risk cases in state and federal courts across the country. Both of
these honors alumni have returned to campus in recent years as commencement speakers.

Many other honors graduates from Southeastern have made their mark in the fields of public service, education, business, academia, law, medicine, medical research, accounting, finance, banking, writing/editing, information technology, psychology, occupational safety & health, and the military. Several of these alumni have returned to the university to serve in key positions in information technology, the learning center, advising and outreach, the library, and disability services.

The honors program at Southeastern enriches the overall experience of all its stakeholders: students, faculty, staff, and community. In addition, the program continues to play a valuable role in producing future leaders.

President Burrage may be contacted at sburrage@se.edu.
Opportunities in Honors for Underserved Students

Baker Pattillo, President
Stephen F. Austin State University

Honors Director: Michael Tkacik

First-generation students sometimes lack a support network that values higher education. Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA)—a regional, comprehensive university of approximately 13,000 students, located in the piney woods of East Texas—serves a diverse body of students who are nearly 50% first-generation. These students often face financial constraints and have been underexposed to the cultural diversity of the twenty-first-century economy. At the same time, our students know that a university education is vital to their success and have an intense desire to conquer new intellectual landscapes. Thus, while some would consider our student body a challenge, we see it as an opportunity. Because of our unique student body, we at SFA are able to help an underserved population whose success is central to meeting the local, national, and international challenges of the future. To meet these challenges, SFA encourages transformative learning experiences, a culture of engagement, undergraduate research, and a focus on lifelong learning, among
other strategies. I value the School of Honors for its high-impact role in helping SFA serve our students and community.

SFA students, even in honors, are in some instances still falling in love with learning or still trying to convince others of the value of higher education, and so foisting a rigid set of requirements on them might be counterproductive. Instead, our philosophy is to offer a wide variety of opportunities to honors students that will allow them to cultivate a love for education. When we achieve this goal successfully, the students graduate not only with exceptional grades, a love for lifelong education, and a deep understanding of their particular subject matter but also with high levels of continuing success, whether measured by employment or acceptance into post-graduate study.

Before working with students, honors brings value to the university in the way it recruits. The SFA School of Honors engages prospective students at every stage of the recruiting process. Provided a list of academically qualified students who have expressed an interest in honors, the honors director contacts each of the students by mail, inviting them to visit the SFA School of Honors and to apply. Other students are flagged by the admissions office or other units across the campus, and the director writes each of them a personal email. All students touring campus (and their parents) are given an opportunity to meet with the director. During these hour-long meetings, the director reviews the three primary opportunities that honors at SFA provides: enhanced educational experiences, practical support for daily learning, and recognition at graduation.

Honors has the most profound impact on students by enhancing their educational experience. SFA honors attempts to provide a small, private-school experience for students paying the tuition of a regional, mid-sized, public university. Honors offers small classes, capped at twenty-five students, and hand-picked professors who are regularly evaluated for their success in the classroom. Honors professors are urged to use innovative methods inside the classroom; in a bioethics course, for example, professors have provided students the opportunity to have their DNA profiles read. Part of the honors philosophy is that, especially for students who are often first-generation and may not have been beyond the borders of Texas, study abroad is a key opportunity. Honors provides an introductory summer study abroad experience in central Europe that is both moderately priced and immersive. Study abroad should not be simply a whirlwind of visits to hotels and tourist sites. SFA honors study abroad means living with local students in their dorms and working on joint research projects with local students, culminating in a presentation
to the resident faculty. Honors also provides scholarships for semester-long study abroad, but many of our students are not yet prepared to make that leap. After a successful month abroad under faculty supervision, however, these students are often motivated and ready for a longer-term experience.

Not every student can afford a study abroad experience, yet our students still benefit from broad cultural exposure. Honors provides a “Cultural City Experience,” a day-long trip to a larger city to see a play, attend a museum, or engage in other cultural activities. Honors buys lunch for the students at a restaurant where they can be exposed to non-American cuisine. The director may lead this trip or may solicit another faculty member who is an expert on the day’s events. While not life-changing, the trip helps to prepare top academic students for a world that is far more diverse than they sometimes realize.

Similarly, few of our students come out of high school with research experience. Honors at SFA makes a point of providing multiple research opportunities for our students. Honors administers the SFA Undergraduate Research Conference (URC), for instance, which is not limited to honors students, but they typically make up a third to a half of the participants. We further encourage research through an honors academic contract system. At SFA, honors contracts are more than just opportunities to earn honors credits; here, honors students use these contracts as opportunities for research and as preparation for graduate school or the workplace.

Though providing an enhanced education is central to the mission of honors at SFA, honors also provides practical support that is especially relevant to our student body. For example, once a student has successfully presented at the URC, honors urges that student to present at a national conference. If the student is accepted, honors helps fund the trip. We have had great success (sometimes too much success) funding research trips for students.

We also try to provide our students some of the benefits that make higher education a little easier. First-generation students might not realize the importance of early registration or might not have budgeted for printing costs or might not own a computer. So, for example, honors students at SFA can register on the same day as graduating seniors and athletes. Honors has a private computer lab that is a “no phone zone,” providing not only computers but also an effective learning environment. Honors also provides laptops that students can borrow for free. We have a dorm that has quiet hours, thus providing not just an environment for success but also an example of how to create such an environment. Through the honors residence hall, we can put together informal study groups, allowing students to trade their academic
strengths, improve academic results, and participate in the collaboration necessary for success in the post-graduate world. Another example of a benefit for honors students is a close working arrangement with the Academic Assistance and Resource Center (AARC); when the AARC needs tutors, they come to honors first, and when honors students need on-campus jobs, they look to the AARC first. Other benefits are the honors student association, which provides a social outlet for students; a newly developing mentor program for incoming students; and the inclusion of administrators, faculty, staff, and other students as part of the honors experience.

Graduating from an honors program would be anticlimactic and probably disappointing if it did not include a culminating experience, which may be most important for first-generation students. At SFA, graduating honors students are called University Scholars. Before graduation, honors hosts a University Scholar dinner to celebrate the students’ success. These students are then announced as University Scholars at graduation, they are noted in the program, and they wear honors cords and medallions. These badges of distinction are important not just for the student but for the student’s family, who have perhaps changed their minds about the value of higher education. This culminating moment of success can also be life-changing for a younger sibling or cousin, who now has reason to attend university and perhaps greater support from home.

At SFA honors is an individual path for each student, lined with opportunities and choices rather than demands and requirements. In this way, honors best serves our unique student body. Our students generally lack the confidence of students whose parents attended college and face greater financial challenges. Our students may also be more resistant to the culture of higher education and thus need a bit more guidance to become successful in their undergraduate work and then in post-graduate study and the workplace. In the SFA School of Honors, we specialize in polishing hidden gems, and we then have the pleasure of watching them shine.

President Pattillo may be contacted at bpattillo@sfasu.edu.
Honors as Validation

Dan R. Jones, President
Texas A&M University – Commerce

Honors Dean: Raymond J. Green

Ever since I was inducted into the Junior National Honor Society in middle school, I have been engaged in honor societies and honors programs. I have experienced firsthand the profound impact such distinctions can have on students’ personal and intellectual development as well as their positive effects on the academic character of institutions.

As a student, my induction into an honor society stirred feelings of pride, authenticity, and determination. Academically high-achieving students often find themselves marginalized from other forms of recognition such as those associated with athletic excellence and leadership in student organizations. For these students, the recognition of excellence in academic achievement can be an important affirmation of their discipline, hard work, and intellectual gifts.

Later, in high school, I received an award from the National Council of Teachers of English. Although I hardly knew it at the time, I now realize that this award was a turning point in my life. It provided external validation of a gift for writing and story-telling I possessed, but of which I was only dimly aware.
For me, the award was far more than a pat on the back for a job well done; it
guided me in the choice of a college major and, ultimately, of a profession. On
display in my office are a number of diplomas and other impressive-looking
awards I have received over the last forty years. None means more to me than
the modest framed certificate for “excellence in high school English” that is
prominently positioned in their midst.

As an undergraduate, I was inducted into Phi Kappa Phi and Phi Beta
Kappa, and I participated as well in the honors program in English at my uni-
versity. At the time, I viewed these recognitions as résumé builders and listed
them conspicuously on job applications in hopes that a prospective employer
would be impressed. Their real value, though, lay in the way they helped me
develop the intellectual self-confidence I would need to be successful in the
competitive world of higher education.

My association with honor societies and programs did not end with
graduation. As a faculty member and administrator, I have come to appreciate
even more the value that these affiliations bring to institutions. After my initial
induction into Phi Kappa Phi as an undergraduate, I am proud to have played
a role in chartering three new PKP chapters: Chapter 265 at the University of
Houston-Downtown, Chapter 296 at Texas A&M International University,
and most recently Chapter 322 at Texas A&M University – Commerce. I have
fond memories of the chartering ceremonies at each of these universities,
especially the look of pride on the faces of inductees and family members in
attendance. For some, the recognition may be remembered, if at all, simply as
a passing event; however, I am certain that for others, the bestowal of honors
will have the same profound and lasting impact that it has had for me.

The presence of honor societies and programs on a university campus is
an important component of its reputation for excellence. We in higher edu-
cation spend a great deal of time talking about the academic reputation of
our institutions, as do our prospective students and their families; witness
the much-pilloried but nonetheless widely read annual rankings published
by *U.S. News & World Report*. While we may quibble with the methodolo-
gies employed by this or that ranking, reputation is one of the key drivers of
choice when students and their families are making that all-important deci-
sion about which university to attend. Honor societies and honors programs
can be an important factor in that decision and thereby bolster high-quality
enrollment growth.

The institution at which I serve as president, Texas A&M University
– Commerce, is a case in point. Nine years ago, my predecessor made a far-
sighted decision to establish an honors college. The college consists of two hundred high-achieving students, fifty in each class, each of whom receives a four-year, full-ride scholarship inclusive of tuition, fees, books, and room and board.

In its initial year, the honors college attracted some very well-qualified students. Applicants were, for the most part, in the top ten percent of their graduating class, with enviable scores on their ACTs and SATs, and with extensive records of leadership and extracurricular involvement at their high schools. As its reputation grew, the quality of applicants steadily improved. Members of the current freshman class are, on average, from the top 4.56 percent of their graduating class; other indicators of academic achievement have risen as well.

Several years ago, we were attracting so many highly qualified applicants that we created a spillover scholarship program that we named Regents Scholars. The benefits, while less generous, are still very attractive. The impact that these highly qualified students have had on the academic character of our university has been substantial. I seldom hear faculty complaints about unprepared students; now, faculty members clamor to teach honors sections. Because honors students have other honors students as friends, the number of high-achieving students who choose our university continues to increase, with a corresponding rise in the performance indicators we use to track the quality of our incoming students: ACT/SAT scores, high school GPAs, class rank, and so forth. As a result, we have been able to raise admission standards while sustaining robust growth. This year, our year-to-year growth is approaching ten percent. Most of that growth is in new students who were drawn here because of our academic reputation.

Honors programs have real and measurable value for students and institutions alike. As a student, I personally experienced how receiving distinction for honors can change the course of a life. As a professional educator, I have seen how institutions that find a prominent place for honor societies and programs thrive. The formal pursuit and recognition of academic honor does indeed create lasting value.

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President Jones may be contacted at

dan.jones@tamuc.edu.
The Practical Value of Honors

James R. Johnsen, President
University of Alaska

Interim Honors Dean: John Mouracade (Anchorage)
Honors Coordinator: Sol Neely (Southeast)
Honors Director: Marsha Sousa (Fairbanks)

The University of Alaska serves the diverse peoples of Alaska through three separately accredited universities and their community campuses. The system’s three universities at Fairbanks (UAF), Anchorage (UAA), and Juneau (UAS) differ greatly. UAF is a research university located in the Alaskan interior in a city of under 100,000 people. UAA is a comprehensive university in the population and commercial center of the state. UAS is a regional university located in Alaska’s capitol that serves the people of Southeast Alaska (the S is for Southeast). Within each of these universities, the faculty developed honors programs that fit the context and mission of their unique institution. While these programs differ in their particulars and evolved independently, they have had remarkably similar emphases and impact.

As with honors programs generally, honors at the University of Alaska develops leadership, fosters interdisciplinary thinking, engages the critical
issues of our day, and deepens students’ academic experience through community engagement and undergraduate research. All three programs have a significant community service component. This element is most noteworthy at UAS where the director, Professor Sol Neely, has developed a program called “The Flying University,” where university students go inside prison to study alongside incarcerated students.

Professor Neely’s outstanding work in Juneau is characteristic of honors across the universities. Each university exhibits unique strengths and opportunities. UAS is a smaller university in a smaller urban setting where it is fitting for honors to reflect a commitment to issues in the community and issues of justice. UAF is the midsized campus that reflects a very traditional student residential population, and its honors program stands out as the one with the strongest living learning community. UAF honors is located in a house that serves as a social center for honors students. UAA, located in the largest urban center in Alaska, has been the leader in undergraduate research. Through partnerships with community leaders and industry, UAA has built the largest undergraduate research program at UA, the Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarship, which supports over a hundred undergraduate research projects every year.

While honors programs have developed at each university to reflect the needs and opportunities of that institution, collaboration across campuses has emerged as the programs mature. For example, UAA worked with UAF to assist their creation of a robust undergraduate research program, the Undergraduate Research and Scholarship Activity Program. Since that time, the three programs have collaborated on curriculum development. The first product of that collaboration is a course entitled “Methods of Inquiry,” which has a core content of twelve digital modules. UAA and UAF each contributed five modules while UAS produced two. The collaborative work was funded centrally by the statewide offices and managed locally at each of the main campuses.

Given the nature of honors across the University of Alaska system, the value of honors should already be evident. Undergraduate research, learning communities, community engagement, and enhanced curriculum add tremendously to the institution by continuously putting faculty and students into high impact pedagogical settings. Frank Bruni’s recent New York Times article <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/09/opinion/sunday/frank-bruni-a-prudent-college-path.html?_r=0> on the value of honors at public institutions articulates many of the benefits honors brings to the University of
Alaska. Bruni seems to have Alaskan students in mind when he states, “Perhaps most important, honors colleges provide a supportive, challenging haven to some gifted young men and women who don’t make the cut at private schools with plunging acceptance rates or who aren’t prepared, for financial and other reasons, to pursue higher education far from their homes.”

