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Honors in Practice: A Publication of the National Collegiate Honors Council, volume 12 (2016)-- Complete issue

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HIP

Honors In Practice

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

Volume 12 | 2016



Honors in Practice

A PUBLICATION OF THE
National Collegiate Honors Council

JOURNAL EDITORS

Ada Long and Dail Mullins

University of Alabama at Birmingham

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EDITORIAL POLICY

Honors in Practice (HIP) publishes articles about innovative practices in individual honors programs and nuts-and-bolts issues of concern to the members of the National Collegiate Honors Council. *HIP* employs a double-blind review system. Essays should present ideas and/or practices that will be useful to other honors administrators and faculty, not just descriptions of “what we do at our institution.” Essays should advance a thesis located within a larger context such as theoretical perspectives, trends in higher education, or historical background. Essays should also demonstrate an awareness of previous honors discussions of the topic.

Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at <adalong@uab.edu>.

DEADLINE

HIP is published annually. The deadline for submissions is January 1.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. We accept material by email attachment in Word (not pdf). We do not accept material by fax or hard copy.
2. If documentation is used, 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.
3. There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.
4. 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.

DEDICATION



Patrice Berger

By Karen Lyons, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Patrice Berger has been Director of the Honors Program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln since 1986, when the program was founded. A member of the UNL History Department, he regularly teaches in both his department and the honors program, where each fall he offers several sections of the freshman seminar Old World . . . Our World, an exploration of the political and social changes in Europe between the late seventeenth century and middle nineteenth century. His seminar is always in high demand.

Patrice has provided both the stability and vision of the honors program, seeing it grow from a fledgling class of 93 students to over 2,100 students. Nearly 3,000 theses reside in the honors program's thesis library. With knowledge gained from expanding the UNL Honors Program, he was instrumental in bringing the NCHC executive offices to the UNL campus. His negotiating skills, well-honed in working with the UNL administration, were put to the test as plans went forward. He skillfully convinced UNL administrators of the great value of housing NCHC and negotiated the space as well as phone

service, mail delivery, and access to the UNL digital commons, where NCHC publications are now stored electronically. Shortly thereafter, NCHC moved into the Neihardt Residence Center, the home of the UNL Honors Program.

Patrice has served on the NCHC Board of Directors and is currently Chair of the Portz Fellowship Committee. With his support, UNL has also hosted the Great Plains Honors Council Conference twice.

With great pleasure, we dedicate this issue of *HIP* to Patrice Berger, founding director of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Honors Program and the force behind establishing the NCHC executive offices on the UNL campus.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Ada Long

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

The essays in this volume of *Honors in Practice* run the gamut from assessment to gardening, from hard data to soft earth, from quantitative analysis to experiential learning. The range and depth of this spectrum reflect the multiplicity of perspectives and approaches that honors education offers to its students, its home institutions, and its geographic, cultural, and social contexts. The variety of research and pedagogy in these essays celebrates the diversity that has characterized the National Collegiate Honors Council for the past fifty years.

The volume thus aptly begins with a celebration: Bernice Braid's magnificent speech in honor of the NCHC's fiftieth anniversary, delivered at the annual conference in Chicago this past November. Braid received the inaugural Founder's Award in recognition of her exceptional contributions to the NCHC and to honors education during a span of five decades. As creator and sustainer of NCHC's signature programs—City as Text™, Honors Semesters, and Faculty Institutes—she has fostered the work of thousands of faculty and students. In all of these experiences, Braid says, participants “carry with them their backgrounds, their lives, and their disciplines” into their discovery “of something outside themselves, of something inside themselves, of their capacity to discover.” All of Braid's work is a celebration, in her words, of “somehow, together, keeping our humanity alive in its most creative, integrative, analytical, and deeply reflective manifestation, which is at the very core of NCHC.” The diverse essays in this volume contribute to this celebration.

The first of the formal essays in this volume is “Evaluating the Application of Program Outcomes to Study Abroad Experiences” by Patricia Joanne Smith and Lawrence J. Mrozek. A national survey indicated that most honors programs and colleges offer and often financially support study abroad. Providing accountability through assessment of study abroad grants is essential, the authors argue, given these times of fiscal constraint. The Schedler Honors College developed a self-report instrument to assess its Travel Abroad Grant (TAG) program at the University of Central Arkansas, focusing on three primary areas: “experience and comfort in traveling abroad, impact on student learning, and financial support.” Smith and Mrozek present the results of their study and suggest that “this type of program assessment should be conducted

not just to justify our support for study abroad but also to offer greater opportunities for student growth.”

“Why Not Honors? Understanding Students’ Decisions Not to Enroll and Persist in Honors Programs” reports on another data-driven study conducted by Timothy Nichols, Jacob Ailts, and Kuo-Liang Chang. The authors conducted a survey of current students in South Dakota State University’s Van D. and Barbara B. Fishback Honors College to determine what factors “influence students’ decisions whether to enroll or not to enroll and persist through graduation with honors.” Their findings included, for instance, that honors-eligible students who did not enroll were less likely “to value the opinions of friends and family members about honors, to understand the program requirements, and to have been encouraged by their advisor to pursue and persist in honors.” The authors contend that understanding why students choose not to enroll or persist in honors can “provide insights that guide more effective, responsive program development and outreach.”

Student surveys are also among the tools used to assess and improve the peer mentorship program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Giovanna Walters and Ashley Kanak describe the evolving roles that experienced honors students have played in first-year orientations for new honors students in their essay “Effects of Peer Mentorship on Student Leadership.” Part of the introductory course for new honors students is a first-year-student retreat that is now planned, organized, and run almost entirely by veteran honors students. The authors describe the multiple benefits of this peer mentorship program: new students gain from the insights and support of fellow honors students; mentors get important leadership experiences that help them develop academically and socially; and the honors program sees the potential for improved transition and retention of incoming students.

The remaining essays in this issue provide innovative and practical ideas for enhancing honors programs and courses. Susan Yager of Iowa State University offers all administrators and faculty important advice in “The Challenge of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Honors Programs.” Given that core values of honors education should always include “respect for the rights of students with disabilities and the value of course planning for a diverse group of students,” Yager makes a plea for recognizing, understanding, and accommodating the needs of students with ASD, an increasingly prevalent disorder in the United States. She offers background, insights, and advice about how to create a positive environment for these students, who are often bright and high-functioning but “are likely to have problems with social

and emotional interaction, difficulty with nonverbal communication, and sometimes difficulty with relationships.” Given that honors programs already attract ASD students and that the numbers of these students will probably keep increasing, this essay will help honors administrators design honors courses, social events, and extracurricular activities that respect the needs of these and all students.

“Varying Formats for Two-Year-College Honors Seminars” addresses issues specific to two-year-college faculty and administrators. Ce Rosenow and Katie Morrison-Graham of Lane Community College and Erik G. Ozolins of Mt. San Jacinto College offer two models for honors seminars at two-year colleges: “the three-credit interdisciplinary courses offered at Mt. San Jacinto College and the four-credit, team-taught interdisciplinary seminars at Lane Community College.” Both models are designed to increase the success at transfer institutions of a student population that typically includes “returning students, veterans, parents, and economically disadvantaged members of the community.” The comparison of two different seminar models, along with advice about selecting faculty, recruiting students, and gaining community support, should be useful to two-year-college honors administrators who are designing or redesigning their seminars.

In “A Global Endeavor: Honors Undergraduate Research,” Mimi Killinger, Kate Spies, and Daniella Runyambo describe a research experience at the University of Maine that was designed to “make individuals more decent as well as competitive in a global society.” Combining critical thinking and integrative learning with the traditional approach to undergraduate research, the UMaine Honors College, like the honors college at the University of Central Arkansas, encourages active learning abroad through a scholarship program for honors students, and it also “steers students toward thesis projects rooted in academic arenas that focus on moral concerns.” Killinger served as faculty advisor to two such projects undertaken by Spies and Runyambo, and the three of them illustrate the trajectories and benefits of thesis projects that promote moral growth in a global context.

In her essay “Honoring Controversy: Using Real-World Problems to Teach Critical Thinking in Honors Courses,” Sarita Cargas argues that it is not enough to promote or practice critical thinking in the honors classroom; honors teachers must also explicitly teach critical thinking skills to their students and give them the tools to transfer these skills outside the classroom. In her 300-level course on controversy and critical thinking at the University of New Mexico, Cargas has students consider arguments against fracking, for

instance, or against genetically modified foods, as presented in films, books, and articles that persuade them that these practices are wrong. She then has them consider opposing points of view to complicate and upset their easy judgments. Finally, she has them learn the common tools—analyzing implicit assumptions, for instance, or examining how data are selected—that they can transfer to any context in their other classes and their lives.

This volume concludes with a delightful and informative essay called “Garden Variety Experiential Education: The ‘Material Turn’ and Environmental Ethics,” in which Allison B. Wallace describes her junior seminar, called “Philosophy, Principles, and Practices of Organic Horticulture,” at the University of Central Arkansas. The seminar is designed to “encourage honors students to think deeply on the subject of manual skill as a means of connecting intellectual endeavor to the material world” and to “begin to learn, literally first-hand, the ecological reasons for an ethical relationship to nature.” The students spend a third of the course sessions in classroom discussion and two-thirds working in the campus garden, along with extra hours when the garden makes special demands. The course includes final meditations and periodic class dinners. Wallace provides an in-depth discussion of the theoretical premises of the course and the challenging readings she assigns, which—along with laboring in the garden—“contribute to the development of self-confident yet paradoxically humble adults who are inclined to greater thoughtfulness about the material enactment of their intellectual and ethical commitments.”

Honors in Practice

**FIFTIETH-ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION**

Founder's Award Speech

BERNICE BRAID

LIU Brooklyn

(What follows is a slightly revised version of the address that Bernice Braid delivered on November 14, 2015, at the fiftieth-anniversary NCHC conference in Chicago. Bernice Braid received the inaugural Founder's Award in recognition and appreciation of her invaluable contributions to the NCHC and to honors education during the past five decades.)

This Founder's Award is about me, it's about you, it's about NCHC. At my first NCHC conference, in San Francisco, 1972, I noticed that the group gathered there was both composite and excited about its own variety of interests. It's possible that those characteristics excited me in part because of what I myself brought to the meeting.

Growing up in Philadelphia, then full of Quakers, Mennonites, and occasionally Amish families walking through downtown, I was always aware that people who passed those wearing broad, black hats and long beards, or wearing long dresses and starched voile caps, turned completely around to stare after them once they'd passed. The city was surrounded by rural areas with poor farmer families who spoke Pennsylvania German and ate food unlike what came out of my mother's kitchen. And I myself was born to a Russian

immigrant family and lived in a working-class neighborhood, stuffed with Italian immigrants, called Strawberry Mansion, a name that taught me the irony of metaphor.

Images and the sounds of the Other came with me into my study of comparative literature and maybe, once I was teaching, let me notice something odd in my literature classes: students seemed to be talking about their own lives when they discussed French and Russian novels. They rechristened characters whose names seemed too tricky to pronounce in order to make them familiar, to claim them as a part of their lives.

Those memories floated in my head in 1974 as I worked on an ad hoc Honors Semesters Committee with a group of experimentalists who were eager to create some way to invite a broad cross-section of American students to think about the America of this 1976 Bicentennial. We saw our national milestone as a perfect moment to tackle the notion of “Americana” writ large, and we spent two years shaping a multidisciplinary curriculum, finding off-campus housing, and setting up NCHC’s first-ever National Honors Semester, the Washington Bicentennial Semester. The program was based on our conviction that the streets of the nation’s capital were as important a learning laboratory as seminars with constitutional lawyers, colloquia on civil rights, and workshops on folk art and music. This project was NCHC’s—our—organizational foray into deep experiential learning, into the power of place.

With the success of the Bicentennial Semester, this ad hoc group morphed into a standing committee; planners grew in number and changed over time; and students came from all over mainland U.S. and sometimes from Europe and Puerto Rico, bringing with them their own cultures, metaphors, foods, and ways of speaking. From the get-go, the Semesters proved that students learn at least as much from one another’s cultural and ethnic differences as from the materials they read or the interviews they conduct in their fieldwork. In Washington we had tested independent Issues Colloquia as a means of tying together ideas gleaned from coursework, from reflections on being embedded in local schools or researching local political offices, and from living, cooking, and entertaining together in a residence hall off campus. The director of the newly created American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress came to our Folk Art and Music class party to play his fiddle for us—drawn, he said, by our explicit intention to learn from the streets and not just from class.