However, honors plays an even greater role in Alaska than in other states. Alaska is home to few institutions of higher education, and it is a 2,500 mile drive to the next state over. Honors helps fill that gap by providing three distinct liberal arts college experiences within UAA, UAF, and UAS. This expanded opportunity within the state system is crucial for retaining some of our best students, who would otherwise go elsewhere. Alaska’s future is in its people. Honors at UA helps keep some of the best students at home and provides opportunities and challenges that allow them to fully develop their potential. Because of the state’s need for talent, it is critical that honors thrives at all three universities.

Although some paint honors as elitist, allotting a disproportionate amount of resources to relatively few students, this way of thinking is flawed because it looks at honors in isolation. The truth is that the resources put into honors benefit the institution generally. Because honors students represent a wide variety of programs, they improve the learning environment in their other classes. Any professor will tell you that just a handful of more active, engaged, and aware students changes a class. By permeating the university, honors students spread the impact of honors across all programs. In this way, the resources put into honors flow out to the rest of the academic programs on campus.

Finally, the most important value of honors is its impact on students. Honors changes lives by building a community of engaged students and training them to benefit society through learning, discovery, and service. The support network, encouragement, and programming open pathways for students that inspire them to go further and do more than they had previously thought possible, thus fulfilling the main job of a university: providing an array of opportunities and equipping students to take advantage of them.

President Johnsen may be contacted at

ua.president@alaska.edu.
The Culture of Honors

SUSAN J. KOCH, CHANCELLOR
University of Illinois at Springfield

HONORS DIRECTOR: MARC KLINGSHIRN

As I began to consider the value of honors at the University of Illinois at Springfield, the first thought that came to mind was this sentence from Wendell Berry’s 1987 book, Home Economics: “The thing being made in a university is humanity.” Our honors program “makes humanity” in a unique way that adds value to the educational experience for the individual honors student at the same time that it adds value and benefit to the university and, by extension, to humanity beyond.

Though my own undergraduate experience predated establishment of the formal honors program at my undergraduate alma mater, I was fortunate to have an honors-like experience at the small college I attended in my home state. Dakota Normal School was founded by the Territorial Legislature in 1881, eight years before South Dakota became a state, for the purpose of “training teachers in the Dakota Territories.” By the time I arrived there in 1967, it had become a thriving university with many elements that define the college honors programs of today.
During my freshman year, the Vietnam War was raging. Martin Luther King, Jr., was murdered that April. Though a sobering and sometimes tumultuous time on most campuses including mine, what mattered was that the culture on this small campus (including a challenging curriculum, intellectual engagement with the issues of the day, and an exceptional performing arts program) ignited opportunities for growth and exploration that were the first steps for me on what became a lifelong path of liberal learning and self-actualization. I still remember the excitement of being surrounded by bright minds and new ideas, and I owe a great debt to the dedicated Dakota State University professors who set me on the route that remains my intellectual and professional path today. That path has included many rewarding experiences, among them helping to create the honors program at the University of Northern Iowa and now, since 2011, serving as chancellor at the Springfield campus of the University of Illinois, where the Capital Scholars Honors Program is thriving.

My experience as an honors student and now as a chancellor is that the value of honors lies in that single word: “culture.” Students who participate in honors at UIS, for example, are welcomed into a small residential community within the larger university. That community provides a culture where talented students and faculty learn together. Honors students feel an immediate sense of place that reflects and recognizes earlier academic achievements while at the same time it presents endless opportunities to engage with new ideas, new people, and new places in the company of equally bright and motivated learners. The honors program is a community with a culture all its own.

At the heart of the CAP Scholars program is an understanding that the problems facing today’s world are complex and that solutions often require the application of knowledge from many different areas of study. For that reason, the program is centered on an engaging interdisciplinary curriculum where exceptional UIS faculty challenge students to investigate, debate, and think critically about the complexities of today’s society. The curriculum encourages students to recognize that the same topic may be viewed and analyzed in different ways and for different reasons. Courses are designed to teach students to think clearly and creatively and to expand their knowledge of and appreciation for various worldviews and cultures.

Many honors students arrive as first-year students bringing successful leadership experiences from high school. Developing those leadership skills further, whatever the starting point, is what the UIS honors director calls “finding their inner leader”; this is a major emphasis of the honors experience,
where the deliberately organized culture of the honors program provides added value. Honors students serve as peer tutors and mentors for other students with the supervision of honors program staff, and many also provide leadership for campus organizations and community service activities in the larger community. Taking full advantage of the campus location in Springfield, the state capital of Illinois, UIS CAP Scholars also participate in seminars with Illinois political leaders as well as leaders from the private sector. A number of UIS honors students are also part of the university’s growing Division II athletics program, another opportunity for leadership and engagement.

Honors students are surrounded by bright minds, challenging problems, a panoply of ideas, and numerous opportunities to collaborate and dig deeper into important questions. As students move through the curriculum and associated research opportunities, faculty help them develop the skills of inquiry that lead to deeper understandings and discovery, setting the stage for the successful pursuit of advanced professional or academic degrees. At the same time, the residential honors community provides a socially nurturing home base for cultural and social activities that enrich the time that students spend away from their studies and that lead to additional learning opportunities as well as lifelong friendships and professional associations.

Having taught in honors myself, I can personally confirm that the presence of an honors program provides important opportunities for faculty growth, especially in interdisciplinary research and teaching. After studying the confluence of health and human rights at the Francois Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard with Jonathan Mann, who founded the World Health Organization’s Global Program on AIDS, I developed and taught an honors course at UNI titled “Health and Human Rights”; this course provided an opportunity for me, as a young faculty member, to develop new knowledge about an emerging public health issue of great importance at the same time that it provided motivation for me to reach out to faculty with similar interests in sociology, social work, and biology. The course was a vehicle for exploring the issue deeply with a group of exceptional undergraduate students, not only benefitting them but also helping me as a researcher and teacher. It remains today one of my most satisfying experiences in the academy.

Another value of the honors program for the campus is that it provides a vehicle for recruiting talented and motivated students who contribute to the intellectual and social climate of the campus in countless ways. These contributions are likely to enhance the reputation and rankings of the institution,
but, more importantly, they improve and stretch the educational experience for the student body as a whole.

Finally, the honors program creates a stream of talented and successful alums who remain appreciative of their honors experience and often stay engaged with the university in important ways. They are lifetime assets of the campus and of their communities, with stories attesting to and reinforcing the quality of the educational experience that their alma mater provided. Sometimes that engagement includes a significant gift, an investment in the campus that supports future students and the university.

A recent University of Illinois at Springfield honors graduate, John Tienken, who is now a law student at the University of Chicago, may describe the value of the honors experience at UIS best: “The CAP Honors Program,” he states, “was an invaluable foundation for my undergraduate years. The program’s true value came from pushing me to go beyond my political science major. In the interdisciplinary classes taught by professors from other departments, I was exposed to different ways of looking at problems. Some of these professors would become close mentors for the rest of my time at UIS. More than the knowledge I gained, the relationships I made with professors and scholars outside of my major have had lasting impact.”

I couldn’t have said it better myself.

Chancellor Koch may be contacted at
koch@uis.edu.
Tangible and Intangible Student Success

Marc A. Johnson, President
University of Nevada, Reno
Honors Director: Tamara M. Valentine

First are the obvious benefits. The value that honors programs hold for universities lies in the tangibles.

Honors programs help an institution pinpoint and cultivate the talents of its finest students. They help these students achieve undergraduate research and encourage them to seek further inquiry and creative endeavor. They provide the counsel, advising, and encouragement that can lead to nationally and internationally competitive, prestigious scholarships in all academic fields and endeavors. They help bring renown to the university they serve by ensuring that the institution’s finest students receive the care and attention needed to succeed in challenging academic and research environments. They can and usually do lead the student down a transformational career path.

These are the tangibles. In many ways, they are the tidy end products of what is often assumed to be a successful and smooth four-year process that ends with a happy student holding his or her honors diploma during commencement weekend. And why shouldn’t it be? Honors programs, by their very definition, deal with the best and brightest of an institution’s student
population and can expect these tangible outcomes. Certainly my institution, the University of Nevada, Reno, has an honors program that can attest to the validity of such outcomes.

Without diminishing in any way the tangible end product, let me make an equally compelling case for the personal byproducts that are often just as important, just as meaningful, that can be gained from our honors program. In many ways, the true value of any honors program, in both a theoretical and a practical context, lies in the intangibles. Typical honors students are highly, richly, and wonderfully human, not computerized automatons programmed for perfection. They are young, sensitive human beings who, though they may be extremely talented, intelligent, and driven to succeed, are by no means guaranteed to reach their ultimate academic potential. The reality for almost all college students is that at some point the ground can seem to tilt upward, and every step can seem to be tortuous and paved with frustration. Our students can be like delicate flowers, and it is our student enrichment programs such as our honors program that can provide the encouragement and support that help talent rise and help develop the reserve of steel needed to persist and to flourish in a highly competitive college environment.

We’ve seen this to be true at our university. Our honors program helps change the lives of the students it serves, both tangibly through academic achievement, and intangibly through a stronger sense of direction and self-worth.

Let me give you just one example. Late this summer, a December 2013 graduate of our University, Jonathan Carral, visited our campus before heading back to graduate school at Columbia University. Jonathan, an honors program student, majored in international affairs. When he enrolled as a student at our university, Jonathan did not see himself as an honors student. He says now that his test scores weren’t the greatest. As a first-generation college student, Jonathan admits that even seeking a college degree “was a bit questionable.”

Yet Jonathan made a key decision early on during his academic career. Following the advice of a friend, just weeks into his experience as a student here, he paid a visit to our honors program office, which has been ably directed by Tamara Valentine since 2004. Jonathan says now that Valentine and her staff “saw something and exposed something in me that I didn’t even know was there.”

What followed was one of our university’s most remarkable student success stories. Jonathan earned a Truman Scholarship in 2013, citing his two
years of study and public service in China. An exceptional amount of work was involved, including a public service component, research, and a thesis. “The Honors Program doesn’t exist to baby the students,” Jonathan says, but he adds that the staff of the honors program was always there to interact, to help, to suggest possibilities, to advise, or simply to listen. By the time he graduated, Jonathan, who is now beginning the final year of his graduate studies in international affairs at Columbia, felt he was fully prepared for the next important chapter in his life. He says, “The Honors Program really spoke to me—it helped me find qualities that I didn’t necessarily realize I had.”

Of course, challenges, both expected and unexpected, can occur before this sort of acute and wonderful self-realization happens. Over the past several years, the state of Nevada has grappled, like many other states, with the post-recessionary economy. The allocation we receive from our state has diminished since the recession of 2008. Between 2009 and 2013, we lost 35% of our state budget. Yet our university, through a series of strategically targeted reductions that aimed to protect the size and quality of programs that served the most students and produced our most robust research, has managed in 2015 to find itself in a place of record student enrollment, retention, achievement, and graduation as well as faculty productivity. We have positioned ourselves in a unique way in the ever-changing landscape of higher education. We are classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as an “Arts and Sciences/Professions Balanced” institution, which means our offerings are often broader and more robust than other institutions of our size as we offer degrees in the humanities, the arts, medicine, engineering, agriculture, and business, to name just a few.

The improvement of the economy has helped us come back with great momentum, but some of the seeds for this resurgence were also sown through the effectiveness of our honors program. A remarkable educational experience, with a focus on experiential, hands-on learning and on students’ personal capabilities and potential, has helped us focus squarely on meaningful educational outcomes. Combine all of these factors and you can see why the academic core GPA and composite ACT scores of our incoming freshmen have climbed every year over the past five years while the geographic expanse of our enrollment has broadened considerably. We have become well-known in the West as an institution that offers a quality education at an affordable price with outstanding faculty who excel in teaching and research and with a student body that is increasingly diverse and accomplished. Not surprisingly, we are also at record numbers of National Merit Scholars on our campus.
Our honors program is a key driver in this picture of achievement as a proven example of our institution’s commitment to student quality and success. Even before the academic year begins, our honors students gather at nearby Lake Tahoe for a retreat, and the bonds they form during this introductory time often carry on throughout the rest of their academic careers; they are housed in the Honors Residential Scholars Community, which is part of a larger residential community catering to our many academic disciplines; they are given first priority in class selection and online registration, allowing them flexibility in the field of study they have chosen; their curriculum features small classroom settings, taught by many of our most distinguished professors; they commit to at least fifteen hours of community service, a total that they annually exceed as the group often totals more than two thousand hours of such service per academic year; they are encouraged to participate in our rigorous undergraduate research program; and they develop a comprehensive honors thesis.

Often, our honors students go beyond what is expected. A recent engineering graduate, Steven DelaCruz, became a Goldwater and Udall Scholar and founded our university’s Sustainable Energy Network. Another Truman Scholar, Ivon Padilla-Rodriguez, became a Glamour Top 10 College Woman, received Phi Kappa Phi’s Marcus L. Urann Fellowship, was a Rhodes Scholarship finalist, and co-authored a well-received book on undocumented youth with one of her professors. Our most recent Goldwater Scholarship recipient for 2015, Josh Regalado, a neuroscience major and only a sophomore, is working in one of our many labs in the psychology department, actively researching sleeping behavior in starvation-resistant flies.

As these samples show, our honors students graduate with a notable breadth of experience that fully positions them for immediate employment or acceptance into the country’s finest graduate programs in all fields and throughout all disciplines. Perhaps more impressive is that they realize through their participation in our program who they can and should be.

Students such as Jonathan Carral, because of their involvement in our honors program, come out poised to change the world. One day, Jonathan, who spent this last summer as part of a non-profit educational internship in the Congo, hopes to form his own international, non-governmental organization to help the children of the world’s developing countries. And to think it all started with a last-minute decision to visit our honors program office, which sits overlooking one of the most picturesque spots on our campus, Manzanita Lake. “The view of the lake from the Honors office is pretty amazing,”
Jonathan says. Amazing, too, are the tangible and intangible benefits an institution of higher learning such as the University of Nevada, Reno can provide when it places high priority on an effective, humanistic honors program.

President Johnson may be contacted at marc@unr.edu.
Expanding an Honors Program in the Midst of Institution Consolidation

Bonita C. Jacobs, President
University of North Georgia

Honors Director: Stephen Smith

Institutions of higher learning have been facing budget constrictions throughout the country, leading to consolidations and cutbacks. Administrators often have to make hard choices about what programs to eliminate or cut back, but one program that is not on the table at the University of North Georgia is our honors program. On the contrary, we are expanding and adapting honors to accommodate the changing nature of our institution; we want students at all levels to have the honors advantages of global opportunities, undergraduate research, civic engagement, and a sense of community.

INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

With more than 17,000 students and campuses in Blue Ridge, Cumming, Dahlonega, Gainesville, and Oconee County, the University of North Georgia (UNG) was created in 2013 through the consolidation of North Georgia
College & State University (NGCSU) and Gainesville State College (GSC). UNG is now one of the state’s largest public universities.

Through its five unique campuses, UNG creates communities where learning thrives, providing students the opportunity to achieve success and become leaders. We ensure that students of wide-ranging backgrounds have access to academic success, dedicated mentors, leadership opportunities, and rewarding careers. The university has been recognized nationally for its academic excellence and economic value.

UNG is also one of only six federally designated senior military colleges in the United States; the others are the Citadel, Norwich University, Texas A&M University, Virginia Military Institute, and Virginia Tech. With this signature leadership program, UNG is designated as The Military College of Georgia by the Georgia legislature and as a state leadership institution by the USG Board of Regents.

HONORS BACKGROUND

The UNG Honors Program, as we now know it, was founded at NGCSU (now the Dahlonega Campus of UNG) in 1995. NGCSU, one of the oldest universities in Georgia, was founded in 1873. Since NGCSU enrolled students for baccalaureate and graduate programs only, the honors program was shaped to serve only four-year students. However, the consolidated institution now offers degrees from associate to doctorate, and the honors program has expanded to meet the needs of high-performing students across that spectrum. Thus, although the honors program is relatively young, it has become a valuable component of the institutional mission. In an environment of tight budgets, we have made a decision that the honors program should be not only retained but allowed to grow.

The UNG Honors Program has recently expanded to include students on the Gainesville and Oconee campuses in addition to the Dahlonega campus. Each of the programs offers an expanding number of extracurricular experiences including field trips, conferences, and community service. The program requires that each member hold at least one significant leadership position while in college, and most honors students serve in several different leadership positions before they graduate.
GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES

UNG has a rich history of educating civic, professional, and military leaders who serve and work in communities locally and globally. To prepare them for today’s global environment, we teach ten languages and provide a rapidly expanding opportunity for study abroad and internships. By the time they graduate, about forty percent of our honors students have participated in at least one study abroad experience.

For example, junior psychology major Amy Shim travelled this year to India to study the dynamics of children, teachers, and mothers during childhood development. Her work demonstrated opportunities for improved conditions for these children, and she stated that it opened her eyes to “new things, new people, and different ways of life.”

Similarly, Jacob Dietrich travelled to Oman in 2013. Using the experience as a foundation, he received a Fulbright scholarship and will return to Oman in 2016 to study the impact of tourism on Oman’s culture. As Jacob put it, “The Honors Program provided me the support and encouragement I needed to continue my studies abroad. . . . [and] provided me with a forum in which I was able to share my experiences with future students traveling abroad. Traveling abroad is an addictive and enlightening experience. . . .[I]t allowed me to observe firsthand the global reach of my education.”

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

UNG has long supported undergraduate research activities, and honors students are encouraged to participate in these opportunities. They are expected, prior to graduation, to complete an honors thesis, which must be a significant scholarly contribution. Honors students’ participation can be a strong motivator for other students to become involved in undergraduate research.

Honors students Joshua McCausland and Obadi M. Obadi each engaged in undergraduate research projects with their faculty mentors. In large part because of their work on these projects, they were each awarded an NIH scholarship that includes a summer laboratory experience and full-time employment for one year post-graduation. This kind of early professional experience has a lifelong impact. “Not only did I gain much more appreciation for the value and power of research, but it also established many fruitful connections at conferences and meetings that eventually led to my current...
employment at the NIH,” Joshua reported. “This work has made me a more competitive applicant, and it will definitely help me as I apply for graduate school.”

In addition to offering funding for thesis projects, the UNG Honors Program provides students with stipends for study abroad and grants honors credit for applicable courses taken internationally. This exposure to other cultures enhances students’ ability to work in an increasingly multicultural and global society.

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

Honors students engage with a variety of populations not only abroad but also in their local communities. The program encourages civic responsibility and active engagement as a means to help them understand the importance of giving back to one’s community. For example, Kelly Howard, an alumna who is now an attorney with a Washington, D.C., firm, also serves as a volunteer lawyer for the Homeless Persons Representation Project in Baltimore City. Kelly stated that the honors program “was such a crucial part of my college experience; it not only gave me an outstanding education, it helped to frame the importance of giving back to and being part of a community.” Honors students are urged to consider the ways they can give back, and their sense of social responsibility benefits their communities, both local and global.

**BUILDING COMMUNITY AND A SENSE OF BELONGING**

Students in the honors program also have the opportunity to be part of a tightknit learning community, providing support for one another emotionally, academically, and physically. They form study groups and perform community service together, with a combined total of thousands of hours each year. Honors activities include forums to debate politics, opportunities to tutor one another, times set aside to celebrate each other’s birthdays, and encouragements to share research ideas. In large part because of the strength of the honors community, the honors program experiences an 80% four-year graduation rate with a 3.6 collective GPA across our campuses in Dahlonega, Gainesville, and Oconee.
CONCLUSION

The UNG mission statement highlights our desire to “provide a culture of academic excellence.” Like other regional institutions, UNG strives to meet the needs of students from a wide variety of backgrounds and preparation levels. As we do so, we recognize the importance of the honors program in promoting a culture of excellence. Welcoming high-achievers and rewarding those who choose to do and learn more are important ingredients of that culture, and the University of North Georgia is committed to supporting this culture as an important asset to our multi-campus institution.

President Jacobs may be contacted at
Bonita.Jacobs@ung.edu.
Enriching the Life of the Community
On and Off Campus

MARK A. HECKLER, PRESIDENT
Valparaiso University

HONORS DEAN: PETER KANELOS

INTRODUCTION

A ccording to the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), “The value of Honors programs and Honors colleges for students cannot be overemphasized. For high achieving students, Honors programs and colleges offer many opportunities to make the most of their higher education.” Many faculty and administrators who have spent their careers in higher education would concur with NCHC’s assessment. Honors colleges and programs throughout the country have historically offered significant value to those who participate. From learning critical-thinking skills to developing exceptional written and verbal communication skills and deep connections with professors and peers, students benefit greatly from their honors experiences and often leave higher educational institutions with higher aspirations for life after college than many of their peers (Hafsy).
While colleges and universities have instituted honors colleges and programs for a number of these reasons, many have yet to consider the value that these programs hold outside the confines of the classroom and for those students who participate. At Valparaiso University, Christ College (our honors college) serves students both within and beyond the college. Christ College (CC) also engages community members and alumni, providing comprehensive value to both the university and the greater community. Additionally, CC bolsters the university’s mission and vision in rich and fulfilling ways. Using Christ College as an example, I will describe the ways in which Valpo achieves these results in order to underscore the value of honors programs beyond the classroom.

**CHRIST COLLEGE: A BRIEF HISTORY**

Founded in 1859, Valparaiso University is an independent Lutheran university grounded in the liberal arts tradition and located in Northwest Indiana just an hour east of Chicago. In 1958, the earliest version of Christ College was instituted during a time when many universities initiated similar colleges and programs after the launch of a national conversation generated by the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student (Andrews). Modeled after programs at Oxford and Cambridge, Christ College invited incoming freshmen to join the honors program, where they engaged in advanced, more rigorous versions of required freshman courses such as Western Civilization, English, and Theology (Baepler). Eventually, CC evolved into much more than a program and was founded as an autonomous honors college within the university that provided students with an interdisciplinary approach to higher learning.

Nearly fifty years after its inception, Christ College remains a top honors college with a rigorous curriculum grounded in student-centered learning, fulfilling former President O. P. Kretzmann’s originating vision to “take heed of the emerging national student protests against the bureaucratization of learning by shaking off curricular straightjackets and discovering new, personal methods of learning” (Baepler 36).

Christ College models this student-centered approach in several ways. While in the classroom, students engage not only with classical texts but also in independent research tailored to their interests and courses of study. Outside of the traditional classroom setting, CC students participate in a variety of experiential learning opportunities that enhance their growth and discovery and that contribute meaningfully to the community at large.
In 1991, the dean of Christ College founded the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts at Valparaiso University, bringing to campus recent post-doctoral academicians annually to teach and do research during two-year residencies. These young scholars teach in Christ College and in their disciplines, bringing cutting-edge perspectives to students and faculty colleagues.

Christ College’s intentional and distinctive approach to higher learning and its exceptional faculty serve to enhance the university’s mission to prepare women and men who will lead and serve in church and society while also enhancing the liberal arts tradition upon which the university was founded. While CC serves this purpose for the students enrolled, the college also extends these foundational values into the community at large.

COMMUNITY–WIDE EVENTS: A BENEFIT TO THE LOCAL AND CAMPUS COMMUNITY

During the first semester of the honors program, CC students explore great works of history, literature, drama, philosophy, and religion through critical reading and close analysis of texts as well as careful and focused research and writing, scholarly lectures, faculty-guided small-group discussion, formal public debate, and creative, dramatic, and musical expression.

In order to cultivate learning via dramatic and musical expression, students participate in the weekly Freshman Program Drama Workshop, during which they write, stage, and perform an original ninety-minute theatre piece, accompanied by music, based on themes from their coursework. The Christ College Freshman Production is then performed for members of the campus community and the general public annually in the late fall. The experience inspires innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to learning, and it also allows a unique way for the larger campus and the general public to interact with the college.

In addition, for the past thirty years, CC has offered the Christ College Symposium. Each week, evening events feature exemplary scholars, artists, and public intellectuals who address a common theme in the context of their own disciplinary perspective. And now in its third year, Shakespeare Week, hosted by Christ College in partnership with the English and theatre departments, showcases a series of performances, workshops, and other events relating to various Shakespeare works. These and many other CC co-curricular experiences offer, in the words of the current CC dean, Peter Kanelos, “a model for infusing an ethos of inquiry and exploration throughout the entire student experience.”
Most of these events are open to the community, and they allow students and the public alike to consider classical and contemporary works in concert with one another. This kind of collaborative interaction and learning enhances both the college and the wider university and local community, and it serves to support the mission and vision of the university, which aims to bring diverse people together in the common pursuit of truth (Heckler).

THE BENEFIT TO NON-HONORS STUDENTS

Christ College also adds value to the wider student population that interacts daily with students in the program. As an intentional component of the Christ College curriculum, CC students take the majority of their coursework outside the confines of the college. Along with earning honors distinction, students concurrently enroll in another college at the university—the College of Arts and Sciences, Business, Engineering, or Nursing and Health Professions—where they pursue a major area of study and earn their bachelor’s degrees. While some of their courses in departments outside the college are cross-listed for honors credit, most are not.

When Christ College students collaborate and interact with students from all areas of study, it enhances both their own experience and the experience of students who are not enrolled in the honors program. It provides value to the honors students as they gain new perspectives from a heterogeneous population of students with whom they would not customarily interact. In turn, the larger student population benefits by witnessing, and often adopting, the honors students’ exemplary critical-thinking and research skills as well as the thoughtfulness and discipline with which they approach academic material. This interaction elevates the overall academic experience for the entire student population as CC and non-CC students alike collaborate to develop concrete skills that they will take with them into their careers.

ALUMNI/AE PARTICIPATION: ADDING VALUE BEYOND GRADUATION

One of the indisputable benefits of most honors colleges and programs is the camaraderie it provides among enrolled students as well as the faculty with whom they interact. Many Christ College students, for example, develop deep relationships with their CC classmates and faculty mentors, and often these relationships extend beyond graduation. Christ College alumni reading groups in several major metropolitan areas convene to follow syllabi prepared
by faculty as guides to topics such as What Is Beauty?, American Consumer Culture, Strangers and Journeys, Faith and Skepticism, or The Lincolns. CC has also launched a continuing education program that attracts area alumni and others to discussions of masterworks. This ongoing value encourages a virtuous cycle of alumni/ae engagement and investment, and the combination of intellectual and social stimulation engenders an affinity with the college and university that other colleges sometimes struggle to match. Honors students who have experiences that keep them engaged with the university are more likely to be engaged in their workplace and as alumni/ae (Gallup/Purdue University).

According to a report by The Alumni Factor, friendship and intellectual capability are the most significant outcomes that influence alumni/ae to give back to their alma mater. Because honors colleges such as Christ College develop both intellectual and social bonds, a strong correlation between participation in the college and annual giving seems only natural. At Valpo, 20.6% of Christ College alumni gave back to the university in fiscal year 2015, compared to the 17.1% of alumni overall, and 10.4% of alumni gave back to the Christ College dedicated dean's fund compared to an average of 3.7% of alumni across all other colleges’ deans’ funds.

Given these statistics, the phrase “value of honors” is both figurative and literal. While colleges like Christ College continue to build universities’ reputations for promoting rigorous academic inquiry, they also serve to enhance relationships with graduates, leading to opportunities for donor investment and greater financial sustainability. For Valpo, this type of engagement and financial potential plays a role in fulfilling the university’s vision to remain financially prudent as we seek to prepare women and men to lead and serve for centuries to come, as articulated in the university’s strategic plan (Heckler).

CONCLUSION

From critical analysis of theories and practices to student-centered learning, community engagement, campus-wide enrichment, and stronger affinity with the university post-graduation, Christ College provides a rich example of the value of honors. As we have shifted into a post-secondary landscape in which learning outcomes, alumni/ae and community engagement, and return on investment are of increasing importance (Hayword), universities and colleges across the country are well-served by the comprehensive value of honors programs and the role they play in enriching the entire university community and beyond.
REFERENCES


President Heckler may be contacted at mark.heckler@valpo.edu.
In February of 1967, newly elected Governor Ronald Reagan delivered a speech about California’s austere budget in which he chided the “intellectual luxury” of higher education as something that could lead to “economic ruin” if unchecked. “Taxpayers shouldn’t be subsidizing intellectual curiosity,” Gov. Reagan decreed. Thus began in California and soon the rest of the nation a historic conversation about the role of higher education: Do we exist to open minds to the world or open doors to a job?

Reagan boldly argued the latter despite the tradition of education as a social and moral good, an idea championed years earlier by another man who would be president. Liberally educated people are “worthy to receive and able to guard the sacred deposit of the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens,” Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1779, forty years before he founded the University of Virginia. Higher education would strengthen our fledgling democracy because well-educated people “would not be swayed by tyrants.”