Treating the Semester as a laboratory led us to critique its integrative mechanism, the colloquia. In 1978 I was already testing, in the first New York

Honors Semester, what by the 1981 New York Honors Semester had become City as Text™, an integrative laboratory/seminar that focused on the site and theme of a Semester, the courses students took, their dorms or hotels, their projects, and each other's cultural backgrounds: all of these as the subject matter everyone in the Semester analyzed, reflected on, and drew from to create their final projects. Our one rule was that the project could not be produced nearly as well in the best library in the world as right here in this site, with these experiences.

Full immersion in place and in thinking, talking, and writing about experiences participants undertake together have become catalysts for insights that yield more than any of us expected. In our thirty Honors Semesters, in by now thirty-two Faculty Institutes, and even in the short City as Text experiences at conferences, we continue to see that what each of us brings to the venture shapes what all of us experience in the moment and that SEEING this reveals us to ourselves in unanticipated ways.

For instance, in a Faculty Institute set in earthquake-prone San Francisco, a team of two—one an urban planner trained as an engineer working with our colleague Shirley Thomas, a poet from the hills of Arkansas—startled themselves when he could only write about cracks he saw in foundations along the streets of Haight-Ashbury whereas she remained speechless, standing open-mouthed staring at a storefront featuring models wearing g-strings and leather straps at an S&M shop.

For me, the privilege of experimenting with these ways of mapping place and exploring images, metaphors, and ideas reveals the profound power of liberal education. Faculty and students carry with them their backgrounds, their lives, and their disciplines, all of which become as much a subject of study as the sites they and we explore together. Mapping strategy is, and has always been, about figuring out how we see, what we hear, how much we absorb: about an abiding passion for inventing an investigative language to connect the classroom and the world.

Once that passion is aroused, there's no stopping it, as Semesters alumni have proven. Their adventure has made them aware of who they are, of what they have seen, and of what they really care about. I am convinced that the single most important moment in this process is the moment of surprise, when what really registers is DISCOVERY: of something outside themselves, of something inside themselves, of their capacity to discover. That is the moment they never seem to lose.

There is a flurry of writing now on liberal education, maybe because we feel it's becoming, like so much else, an endangered species. Father John Walsh wrote an article for *Métropolitain* that he called "The Need For A Liberal Arts Education. It's About Being Human" <<http://www.themetropolitain.ca/articles/author/143>>, a title that gets at the heart of the matter. Our shared humanity is one of the most satisfying dimensions of our work on experiential learning: in *City as Text* and its spinoffs, we are somehow, together, keeping our humanity alive in its most creative, integrative, analytical, and deeply reflective manifestation, which is at the very core of NCHC. Reread your program for the Chicago conference, and note the adaptations of *City as Text* and of inspirations drawn from Faculty Institutes.

We have always concentrated on how it is that people transform space into place. We have always asked people to look at the surface, then look beneath the surface, to ask "What is it like to live here? For whom? What makes you think so?" If you have time, go to the Art Institute of Chicago, and visit the exhibit "Making Place: The Architecture of David Adjaye." He uses a version of *City as Text* to read a culture and environment before he even begins to design a building, in his case because he hopes to reshape "place" by addressing the social implications of buildings.

As some of you know, a mantra of mine has always been a sentence from Kafka's story "A Country Doctor" when the doctor thinks, "To write prescriptions is easy, but to come to an understanding with people is hard."

City as Text is a way of seeing and thinking that becomes a way of doing—and so a way of being in the world. The process itself is democratizing. To see oneself contextualized: that is deep learning, isn't it?

So tonight's Founder's Award is about me and my work. It's about you and your work. And it's about NCHC and our work.

Congratulations on our 50th anniversary.

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Honors in Practice

RESEARCH ABOUT HONORS

Evaluating the Application of Program Outcomes to Study Abroad Experiences

PATRICIA JOANNE SMITH AND LAWRENCE J. MROZEK

University of Central Arkansas

Study abroad is a critical component of a comprehensive higher education experience in today's global society. The Institute of International Education (IIE) reported that, in 2013–2014, 304,467 U.S. students participated in study abroad. This number has more than tripled over the last two decades, and while short-term study abroad is still the most popular, the number of American students spending a semester or a year abroad is also increasing (IIE). According to Kuh, O'Donnell, and Reed, study abroad has been deemed a high-impact practice, and, as an experiential approach to global learning, study abroad has the power to transform the lives of college students who are given the opportunity to participate and broaden their education.

A search through the 2015 annual conference program of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) turned up a dozen sessions focusing on the topic of study abroad, demonstrating that a growing number of honors programs and colleges are encouraging or requiring study abroad. Many programs now offer and support honors semesters abroad or organized, faculty-led summer trips. According to Scott, 66% of honors colleges and 44% of

honors programs at four-year institutions support study abroad that includes academic coursework, and many provide financial support to students studying abroad. Given this high level of support, in conjunction with an era of fiscal exigency, examination of the impact and benefits of study abroad is especially important.

Although program outcomes vary, diversity, intercultural competence, and global citizenship are goals shared in some form by many honors programs and colleges. Study abroad is often the most direct way to foster these outcomes because it gives students opportunities to experience unfamiliar settings that promote inclusivity and reduce ethnocentrism, yet global citizenship is not the only area in which a student might experience growth through this type of experience. The purpose of our study is to examine the perceived and documented enrichments to the academic experiences of study abroad students in the Schedler Honors College Travel Abroad Grant (TAG) program. In the article “Building an Honors Education for the Twenty-First Century: Making Connections In and Outside the Classroom,” Alger points out that “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” (63). Heeding this assertion, honors administrators must be prepared to defend their support of study abroad if they are going to be able to fund these types of experiences in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Creating a strong, effective learning environment is important in developing culturally aware and effective global leaders. Focusing on this kind of learning environment, Perry, Stoner, and Tarrant applied John Dewey’s ideas on educative experiences and critical reflection, along with Mezirow’s phases of transformative learning theory, to study abroad, demonstrating that, “when coupled with an adequate pedagogical framework, short-term study abroad could serve as an educative opportunity for fostering transformative learning environments where new experiences and perspectives may be developed” (682). This type of learning environment is an example of the experiential learning that honors programs and colleges are called on to offer according to the Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program (National Collegiate Honors Council). The NCHC states that a program should emphasize “active learning and participatory education by offering opportunities for students to participate in regional and national conferences, honors

semesters, international programs, community service, internships, undergraduate research, and other types of experiential education” (para. 16).

Previous studies have shown that study abroad increases a student’s motivation for research (Engel & Keeley), global awareness (Grigorescu; Statham), ability to work with others (Olson & Lalley), self-efficacy (Cubillos & Ilvento), second-language acquisition and proficiency (Reynolds-Case; Watson, Siska, & Wolfel), and intercultural effectiveness and cultural competence (Anderson & Lawton; Buckley; Statham). According to Burkholder, participants in study abroad have also exhibited stronger coping mechanisms for stress, such as “positive reinforcement and growth, along with religious coping” (para. 5), as compared to students in other domestic classes who were more likely to use substances to cope.

Specific, distinct guidelines for all participants and faculty are crucial to creating a positive experience, especially for students who have never traveled abroad (Fabregas Janeiro, López Fabre, & Rosete; Mills, Deviney, & Ball). In addition, advisors need to be careful about putting students in a cultural immersion that may be overwhelming and cause undue stress (Mills et al.). However, anxiety about the unknown and unfamiliar, in itself, may not be as much of a factor (Heffron & Maresco).

Factors Influencing Study Abroad

Although participation in study abroad programs is increasing, disparity still exists in who participates. White women students make up disproportionately more of the participants in college study abroad (IIE; Pope, Sánchez, Lehnert, & Schmid; Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella) although moderate increases have occurred recently for students of color (IIE). Other students who have been less likely to participate in study abroad experiences include those who acquired low social and cultural capital prior to college or have fewer resources (Pope et al.; Salisbury, Umbach, et al.); are older (Pope et al.); have social anxiety about, for instance, participating without their friends (Heffron & Maresco); have parents who have not traveled abroad (Pope et al.); or majored in STEM, business or education (Salisbury, Umbach, et al.). Other studies have found a stronger interest in globalization and the idea of study abroad among business majors (Mills et al.; Olson & Lalley; Walker, Bukenya, & Thomas).

Deresiewicz found that students showing a preference to study abroad in non-Western rather than Western cultures expressed a desire to learn about “other” cultures (para.7), had previous exposure at home to people of

different cultures, or felt a desire to “repay their privilege,” which the author refers to as “liberal guilt” (para.8). Additionally, students have reported a desire to build their résumé and increase marketable skills (Deresiewicz; Mills et al.; Schwald). Deresiewicz also referred to a desire for authenticity, which is “. . . the feeling of being touched by something real, and what is most real to them is not the past, but the Other” (para. 7). De Jong, Schnusenberg, and Goel found that academic and cultural components, as well as the reputation of the professor, can also contribute to the likelihood of participating.

The cost of the program can be a major contributing factor to participation (de Jong et al.; He & Banham; Lukosius & Festervand; Schwald). Lukosius and Festervand stated that the “financial component is an essential part of a study abroad program because most associated activities require financial support” (486) and that funding sources need to be addressed when promoting the program, along with the timing of the study, the student population, and how it is promoted. Organizing or presenting information on scholarships and grants as well as keeping costs to a minimum can greatly enhance the success of the program and the likelihood of participation (de Jong et al.; He & Banham; Schwald).

Assessment

Given the fiscal urgency permeating institutional administrations and the increase in departmental accountability, displaying effectiveness in learning and program outcomes is vital; yet measuring the effectiveness in program outcomes such as diversity, intercultural competence, and global citizenship may not be a simple task. Students may acknowledge that “studying abroad is a profound experience for them, but they find it difficult to articulate the changes they have undergone” (Anderson & Lawton 88). The authors note that the assessment tool can be important to the evaluation process because measuring such indistinct and abstruse concepts as cross-cultural competence can be difficult. Several inventories have been developed over the years that have shown some success, including the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and Global Perspective Inventory (GPI). The IDI (Hammer; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman) was based on Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), which looked at the development of intercultural competence as a continuum from ethnocentric to ethnorelativistic thinking. Others have used self-reporting assessments to evaluate the impact on cultural understanding and desire to experience more (Cubillos & Ilvento; Olson & Lalley; Reynolds-Case).

Another approach has been using qualitative methods such as reflective journals, which have been found influential in helping students process and gauge their progress and development (Andrew; Stewart) and also in improving their critical writing skills (Stewart). Digital storytelling can be similarly useful in assessing changes in development (Buckner). However, Rubin & Matthews have suggested that the most effective method may be incorporating multiple methods of assessment and measuring student learning outcomes more than program outcomes.

METHODS

The Schedler Honors College developed a self-report instrument to assess the impact of study abroad on students who participated in 2014–2015 with a Travel Abroad Grant (TAG). Administered in the fall semester of 2015, the instrument was sent to 58 students and received a response rate of 94.8% (n=55).

Setting

The Schedler Honors College was established in 1982 at the University of Central Arkansas, a medium-size, four-year, primarily residential university in the Mid-South (Carnegie Foundation). In the fall of 1993, the honors college introduced a grant program to assist honors students' efforts in undergraduate research, internships, and study abroad, with the first grant awarded in the summer of 1994. Undergraduate research and internships are supported through what has become known as the Undergraduate Research Grant for Education (URGE) program while study abroad is supported through the Travel Abroad Grant (TAG) program. The TAG/URGE programs not only add to the education of students but also serve as powerful recruiting tools.

The TAG program provides funding for students to travel abroad for study and research, with the express purpose of enlarging the scope of the undergraduate experience, better preparing honors scholars for post-baccalaureate training, and making the tangible international contact that characterizes the globalization of our society. Students receiving TAG grants can use the funds to study abroad for a semester at one of the university's partner schools; to participate in one of the short-term, faculty-led study abroad trips organized by the university; to participate in a language immersion program sponsored by the university; or to do an independent study abroad trip that the student organizes on his or her own. An anecdotal outcome of the TAG program has

been that honors scholars gain self-confidence, resulting in an increased likelihood of applying to more competitive graduate and professional schools. Over 1,000 TAG grants have been awarded since 1994, averaging \$2,600 per award, approximately 64% of their total costs, with 75% being the maximum total award.