As our nation’s most-populated state faced financial burdens two centuries later, though, Gov. Reagan asked public universities to shift their focus from
developing minds to developing workers, changing America’s view of what higher education should be. Before Reagan’s address, three out of four students said they went to college to “develop a meaningful philosophy of life.” Only about half as many said their primary intent was to be “very well off financially.” In the years following, however, student attitudes reversed. Today, eighty percent of students say that the greatest value of an education is its potential economic returns—more than double the percentage before Reagan’s transformational speech.

Our great universities offer countless benefits to those we educate and to the societies they represent, including the prospects of a better financial future; several studies show lifetime earnings increase exponentially with degree attainment. This important benefit, though, must not define what we do. The primary purpose of higher education, especially an honors education, must always be changing the world by changing lives. The ideas and innovations that occur on our campuses every day—in laboratories, clinics, studios, classrooms, and dorm rooms—are the catalysts that will transform humanity.

No better examples of transforming humanity occur than those that take place in honors colleges and programs across America and among students like James Denison at Virginia Commonwealth University. James has used his extraordinary knowledge of statistics and mathematical modeling to help save lives. Calling on the advanced mathematics that he studies as part of his honors curriculum at VCU, he has shown how fire trucks in the counties around Richmond, Virginia, can respond to emergencies more quickly and efficiently, thus getting to people in dire need sooner. In VCU’s Honors Summer Undergraduate Research Program, James made mathematical models and applied them to a real-life problem that will make a difference for people.

What James does—and what honors students across America do—speaks to a university’s greatest mission: changing the world by changing lives, through what we discover, create, innovate, and inspire. Yes, we prepare students to take jobs, but more than that, we prepare them to create new jobs and new industries. We prepare them to innovate. Whatever future they can imagine, they can make real. They are the ones who will finally solve problems that have plagued human beings for centuries. Indeed, the next Greatest Generation consists of the students in our honors colleges today. We must ensure that they have every chance and every resource to succeed in big ways.

Honors education is not inexpensive, but its value to our universities and those we serve is undeniable. Honors education encourages, even demands, interdisciplinary collaboration. It asks students and faculty to come together to
innovate and create broadly, and to work with each other as a team of scholars and pioneers from different backgrounds and different disciplines. Similarly, it fosters diversity in all of its forms, a core tenet of the educational experience, bringing together bright students and faculty whose only similarity is their shared focus on excellence. Innovation and creativity happen when we surround ourselves not with those who are most like us but rather with those who will challenge us and inspire us to think differently.

The honors curriculum builds deep thinkers, those who are re-imagining what is possible for humanity to conceive and achieve, starting with real-world experiences in the communities we serve, asking questions no one else has asked, and then finding the answers no one else can find, as James did. Pioneering discoveries, not simply learning about them, is inherent in the undergraduate research our honors students conduct with their faculty mentors.

As universities, we are in the business of “what’s next?” What is the next great innovation in medicine, science, art, literature, communications, and business? What is the next remarkable innovation in technology? What will be the next great achievement of humankind? No one is better positioned to ask and answer “what’s next?” than someone who has the foundation and future afforded by an honors education.

The benefits of an honors college, of course, extend beyond the college itself to every aspect of the university. Honors colleges attract renowned faculty and the best and brightest students; in doing so, they raise the profile, prestige, and reputation of the entire institution. Honors colleges may serve as testing grounds for new pedagogies. Studies show that honors students also elevate the discussion in non-honors courses and are more likely to serve as student leaders. In short, an excellent honors college raises all aspects of a university’s reputation and reality, and that is why I am deeply proud of the remarkable honors college at my institution, Virginia Commonwealth University, where students like James Denison will help solve society’s biggest problems and where our dean, Barry Falk, who is a recognized leader in the National Collegiate Honors Council, helps ensure that our focus remains clear: We exist not simply to advance a single career, but to advance humanity. Nowhere does this advancement happen more clearly, or more purposefully, than in our honors colleges.

President Rao may be contacted at president@vcu.edu.
Value Added

M. Roy Wilson, President
Wayne State University

Honors Dean: Jerry Herron

With more than a thousand honors programs or colleges in the United States and that number growing every year, defining the value of honors is a significant undertaking. Honors seems to have become an obligatory upgrade that no college or university president can afford to be without, but there is more than institutional trending to be considered, or at least there should be, so the real issue is defining the value that honors adds—for students, for faculty, for staff, and for the larger community we serve. When it comes to budgets and governing boards and all the constituencies the university is responsible to, the way that each of us determines the value added is going to be different. Some best practices are consistent across the whole range of colleges and universities where honors education goes forward, but the real value added is in how we apply those best practices to make the most of each institution’s distinctive character and strengths, and how we turn good ideas into conscious practice.

Let’s start with who we are. At Wayne State University we pride ourselves on a history of academic excellence and opportunity that reaches back almost
150 years. Wayne State is a comprehensive university with more than 380 degree and certificate programs. We have Michigan's most diverse student body, with an enrollment of more than 27,000 in our thirteen schools and colleges, including more than 18,000 students in our undergraduate programs. We have 245,000 living Warrior alumni. WSU is one of only 108 institutions in the United States to receive the highest rating for research productivity from the Carnegie Foundation (Research University/Very High Activity). Along with Michigan State University and the University of Michigan, we are partners in the University Research Corridor (URC), which is advancing research, moving new technologies to the marketplace, helping create new jobs, and giving a boost to the state's economy. According to a report released by Anderson Economic Group LLC, the URC contributed $16.6 billion in 2012 to the state's economy—a 30% increase from the first assessment in 2007. Wayne State is Michigan's only urban research university, located in the heart of Midtown Detroit. We are proud to be one of a limited number of institutions nationally to hold the highest Carnegie classification for both research and community engagement. Our vision is to become a preeminent public, urban research university known for academic and research excellence, success across a diverse student body, and meaningful engagement in its urban community.

Communicating to students the distinctive character of Wayne State University and making our vision a reality to them is an important part of our mission, not just during recruitment but all the way through their baccalaureate experience. The Irvin D. Reid Honors College has an important role to play in communicating this vision. Honors is a marquee for the best WSU has to offer to undergraduates and a means of engaging them, consciously, in the special opportunities that set this university apart. In keeping with the university’s vision, the honors college is city-based and service-oriented, with an enrollment of more than 1,800 this past academic year. Honors students choose to major in any of the 126 available options, which means that the college is not tied to any particular academic discipline; instead, it represents the virtues of a liberal education that reaches across departments, schools, and colleges. For our students, the aim is to integrate the specialized—and essential—knowledge of the disciplines into a broader understanding of themselves, our community, and the world. With understanding comes engagement. The honors experience at Wayne State is based on four pillars—community, service, research, career—which define the curricular and co-curricular elements of our program and also highlight the distinctive strengths of this university, at
the same time making real the value-added, high-impact practices that define the very best of undergraduate education.

Entering freshmen participate in a year-long course on the city and citizenship, with a special emphasis on Detroit; they are part of a learning community that foregrounds group work, interdisciplinary research, and freshman seminars. The aim is to ensure that students become active members of a community and that they also take full advantage of the community where we live, with a Detroit Passport that includes trips to cultural and entertainment venues that are integrated into the first-year course. In the second year, students apply what they do in the classroom to service-learning projects, facilitated by the office for CommunityEngagement@Wayne, which is part of the honors college. In year three, the emphasis is on research. The office of Research@Honors provides workshops and advising to help students develop independent research projects in order to take full advantage of the resources provided by an RU/VH institution. In year four, students undertake a capstone project, preparing their senior thesis, which is a summing up of what they are capable of achieving, as they embark on their careers. Whether students pursue a general university honors curriculum or departmental honors, the goal of honors is the same: to add value by challenging students to ask more of themselves and providing the resources they need to succeed.

Faculty also become self-conscious partners in the value-added project, in keeping with the mission of the honors college to be both a marquee and also a workshop and laboratory for new ideas. High-impact practices start in the two-semester course on the city and citizenship that all entering students take, an interdisciplinary course sequence that emphasizes problem-solving, group work, and active engagement with our community. The faculty who are seminar leaders in the first-year course are recent PhDs starting out on their careers, and honors provides them a good start in a setting where they work in teams with senior WSU colleagues. If the kind of interdisciplinary, problem-based thinking that informs the first-year curriculum is to define the future of liberal education, which seems a real and welcome possibility, then the value-added strategy of honors needs to extend beyond the first-year course to members of the WSU faculty at large, so the honors college has undertaken, through its Faculty Fellows Program, to award faculty incentive grants that promote the use of high-impact, cutting-edge pedagogy in the classroom. These grants, which are being designed in partnership with the WSU Office for Teaching & Learning, will build on current junior/senior level-seminars with new courses designed to integrate practices, enhance the
learning process, and expose students to the most current topics in a wide range of academic disciplines.

The four pillars of honors—community, service, research, and career—are also central to the experience of staff, who benefit by becoming members of a community of professionals. Staff serve in multiple roles: they are advisers and teachers, they oversee learning communities and co-curricular projects, they engage in service and service learning through the WSU Office for Community Engagement, and they are hands-on collaborators with each other and with students in the whole range of activities that define our honors college programs. Staff are encouraged to develop career paths in honors education in order to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by a research institution such as ours: through professional training, by participating at regional and national meetings, and through their own research projects. Currently, two staff members have made the honors curriculum the subject of doctoral research projects—one on the value-added impact of service learning and the second on best practices in general education.

In keeping with our status as an RU/VH institution, the honors college has undertaken an ongoing, longitudinal study of value-added outcomes in honors. This emphasis on research finds a place in the national conversation about honors education as the founding dean of our college, Jerry Herron, assumes the presidency of the National Collegiate Honors Council. Together with his colleagues, he is working to promote the role of value-added research as the basis for a larger national conversation about the importance of liberal education. “[T]he world lies no longer a dull miscellany and lumber-room, but has form and order,” Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, in “The American Scholar,” where he sets out what it means to become a scholar. “[T]here is no trifle; there is no puzzle; but one design unites and animates the farthest pinnacle and the lowest trench.” Our challenge, as scholars, is to puzzle out the design that animates understanding and makes sense of all that we can know—now more than ever.

Maybe it is best to think about honors not in terms of an end result but as an ongoing conversation about value added and all the ways that this institution and our students, faculty, and staff work to achieve excellence to benefit our whole community. There is surely no better place than this city and no better time than now to be having this conversation. This indispensably American place, Detroit, is embarked on a comeback unprecedented in our history yet representative of all we have accomplished as a people and all we have left to do if we are to live up to our high ideals. The university is central to
this good work just as honors is central to the conversation about the range of possibilities that define the best in higher education. From the beginning, the mission of our honors college has been to showcase our distinctive address so that students, parents, members of the larger community, and we ourselves know what it means to be here: all that we get to do and must do well because of who we are and where we are. There is no finer work than this, especially when our students tell us that we have succeeded. As a recent graduate, Erika Giroux (class of 2014) kindly wrote, “In short, the Honors College expands education to the best and fullest sense of the word: academic, social, cultural, and interpersonal consciousness and understanding. This empathic potential is why I chose Wayne State Honors, and I simply cannot imagine my life any other way.” We are proud of students like Erika, just as we are proud she chose to come here for her education. Such outstanding scholars demonstrate the value that honors adds and how much that means—to all of us.

President Wilson may be contacted at

president@wayne.edu.
Access, not Exclusion:
Honors at a Public Institution

E. GORDON GEE, PRESIDENT
West Virginia University

HONORS DEAN: KENNETH P. BLEMINGS

I tend to joke with our Dean of the Honors College, Ken Blemings, that his main goal is to work himself out of a job. Sorry, Ken.

After all, it is in our nature as agents of higher education to recruit, retain, and graduate the best and brightest talent available. In other words, every student walking onto our campus ought to be honors caliber. Likewise, the overall college experience for every student ought to be honors quality. I have been around the block for the last thirty-plus years serving as president of five major institutions in the United States, and I can affirm that the increased value placed on an honors education is enriching entire universities and how they operate. We are witnessing a shift in the way we prepare the next great generation of thinkers and doers, thanks to the high standards that the Honors College at West Virginia University and at other campuses across the nation have established.
Speaking for West Virginia University, a public, research, land-grant institution, I can attest to the following strengths of an honors program:

1. It increases the intellectual climate of the university.
2. It recognizes high-achieving students and their potential impact in the region and state.
3. It pairs outstanding teachers with small groups of students.
4. It teaches critical and reflective practices.
5. It is interdisciplinary, blending all varieties of students together from the arts to the sciences.

This effect is visible even to the general masses. In a piece called “A Prudent College Path” (8 Aug. 2015), *New York Times* op-ed columnist Frank Bruni highlighted how honors programs at public universities are luring top-notch students away from the elitist Ivy Leagues. A lower price tag is one reason. Here is another outlined in Bruni’s column: honors programs promise a more inclusive environment of devoted, highly driven students within an even more diverse campus population.

When honors colleges deliver on their promises, they are being anti-elitist. I know that many honors colleges and programs struggle with perceptions of elitism on their campuses, but we should never mistake an elite education for an elitist one. When you look at it from a different angle, at the way a strong honors college or program can affect the whole campus, especially one with a mission for access and service, you get a different result.

The obvious way that honors colleges are about access is that they give individual students access to the kind of educational opportunities and environment that they might not have been able to afford otherwise. Just look at the unorthodox yet thought-provoking approaches taken by a WVU Honors College instructor, Kevin Gooding. Also a Methodist pastor, Gooding teaches a small class exclusively for honors students on the Salem witch trials. At the beginning of each semester, Gooding’s students choose one of the accused Salem witches and study her trial. One student discovered that one of her ancestors was accused by her own children of witchcraft and was executed on August 19, 1692. Had the student not taken that class, she might have never known that sobering yet fascinating fact of her family history.

No, the Salem witch trials course is not just another class. Nor can one even label it a run-of-the-mill history class. Gooding describes it as a study of
the “facts” of the trials themselves and how their interpretation has changed based on the time and culture of the interpreter. The class looks not only at scholarly interpretations but at popular ones as well: poetry, fiction, theater, film, television, and music. As an extra perk, students watch and analyze episodes of Bewitched and The Simpsons that invoke the ongoing cultural relevance of the witch trials in our modern imagination. Gooding’s approach as a teacher is not just to throw dates and names out for students to remember. Instead, he demonstrates how the witch trials were events, situations, and ideas that have gone into forming who we are as a people and a nation.

Not only does our honors college offer access to these kinds of intimate educational experiences to students who might not be able to afford a private college environment, but a strong honors college like ours, with the recruiting advantage it has, provides other kinds of benefits that go well beyond individual students. The honors college benefits the land grant mission of a twenty-first-century state institution because it not only saves those students money in getting a customizable education but their presence enriches the entire campus and our state.

Here’s why. When we bring more honors students to our campus, we are raising the level of discussion in every classroom, not just honors classes. When we have more students who know how to balance working smart and playing smart, we are helping teach all of our students how to work and play smarter. When we have more students engaged in going first in the classroom, we create an environment where more are encouraged to go out into the world with boldness and confidence.

So we need to bring in students like Hannah Clipp, a wildlife and fisheries resources major, and a shining example of an honors student who is setting the pace. Over the past two years, Clipp has conducted golden eagle surveys at 4:00am, sunk into knee-deep mud to collect insect samples, and endured icy winds and freezing sleet to check on black bear dens—all for the sake of wildlife research. No, Clipp is not a graduate student. She is an undergraduate who has capitalized on the amazing, real-world research opportunities presented to her as an honors college student. Furthermore, she made history at West Virginia University as the first Mountaineer ever to win both the Udall and Goldwater scholarships, a feat she accomplished in early 2015.

The stock of our incoming freshmen each year is rising higher and higher as more Hannah Clippes enroll at our public campuses. West Virginia University is prepared to offer the support these students need to excel. We need to deliver the innovative programs they deserve and desire—not just because
these programs can benefit students such as Hannah but because they benefit all of the students on our campus.

When we keep talented students at our land-grant universities, we are also keeping them in our state, contributing not just to the university’s academic mission but also to its mission to serve the citizens of the state. We want our honors students to be leaders and servants, often both at the same time.

At West Virginia University, our pool of first-year honors students has grown from 580 to 739 for the 2015–2016 academic year, making it our largest incoming honors class ever. Overall, our honors college boasts over 2,200 students, who help make up the university’s total enrollment of some 32,000 from more than 110 countries. This past August, those 739 new students arrived on our campus with a bang. All of them participated in a day of service that had them giving back to the community that they were just joining. That kind of service is good for them and for our city.

The honors commitment to service takes place not just in one day or at one place. Honors students on campuses across the country are providing great service to their communities. Many honors students at WVU are not going to spend just four years giving back; many are going to stay in our state and give back to the community for years to come. Educating them here in West Virginia helps them see our state as a place to invest their time, energy, and talent. They might be great teachers in our schools, public servants in our legislature, doctors in our hospitals, and engineers in our industries.

The role of an honors college is clear: it helps bring talented students to our campus and offers them access to an education that they might not otherwise be able to afford. Honors students on campus make our entire university better, and having them in our community and in our state is an investment not just in these students but in ourselves.

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President Gee may be contacted at
presidentsoffice@mail.wvu.edu.
Honors and Institutional Transformation

GARY A. RANSDELL, PRESIDENT
Western Kentucky University

HONORS DIRECTOR: CRAIG T. COBANE

Honors colleges and programs often evolve in response to a mandate from boards of regents or trustees. Such mandates can lead to new or accelerated change within the institution, change that in many cases is linked to and represented by honors. Such has been the case at Western Kentucky University (WKU), where the honors program has played a key role in enhancing the national visibility and prestige of the institution.

I was hired by the Board of Regents in 1997 with a mandate to enact a “fundamental transformation” of WKU. It became clear to me that the honors program could play a major role in achieving the Board’s mandate, and eight years later, in April 2005, we created the position of full-time director of the honors program to place a strong focus on honors education. I believed that a serious honors program could raise WKU’s national profile while helping with recruiting, creating a destination point for gifted and high-ability students, improving the academic climate on campus, and increasing the institution’s overall reputation and prestige. I wanted an honors program that would play
a principal role in achieving our vision of WKU as a leading American university with international reach.

It has been ten years since we hired Craig T. Cobane as Executive Director and made the honors program an institutional priority. The program became an honors college in 2007, and it has become a centerpiece of academic transformation at WKU. Although the transformation is ongoing, decanal data demonstrate that the Honors College at WKU has been a primary driver in improving both the overall academic caliber of the undergraduate population and the institution’s statewide and national reputation.

In 2005–2006, only about two hundred students were active in the honors program, and only ten graduated. Today, the honors college has over 1,350 scholars, and two hundred graduated last year. This growth resulted in large part from our decision to invest in honors and increase opportunities for scholars. The investment has been substantial, but the return has been worth it. The past decade’s investment has included hiring tenure-eligible honors faculty and specialized staff, creating buy-out funds for honors courses, and designating honors-only residence halls. Additional resources enabled the honors college to create a freestanding Office of Scholar Development and a Chinese Flagship Program while also playing a leading role in bringing Kentucky’s first Confucius Institute to WKU. These investments have allowed the college to recruit the best and brightest and to provide them the academic and intellectual opportunity to earn the nation’s top competitive scholarships. The honors college is doing exactly what we had envisioned: it is increasing the quality of students and improving the institution’s reputation within the state and nationally.

**ACADEMIC QUALITY**

One of the primary reasons we invested in honors education was to attract a greater number of high-quality students to WKU. The plan was to increase the number of honors-eligible students on campus, thus helping to improve the overall intellectual climate on campus and the institution’s prestige and reputation. The quality of students can be measured in a number of ways, one of which is ACT/SAT scores. At many institutions, average national scores have been the primary, albeit somewhat controversial, way of assessing the academic quality of students. Another factor is the recruitment of graduates from outstanding high schools. Finally, the number of students applying for the institution’s top scholarships can serve as a proxy to show an increase in high-ability students. WKU has excelled in all three measurements.
INCREASE IN ACT/SAT AVERAGES

In addition to the significant growth of the honors college in numbers of students this past decade, WKU has also seen an equally impressive improvement in the average ACT/SAT of incoming honors scholars (27/1220 to 30.24/1350). The 2005 average scores for the 161 incoming first-year honors scholars was at the 85th percentile, and by 2015 it improved to the 96th percentile, with a 100% larger cohort. Not only has honors grown considerably, in both numbers and quality, but the scores of students not in the college have also improved significantly—further evidence that the honors college is having a positive impact on WKU’s academic reputation and attracting more high-achieving students to the university.

The honors college’s success in recruiting graduates from the Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science (according to Newsweek Magazine/The Daily Beast, the nation’s number one high school for the past three years) is additional evidence that the investment in the college is working. During its first six years (2007 to 2013), more Gatton Academy graduates have matriculated to WKU than any other university.

INCREASED PRESTIGE AS MEASURED BY SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

As the Honors College at WKU has grown, it has seen significant increases in 1) the number of students applying for WKU’s top merit-based scholarships, 2) the number of students applying for merit-based scholarships targeted at underrepresented groups, and 3) the percentage of applicants accepting scholarships and matriculating at WKU.

In the past ten years the number of students applying for the top three merit-based scholarships has grown by 200% with an almost 160% percent growth in acceptances. A similar analysis of the top three scholarships for underrepresented groups shows that the number of applications has grown by over 310%, and acceptances have increased by 278%.

While scholarship application/acceptance is not a perfect proxy for institutional prestige/reputation, the substantial growth in the number of applicants for top scholarships is a strong indicator that our strategy is working and that the university is increasingly becoming a destination point for academically high-achieving students.
ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENT INSTITUTION-WIDE

Investment in honors education has also helped increase the overall number of high-quality non-honors students at WKU. Our strategy was that a successful honors college would attract outstanding students. The strategy has paid off, and in the past ten years the institution has seen a 65% increase in students with ACT/SAT scores of 25/1340 or higher. This growth in high-ability students is especially impressive because it came at a time when the overall enrollment of the university grew by only 10%. We have thus been able to use the honors college as a vehicle to not only improve the institution but especially to enhance our academic reputation.

NATIONALLY COMPETING SCHOLARSHIPS AND INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY

Another variable used to measure academic quality is success with nationally competitive scholarships. Over the past decade, because of a conscious investment in promoting these scholarships, WKU has experienced a substantial increase in the number of students applying for and receiving nationally competitive awards, improving our overall reputation both regionally and nationally.

WKU had no real “national scholarship” culture in 2005. A couple of students would apply annually with little success, so, in support of the honors college, we created the campus-wide Office of Scholar Development (OSD) in 2006. Since that time, growth of applications and successes has been dramatic. This past year, 42 of the over 120 students who applied for nationally competitive scholarships earned recognition. Furthermore, although the majority of applicants are members of the honors college, the number of non-honors students applying is substantial and growing.

This trend is a positive sign of change in the campus culture. In my early years at WKU, most of our students and many of our faculty were skeptical about national scholarship opportunities. As a result of our investments, WKU is now known in Kentucky, and increasingly nationally, for success with national awards. Earlier this year, the Chronicle of Higher Education recognized WKU for success in the J. William Fulbright competition for the second time in the past four years. In 2014, WKU was tied for third in the nation among master’s comprehensive institutions in Fulbright production. Additionally, John Willingham, the editor of A Review of Fifty Public Honors
Program (2014), in referencing WKU’s success with STEM-related nationally competitive scholarships, stated: “Few national universities, public or private, have a better record during the period” (from 2008–2014). In short, because of a focus on and investment in honors education, WKU is enjoying increased positive national recognition. These types of validations and the perceptions they create of our academic excellence are critical in helping me talk about the value of the WKU experience to donors, alumni, state legislators, and other external constituencies.

**GROWTH IN STUDY ABROAD PARTICIPATION**

My decision to invest in honors education has also helped grow WKU’s participation in study abroad, which has led to additional statewide and national recognition. Over the past decade, the Honors College at WKU has played a leading role in creating new study abroad opportunities and partnerships, providing exemplars of the value of international education and popularizing study abroad. As a result, the number of WKU students studying abroad has grown from fewer than 150 in 2005 to 544. WKU now ranks twenty-third in the nation for total students studying abroad and fourteenth for student participation in short-term programs among master’s institutions. Of the students who studied abroad in 2013–2014, nearly forty percent were members of the honors college. In fact, more of our honors students study abroad annually than the entire institution produced in 2005. Due to this growth, WKU is the only public university in Kentucky ranked by IIE in the top forty nationally, and increasingly I hear from prospective students, their families, alumni, and state legislators that WKU is considered the “study abroad” university in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

**CONCLUSION**

Our investment in honors education over the past decade has not only enhanced the Honors College at WKU but improved the academic quality of the university. It has made the institution stronger, helped attract more outstanding faculty, and improved the intellectual climate on campus. Additionally, the increased number of high-ability students applying and matriculating at WKU has led to more students studying abroad and earning nationally competitive scholarships. As a result, during the past ten years I have witnessed WKU’s statewide and national academic reputation increase dramatically. In short, my decision to invest in honors education has been an
undeniable success and has helped transform the academic culture at WKU, moving the institution closer to fulfilling our vision of becoming a leading American university with international reach.

President Ransdell may be contacted at president@wku.edu.
Striving for Our Best and Brightest Selves: 
Making Honors Central to the 
Campus Community

STEVE MORGAN, PRESIDENT 
Westminster College

HONORS DIRECTOR: RICHARD BADENHAUSEN

Honors education in the United States got its start almost a century ago when Frank Aydelotte became president of Swarthmore in 1921 and introduced a then-radical curriculum for juniors and seniors that emphasized active learning, critical thinking, and interdisciplinarity (Rinn 70–3). Informed by his experience as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, Aydelotte believed that a specially designed curriculum for high-achieving students would push such students intellectually and yield positive learning outcomes. Aydelotte’s brainchild has proved wildly successful, so much so that the National Collegiate Honors Council can point to over 800 institutional members on the eve of its fiftieth anniversary.

In spite of the popularity of this model, some critics have objected to honors education as elitist, mere special treatment for a class of already privileged
students. On one level, I can understand this perception, especially given the recruiting model employed by some honors programs and colleges that emphasizes “perks” as a way of enticing high-achieving students to attend their institutions. Priority registration, book stipends, full tuition waivers, and lush honors dorms that physically remove students from the general population certainly give the impression that honors students reside in a separate sphere and are, according to University of Florida Honors director Kevin Knudson, “flying first class.” Criticizing this climate of entitlement, Knudson calls for an alternative model where we are “engaging students who want to push the boundaries and helping them find ways to do it, rather than providing further empty rewards for students who jump through hoops with style.”

I am pleased to say that at Westminster College we do not depend on any of these perks to attract our students. Instead of framing honors around the idea of a “better” experience, whatever that might mean, we speak of honors as “different,” an alternative learning opportunity that offers students attracted to interdisciplinary, seminar-style learning a place to stretch themselves with other like-minded individuals. We have many unique academic programs at the college—an innovative, May-term, study-away program; a portfolio of low-residency and competency-based options; an outdoor leadership curriculum; and even an aviation degree, among many others—each serving a class of students that has special interests and needs. Honors fits right in with that larger institutional philosophy.

The approach that Knudson calls for seems to be working at Westminster. The fall 2014 entering honors class was drawn from the largest applicant pool in the program’s almost three-decade history. Far from focusing on perks, 68% of these entering students claimed it was the interesting honors curriculum that caused them to submit an application. As for the larger applicant pool itself, the top reason students tend to apply to our honors program is the rigor of the program: students want to challenge themselves. This fact is especially heartening in light of a recent book on the science of successful learning demonstrating that “[l]earning is deeper and more durable when it’s effortful. . . . [W]hen learning is harder, it’s stronger and lasts longer” (Brown 3, 9).

Far from being elitist, honors at Westminster plays a crucial role in providing opportunity and access. As Scott Carnicom points out, honors “has historically been an antidote for elitism, democratically leveling the playing field and providing a top-notch education to students outside the hallowed halls of the oldest and/or most prestigious institutions” (51, my emphasis). While a number of elite institutions like Washington University have been
taken to task recently for the paltry number of low-income students they serve, our college seeks out such students in the belief that we have a moral obligation to provide educational opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds. During the 2014–2015 academic year, 27% of Westminster undergraduates were Pell grant recipients, students who come from the lowest income group in the country, and the large majority of our students have significant financial need. Honors students are no different: they typically have roughly the same amount of need as the entering class they are part of. While Andrew Delbanco has recently lamented in *The New York Review of Books* that highly selective universities enroll only 5% of students from the bottom income quartile of our society, “reflect[ing] the stratification of our society more than resisting it” (38, 39), I am proud that Westminster sees social mobility as an important part of its mission.