Over the course of the last two decades, the honors college has developed a sophisticated method of awarding funds through a grant application process. Students' applications are scored on a rubric of up to 75 points by a minimum of two committee members; students scoring a minimum average of 50 points are awarded a grant. The average score then becomes the percentage of the total cost that the honors college funds, i.e., a score of 70 out of 75 would mean that the student is awarded 70% of the total cost of the trip. As trip lengths and total costs vary, a percentage of the total cost has worked better than set amounts in awarding the grants. To be eligible to apply, students must have a 3.50 cumulative GPA, but the application process also takes into account the academic merit of the proposed experience, the proposed itinerary or study plans, the student's plan for dissemination, and the total cost of the experience (see Appendix A).

Since 2001, when the honors college began maintaining its grant records digitally, 1,364 TAG and URGE grants have been awarded to 918 of its 1,830 students and, specifically, 994 TAG grants to 768 students. During this time, students who have received TAG funds were retained to graduation at a rate of 95.8% compared to an average completion rate of 64.0% among all honors students. This 20% difference in completion rates cannot be attributed solely to the students' participation in a study abroad program given that the 3.50 GPA requirement to apply for grant funds is higher than the 3.25 GPA that is required to stay in honors, but it does seem to indicate that honors college administrators have been good stewards of the funds awarded.

In addition to tracking completion rates of grant recipients, the administration implemented a process of accountability in which students are expected to send postcards while traveling, submit a written report and photographs of their experiences upon their return, and share their experiences with the honors community through a public presentation. Despite having collected students' reflections through written reports and public presentations of their experiences, little has been done empirically until now to document the impact of the study abroad experience on student development and learning.

Instrument

In the fall of 2015, the honors college administered a 16-item survey to students currently enrolled in the program who had received a TAG grant (see Appendix B). This self-report survey was intended to determine what type of learning might be taking place and to inform the type of learning outcomes assessment called for in a future assessment plan. Students were asked to report whether they believed they had experienced growth in each of the seven areas of program outcomes defined within the honors curriculum: communication, critical inquiry, diversity, ethics, integrative scholarship, interdisciplinary learning, and leadership development. Additionally, the survey collected information on the participants' prior experience with traveling abroad; their motivation for wanting to study abroad; their comfort level with traveling abroad, both before and after the experience; and whether or not they felt that the funding they received from the honors college was sufficient. The survey was expected to take approximately ten minutes to complete.

Participants

The students recruited to participate were currently enrolled juniors and seniors who had previously received TAGs and had had the opportunity to study abroad during their undergraduate collegiate experience. Of the 58 individuals invited to participate, a total of 55 completed the survey, with a total response rate of 94.8%. Of the 58 individuals, 74.1% (n=43) were female and 25.9% (n=15) were male. For ethnicity/race, 87.9% (n=51) of the respondents were white with 65.5% white women, which is not unlike the findings from other research focused on study abroad (IIE; Pope et al.; Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella). Regarding areas of academic concentration, 27.6% (n=16) were majoring in health sciences, 25.9% (n=15) in math and science, 15.5% (n=9) in business, 13.8% (n=8) in fine arts, 13.8% (n=8) in humanities or social sciences, and 3.4% (n=2) in education.

FINDINGS

The survey focused on three primary areas: experience and comfort in traveling abroad, impact on program outcomes, and financial support. For the program outcomes, students rated the level to which they agreed with a provided statement. Two open-ended qualitative questions allowed students to expand on reasons for travel and make additional comments.

Previous Travel Abroad Experience

Forty percent (n=22) of the participants had never traveled outside the country prior to this experience (Q1). Of the 33 who had traveled outside of the country (Q2), 39.4% had only done so once prior, 24.2% twice prior, and 33.4% three or more times prior. As to reasons for prior trips (Q3), 45.5% indicated that the purpose was a family vacation, 33.3% a church/mission trip, 15.2% participation in a student-exchange program, 15.2% school-sponsored trips, and 21.2% some other reason (students could select more than one response; see Figure 1). Of the total sample, 21.8% indicated that their parents had never traveled abroad (Q4).

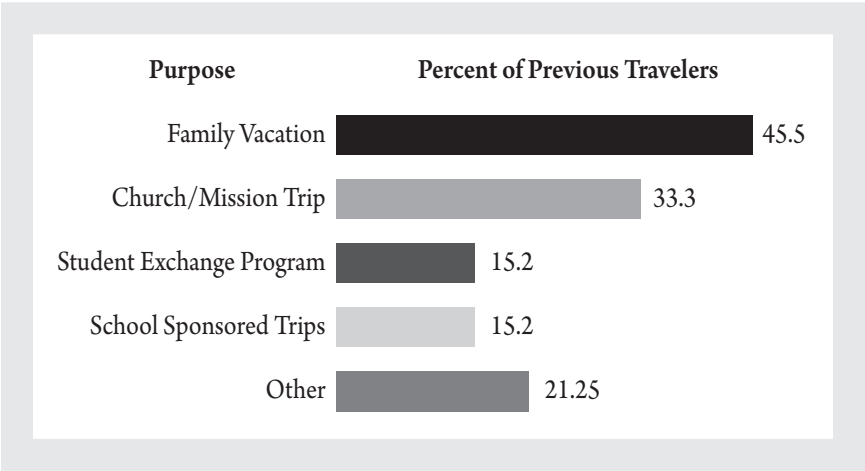
Funding

Participants had received between 50% and 75% of their overall travel costs from TAG, with an average of 64%. Fifty-three students answered the question about whether this funding was sufficient (Q13); 94.3% (n=50) answered yes and 5.7% (n=3) answered no.

Comfort Level in Traveling Abroad

Students were asked to rate their comfort level with traveling abroad both prior to (Q14) and after (Q15) their TAG experience, with 5 being very comfortable and 1 being not at all comfortable (see Figure 2). Their mean score concerning their comfort level in traveling abroad prior to receiving a TAG

FIGURE 1. FOR WHAT PURPOSES HAVE YOU BEEN ABROAD?

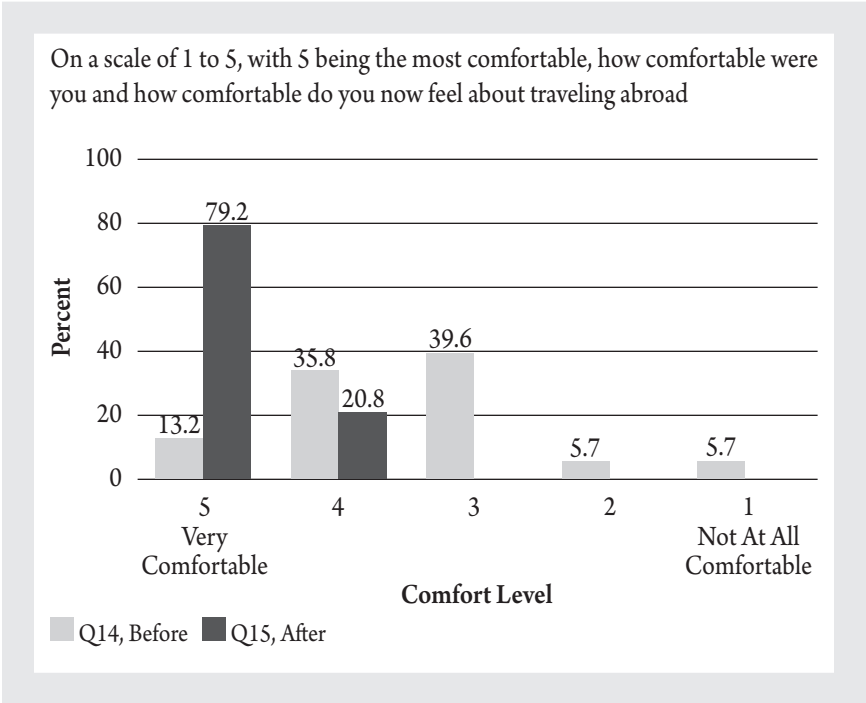


was a 3.45, indicating that they were only somewhat comfortable traveling abroad; however, after the experience their mean rating was a 4.79, with no students selecting lower than a 4, indicating that they were much more comfortable overall with traveling abroad. When comparing students who had never traveled abroad with those who had, the group with prior travel experience originally reported a mean comfort level of 3.73 prior to the experience and 4.90 after returning from their TAG experience. Those who had never traveled abroad prior to the TAG experience rated their comfort level mean as 3.09 prior to the experience and 4.65 upon their return.

Motivations for Traveling Abroad

Students were asked to describe their motivations for wanting to travel abroad in an open-ended question (Q12). Their responses were then reviewed for common themes, which included growth or experience in a variety of capacities: academic, cultural, career, language, personal, and travel. Twenty-seven (49.1%) students identified cultural growth as a motivation, 30.9% travel experience, 21.8% experience with a foreign language, 20% academic

FIGURE 2. COMFORT IN TRAVELING ABROAD



pursuits, 12.7% personal reasons, and 3.6% career growth as their primary motivations.

Impact on Honors College Program Outcomes

The impact on the Schedler Honors College program outcomes were measured by responses to a statement reflecting a development within that particular program outcome; the responses are listed below (see Table 1). Students were asked to rate the impact using a 5-item Likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. More than 60% of the students strongly agreed with each of the statements; with Leadership Development and Diversity

TABLE 1. SCHEDLER HONORS COLLEGE PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND SURVEY STATEMENTS

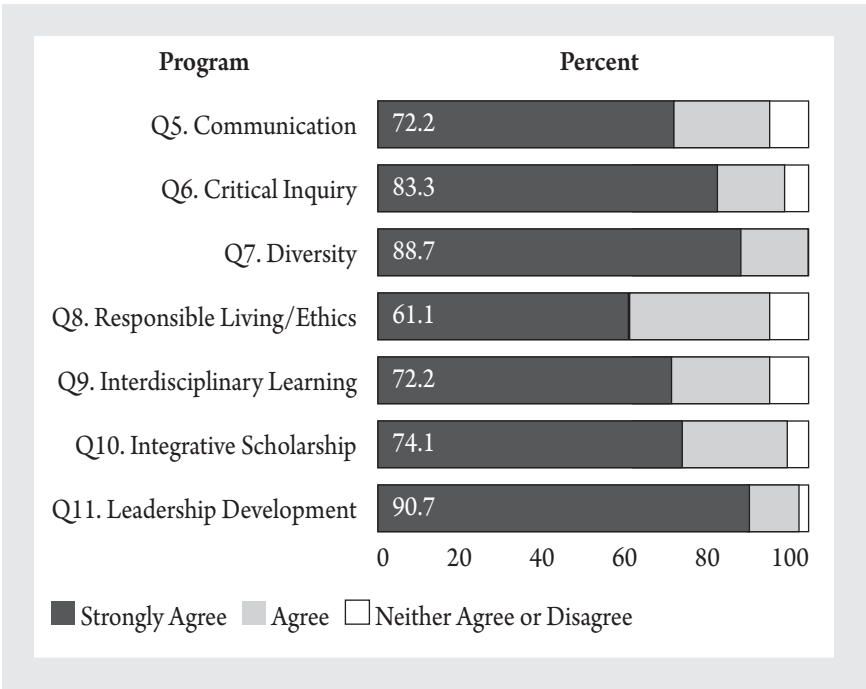
Communication	Q5. I believe that this experience impacted my ability to develop and present ideas logically and effectively in order to enhance communication and collaboration with diverse individuals and groups.
Critical Inquiry	Q6. I believe that this experience impacted my ability to analyze new problems and situations to formulate informed opinions and conclusions.
Diversity	Q7. I believe that this experience impacted my ability to analyze familiar cultural assumptions in the context of the world's diverse values, traditions & belief system as well as to analyze the major ideas, techniques & processes that inform creative works within different cultural & historical contexts.
Responsible Living/Ethics	Q8. I believe that this experience impacted my ability to address real-world problems and find ethical solutions for individuals and society.
Interdisciplinary Learning	Q9. I believe that this experience impacted my ability to demonstrate knowledge of examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study.
Integrative Scholarship	Q10. I believe that this experience impacted my ability to integrate knowledge to express insight and originality through disciplinary or multidisciplinary methodologies.
Leadership Development	Q11. I believe that this experience impacted my ability to demonstrate ownership of one's educational process.

receiving the largest percentage of responses for Strongly Agree: 90.7% and 88.7% respectively. However, all of the students agreed to some extent that the study abroad experience impacted their understanding of diversity, and 98.1% agreed that their leadership was also impacted (see Figure 3). No student responded with Disagree or Strongly Disagree for any of the program outcomes.

DISCUSSION

In addition to serving the goal of offering experiential education to honors students, many honors programs and colleges have come to realize what Cubillos and Ilvento pointed out: that offering support for “study abroad has great potential as a recruitment and retention tool” (505). As honors programs develop resources to offer this support through either their university or development funds, honors administrators need to demonstrate the effects on student development and show fiscal responsibility. To measure the impact that study abroad has on a student, we must look beyond completion rates

FIGURE 3. IMPACT OF STUDY ABROAD ON HONORS COLLEGE PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES



and begin to focus on its transformative impact. Our survey focused on three primary areas with regard to the student: experience and comfort in traveling abroad; impact on student learning; and financial support. Though this survey did not provide a direct assessment of program outcomes, the results offer valuable insights about the direction that future assessment and research regarding study abroad should take.

Assessment of Student Learning

All of the survey participants reported that they experienced at least some growth in Diversity, influencing their “ability to analyze familiar cultural assumptions in the context of the world’s diverse values, traditions & belief system as well as to analyze the major ideas, techniques & processes that inform creative works within different cultural & historical contexts.” Additionally, 98.1% of students agreed that they had experienced growth in Leadership Development, an area that the honors college faculty plans to relabel *Intellectual Autonomy* to better reflect the program outcome statement “I believe that this experience impacted my ability to demonstrate ownership of [my] educational process.” Going forward, the program needs to identify a means of capturing diversity and autonomy of learning through direct assessment. An example might be to have students write a reflective report upon their return, using a prompt that asks them to address these two areas specifically. A pre-test and post-test could also be administered.

The use of self-reported, indirect assessment has allowed the honors college to narrow the focus from all seven program outcomes to the primary two in which the majority of students report experiencing growth: Diversity and Intellectual Autonomy. This assessment will allow more development of direct measurements in the future, an important benefit given faculty time constraints in implementing a comprehensive assessment for all program outcomes. Additionally, the assessment will be valuable in monitoring these two program outcomes for all honors students and determine to what extent, if any, students who had the opportunity to receive a TAG are more likely to reach proficiency or mastery of these program outcomes.

Student Efficacy and Experience

In addition to allowing students to report on their learning, this instrument also gauged their experience and comfort with traveling abroad. Students were asked whether they had traveled abroad prior to this opportunity and,

if so, for what purpose and on how many occasions. Students were asked whether their parents had ever traveled abroad. They were also asked to report their level of comfort with traveling abroad both before and after their TAG experience.

Using 2013 data from the U.S. State Department, Stabile reported that only 22% of Arkansas residents have a valid passport, the third lowest percentage in the country; in contrast, nearly 62% of honors students surveyed had previously traveled abroad, with nearly one-third of the students having traveled abroad three or more times. Some students who had traveled outside the country prior to receiving a TAG from honors reported traveling for a religious purpose, such as a church/mission trip (33.3%), or an academic purpose, such as a student exchange program (15.2%) or a school sponsored trip (15.2%), but the most common reason reported was as a family vacation (45.5%). This prior travel experience may reflect that students applying for TAG grants are among the more wealthy students in the program, a possibility that is reinforced by the fact that more than three-quarters of the students reported that their parents had also traveled outside of the country.

Students who had previously traveled abroad did not report a significantly higher comfort level prior to their TAG experience than those who had no prior experience, 3.73 compared to 3.09. The small comfort level of experienced travelers likely results from either the greater length of stay or the level of independence that the students experienced on the TAG trip versus the likely experience that they would have had on a family vacation or church/mission trip, for example, or from the idea of traveling with unfamiliar participants (Heffron & Maresco). In contrast, however, students who had previously participated in a student exchange program had rated their comfort level as 4.0 prior to their TAG experience, having likely experienced a longer trip with more independence. After the TAG experience, the resulting comfort level was again similar for students who had prior experience versus those who had not (4.90 to 4.79 respectively), both groups showing a substantial increase in their comfort level with traveling abroad. The students' comfort level is an important indicator of their self-efficacy in regard to travel, so a significant outcome is that all students reported comfort in travel abroad upon their return, with no one selecting lower than a 4. Future tracking will compare comfort levels based on the type of TAG trip—i.e., a semester at a partner school, faculty-led trip, or independently planned trip—in addition to pre- and post-trip tests.

Lastly, this instrument was used to determine whether students were satisfied with the funding they received. Ninety-four percent of students indicated that the funding from the honors college was sufficient. Considering that students were receiving between 50% and 75% of their overall travel costs from TAG, with the average being 64%, further investigation is needed into their other sources of funding. At this time, the honors college does not factor the student's financial need into their decision on how much to fund. If it were to be discovered that students from low-income homes were less likely to apply due to not being able to make up the difference in cost, the program might wish to change that practice, perhaps creating a supplemental fund to assist with the travel expenses of students with greater financial need.

CONCLUSION

Honors programs and colleges will likely continue to support study abroad because it has documented benefits for students and also serves as a recruitment tool. As more programs begin to gain control over their own funding to support these programs, however, honors administrators must be able to document not only sound fiscal responsibility but also the impact on student learning. Showing to what extent students report being comfortable with traveling abroad is one area of self-efficacy. Future assessments can identify other areas of perceived gains in efficacy to determine where students are experiencing growth.

Our survey proved a valuable pilot tool in evaluating the impact of the TAG program on students and their development. This attempt to apply the program's established outcomes was a good first step toward developing a more inclusive plan to assess student learning as a result of their participation in a TAG program. The administration was able to identify two primary program outcomes in which nearly all students reported experiencing growth; however, other areas for improvement need future evaluation. One option might be to use a pre-test and post-test to get a more accurate reflection of the students' resonance at the time. Rubin and Matthews have suggested the value of listing learning outcomes—i.e., "I believe that this experience impacted my ability to analyze familiar cultural assumptions in the context of the world's diverse values, traditions & belief systems"—rather than program outcomes such as "Diversity" in order to avoid the possibility that students' values might conflict with the words used and unduly affect their rating. Another option could include asking students to respond to a prompt for a reflective essay that will then be evaluated for growth in the two identified domains.

Using a tool such as this survey can be important for demonstrating the effectiveness and impact of a program in order to justify fiscal and personnel resources as well as for improving student learning, yet a more comprehensive evaluation would be a better strategy. A mixed methods approach that includes triangulating multiple data sources (Rubin & Matthews), e.g., graduation rates, journals, and surveys, would help provide insights that might not be possible through a single method. Also helpful would be looking at identified program outcomes at the completion of the honors program and noting whether students who participated expressed greater growth in these domains than those who did not.

Moving forward, this type of program assessment should be conducted not just to justify our support for study abroad but also to offer greater opportunities for student growth. Once an effective assessment tool can be devised that is fitting to the outcomes of the program, then the implementation of the assessment will allow our programs to identify areas of improvement. With the need for developing global citizens as a part of a flourishing learning environment, working to ensure that students receive maximum benefits from their study abroad experience is crucial to an exemplary honors program.

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APPENDIX A

Honors Grant Application

The Honors Grant Application asks students to provide the following information:

1. Grant Type and Sub-Type

a. TAG

- i. STSA-Short-Term Study Abroad
- ii. IEP-Internal Exchange Program
- iii. EEP-External Exchange Program

b. URGE

- i. Research
- ii. Internship
- iii. Other

2. Departure and Return Dates

3. Total and Requested Amounts

4. Proposal (score of 75 points total)

- Abstract, 100–200 words (5pts)
- Rationale (40pts total):
 - ◊ Academic Merit/Educational Benefits, 200–400 words (20pts)—A statement detailing the academically enriching experience the student will receive by participating in this experience with specific attention to how the experience relates to future educational or career aspirations or future research, such as a thesis project
 - ◊ Course Credit (5pts)—A list of credit the student will receive—including, but not limited to course credit in the major or minor that will be received
 - ◊ Impact of Experience (10pts)—A persuasive personal statement of how the student will be influenced or affected by the proposed opportunity
 - ◊ Plan for Dissemination (5pts)—A statement of how the proposed experience will have a larger impact on the Honors community, including, but not limited to a publication, conference presentation, future thesis research, a soapbox presentation, a poster presentation, or other ideas for sharing the student experience

EVALUATING THE APPLICATION OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES TO STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCES

- Budget (15pts)—An itemized budget is provided with rationale for each expenditure; and it is clear that each expenditure is necessary for the experience; plus shows evidence of individual, family, community, or additional grant support
- Itinerary/Study plans (10pts)—Comprehensive statement of travel plans, stating destination(s) and dates or a plan detailing internship or research experience
- Vita (5pts)—Indicates major, current GPA, Honors seminars completed, major papers written, undergraduate publications and/or public presentations, scholarships, grants, and awards received

APPENDIX B

TAG Assessment Survey Questions

1. Prior to receiving this TAG, had you ever traveled abroad?
Yes
No
Skip Logic: If No Is Selected, then skip to Question #4.
2. How many times had you been abroad prior to receiving your TAG?
1
2
3
4
more than 4
3. For what purposes have you been abroad? (mark all that apply)
Church/Mission Trip
Family Vacation
Student Exchange Program
Other
4. Have your parents ever traveled abroad?
Yes
No

For each of the following questions, select the response that best describes your feelings toward the statement:

5. Communication: I believe that this experience impacted my ability to develop and present ideas logically and effectively in order to enhance communication and collaboration with diverse individuals and groups.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
6. Critical Inquiry: I believe that this experience impacted my ability to analyze new problems and situations to formulate informed opinions and conclusions.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

7. Diversity: I believe that this experience impacted my ability to analyze familiar cultural assumptions in the context of the world's diverse values, traditions & belief system as well as to analyze the major ideas, techniques & processes that inform creative works within different cultural & historical contexts.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
8. Responsible Living/Ethics: I believe that this experience impacted my ability to address real-world problems and find ethical solutions for individuals and society.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
9. Interdisciplinary Learning: I believe that this experience impacted my ability to demonstrate knowledge of examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
10. Integrative Scholarship: I believe that this experience impacted my ability to integrate knowledge to express insight and originality through disciplinary or multi-disciplinary methodologies.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
11. Leadership Development: I believe that this experience impacted my ability to demonstrate ownership of one's educational process.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

12. What was your primary motivation for wanting to travel abroad?

13. Do you feel the funding you received from Honors was sufficient to support your experience?

Yes

No

14. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most comfortable, how comfortable were you with traveling abroad prior to this opportunity?

5, very comfortable

4

3

2

1, not at all comfortable

15. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most comfortable, how comfortable do you now feel about traveling abroad after this experience?

5, very comfortable

4

3

2

1, not at all comfortable

16. Any final comments or thoughts about the assessment instrument?

Why Not Honors?

Understanding Students' Decisions Not to Enroll and Persist in Honors Programs

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, retention and graduation of honors students have received increasing attention in scholarly literature. In the spring of 2013, as a part of the strategic planning process, the South Dakota State University (SDSU) Van D. and Barbara B. Fishback Honors College invited current honors students to complete an online survey aimed at collecting information about the key factors that affected students' initial decision to enroll in the honors college, the main reasons affecting their decision to continue their enrollment, and the challenges and levels of satisfaction they experienced. Study results indicated that most students were highly satisfied with their honors experience, smaller classes, opportunities to enhance their leadership and intellectual growth, and close connection with honors faculty and their peers

(Nichols and Chang). In 2014, as an extension of the 2013 study, a team of researchers set out to further explore the other side of these issues: why not honors? What factors influence students' decisions whether to enroll or not to enroll and persist through graduation with honors? While this research is based on students at South Dakota State University, insights gained may be relevant to other honors programs and professionals seeking to better understand and serve their students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2013, Herron provided evidence that high school GPA and ACT scores were the best predictors of honors student retention and graduation at Wayne State University. In their research at Oklahoma State in 2008, Campbell and Fuqua found high school GPA, class rank, first-semester college GPA, gender, and freshman honors housing to be the strongest predictors for honors program completion. Keller and Lacy, in their 2013 study of honors students at Colorado State University, found that participation in the university's honors program was associated with meaningful increases in first-year student retention and graduation rates after four, five, and six years. These results compared honors students with individually matched students who did not participate in honors. In 2004, Cosgrove found higher grade point averages, retention, and graduation rates among students who completed the honors program when compared to students who did not enroll in honors and those who completed only a portion of their honors requirements. Similarly, Pflaum, Pascarella and Duby, whose 1985 research controlled for academic variables, reported a higher retention rate for honors students. In 2008, Slavin, Coladarci and Pratt also reported higher first year retention rates for students who had completed honors program requirements.