Westminster has also enjoyed recognition for its advocacy work with students from underrepresented groups. We have helped design innovative outreach efforts through our Venture and Clemente programs, have been singled out for the past two years for work with the low-income South Salt Lake area as its “Partner of the Year,” and have housed a very successful McNair Scholars program at the college, to name just three efforts. Belying the ugly myth that diversity and academic excellence are mutually exclusive, 19% of Westminster McNair Scholars have been drawn from the honors program over the past eight years even though honors students represent only 7% of the student body as a whole.

Honors programs bring a wide variety of benefits to campus, some of which are obvious and others that are less so. Many students who might not otherwise know about an institution or consider applying learn of it or matriculate specifically because of the honors opportunity. For example, for 83% of last year’s entering honors class, acceptance into honors was important or very important to their decision to attend Westminster. Honors students typically retain and persist at higher rates than the overall student population and thus are a good investment for the college. Honors also attracts student leaders to campus who spread out across all our programs and provide lifting power to clubs, sports teams, and other organizations. At Westminster, such students have played especially prominent roles in our service efforts and leadership positions. Although they make up a small fraction of the student body, these students have won a remarkable 50% of the two major commencement awards for character and leadership over the past dozen years.
Honors can also have many positive effects that are less visible. Our honors seminars are all team-taught, and the collaborative setting forces faculty to stretch themselves not only by reading outside their disciplinary fields but by constantly trying new teaching strategies and by getting feedback from a teaching partner after every class. All three of the finalists for our college’s Excellence in Teaching Award in 2015 had significant experience teaching in honors, and each of these faculty members mentioned in their finalist interview how honors had improved their teaching in all their classes. Writing in the program newsletter a few years ago, gifted math faculty member Richard Wellman noted, “Since I began teaching in the Honors program, I’ve incorporated more discussions into all of my classes and I have learned to talk less and listen more” (9). Another important benefit is that honors can be used by savvy marketing departments to associate the college’s brand with academic excellence, a strategy that public institutions with honors colleges have employed with special effectiveness. Finally, as the National Collegiate Honors Council’s “Basic Characteristics” suggest, honors can be a laboratory for curricular and pedagogical experimentation, work that can “serve as prototypes for initiatives that can become institutionalized across the campus” (Characteristic #13). At Westminster, we are about to bring online an exciting new general education program that replicates the honors model in cross-disciplinary opportunities and, in places, team-teaching.

Given how crowded the higher education space is right now, institutions that are able to differentiate their honors programs according to learning opportunities rather than perks will excel in the long term. A college that chooses the perks route can only differentiate the amount of “stuff” offered to prospective high-achieving students. The natural result is an escalating arms race in which each institution seeks to outbid the other; this approach does not make good business sense, nor is it sustainable. A more strategic approach is to shape honors around a specific learning design—a curriculum focused on global issues, civic engagement, leadership, or interdisciplinary learning, as is the case at Westminster—and then educate families during the recruiting process so that students know exactly what they are getting into. This transparency in the admissions process will translate into higher retention and satisfaction among high-achieving graduates, who someday may return to the college to help as active alumni or even trustees.

In his fine lead essay, Jim Herbert eloquently recounts calling on his honors training to solve challenging “real world” assignments at the College Board and the National Endowment for the Humanities. I know the graduates of
our honors program have had similar experiences, like a recent economics major who went straight from Westminster to Stanford’s MBA program and was surprised to find that his first-year class ran much along the lines of his freshman honors humanities seminar. On finishing his graduate degree, he began work at Amazon.com, one of the most writing-centric companies in the world, where he drew on his honors training of weekly writing prompts to succeed in an environment where CEO Jeff Bezos started meetings by having executives read and comment on written proposals.

Herbert’s essay also demonstrates that we have come a long way in higher education on the question of demonstrating what our students have learned. While he references the struggles of the College Board to agree on basic academic competencies that students should master, most institutions now engage in those conversations as part of their regular annual assessment efforts. At Westminster, our college-wide learning goals drive everything we do, and students cannot graduate from the college without completing an extensive eportfolio in which they demonstrate achievement of the various competencies through learning artifacts and reflective essays. During a recent curriculum revision, the honors program revised its learning outcomes so that they were nested under the college-wide learning goals, thus allowing students to see even more explicitly how their honors experiences connect to the larger learning goals of the college. Again, honors can be most valuable when it positions itself not as separate from the rest of the campus but as intimately tied to the institution’s mission.

Herbert ends his essay on an optimistic note, and I’d like to follow his lead in my own conclusion. He suggests that what is perhaps most important about his experience in honors is the intellectual commonality that can be achieved when individuals who take different positions come together to work through these differences. “That we all can think and rethink another’s thought,” he writes, “is what I learned in honors education and what turned out to be essential in my work.” Such rethinking because we see anew through the eyes of others is perhaps the most valuable asset we provide in education; it complicates and deepens our beliefs, forces us to see the world for the complex place it is, and helps us develop empathy for others. This is the true value of a liberal education at colleges like Westminster. As we often do at Westminster, I will give our students the last word by quoting a reflection in an exit survey from a recent honors graduate, who commented on the worth of her experience: “I have met a host of interesting people who force me to be my best, brightest self, to constantly stand at intellectual attention.”
REFERENCES


President Morgan may be contacted at smorgan@westminstercollege.edu.
Educating the Leaders of the Future

ALBERT CORNELISSEN, PRESIDENT
Windesheim University of Applied Sciences (the Netherlands)

HONORS DEAN: JOSEPHINE WOLTMAN ELPERS

LEADERS OF THE FUTURE

Some students want to broaden their perspectives while others want to deepen their knowledge, and it is vital to challenge students to the level of their ability and interest. However, in regular programmes the possibilities for individualization and differentiation in content and didactics are often limited. The main focus of a regular degree programme is how to guarantee the bachelor’s level for all students. Focusing on the average student alone, though, might cause Windesheim to lose the interest of students who are looking for an additional challenge.

It is difficult to predict what tomorrow’s world will look like. All we know for certain is that we are educating the professionals of and for the future, the next generation. Because knowledge is changing rapidly, we need to teach our students not only what we already know but, on top of that, how to build new knowledge and insights.
Besides knowledge, students also need to develop the capacity both to excel in the present and to shape a new and a better society fitting their generation. To find new possibilities and new solutions, our future professionals must be able to cooperate across disciplines and cultures, to be critical and creative. As talented students will become the leaders of the future, Windesheim’s challenge is to find the best way to educate them.

WINDESHEIM HONOURS COLLEGE

Our answer to the challenge is the Windesheim Honours College and Honours Programmes. At our honours college we offer the English BBA programme Global Project and Change Management. This program is accredited as “small scale and intense” by the NVAO—the accreditation organization of the Netherlands and Flanders—and receives excellent marks. Our students are being challenged in diverse areas throughout their bachelor’s programme and are offered an additional challenge when compared to the regular programmes of Windesheim.

One of the didactic pillars is that we address these students from the start as professionals. By cooperating with professionals from [inter]national businesses and institutions and on real-life projects from day one onwards, they learn to cooperate, to come up with new solutions, and to develop their professional skills in diverse settings.

In the third and fourth year, students are able to tailor their own subjects by choosing a project management field as an area of expertise. Students thus have the opportunity to specialize their knowledge and skills in the direction of global health, urban dynamics, social entrepreneurship, and/or civil society. In addition, the programme is globally oriented with an international internship that gives Dutch students as well as international students a challenge abroad. Windesheim provides the support for this programme.

The difference between this bachelor’s degree and similar programmes at research universities is that it is less academic and more practically oriented, directed toward the future working environment of our alumni. It also offers international students a unique opportunity to combine the best in education from both a research as well as a practical perspective. For all of it students, the degree programme provides small-scale personal guidance and strong interaction with staff members.
COOPERATION WITH DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES

In addition to our honours college, Windesheim offers honours programmes, which give our most talented students a sense of community by inviting the best students from different study programmes, thus creating a multidisciplinary learning environment. The main goal of this multidisciplinary set-up is to broaden the students’ perspectives: to have them acquire new twenty-first-century skills and knowledge that the regular programmes do not offer and to have them create new knowledge on shared themes together with lecturers, professors, and companies.

Challenging gifted students to excel is possible if students are set in learning situations in which they must show above-average achievement, task commitment, and creativity. In our honours programmes, students are invited to create and analyze new ideas and to judge the usability of ideas in a specific situation. They learn to challenge accepted practices with innovative ideas.

WICKED PROBLEMS

Our honours programmes address the wicked problems of our times, problems that can’t be solved from the perspective of a single discipline. Wicked problems can only be solved by all stakeholders of a system and require an approach from multiple angles. Consequently, the programmes are set up for students who are interested in more than only their own bachelor’s programme or specialization, who have a wide interest in society. We offer our students an opportunity to work together with peers who each have different perspectives and a different approach to tackling problems. They learn from each other to look at problems in different ways and to work together and complement each other, all bringing knowledge from their own fields.

HIGHER-ORDER THINKING

Although lecturers provide context in their teaching materials, they are no longer the only source of knowledge. They are the coaches of our students, who in turn are the future leaders. Students can find information everywhere but must learn how to handle the different sources, how to validate information, how to synthesize and leverage it, how to communicate it, and how to use it to solve problems. It is becoming more and more important to put the emphasis on the skills that will be needed in the future rather than the facts or content.
The Windesheim Honours College and Honours Programmes pay a lot of attention to higher-order thinking: analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Professionalism in the twenty-first century differs from professionalism in earlier centuries. We need to reconsider some of the classical tools we use in education, the types of problems students have to solve, and how to gather and discuss data collected via sources such as cell phones, social media, crowdsourcing, online surveys, and RSS feeds. As students collaborate using chat, Skype, Google wave, Google docs, Twitter, and Facebook, skills in explaining, justifying, and evaluating opinions and sources are becoming increasingly important. These skills require higher-order thinking. In addition, soft skills such as communication and empathy will be necessary in the world of future professionals, the world for which we want to prepare our students.

**HIGHER STANDARDS**

As a university of applied sciences, Windesheim plays a central role in its region. Every year we deliver thousands of graduates to our society, ready to find their place and their role as professionals. During their studies, we not only teach them the standards of their future profession but also make them aware of their own moral values. We challenge them regularly with contrasting values in order to teach them to build bridges within society. We have set our own standard higher than is formally required because we are convinced that we are more than just a degree-granting institution. The Windesheim Honours College and Honours Programmes play an important role by challenging our most talented students to realize their full potential so that they are optimally prepared for their future.

President Cornelissen may be contacted at

awca.cornelissen@windesheim.nl
ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

JONATHAN ALGER is President of James Madison University. An expert in higher education law and policy, he has previously served in positions at Rutgers, the University of Michigan, the American Association of University Professors, and U.S. Department of Education. He is a graduate of Swarthmore College and Harvard Law School.

J. DAVID ARMSTRONG, JR. brings more than twenty-five years of experience as a state and national leader in higher education and economic development to his presidency at Broward College. He leads one of the largest and most diverse colleges in America, enrolling nearly 60,000 students from more than 150 different nations of origin. Armstrong is a graduate of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government. Previously he was Chancellor of the Florida Community College System.

RICHARD BADENHAUSEN is Professor and Kim T. Adamson Chair at Westminster College, where he is also Director of the Honors Program. The author of T.S. Eliot and the Art of Collaboration (Cambridge UP), Badenhausen is also Co-Chair of NCHC’s Publications Board, an NCHC-Recommended Program Reviewer, and former member of NCHC’s Board of Directors.

KAREN BAKER is Coordinator of the Orange Coast College Honors Program. A graduate in marine biology at San Diego State University, marine science professor Karen Baker has been honors coordinator since the fall of 2014. She is also the chair of the Department of Marine Science and advisor to the Eta Eta Omicron Marine Science Honor Society.

MARK P. BECKER became Georgia State University’s seventh president in January of 2009. He has devoted his tenure to providing a vision for the future of the university and leading the institution into a period of marked growth and advancement. Reflecting his vision for an urban research university in the twenty-first century, GSU has adopted a dynamic ten-year strategic plan that puts it well on its way to becoming one of the nation’s premier urban research universities.

MICHAEL T. BENSON, D.Phil., is President and Professor of Government at Eastern Kentucky University. Previously, he was President of Southern
Utah University, whose honors program was instrumental in launching the NCHC’s Partners in the Parks initiative. He now heads an institution that for twenty-three years has led the nation in student presentations at the NCHC’s annual conference. He accompanied a contingent of forty EKU honors students who made presentations at the 2014 NCHC annual meeting and plans to attend the 2015 meeting.

**LARRY BERMAN** assumed the position Founding Dean of the Honors College at Georgia State University in January of 2012. He has been a Guggenheim, American Council of Learned Societies, and Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Fellow. In 2010 he received the UC Davis Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Mentoring Undergraduate Research.

**SUKETU P. BHAVSAR** has been Director of the Kellogg Honors College at Cal Poly Pomona since 2007 and was formerly Director of the Honors Program at the University of Kentucky. After graduating from IIT Bombay, he received his PhD in astrophysics from Princeton University. His research contributions have been in cosmology and quantifying the large-scale structure in the universe. He is a professional member of the NCHC Board of Directors.

**KENNETH P. BLEMINGS** is Dean of the West Virginia University Honors College. He is a long-time professor of nutritional biochemistry in WVU’s Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design. In 2013, Blemings became the founding director of WVU’s intercollegiate undergraduate program in biochemistry.

**RON BORMANS** is President of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (Hogeschool Rotterdam). He is a graduate in political science (KU Nijmegen) with a specialization in management science. Bormans worked for the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture & Science as Deputy Director for Higher Professional Education and Director of Study Finance. He was a member of the so-called Veerman Committee, which advised the Dutch Government how to organize Dutch higher education.

**QUINTIN B. BULLOCK** is the ninth president of the Community College of Allegheny County, a diverse, multi-campus community college in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is a consummate professional, an experienced educator, an exemplary community leader, a mentor, and a positive role model for students and aspiring leaders, with an extensive, diverse professional background in
higher education. He is a proven and results-oriented president recognized as an ambassador for the faculty, staff, students, and communities he serves.

SEAN BURRAGE is President of Southeastern Oklahoma State University. He earned his Juris Doctorate from the University of Oklahoma College of Law and holds a bachelor’s degree in accounting from OU. He is a member of the Governor’s Education Advisory Committee and The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. He served two terms in the Oklahoma Senate.

JEFF CHAMBERLAIN has been Director of the Frederik Meijer Honors College at Grand Valley State University since 2007. Under his direction the program has grown significantly. Prior to his tenure at Grand Valley, he was a faculty member at the University of St. Francis (IL), where he founded the Duns Scotus Fellows and Scholars Program. He is a professor of history and has written a couple of books and numerous articles on eighteenth-century British religion and history. He was president of the Mid-East Honors Association from 2012–2015.

DAVID L. CHICOINE has served since January 2007 as the nineteenth president of South Dakota State University, his undergraduate alma mater. As a policy economist, he has contributed as a co-author or co-editor of four books and has published more than a hundred academic journal articles, book chapters, and professional papers. Chicoine previously served the University of Illinois for more than thirty years as a professor, department head, dean, and vice president.

JAMES P. CLARKE is Director of the Honors College at LIU Brooklyn. He also teaches philosophy and has published articles on the work of Hannah Arendt and Jean-François Lyotard. His interests include political theory, ethics, and contemporary French and German philosophy. He earned his BA from Sonoma State University in California and his MA and PhD in philosophy from Stony Brook University in New York.

KIMBERLY R. CLINE is the tenth president of Long Island University. Cline is recognized as a transformational leader and has positioned LIU’s strength in engaged learning, combining rigorous academic instruction with real-world training and entrepreneurship. She holds an MBA, a JD, and an EdD.
CRAIG T. COBANE, PhD, is Executive Director of the Western Kentucky University Honors College and currently holds the John and Jacque Jarve Endowed Professorship in Honors. He was appointed Chief International Officer—Global Learning (CIO-GL) in 2012 and is the Principle Investigator for the National Security Education Program (NSEP) grant that funds the Chinese Flagship Program.

DAVID COLEMAN is Interim Director of the Eastern Kentucky University Honors Program. Professor of History and former Chair of the EKU History Department, he has taught with the EKU Honors Program since 1999. He is currently working with students, faculty, and administrators to help shape the EKU Honors Program’s planned transition to honors college status in 2016.

LISA L. COLEMAN is Director of the Honors Program and Professor of English at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. A former member of the NCHC Board of Directors, she co-chairs the Committee on Diversity Issues, serves on the Publications Board, and is co-editor of two NCHC monographs, Setting the Table for Diversity (2010) and Occupy Honors Education (2016).

SORAYA M. COLEY, PhD, is the sixth president of Cal Poly Pomona. With over twenty-five years of academic and administrative experience, Coley has also served as a professor, dean, provost, and vice president in the California State University system. Her life’s work is dedicated to providing access and opportunity to students from all backgrounds, including those who are least likely to afford what is possible.

JERRY CORCORAN has held ten job titles, including “President,” in his twenty-five years at Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC). His EdD from Northern Illinois University is in curriculum and instruction. Under his leadership, IVCC has seen many ambitious capital improvements, including this year a student center and cyber café. The IVCC Foundation recently raised $2.1 million in support of its first capital campaign, and now the goal is to dramatically build the scholarship endowment.

ALBERT CORNELISSEN is President of the Board of Windesheim, University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands, located in Zwolle and Almere. He has a master’s in biology and PhD in parasitology. He was a researcher at the University of Edinburgh, the Netherlands Cancer Institute, and, as group-leader, at the Max-Planck-Institute for Biology. In 1991, he was appointed as
a full professor in parasitology by Utrecht University. He became Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in 1999 and fulfilled this position until 2009, when he became President.

**Michael K. Cundall, Jr.** has been Director of the University Honors Program at North Carolina A&T State University since 2011. A veteran of honors education, he has worked in honors programs and colleges since 2004. A philosophy professor by background, Cundall—or Dr. Mike to his students—focuses on student success and growth as the hallmarks of a successful education program.

**Joan Digby** is Director of the Honors College at LIU Post as well as Professor of English and Director of the Poetry Center on her campus. She is a past president of the National Collegiate Honors Council who serves on the Publications Board and is a reviewer for *JNCHC*. The initiator of Partners in the Parks, she was also the editor of the NCHC monograph on this hallmark program.

**Elizabeth A. Dinndorf** is President of Columbia College in Columbia, SC, a women’s liberal-arts college with an emphasis on real-world experiences and career preparation. She is a graduate of the College of Saint Benedict, where she served as Chair of the Board, and William Mitchell College of Law. She was also Senior Vice President of U.S. Bank and Wells Fargo Bank.

**Tashni-Ann Dubroy** is the seventeenth president of Shaw University and the youngest woman to lead the first HBCU in the South. A proud alumna who received a BS in chemistry from Shaw University, she previously served as the university’s special assistant to the president for process optimization, chair of the natural sciences and mathematics department, and associate professor. A successful entrepreneur, Dubroy has also earned an MBA from Rutgers University and a PhD from North Carolina State University.

**Josephine Woltman Eelpers** has been Dean of the Windesheim Honours College at Windesheim University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands since 2013. She is also Director of the Honours Programs & Tracks, top Bachelor Programs, the MBA, internationalization, and Entrepreneurs in Residence. She was formerly head of the Center of Excellence Market Intelligence at 3M Germany. She has a master’s in business economics and PhD in marketing & advertising research.
BARRY FALK is Dean of the Honors College at Virginia Commonwealth University, a position he began after seven years as Director of the Honors Program at James Madison University. He has been active in the leadership of the National Collegiate Honors Council, currently serving as president. He is also a member of the Finance Committee and Board of Directors.

JULIA FENNELL is Honors Director and Professor of English at the Community College of Allegheny County. She has been active in the NCHC and NRHC since 2002, completing several NCHC Faculty Institutes and serving as NRHC President in 2010. She is currently a member of the NCHC Two-Year College Committee.

PAUL W. FERGUSON, the fifteenth president of Ball State University, has initiated a new and refreshed vision for Ball State as well as a refocused strategic plan in preparation for the institution’s hundredth anniversary, The Centennial Commitment (18 by ’18), promoting student-centeredness and community engagement as a model twenty-first-century public research university.

JIM FORD is founding Director of Rogers State University’s Honors Program and, as Director of Academic Enrichment, now oversees RSU’s leadership and international programs as well. He loves honors in general and NCHC in particular. He serves as Co-Chair of the Assessment & Evaluation and Teaching & Learning Committees.

MARGARET FRANSON is Associate Dean of Christ College, the honors college of Valparaiso University and home of the Lilly Postdoctoral Fellows Teaching Program in Humanities and the Arts. She has been active in NCHC since 1998 and has written and presented on honors education in a variety of forums.

E. GORDON GEE is President of West Virginia University. Having helmed universities for more than three decades, Gee was named one of the top ten university presidents in the United States by Time Magazine in 2009. In addition to WVU, he has led the University of Colorado, Brown University, Vanderbilt University, and Ohio State University.

RAYMOND J. GREEN is founding Dean of the Honors College at Texas A&M University – Commerce. Before starting the honors college in 2007, he taught psychology at A&M – Commerce and Indiana University of
Pennsylvania. He earned his PhD in social psychology at Rutgers University and his BA from Drew University.

GEORGE L. HANBURY II is President and CEO of Nova Southeastern University and is Professor for the H. Wayne Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship. Prior to his appointment as president, Hanbury served for twelve years as Executive Vice President for Administration following an illustrious career as the CEO of multiple major cities throughout the nation. He has degrees from Florida Atlantic University, Old Dominion University, and Virginia Tech.

THOMAS J. HAAS is President of Grand Valley State University. He is an internationally recognized expert in hazardous material transportation, strategic planning, and higher education leadership. He is a retired captain after twenty-three years of commissioned service in the U.S. Coast Guard, and he is a member of the Athletic Hall of Fame and a distinguished graduate from his alma mater. He has degrees from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, the University of Michigan, Rensselaer Institute of Technology (New York), and the University of Connecticut.

DENNIS R. HARKINS is President of Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, California. He serves on the ACE Commission for Internationalization and Global Engagement and the AACC Council for Global Education. He holds honorary titles from the Nanjing Institute of Visual Arts and Shandong University of Art along with a PhD in education from Georgia State University and an MA in international affairs and a BFA from Ohio University.

MARK A. HECKLER, PhD, has served as Valparaiso University’s eighteenth president since 2008. He previously served as Provost and Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs at the University of Colorado Denver. Heckler holds a PhD in educational leadership and innovation from the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado, an MFA from Catholic University in Washington, D.C., and a BA from Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania.

JAMES HERBERT served at the College Board as Director of Academic Relations and then Executive Director of Academic Affairs (1982–1989). He served at the National Endowment for the Humanities as Director of Education Programs and then Director of Research Programs (1989–2003). His
subsequent work experience was with the National Science Foundation, the European Science Foundation, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK), and the University of Cambridge.

**JERRY HERRON** is Professor of English and Founding Dean of the Irvin D. Reid Honors College at Wayne State University. His publications include two books, *Universities and the Myth of Cultural Decline* and *AfterCulture: Detroit and the Humiliation of History*. His essays and critical writings have appeared in *South Atlantic Quarterly, Raritan, Social Text, Representations, Georgia Review,* and *Antioch Review* as well as the online journal *Places*. He is President-Elect of NCHC and a member of the Publications Board.

**BONITA C. JACOBS** has been President of the University of North Georgia since 2011. She is the university’s first woman president and is only the second to lead one of the country’s six Senior Military Colleges. A recipient of multiple awards for her leadership in higher education and student development, Jacobs is a frequent speaker on transfer and student success issues. She has degrees from Stephen F. Austin State University and Texas A&M.

**STEPHEN J. JEROME** joined Monroe College in 1966 as an instructor and held a succession of positions, becoming president in 1978. Among many other positions, he is President of the Association of Proprietary Colleges in New York State, and he is a former Commissioner of the Accrediting Commission of the Association of Independent Colleges and Schools. He received his baccalaureate degree from Pace University and his MS degree in higher education administration from Baruch College.

**JAMES R. JOHNSEN** is President of the University of Alaska. His most recent experience includes service as an executive with Alaska Communications and previously with Doyon, Limited. Johnsen also served the University of Alaska between 1996 and 2008 in several executive roles, including vice president of administration and chief of staff.

**MARC A. JOHNSON** was appointed sixteenth president of the University of Nevada, Reno in 2012. Prior to his appointment, Johnson served as the interim president and executive vice president and provost at the university starting in 2008. During his tenure, the university has reached record numbers in enrollment, graduation, and National Merit scholars.
DAN R. JONES is the eleventh president of Texas A&M University – Commerce and a tenured professor of English. Prior to joining A&M – Commerce in July 2008, he served as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Texas A&M International University in Laredo, Texas, and as Dean of University College at the University of Houston-Downtown. He holds bachelor’s degrees in English and journalism from the University of Texas at Austin, a master’s in English from Rice University, and a master’s and PhD in American Studies from the University of Iowa.

SHEILA JONES, PhD, is District Director of the Robert “Bob” Elmore Honors College and Associate Professor of History at Broward College. She earned her BA in history and business administration from Washington & Jefferson College, graduating with Honors in History, and her MA and PhD in history from Bowling Green State University. She has served as President of the Florida Collegiate Honors Council and as an NCHC conference presenter.

PETER KANELOS is Dean of Christ College, the honors college of Valparaiso University. His scholarly interests center on dramatic literature and the performing arts, especially Shakespeare studies. Kanelos has been awarded several university-wide teaching awards and research fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Humanities Center. Prior to arriving at Valparaiso, he held appointments at Stanford University, the University of San Diego, and Loyola University Chicago, where he founded the Interdisciplinary Shakespeare Studies Program.

MARC KLINGSHIRN is Director of the Capital Scholars Honors Program and Associate Professor of Chemistry at the Springfield campus of the University of Illinois. He has taught consistently in the honors program for the past nine years. His research interests include chemical education, separation science, and materials science, with all of these areas linked together by an underlying emphasis on green chemistry. He earned his chemistry degrees from Ashland University (BS), the University of Tennessee Knoxville (MS), and the University of Alabama (PhD).

NAOMI YAVNEH KLOS is Director of the University Honors Program at Loyola University New Orleans. A member of the NCHC Board of Directors and chair of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities Honors Consortium, her research interests include gender and spirituality in Early Modern Italy as well as Ignatian values and pedagogy in honors.
SUSAN J. KOCH is Chancellor of the Springfield campus of the University of Illinois. With her leadership, UIS has expanded academic offerings and enrollment, increasing campus visibility and impact across the Central Illinois region and beyond. A highly engaged campus and community leader, Koch also leads an advancement team that has achieved record fundraising goals. Koch holds academic degrees in education from Dakota State University and the University of Northern Iowa.

KARLYN KOH is Professor of English and Director of the Honors Program at the City University of New York’s LaGuardia Community College. She has published in the fields of critical theory, post-colonial theory, Asian diasporic cultural studies, and post-modern poetry. She is a recipient of such awards as the NISTS 2014 Bonita C. Jacobs Transfer Champion Award and LaGuardia’s Student Government Association’s Professor of the Year Award (2011), and she is the current executive secretary of the NRHC.

JOHN KORSTAD has been Professor of Biology at Oral Roberts University since 1980 and Honors Program Director since its formation in 2001. He spent two sabbatical years (1993–1994) doing aquaculture research in Norway, supported by a Fulbright Fellowship. His current focus is on sustainability and developing biofuels from algae.

JOE LANE is Hawthorne Professor of Politics and founding Director of the College Honors Program at Emory & Henry College. He graduated from the honors program at Hampden-Sydney College and earned his PhD at Boston College. He has written widely on American constitutional law and politics, political philosophy, and environmental political thought.

KIM Q. B. LEATHERS has been Director of the Honors College at Shaw University since 2004 and is coach of the Honda Campus All-Star Challenge team. A sociologist by training, she emphasizes students as “renaissance” men and women, aware of their world and potential to be service-oriented, transformational leaders. She earned her BA, MA, and PhD in sociology from Howard University.

KATHRYN M. MACDONALD serves as Coordinator of the Monroe College Honors Program and is Professor in the Department of English. She earned her MA from Fordham University in mass media and communications. She is an active member of the Northeast Regional Honors Council,
always encouraging students to take advantage of every opportunity honors offers.

**HAROLD L. MARTIN, SR.** is the twelfth chancellor/president of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. A graduate of NC A&T, he returned to teach at A&T in 2009 and rose to the rank of provost after a term as Chancellor of Winston-Salem State University and Vice President at the University of North Carolina System. Martin, whose PhD is in electrical engineering, has been a driving force in higher education in North Carolina since the 1980s.

**GEOFFREY S. MEARNS** has served as the fifth president of Northern Kentucky University since August 1, 2012. He received his undergraduate degree from Yale University and his law degree from the University of Virginia.