In his 2004 study, Cosgrove explored whether active involvement in honors made a difference in student retention. He found that honors program completers, on average, had higher grade point averages and a shorter time to degree completion than non-completers. However, Goodstein and Szarek argued in 2013 that these data are skewed by the fact that underperforming honors students are more likely to drop out or be dismissed from the program for their failure to fulfill program requirements, and they suggest that the "dirty little secret" of honors is that, when data are examined on a national level, most students who begin in honors do not graduate as honors scholars. In fact, published information estimates that honors program completion rates float at approximately thirty percent (Goodstein and Szarek). High

dropout rates suggest that programs may not attract students well-suited for their offerings, may not offer attractive curricular and co-curricular offerings to sustain student engagement, may require too much from students, or all of the above. One way to increase program completion rates is to lower program standards; research suggests that those programs not requiring a thesis and those with lower grade-point-average requirements may have higher completion rates. Some universities have addressed the completion issue by instituting “mid-career awards” recognizing student success in the first two years of their honors curriculum as an incentive to motivate students toward program completion (Goodstein and Szarek). On the other hand, Kelly has argued that retention and graduation rates are not the only appropriate measures of honors program effectiveness and that the successful implementation of “high impact practices” across the honors curricular experience (as discussed by Kuh et al) may provide more meaningful insights about program quality.

High school performance has been another focus of research about retention and completion. Smith and Zagurksi found that, while high school GPA helped predict first-semester college GPA, standardized test scores did not and furthermore that none of the single variables under examination was a significant predictor of retention. At Marquette University in 1979, however, McDonald and Gawoski found that high school grade point average and ACT math scores were the strongest predictor of honors program completion, and McKay’s study in 2009, which controlled for other variables, found high school GPA to be the strongest predictor of honors program completion.

Research has uncovered a number of reasons for students’ opting out of honors, including early graduation, electing additional coursework (e.g. double majors, minors), not finding a thesis topic of interest, or needing time to prepare for professional entrance exams (Holland). While Savage, Raehsler, and Fiedor found that high school GPA was the strongest predictor of honors program completion, their research further suggests that major-specific upper-division requirements (such as student teaching) may impede honors program completion. Other reasons for not completing honors may include institutional structural inadequacies such as a shortage of research advisors, inadequate student preparation for independent research, or a lack of honors academic or programmatic opportunities.

Goodstein and Szarek’s 2013 study tracked student honors completion between 1998 and 2010 and thus provides important longitudinal insights. The researchers found that from 1998 to 2002 between 20 and 30 percent of

students completed the honors program at their university while between 2003 and 2008 roughly 40 to 50 percent of students were program completers. These positive shifts mirrored university efforts to improve honors program quality, including reinvigoration of an honors first-year seminar and strengthening of honors housing options. In addition, their research indicated that the later cohort (with the higher program completion rate) came to the university with higher SAT scores. Finally, the higher program completion rates were associated with an increased emphasis on honors students' earning the mid-career award. Importantly, this research demonstrates that program improvements can significantly enhance honors program completion rates.

While the findings of these studies suggest many reasons that students do or do not graduate with honors distinction, the wide variability in honors programs across the country indicates the importance of examining these issues across a range of institutional contexts. Our research contributes to the existing literature by exploring factors that influence students' decisions on whether to enroll and persist through graduation with honors. In addition, we examine these issues through a unique conceptual framework, Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior. Finally, this research is particularly valuable in that it examines the perspectives of three groups of honors students, those who were eligible but did not enroll, those who enrolled and discontinued their participation in the program, and those who were persisting in honors.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

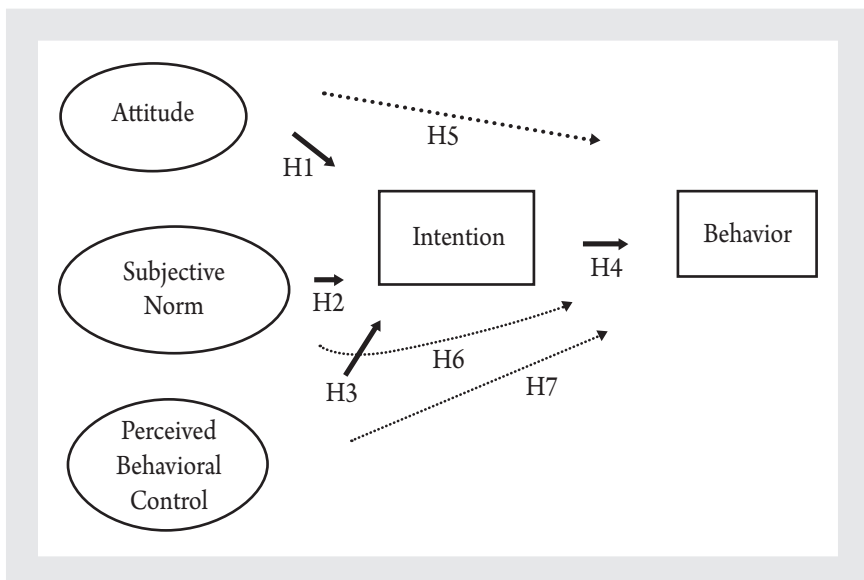
Ajzen's 1991 Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been a useful framework for understanding decision-making and consumer behaviors such as conservation behaviors (Claudy et al.; Kasier et al.; Kalafatis et al.), nutrition and food consumption (Liou and Bauer; Pawlak and Malinauskas), and health behaviors (Schifter and Ajzen; Noar and Zimmerman). TPB may be particularly useful for understanding honors student persistence because of its strength in connecting individuals' intentions with their behaviors.

According to TPB, individuals' behaviors are affected by their intentions to accomplish the behavior, and intentions are affected by people's attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived limitations and challenges. Figure 1 provides a visual summary of the structure of the model.

Definition of Terms

In TPB, *Attitude* (towards the behavior) is defined as a cognitive process through which rational individuals evaluate the pros and cons associated with a particular behavior (Ajzen 1988). In this study, *attitude* is defined as a student's positive and negative evaluation of enrolling and graduating from the honors college. The term *Subjective Norms* is defined as the influences on how individuals consider the viewpoint, i.e., approval or disapproval, of their friends, family, or society regarding the behavior in question (Ajzen 1995). In this study, *Subjective Norm* is conceptualized as honors students' expected reactions from friends, peers, and family members in regard to their behaviors (i.e. enrolling, continuing, and graduating with honors). We define *Perceived Behavioral Control* as students' perceptions of their physical, financial, and intellectual abilities to continue enrollment and graduate from the honors college; the term includes key internal and external factors that determine the easiness or difficulty of persisting and completing honors requirements. In this study, *Intention* is defined as students' anticipation and willingness to continue enrolling in honors courses and ultimately graduate with honors college distinction. Intention is measured based on the student's answer to the question "Graduating with Honors College distinction is not a priority

**FIGURE 1. DERIVED FROM THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR
CONCEPTUAL MODEL (AJZEN, 1991)**



for me” (Likert scale, 1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree). Finally, *Behavior* is measured in this study by whether a student ever joined, discontinued, or continued his or her enrollment in the honors college.

When applied to this study, TPB would postulate that, if a student has a positive view towards the honors college or being an honors student, he or she also has a stronger intention to join and continue in honors. Similarly, when a student holds a positive view about honors (which indicates positive feedback from his or her family, friends, and peers), he or she is more likely to have a stronger intention to join and continue in honors. On the other hand, if a student perceives limitations that will prevent him or her from being successful in honors, his or her intention will decrease. Further, a positive relationship between intention and behavior is predicted, i.e., the stronger a student’s desire to join and graduate with honors, the more likely it is that he/she will accomplish this goal. These relationships are shown in Figure 1 with solid arrow lines.

In addition to the basic TPB model, we also assume the direct positive impacts of Attitude, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control on students’ behavior. The dashed-arrow lines in Figure 1 indicate these effects.

Based on our literature review and stated assumptions, this study suggests the following seven hypotheses (also illustrated in Figure 1):

- **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Students’ attitudes toward joining and continuing an honors education contribute to their intention to join and continue enrollment in honors.
- **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** The social norms toward graduating with honors college distinction affect students’ intentions to join and continue enrollment in honors.
- **Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Students’ perceived control affects their intention to join and continue enrollment in honors.
- **Hypothesis 4 (H4):** Students’ intentions to continue in honors affect their behaviors in enrollment.
- **Hypothesis 5 (H5):** Students’ attitudes directly affect their behaviors in honors enrollment.
- **Hypothesis 6 (H6):** Subjective norms directly affect students’ behaviors in honors enrollment.

- **Hypothesis 7 (H7):** Students' perceived control directly affects their behaviors in honors enrollment.

METHODOLOGY

Based on the initial research question—*What factors influence students' decisions to enroll, persist, and graduate with Honors College distinction?*—and based on the seven hypotheses, we developed a survey in the early summer of 2014. The first draft included 40 questions to reflect each component of the TPB shown in Figure 1. This draft was reviewed by a small number of honors students and was modified based on their suggestions. The final draft was a 45-statement questionnaire based on a 1–5 Likert Scale for each question (1: Strongly disagree, 3: Neutral; 5: Strongly agree). Of the 45 questions in the survey, this article examines results that emerge as particularly relevant for our application of the Theory of Planned Behavior.

The statements below are taken from the survey and are clustered around components of the Theory of Planned Behavior Model.

Attitude

- The extra work required by the Honors College will not help my future career.
- I believe that Honors College distinction will benefit me in the future.
- I enjoy the intellectual stimulation that Honors classes bring.
- Honors classes feel like a waste of time.
- I think the extra time and effort needed to graduate with Honors distinction is worth it.

Subjective Norms

- Honors students are not the kind of students I like to hang around with.
- My advisor did not encourage me to participate in the Honors College.
- My close friends have a negative impression of the Honors College.

- When I decided to join Honors, my family's opinion was very important to me.
- When I decided to join Honors, my friends' opinions were very important to me.

Perceived Control

- Honors classes are harder than non-Honors classes.
- I fear that Honors classes will negatively affect my GPA.
- The Honors independent study requirement intimidates me.
- Completing an upper-level division Honors contract intimidates me.
- I understand what is required of me to graduate with Honors distinction.
- I do not have time to finish the Honors requirements.

To better understand some of these questions, readers should know that the Fishback Honors College at South Dakota State University requires 24 credits in honors and a 3.5 overall grade point average to graduate with honors college distinction. Curriculum requirements include the following program components: honors general education; upper-division honors contract(s); interdisciplinary honors colloquia; and an independent study (scholarly/creative/research) project.

The data reported in this study represent students who were eligible for the Fishback Honors College and enrolled at South Dakota State University between the fall of 2010 and the spring of 2014. Any student with a 27 or higher composite ACT score or who was in the top 10% (class rank) of his or her graduating class is eligible and has the option of taking honors courses with no application process required or maximum number of students accepted per year.

The survey was open during September and October of 2014 and was administered through QuestionPro, an online survey program. A link to the survey was sent to students through their campus emails; the total distribution list for this email was approximately 1,275 students, representing all of the sophomore, junior, and senior students who were honors-eligible at the time of their enrollment at SDSU. Of these students, 260 completed the online survey (87% of those who began the survey), a response rate of approximately 20%. The survey took respondents approximately seven minutes to complete. The survey consisted of 45 questions that participants rated

on a 1 to 5 Likert scale (1: strongly disagree; 3: neutral; 5: strongly agree). A coupon for a free SDSU ice cream cone was offered as incentive for survey completion.

RESULTS

Table 1 (see Appendix) provides descriptive statistics for the 260 students who completed the survey. Among all the students who finished the survey, about 67% were female and about 97% were Caucasians. The class breakdown of respondents was senior 32%; junior 33%; sophomore 28%; and other 7% (graduated or 5th+ year).