**GAIL O. MELLOW** is President of LaGuardia Community College in Queens, NY. An expert on the history, development, and future of the American community college, Mellow is co-author of *Minding the Dream: The Process and Practice of the American Community College* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2nd ed. 2014) and *Taking College Teaching Seriously: Pedagogy Matters!* (Stylus, 2015).

**STEVE MORGAN** is President of Westminster College. He is a CPA by background but has spent most of his professional career in higher education serving as Westminster’s Chief Financial Officer and Vice President of Institutional Advancement. He has been active with many higher education associations and is involved with various local corporate and community boards.

**JOHN MOURACADE** is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Interim Dean of the University Honors College at the University of Alaska Anchorage. After earned his PhD at the University of Rochester in 2000, Mouracade held two academic posts before arriving at UAA in 2005. His area of specialty is ancient Greek philosophy.

**SOL NEELY** is Assistant Professor of English and Philosophy and Coordinator of the Honors Program at the University of Alaska Southeast. He earned his PhD in philosophy and literature at Purdue University. He is co-founder and president of the North American Levinas Society. He has developed a
prison education program where honors students study collaboratively with inmates.

BRADLEY NEWCOMER is Professor of Physics and Director of the James Madison University Honors Program. Previous experience includes numerous honors positions at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), where he focused on integrating high-engagement practices into honors education. He is a graduate of Juniata College, Wright State University, and UAB.

TIMOTHY J. NICHOLS is Dean of the Van D. and Barbara Fishback Honors College and Professor of Sociology at South Dakota State University. In addition to honors teaching and administration, Nichols has collaborated with the region’s tribal colleges and leads campus common reading and student leadership development initiatives.

JOSEPH E. NYRE serves as the eighth president of Iona College, a community of learners and scholars dedicated to academic excellence in the tradition of the Christian Brothers and American Catholic higher education. Nyre earned his PhD from the University of Kansas and completed pre- and post-doctoral fellowships in clinical child psychology at Harvard Medical School/Children’s Hospital and the University of Kansas. Nyre has served as a practicing psychologist and has served on the faculty at the University of Chicago, Baylor University, and Harvard Medical School.

ADAM OLDAKER is Honors Program Director and English Instructor at Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC). Prior to joining the full-time faculty in 2010, he worked as a children’s magazine editor at the Cricket Magazine Group and a middle-school language arts teacher at Spring Valley C. C. School District 99 (IL). He also has experience as Interim Dean of English, Mathematics, and Education at IVCC. He holds degrees from Purdue University, Lewis University, and Illinois Wesleyan University.

KIM PAFFENROTH is Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the Honors Program at Iona College. He has written extensively on Augustine, the Bible, and the interface between Christian belief and popular culture. In the last category, he produced Gospel of the Living Dead: George Romero’s Visions of Hell on Earth (Baylor, 2006), which won the Bram Stoker Award and led him to write several popular zombie novels.
BAKER PATILLO holds a BS and a MEd from Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) and a PhD from Texas A & M University. He is starting his fiftieth year at SFASU and his tenth year as president. He serves on the NCAA Division I Board of Directors and the NCAA Board of Governors.

GARY A. RANSDELL, EdD, has served as President of Western Kentucky University since 1997. He is leading WKU through a complete transformation in enrollment and degree production, private support, campus construction, and comprehensive internationalization. He has two degrees from WKU and a doctorate in higher education administration from Indiana University.

MICHAEL RAO, PhD, has been president for Virginia Commonwealth University and the VCU Health System since 2009. His leadership has helped VCU become a top-50 public research university nationally and a top-200 research university internationally. Nearly thirty academic programs are ranked among the best in the nation, including two ranked Number One.

LARRY RICE, EdD, has served as President of Rogers State University since 2008, leading its three northeastern Oklahoma campuses and its online degree program. Rice has more than three decades of experience in higher education, both as a faculty member and administrator. He also served nine terms as a member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, where he was recognized as a passionate supporter of education.

DON ROSENBLUM serves as dean of the recently established Farquhar Honors College at Nova Southeastern University. Previously, he served as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences for eleven years, directed the NSU Honors Program since its inception, and has been involved with honors education for more than thirty-five years. He has degrees from Ohio State University and the University of Maryland.

JAMES S. RUEBEL has been Professor of Classical Studies and Dean of the Honors College at Ball State University since 2000. He has been officially involved in honors education for over thirty-five years and has served two terms on the National Collegiate Honors Council’s Board of Directors; he was NCHC President in 2014.

JAKE B. SCHRUM has been a college president and leading proponent of liberal arts education for twenty-five years. He is President of Emory & Henry...
College in Virginia. He previously served as president of Southwestern University and Texas Wesleyan University. He has also been the international board chair for CASE.

**Stephen Smith** has been a professor of psychology at the University of North Georgia since 1993 and Honors Program Director since 2001. A graduate of the University of Texas, he has published on a variety of topics in social psychology; his current research focus is on U.S. cadet experiences abroad as preparation for future deployment.

**Marsha Sousa** is Director of the Honors Program and Professor of Biology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She has taught a variety of biology, health, and honors courses; conducted research on the reproductive physiology of caribou and muskoxen; directed and developed allied health programs; and served in administrative roles within the University of Alaska system.

**Michael Tkacik** has been Director of the School of Honors at Stephen F. Austin State University since 2008. He is Professor of Political Science and publishes regularly on international security issues.

**Tamara M. Valentine** has been Director of the Honors Program at the University of Nevada, Reno since 2004. She earned her PhD in linguistics from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. A sociolinguist, Valentine has published articles and presented papers on topics related to English as an International Language, South Asian languages and linguistics, language and gender, and cross-cultural communication.

**Ron Weerheijm** has an MA in architecture and was a practicing architect for twenty years while also teaching students in architecture and engineering. In 2009 he started honors programs in the department of engineering and became Dean of Honors at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences in 2012. With his team he supports, encourages, and also teaches students and faculty in honors and promotes national and international networks.

**Kevin WM. Wildes, S.J.** is President of Loyola University New Orleans. Fr. Wildes entered the Society of Jesus after graduating from St. Joseph’s University. Holding advanced degrees in theology and philosophy, he received his PhD in bioethics from Rice University. In addition to publishing and
teaching, his civic engagement includes service as founding chair of the New Orleans Ethics Review Board and chair of the Civil Service Commission.

**M. ROY WILSON** became the twelfth president of Wayne State University in August 2013. Prior to joining Wayne State, Wilson served as deputy director for strategic scientific planning and program coordination at the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities of the National Institutes of Health. Wilson received his undergraduate degree from Allegheny College, an MS in epidemiology from UCLA, and an MD from Harvard Medical School.

**WILLIAM M. WILSON** is President of Oral Roberts University. He is recognized as a global influencer with unwavering ethics and strong business acumen who has a passion for building Spirit-empowered leaders to impact the world. He is a noted Bible teacher with a weekly television program. He has also fostered unique global partnerships through *Empowered21*.

**BELLE ZEMBRODT** is Interim Director of the Northern Kentucky University Honors Program. She has been involved in NCHC since 1995, participating in national conferences and various faculty institutes. Her current focus is developing the NKU Honors College.

**JOHN ZUBIZARRETA** is Professor of English and Director of Honors and Faculty Development at Columbia College. A Carnegie Foundation/CASE Professor of the Year, he is the author of *The Learning Portfolio: Reflective Practice for Improving Student Learning*, co-author of *The Robert Frost Encyclopedia*, and co-editor of *Inspiring Exemplary Teaching and Learning: Perspectives on Teaching Academically Talented College Students*. He is a past president of NCHC and SRHC, a three-time member of the Board of Directors, and an NCHC-Recommended Program Reviewer.
ABOUT THE NCHC MONOGRAPH SERIES

The Publications Board of the National Collegiate Honors Council typically publishes two to three monographs a year. The subject matter and style range widely: from handbooks on nuts-and-bolts practices and discussions of honors pedagogy to anthologies on diverse topics addressing honors education and issues relevant to higher education.

The Publications Board encourages people with expertise interested in writing such a monograph to submit a prospectus. Prospective authors or editors of an anthology should submit a proposal discussing the purpose or scope of the manuscript; a prospectus that includes a chapter by chapter summary; a brief writing sample, preferably a draft of the introduction or an early chapter; and a curriculum vitae. All monograph proposals will be reviewed by the NCHC Publications Board.

Direct all proposals, manuscripts, and inquiries about submitting a proposal to the General Editor of the Monograph Series:

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555 N. Indian Creek Drive  
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jeffrey.portnoy@gpc.edu  
(678) 891-3620
Assessing and Evaluating Honors Programs and Honors Colleges: A Practical Handbook by Rosalie Otero and Robert Spurrier (2005, 98pp). This monograph includes an overview of assessment and evaluation practices and strategies. It explores the process for conducting self-studies and discusses the differences between using consultants and external reviewers. It provides a guide to conducting external reviews along with information about how to become an NCHC-Recommended Site Visitor. A dozen appendices provide examples of “best practices.”


A Handbook for Honors Programs at Two-Year Colleges by Theresa James (2006, 136pp). A useful handbook for two-year schools contemplating beginning or redesigning their honors program and for four-year schools doing likewise or wanting to increase awareness about two-year programs and articulation agreements. Contains extensive appendices about honors contracts and a comprehensive bibliography on honors education.

The Honors College Phenomenon edited by Peter C. Sederberg (2008, 172pp). This monograph examines the growth of honors colleges since 1990: historical and descriptive characterizations of the trend, alternative models that include determining whether becoming a college is appropriate, and stories of creation and recreation. Leaders whose institutions are contemplating or taking this step as well as those directing established colleges should find these essays valuable.

Honors Composition: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Practices by Annmarie Guzy (2003, 182pp). Parallel historical developments in honors and composition studies; contemporary honors writing projects ranging from admission essays to theses as reported by over 300 NCHC members.

Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges by Samuel Schuman (Third Edition, 2011, 80pp). Practical and comprehensive advice on creating and managing honors programs with particular emphasis on colleges with fewer than 4,000 students.

The Honors Thesis: A Handbook for Honors Directors, Deans, and Faculty Advisors by Mark Anderson, Karen Lyons, and Norman Weiner (2014, 176pp). To all those who design, administer, and implement an honors thesis program, this handbook offers a range of options, models, best practices, and philosophies that illustrate how to evaluate an honors thesis program, solve pressing problems, select effective requirements and procedures, or introduce a new honors thesis program.

Housing Honors edited by Linda Frost, Lisa W. Kay, and Rachael Poe (2015, 352pp). This collection of essays addresses the issues of where honors lives and how honors space influences educators and students. This volume includes the results of a survey of over 400 institutions; essays on the acquisition, construction, renovation, development, and even the loss of honors space; a forum offering a range of perspectives on residential space for honors students; and a section featuring student perspectives.

If Honors Students Were People: Holistic Honors Education by Samuel Schuman (2013, 256pp). What if honors students were people? What if they were not disembodied intellects but whole persons with physical bodies and questing spirits? Of course . . . they are. This monograph examines the spiritual yearnings of college students and the relationship between exercise and learning.

Inspiring Exemplary Teaching and Learning: Perspectives on Teaching Academically Talented College Students edited by Larry Clark and John Zubizarreta (2008, 216pp). This rich collection of essays offers valuable insights into innovative teaching and significant learning in the context of academically challenging classrooms and programs. The volume provides theoretical, descriptive, and practical resources, including models of effective instructional practices, examples of successful courses designed for enhanced learning, and a list of online links to teaching and learning centers and educational databases worldwide.
The Other Culture: Science and Mathematics Education in Honors edited by Ellen B. Buckner and Keith Garbutt (2012, 296pp). A collection of essays about teaching science and math in an honors context: topics include science in society, strategies for science and non-science majors, the threat of pseudoscience, chemistry, interdisciplinary science, scientific literacy, philosophy of science, thesis development, calculus, and statistics.

Partners in the Parks: Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks by Joan Digby with reflective essays on theory and practice by student and faculty participants and National Park Service personnel (2010, 272pp). This monograph explores an experiential-learning program that fosters immersion in and stewardship of the national parks. The topics include program designs, group dynamics, philosophical and political issues, photography, wilderness exploration, and assessment.

Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning edited by Bernice Braid and Ada Long (Second Edition, 2010, 128pp). Updated theory, information, and advice on experiential pedagogies developed within NCHC during the past 35 years, including Honors Semesters and City as Text™, along with suggested adaptations to multiple educational contexts.

Preparing Tomorrow’s Global Leaders: Honors International Education edited by Mary Kay Mulvaney and Kim Klein (2013, 400pp). A valuable resource for initiating or expanding honors study abroad programs, these essays examine theoretical issues, curricular and faculty development, assessment, funding, and security. The monograph also provides models of successful programs that incorporate high-impact educational practices, including City as Text™ pedagogy, service learning, and undergraduate research.

Setting the Table for Diversity edited by Lisa L. Coleman and Jonathan D. Kotinek (2010, 288pp). This collection of essays provides definitions of diversity in honors, explores the challenges and opportunities diversity brings to honors education, and depicts the transformative nature of diversity when coupled with equity and inclusion. These essays discuss African American, Latina/o, international, and first-generation students as well as students with disabilities. Other issues include experiential and service learning, the politics of diversity, and the psychological resistance to it. Appendices relating to NCHC member institutions contain diversity statements and a structural diversity survey.

Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education edited by Peter A. Machonis (2008, 160pp). A companion piece to Place as Text, focusing on recent, innovative applications of City as Text™ teaching strategies. Chapters on campus as text, local neighborhoods, study abroad, science courses, writing exercises, and philosophical considerations, with practical materials for instituting this pedagogy.

Teaching and Learning in Honors edited by Cheryl L. Fuiks and Larry Clark (2000, 128pp). Presents a variety of perspectives on teaching and learning useful to anyone developing new or renovating established honors curricula.

Writing on Your Feet: Reflective Practices in City as Text™ edited by Ada Long (2014, 160pp). A sequel to the NCHC monographs Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning and Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education, this volume explores the role of reflective writing in the process of active learning while also paying homage to the City as Text™ approach to experiential education that has been pioneered by Bernice Braid and sponsored by NCHC during the past four decades.

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC) is a semi-annual periodical featuring scholarly articles on honors education. 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.

Honors in Practice (HIP) is an annual journal that accommodates the need and desire for articles about nuts-and-bolts practices by featuring practical and descriptive essays on topics such as successful honors courses, suggestions for out-of-class experiences, administrative issues, and other topics of interest to honors administrators, faculty, and students.
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