Table 1 indicates more sophomore male and junior female students while we did not find notable differences in gender among seniors. The data indicated that about 52% of the 260 honors-eligible responding students never began the honors program, 15% discontinued their enrollment, and 33% were currently enrolled. There was no significant gender difference in respondents' enrollment status.

Data in Table 1 also suggest a clear difference in male and female students' fields of studies: about 34% of male respondents and only 9% of female students were from engineering. A higher percentage of female students (47%) were from either pharmacy (32%) or nursing (15%). Notably higher percentages of female students were from arts and sciences compared to male students (20% vs. 14%). There were no noticeable differences in gender distribution for students from agricultural and biological sciences.

As data in Table 2 indicate, students' responses to most of our sixteen questions were significantly different among three sub-groups (never-enrolled, discontinued enrollment, continued enrollment). As expected, currently enrolled students had a more positive attitude about the honors college than students who never enrolled. For example, when asked if graduating with honors distinction would benefit their future, the currently enrolled students had a much higher average score than the never-enrolled students (4.0 vs. 2.06). Similarly, when asked if the extra time and effort needed to graduate with honors distinction are worth it, the currently enrolled students gave a significantly higher score than those who never enrolled (3.90 vs. 2.34).

Students who had discontinued their honors enrollment showed some inconsistency in response to the questions regarding attitude toward honors. For instance, they enjoyed the intellectual stimulation that honors classes offered (3.48) but also gave relatively low scores in response to what honors could do for their future. When asked if the extra work required by the

honors college would not help a student's future career, the discontinued students responded with a 3.26, which was higher than those who never enrolled (3.16). Further, the discontinued students' average score for the question "Honors classes feel like a waste of time" was highest in the three groups (2.86), indicating that these students did not appreciate or perceive the value of continuing their honors enrollment.

Most of the questions related to subjective norms showed similar patterns as those associated with attitudes. Currently enrolled students had significantly higher regard for the honors college than other students. Both discontinued and never-enrolled students gave noticeably higher scores for the question "My advisor did not encourage me to participate in the Honors College."

Table 2 suggests that peer influence played an important role for discontinued students in their decision to enroll in honors. For example, when asked if honors students were not the type of students they liked to associate with and if their close friends had a negative impression of the honors college, the discontinued students reported the highest scores (2.63 and 2.59 respectively) among the three sub-groups of students. On the other hand, Table 2 shows the never-enrolled students had noticeably lower scores for Q21 (1.00) and Q22 (0.88) compared to the other two groups of students, which indicates family and friends of this group did not affect students' decisions to enroll in honors as much as other groups did. Finally, the importance of a students' advisor on the students' initial decisions to enroll in honors was evident. As Table 2 illustrates, when asked if their advisors did not encourage them to participate in the honors college, currently enrolled students responded with the lowest score (2.375) and the never-enrolled students responded with the highest score (3.33).

Most responses to the questions relating to students' perceived control also showed statistically significant differences as indicated by the Kruskal-Wallis test results shown in Table 2. (The Kruskal-Wallis test is used to compare two or more independent samples of equal or different sizes [Daniel]). For example, when asked if honors classes were harder than non-honors classes, if honors classes could possibly negatively affect their GPAs, and if completing an upper-level honors contract intimidated them, the discontinued students gave the highest scores of all three sub-groups (3.12, 2.65, and 3.28). Discontinued students also expressed a perceived time limitation in finishing honors requirements. For example, the average score (3.88) for these students' responses to "I do not have time to finish the honors requirements" was higher than those never enrolled (2.66) and those currently enrolled

(2.34). On the other hand, the never-enrolled students gave relatively low scores for most of the questions in this group, which may be due to their unfamiliarity with the program and their lack of honors experience.

The Theory of Planned Behavior findings and analysis are presented and further discussed in Table 3 of the Appendix. These data are significant because they indicate a “goodness of fit” between the TPB model and the phenomenon in question, i.e., why not honors?

Table 4 in the Appendix summarizes the final model, selected variables for each component of the TPB, and the Maximum Likelihood Estimation of path analysis results (Kline). Most of the estimated coefficients are statistically significant except the paths of Subjective “Norms to Intention” and “Attitude to Behavior.” Two selected indicators for attitude have the greatest statistical significance; they suggest that, the more students agree that graduating with honors college distinction will benefit them, the more positive their attitude toward joining and continuing their enrollment. The three selected indicators for Subjective Norms are also statistically significant. The estimated coefficient for Indicator 1 indicates that the less the sample students agreed with the statement that they do not want to associate with honors students, the stronger they feel an obligation to join honors. The coefficients for Indicators 2 and 3 are both positive and significant, suggesting the belief that honors college distinction influences students’ subjective norms regarding honors participation and completion. Similarly, the estimated coefficients for the four selected indicators are all positive and statistically significant. The coefficients for these indicators suggest that students did consider the extra time and effort needed to graduate with honors as well as their family’s opinion when forming their perceptions about control and limitations in joining and continuing enrollment in honors.

Based on the information provided from Table 4, our seven hypotheses are discussed below and illustrated in Figure 2.

- **Hypothesis 1(H1):** Students’ attitudes toward joining and continuing an honors education contribute to their intention to join and continue enrollment in honors.

The estimated coefficient for the path is 0.907 and is statistically significant. This result confirms our hypothesis that a positive attitude contributes to a higher intention to join or continue honors enrollment.

- **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** The social norms toward graduating with honors college distinction affect students' intentions to join and continue enrollment in honors.

The estimated coefficient for the path is -0.001 and statistically insignificant. This result rejects the hypothesis that a positive norm contributes to a higher intention to join or continue enrolling in the honors college. Instead, this result suggests that social norms do not affect students' intention to join or continue enrollment in honors.

- **Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Students' perceived control affects their intention to join and continue enrollment in honors.

The estimated coefficient for the path is -.333 and statistically significant. This result confirms the hypothesis that the less limitation students perceive (for example, the less students are concerned about the difficulty of finishing their independent study projects), the greater intention they report to join or continue their enrollment in honors.

- **Hypothesis 4 (H4):** Students' intentions to continue in honors affect their behaviors in enrollment.

The estimated coefficient for the path is 0.297 and statistically significant. This result confirms our hypothesis that a positive intention contributes to a higher tendency to enroll in the honors college. However, compared to the impact of perceived limitation (0.975) (see Hypothesis 7 below), the influence of intention on students' behavior is relatively small.

- **Hypothesis 5 (H5):** Students' attitudes directly affect their behaviors in honors enrollment.

The estimated coefficient for the path is -0.100 and statistically insignificant, suggesting rejection of the hypothesis that a positive attitude contributes to higher enrollment and persistence in honors. This result indicates that the influence of attitude toward honors recruitment and retention is indirect, through intention. In other words, while attitude has an important role in building students' intention to join or continue enrolling in honors, it does not directly contribute to behavior.

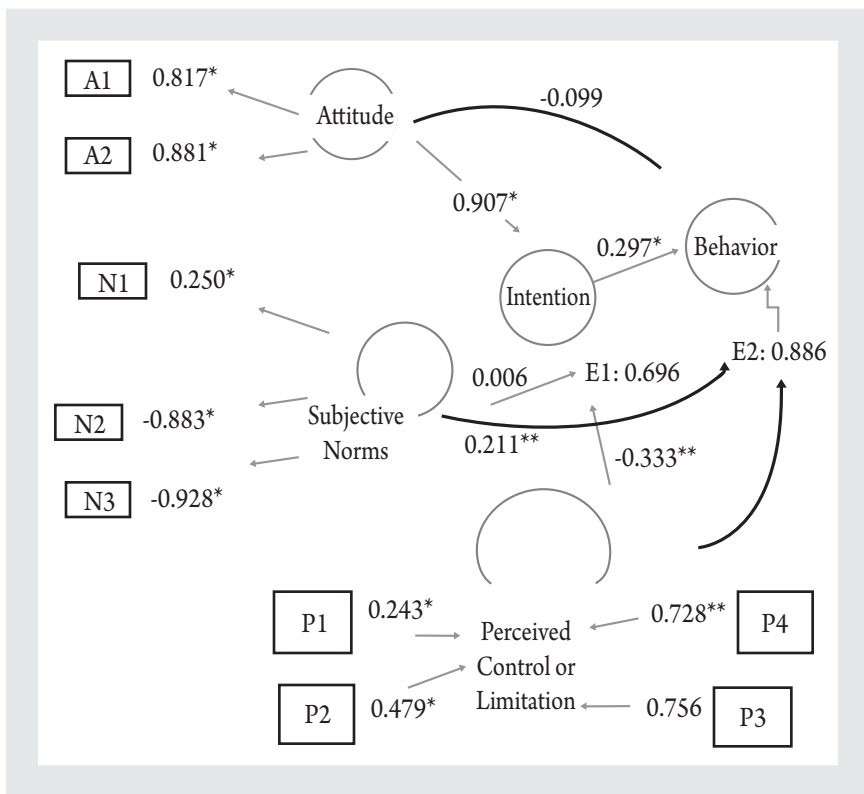
- **Hypothesis 6 (H6):** Subjective norms directly affect students' behaviors in honors enrollment.

The estimated coefficient for the path is -0.211 and statistically significant. This result rejects our hypothesis. Instead of a positive impact, the results here seem to suggest that emphasis on the prestige of joining honors would create a negative effect on students' intention to enroll and persist in honors.

- **Hypothesis 7 (H7):** Students' perceived control directly affects their behaviors in honors enrollment.

The estimated coefficient for the path is 0.975 and statistically significant. This result confirms the hypothesis that perceived limitation is associated with students' behavior in enrolling and/or persisting in the honors college.

FIGURE 2. THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR APPLIED TO HONORS STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND PERSISTENCE



*99% Confident Level; **95% Confident Level

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study gathered, analyzed, and compared perspectives of students who were honors-eligible but never began the program, students who began in honors and discontinued their enrollment, and those who were persisting in honors.

Broadly speaking (and not surprisingly), the responses of students persisting in honors reflected the most positive attitudes toward the program although enrolled students were most likely to indicate that they were intimidated by the Honors Independent Study requirement. The honors-eligible students who never enrolled in the program were significantly less likely to perceive the benefits of honors, to enjoy the intellectual stimulation of honors classes, to value the opinions of friends and family members about honors, to understand the program requirements, and to have been encouraged by their advisor to pursue and persist in honors. Students who began the program but discontinued their honors enrollment were least likely to see how the program would benefit their future career, to be intimidated by the honors requirement of an upper-division contract, or to fear that honors courses would have a negative impact their GPAs, and they were the most likely to feel that honors is a waste of time. There were no significant differences among the three groups on perceptions of honors classes as more difficult than non-honors classes or in the likelihood of students' friends having a negative impression of honors. Each of these findings suggests an opportunity for improved program communication and development.

Further, these findings contribute to the literature on retention in honors by delving more deeply into the question of "why not honors?" through TPB's factors of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived limitations in relation to students' intention to enroll, persist, and complete in honors. While previous studies describe demographic characteristics and performance indicators of those most likely to complete in honors, the data presented here help explain the process whereby students decide whether or not to enroll and continue in honors and the factors that influence that process. Understanding the nuances of students' honors decision-making processes can provide insights that guide more effective, responsive program development and outreach.

Findings and implications related to attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls are further discussed below.

Attitude: Having a favorable attitude toward honors was found to be positively associated with students' intention to enroll and persist in honors,

suggesting that honors programs must work to develop a positive attitude toward honors among their students. The data presented here suggest that clearly articulating tangible program benefits for students during their enrollment and after completion is essential to achieving this positive attitude. Then the lived experience of honors students and alumni must support these claims. Honors curricula and experiences should be engaging, relevant, and transformational, not just more work for students.

Subjective Norms: While the TPB model does not demonstrate a significant relationship between subjective norms and students' intentions or behaviors regarding enrollment or persistence in honors, data did show significant differences in these measures among enrolled honors students, those who never enrolled, and those who discontinued their enrollment. The role of the academic advisor emerges as closely associated with students' honors-related subjective norms, suggesting that honors programs should invest in training and dialogue with advisors across their campuses, taking care to be certain that these key influencers of student behavior are well informed and supportive of their students' honors experiences. The role of peers and family members further demonstrates the need for honors programs to communicate clearly and consistently with their students' parents and family members and to establish a positive reputation for the program, its students, and its alumni on campus and beyond.

Perceived Behavioral Control: Data on perceived behavioral control suggest that a portion of students do not enroll or discontinue their enrollment in honors because they see program requirements such as GPA, research, and coursework as prohibitive or lacking value. These findings, which concur with the findings of Savage, Raehler and Fiedor, underscore the importance of a strong support system that might include honors tutoring, advising, and research assistance, all aimed at propelling students through to program completion. Approaches such as the mid-career award, as discussed by Goodstein and Szarek, may help encourage and incentivize students' graduation with honors college distinction.

An alternative interpretation of the differences in responses based on whether students were currently enrolled, never enrolled, or had discontinued their enrollment might be explained via the concept of cognitive dissonance theory, which argues that, when a person knows things that are not consistent, he or she will try to make them more consistent (Festinger). This psychological theory might suggest that students who have committed to joining and persisting in honors express their positive attitudes toward the

program as a way of reducing their potential cognitive dissonance. In other words, their commitment to and participation in the program might lead to their positive attitudes rather than the other way around. Similarly, students who did not enroll or who discontinued their enrollment might report more negative attitudes as a means to reduce cognitive dissonance with their honors enrollment behaviors.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FURTHER RESEARCH

For the Fishback Honors College at South Dakota State University, this research produces several immediate action steps that may also be worthy of consideration by other honors colleges and programs hoping to improve their students' honors experiences and enhance program completion rates. These steps include the following:

1. Reworking program recruitment and informational resources to more clearly articulate short- and long-term program benefits.
2. Expanding honors training for and support among academic advisors across the university.
3. Enhancing support for current honors students with mid-program recognition, tutoring, advising, and assistance as students prepare for their senior projects.
4. Optimizing all aspects of the honors experience so that the program benefits are being realized.
5. Targeting honors retention efforts specifically to address the concerns of not (yet) enrolled students and those at risk of discontinuing their enrollment.

This study leaves a number of questions unanswered and sparks additional ideas for future research. Exploring qualitative dimensions of the “why not honors?” question via interviews and/or focus groups with each of the sub-groups of this study (never-enrolled, enrolled, discontinued enrollment) would provide deeper insights and understanding of students' perspectives. Detailed program assessment and qualitative and quantitative research among honors alumni could also provide data-driven responses to students' questions and concerns about the perceived and real benefits of the honors experience.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Variables	Full Sample (N=260)	Male Students Only (N=85)	Female Students Only (N=175)	Never began program (N=128)	Discontinued Enrollment (N=43)	Current Honors Students (N=88)
Male (Yes=1)	0.33	1.00	0.00	0.35	0.23	0.34
Sophomore (Yes=1)	0.28	0.34	0.25	0.23	0.16	0.41
Junior (Yes=1)	0.33	0.28	0.36	0.31	0.33	0.36
Senior (Yes=1)	0.32	0.31	0.32	0.38	0.40	0.19
Other (Yes=1)	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.09	0.12	0.03
Never began program	0.52	0.52	0.48	1.00	0.00	0.00
Discontinued Enrollment	0.15	0.12	0.19	0.00	1.00	0.00
Current Honors Students	0.33	0.35	0.33	0.00	0.00	1.00
White	0.97	0.96	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.97
College of Arts & Sciences	0.27	0.14	0.20	0.18	0.19	0.17
College of Agriculture and Biological Sciences	0.18	0.26	0.27	0.23	0.28	0.33
College of Education and Human Sciences	0.09	0.08	0.11	0.08	0.16	0.11
College of Engineering	0.18	0.34	0.09	0.15	0.16	0.22
College of Nursing	0.12	0.05	0.15	0.20	0.09	0.01
College of Pharmacy	0.16	0.13	0.32	0.17	0.12	0.16

TABLE 2. STUDENTS' SURVEY QUESTION RESPONSES
(Likert-type scale 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4= Agree; 5=Strongly Agree)

Question	Full Sample	Never Enrolled	Discontinued	Currently Enrolled	Kruskal-Wallis Test S _p (Pr > Chi-Square)
	Attitude				
The extra work required by the Honors will not help my future career.	2.624	3.159	3.256	2.227	<.0001*
I believe that Honors College distinction will benefit me in the future.	2.707	2.063	2.837	4.000	<.0001*
I enjoy the intellectual stimulation that Honors classes bring.	1.867	1.778	3.488	3.955	<.0001*
Honors classes feel like a waste of time.	2.254	2.288	2.860	1.909	0.001*
I think the extra time and effort needed to graduate with Honors distinction is worth it.	2.898	2.336	2.512	3.897	<.0001*
Subjective Norms					
Honors students are not the kind of students I like to hang around with.	2.737	2.512	2.628	1.955	0.0002*
My advisor did not encourage me to participate in the Honors College.	2.949	3.333	3.000	2.375	<.0001*
My close friends have a negative impression of the Honors College.	2.346	2.183	2.558	2.477	0.2269

When I decided to join Honors, my family's opinion was very important to me.	2.125	1.000	2.930	3.330	<.0001*
When I decided to join Honors, my friends' opinions were very important to me.	1.668	0.881	2.442	2.425	<.0001*
Perceived Control					
Honors classes are harder than non-Honors classes.	3.212	2.717	3.116	3.023	0.6284
I fear that Honors classes will negatively affect my GPA.	3.319	2.839	2.651	2.307	0.0022*
The Honors independent study requirement intimidates me.	2.856	2.635	3.419	3.727	<.0001*
Completing an upper-level division Honors contract intimidates me.	3.140	2.424	3.279	2.920	0.001*
I understand what is required of me to graduate with Honors distinction.	2.809	2.048	3.721	4.182	<.0001*
I do not have time to finish the Honors requirements.	2.757	2.661	3.884	2.341	<.0001*

*99% Confident Level; **95% Confident Level

Theory of Planned Behavior Analysis

For further application of TPB to this study, after compilation of individual responses, 28 unusable observations were deleted and a new data set with 232 was created. The “proc calis” function from SAS/Stat 9.3 was used to perform the confirmatory factor analysis to measure and test the seven hypotheses based on the TPB model shown in Figure 1. As suggested by Table 3, the final model shows a RMSEA value of 0.055; a value of 0.05 or less is considered a strong model fit. Both NNFI and NFI values are around 0.95, suggesting a reasonably strong fit of the model. Other goodness-of-fit indexes (See Table 3) such as standardized root mean square residual (RMR), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), Adjusted GFI (AGFI), and Chi-Square test also indicated the model is adequate for the purpose of this study.

TABLE 3. THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR GOODNESS-OF-FIT INDEX

Modeling Info	Number of Observations	232
	Number of Variables	11
	Number of Moments	66
	Number of Parameters	30
	Number of Active Constraints	0
	Baseline Model Function Value	5.2235
	Baseline Model Chi-Square	1206.6323
	Baseline Model Chi-Square DF	55
	Pr > Baseline Model Chi-Square	<.0001
Absolute Index	Fit Function	0.2649
	Chi-Square	61.1912
	Chi-Square DF	36
	Pr > Chi-Square	0.0055
	Z-Test of Wilson & Hilferty	2.5405
	Hoelter Critical N	193
	Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)	0.0448
	Standardized RMR (SRMR)	0.0448
	Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.9555
Parsimony Index	Adjusted GFI (AGFI)	0.9185
	Parsimonious GFI	0.6254
	RMSEA Estimate	0.0550
	RMSEA Lower 90% Confidence Limit	0.0298

	RMSEA Upper 90% Confidence Limit	0.0782
	Probability of Close Fit	0.3400
	ECVI Estimate	0.5389
	ECVI Lower 90% Confidence Limit	0.4614
	ECVI Upper 90% Confidence Limit	0.6524
	Akaike Information Criterion	121.1912
	Bozdogan CAIC	254.5933
	Schwarz Bayesian Criterion	224.5933
	McDonald Centrality	0.9472
Incremental Index	Bentler Comparative Fit Index	0.9781
	Bentler-Bonett NFI	0.9493
	Bentler-Bonett Non-normed Index	0.9666
	Bollen Normed Index Rho1	0.9225
	Bollen Non-normed Index Delta2	0.9785
	James et al. Parsimonious NFI	0.6214

TABLE 4. CORRELATION STRUCTURE ANALYSIS: MAXIMUM LIKELIHOOD ESTIMATION (STANDARDIZED)

Variable Name	Definition/question content	Estimate	Standard Deviation	T-Value
Attitude				
A1	Honors Distinction will benefit me	0.817	0.029	29.924*
A2	Extra time to graduate with Honors is worthy.	0.881	0.024	36.300*
Subjective Norms				
N 1	Honors students are not the type I want to associate with	-0.250	0.065	-3.863*
N2	Potential to boost my resume/ academic credentials	0.883	0.024	37.103*
N3	The Prestige of being in Honors	0.928	0.022	42.574*
Perceived Limitations				
P1	Honors classes are harder	0.243	0.066	3.686*
P2	Independent studies intimidates me	0.479	0.055	8.691*
P3	I understand the requirement to graduate with Honors	0.756	0.036	21.259*
P4	My family's opinion is important for my decision to join Honors	0.728	0.038	19.441*
Intention				
Attitude	Hypothesis 1: Attitudes toward joining and continuing Honors contribute to the intention to join/continue the enrollment.	0.907	0.119	7.612*
Subjective Norms	Hypothesis 2: The social norms towards obtaining an Honors degree will affect students' intention to join/continue Honors enrollment.	-0.006	0.109	-0.053

Perceived Limitation	Hypothesis 3: Perceived control will affect students' intention to join/continue enroll Honors.	-0.333	0.133	-2.511*
Behavior				
Intention	Hypothesis 4: The intention to continue Honors will affect students' behaviors in enrollment.	0.297	0.084	3.518*
Attitude	Hypothesis 5: Attitude will directly affect students' behaviors in Honors enrollment.	-0.100	0.159	-0.624
Subjective Norms	Hypothesis 6: Subjective norms will directly affect students' behaviors in enrollment.	-0.211	0.103	-2.059**
Perceived Limitation	Hypothesis 7: Perceived control will directly affect students' behaviors in enrollment.	0.975	0.137	7.129*

*99% Confident Level; **95% Confident Level

Effects of Peer Mentorship on Student Leadership

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INTRODUCTION

Orienting and welcoming first-year students to campus and to honors programs are often key components of program development. At an institutional level, successful orientation programs can positively affect retention rates from the first to second year. The greater a student's involvement and integration into the life of the university, the less likely the student is to leave (Tinto). Institutional retention often translates into retention within honors programs as well. The most important benefit of orientation, however, is that students feel welcomed at the university and within the honors program. Not only do they understand the requirements of the program, but they also make friends and begin to envision how they might use their honors program experience to grow as scholars and citizens while also having a bit of fun in the process. In an attempt to achieve all of these goals, the honors program at Minnesota State University, Mankato established a first-year honors student retreat incorporating peer mentors.

During summer orientation, new students meet with an honors staff member to discuss courses and the program's curriculum. Students then enroll in an introductory course that facilitates personal reflection and exploration in the three competency areas of leadership, research, and global citizenship. Feedback from this introductory course consistently indicated that students wanted to learn about the program curriculum and their competency development in a way that was more interactive with older students and that got them outside of the physical classroom. In response to this feedback, honors program staff began to learn about first-year retreat programs at other universities and brainstorm ideas about what might work best for students at MSU, Mankato.

In the fall of 2014, the staff worked together to create the first honors student retreat. The program already had an established group of peer mentors whom we decided to empower as leaders of the retreat. Staff and mentors decided to schedule the retreat early in the academic year so that students could become involved with the program outside of the classroom relatively quickly. Early involvement is crucial because failure to participate in campus activities, organizations, and extracurricular activities, which promote integration into college life, can lead to higher chances of attrition for some students (Roberts & McNeese). With more input from student leaders and a more formalized process in the fall of 2015, students and staff have created a sustainable program that allows first-year students to learn and have fun while at the same time it promotes leadership skills and provides mentorship opportunities for older students.

The rationale behind the first-year student retreat, the procedures for organizing and facilitating it, and its impact on both first-year students and mentors might inspire other honors programs to implement high-impact practices that facilitate successful student transition into college.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

All honors programs are comprehensive umbrellas under which many high-impact educational practices take place. Many such practices that were highlighted by Kuh in 2008 can be found within the MSU, Mankato Honors Program: learning communities; undergraduate research; diversity and global learning; and capstone courses and projects. The retreat adds a high-impact practice for first-year students. Leichter has argued that "providing intentional, rigorous, and intellectually challenging educational opportunities for students to develop leadership skills is arguably a core mission of

honors programs and colleges” (155), and the retreat has helped fulfill our honors program’s mission by providing an outlet for older students to challenge themselves in a peer mentor role.

The honors student retreat is both a first-year experience and a common intellectual experience. What makes it exciting is its combination of intellectual pursuits, through the enhancement of students’ knowledge and understanding of the three competencies, with a social component that engages mentors throughout the creation and execution of the event and beyond as friends of first-year students. Many of the mentors are trained through a seminar, *Developing Your Mentor Philosophy*, and the retreat allows them to apply their knowledge in a practical situation.

PROGRAM NARRATIVE

One focus of the MSU, Mankato Honors Program’s current strategic plan (2013–2016) is learner success. Four out of the seven success indicators of this focus center on the development and achievement of competency benchmarks at key areas of students’ academic careers. Therefore, students need to understand the competencies early on in their academic career and begin to consider ways they might apply them to their discipline and other interests. The first-year student retreat helps students achieve this understanding through experiential learning and interaction with mentors.

Another focus of the strategic plan is the honors student experience. Two key success indicators are that 80% of honors students will be retained in the program into their second year and that 80% of honors students will find value in honors-sponsored co-curricular experiences. A key goal of the first-year student retreat is to help students establish a sense of belonging in the honors program and thus to remain in the program for their second year and ideally through graduation. Fifteen of the seventeen students who attended the 2014 retreat are still in the program.

Our strategic plan also focuses on access and program growth. Two university retention success indicators are described in this focus: 95% of honors program first-year students will be retained to the sophomore year, and honors student retention rates at the university will exceed their peer group, based on class rank and ACT scores. Even if students choose to leave the honors program, we hope that the first-year retreat eases their transition into college so that they find a niche at the university, motivating them to remain after their first year.

Sophomores also need opportunities to grow as leaders and mentors. Research has shown that mentors are often highly committed to their organizations, less likely to leave, and more likely to go on to provide leadership talent within that organization (Burke et al.). Beyond the institution, “innovators in industry, education, and the non-profit sector all search for individuals with leadership skills, and developing such skills is vital to students’ undergraduate experience” (Leichliter 156). The first-year retreat further provides honors mentors with career and life skills as they take on the role of prime leaders for this experience.

In 2014, we contacted students who had completed *Developing Your Mentor Philosophy* about the opportunity to help create a retreat, and a total of six students responded. These students chose various roles to help teach first-year students about one of the program’s competencies: leadership, research, or global citizenship. Then in 2015, the program’s graduate assistant introduced a formal application process to recruit upperclassmen as student volunteers. Application questions elicited information about qualities and skills the student possessed; experience in leadership, research, and global citizenship; the student’s experience with the transition from high school to higher education; any group facilitation practice; and a personal or professional reference. We encouraged any student who had completed *Developing Your Mentor Philosophy* or helped with the retreat the previous year to apply. After a week, we had a total of fourteen applicants. We accepted all applicants and assigned specific roles based on application answers. Six of the students became facilitators. Their role was to develop activities related to leadership, research, and global citizenship. Two other students were named retreat coordinators, who were responsible for overseeing the facilitators. The remaining six students assumed the role of student coordinators. All mentors worked as a team to increase the level of student participation, thus making the retreat almost entirely student-planned.

MENTOR IMPACT

The mentors decided that their purpose was to inform first-year students about honors competencies, facilitate open discussion on how to approach these during academic careers, and develop their own leadership skills through activity facilitation. “Peer leadership programs . . . give upper-class students the opportunity to serve as leaders by assisting with extra-curricular activities, course teaching, tutoring, and other pursuits” (Leichliter 156). Fulfilling this leadership role, the mentors decided that activities should focus

on the honors competencies of leadership, research, and global citizenship. They also wanted to incorporate activities that focused on information helpful to new students. Staff and students planned a full day of activities that included sessions about program requirements, fitting honors into various majors, understanding the concept of reflection, and finding faculty research mentors. After meeting monthly starting in January, planning sessions for the retreat concluded at the end of spring semester with an itinerary outline, a request for materials, and a list of confirmed faculty and student volunteers. When the 2014–2015 academic year began, student leaders practiced facilitation with their partners. During their introductory honors courses, first-year students signed up to attend so that leaders could cater the activities to a definite number of participants. The retreat was not mandatory for first-year students although staff highly recommended it.

In January 2015, the planning process was similar except for the level of program faculty and staff involvement. The student retreat coordinators took a larger leadership role in the planning and execution of activities, thus glean- ing the benefits of student involvement in leadership programs that, according to Komives et al., include learning from peers as well as gaining and practicing valuable leadership skills. The assistant director and graduate assistant called the initial planning meeting to review the goals established the previous year and to introduce the leadership team to their peers. After this meeting, the only staff involvement was the graduate assistant's establishment of meeting times. The leadership team decided to keep the breakout sessions related to the three competencies; the main changes were a shortening of the itinerary, the introduction of a session about getting involved with honors, and the exclusive use of student facilitators (Appendix A & Appendix B).

Short-term Effects of Participating in the Retreat

Student leaders practiced group facilitation and mentoring techniques, provided an event for first-year students to interact with the mentors, and advised their peers in honors competencies and language.

The most immediate payout for student leaders was that they practiced event planning and coordination. The leaders hosted frequent formal meetings during the semester before the retreat, reviewing the previous agendas and proposing changes and additions to programming. The leaders were creative in their design of engaging activities given the resources available. In reflecting on their past experiences, they could create better activities by filling gaps and taking ownership of projects. Coordinating with other student

leaders on a team allowed the leaders to practice active listening skills. Clear communication of ideas was key, and accepting criticism added to their interpersonal skills.

Student leaders who were enrolled in Developing Your Mentor Philosophy benefitted in ways beyond event planning and coordination; by providing an event for first-year students to interact with the mentors, the leaders promoted the progress of the mentorship program, developing their abilities to be resourceful while practicing interpersonal communication skills. They practiced their personal philosophies of mentorship by demonstrating their abilities to advise peers in honors competencies and language. As the primary facilitators of the retreat, the mentors led activities and games centered on students' learning needs. They practiced group development skills and encouraged sharing of diverse perspectives.

Long-term Effects of Participating in the Retreat

Ideally, students who serve as leaders reflect on their mentoring experience in their electronic portfolios. While research indicates that extracurricular and social involvement have a net positive impact on student self-reports of their career-related skills (Pascarella & Terenzini), we do not have enough data to support this claim since most of the mentors have not reached the stage at which they defend their portfolios. However, mentors have had the opportunity to reflect on their experience in other outlets. For example, two mentors who previously participated in the retreat as first-year students wrote an article for *The Honors Beacon*, the program's biannual newsletter, in which they described organizing the event, forming relationships with first-year students, and developing their own leadership philosophies (Anderson & Cummings). As student mentors identify and reflect on positive aspects of their leadership development and consider how to take that development into their future careers, we hope that they will include this experience in their reflections.

If students have the opportunity to serve as leaders again or take on a coordinator position, we also hope that they will take the opportunity to build on their first experience as a leader, taking on other leadership roles within our program, i.e., on the Honors Student Council Board, or outside the program in other campus organizations. Through extended involvement, students can continue to build their leadership and mentorship philosophies. Given the infancy of the retreat, we do not have enough data yet to determine whether it has led directly to skills and personal philosophies of leadership, but research on other campuses suggests such a direct connection (Komives et al.).

FIRST-YEAR STUDENT IMPACT

The primary focus and purpose of the retreat is to inform and engage with first-year honors students on a social and academic level. While participating in the retreat, they develop a social connection in the program to mentors and first-year peers, thus helping them successfully transition to college. While students must experience academic success to remain in college, becoming involved and engaged in other areas of college is also vital (Roberts & McNeese).

We hope that the retreat helps to develop a concrete understanding of abstract ideas, specifically the honors competencies of leadership, research, and global citizenship. Based on student artifacts from our course First-Year Experience in fall 2015, we believe that the retreat activities are integral to students' understanding of the competencies. When asked to reflect on key experiences from their first semester, many students cited the retreat as a key piece of their development. Some students stated that the retreat provided more knowledge or context for all three competencies and the honors program in general. One student stated, "This event has helped me to have a better understanding on what leadership, global citizenship, and research mean in the context of the Honors Program. Prior to the event, I had a vague understanding of what the three meant, but now I have a better, but not complete, grasp on them." Another said, "From this experience I was able to better visualize what the expectations of me as an Honors student are and how I can complete the Honors Program." Other students found the event to be primarily beneficial for one competency area. For example, one student articulated a new perspective on the concept of research: "The first and most important thing I learned during this event was about research, the competency I knew the least about. It lessened my worries about how hefty the word 'research' is. I now understand that research can be an experiment, a survey, or simply an observation." Other students identified social benefits from the retreat as well. One student said, "It was a good event to lay the foundation of what the program is about in a fun and engaging way. I made good connections with other Honors students I had not met yet." Whether students found the primary benefit to be comprehension of the overarching expectations of honors students, specific or general competency development, or development of a social community, all who chose to reflect on the experience agreed that the retreat was a valuable extracurricular experience.

DISCUSSION

As the program grows and the retreat becomes a staple of our honors program, student needs should be considered. Although the mentors have a drive to develop their leadership skills, they need to learn the necessary information and get experience practicing. The student leaders need a formal training process to ensure proper guidance and mentorship. Training sessions would need to be paired with planning sessions in order to reduce the demand on the mentors' schedules since many of them are highly involved. The mentors' basic training would need to include knowledge about other campus resources for first-year support services, diversity training, and facilitation techniques. Student leaders are close in age to the first-year participants and, as Cuseo has argued, allow conversations to be more honest and make peers more approachable than faculty or staff positions. Still, proper training in how to mediate and debrief activities so that each participant has an equal voice provides for healthier discussions in a safe environment. Since strong presentation and interpersonal communication skills are also needed to facilitate diverse populations (Ganser & Kennedy), the mentors also need to hone these skills, which are applicable to future leadership in teams and groups.

Our student leaders gained first-hand knowledge about time management while facilitating the retreat and came to realize that length of activities plays a big role in participation. Time was a factor in the planning between our first retreat and the second. The students felt the day was too long, and the breaks led to disengagement. Shortening the retreat to a half day greatly reduced the financial strain on the program as the need for materials and food was cut in half. As the program grows and the number of participants increases, the need for longer debriefing and discussion periods will probably increase. The leaders will need to manage this time wisely and implement creative solutions such as smaller group sizes and interactive reflection initiatives.

We are encouraged to continue the first-year student retreat based on qualitative and quantitative data that show its success (Appendix C & Appendix D). On survey evaluations, students have consistently indicated on a Likert scale that the retreat helps them understand the three competencies and learn ways to advance their development. Students have stated that they are more aware of what they're "going to be doing in honors," of "how to start research" and "how to fulfill competencies." They have also stated that the most significant piece of information included the idea that "everyone has

leadership skills” and that they don’t need to “feel overwhelmed with everything.” One student stated that the honors program is “more than just school.” A particularly gratifying piece of feedback was that a first-year student “loved being with the mentor of my major.” These reactions are all outcomes that we hope for from the retreat. Furthermore, we hope that many students who attend the retreat as first-year students choose to be mentors and student retreat coordinators in future years. Dewart et al. have stated that, once students have gained academic information about increased student learning and have found benefits from participating as mentees, their willingness to participate in the program as mentors increases, thus providing a self-perpetuating model. Of the first-year students who participated in 2014, eight participants went on to provide facilitation and/or served a leadership role during the 2015 retreat. Our program looks to expand the roles of the retreat leaders; as outlined in Johnson, peer mentors serving as teaching assistants can provide beginning students with first-hand accounts of honors involvement. We are actively working on developing such teaching assistantships for the 2016–2017 academic year.

Based on our experience at MSU, Mankato, we believe that honors programs benefit from high-impact practices that facilitate short- and long-term growth and development within their students. First-year students need a successful transition to the university and their honors program for the sake of the program’s development as well as the students’. With universities examining retention as an indicator of progress and success, honors programs can use a first-year retreat to facilitate student transition. We believe that our model serves as a successful example, and we hope that it inspires other programs to create similar practices.

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APPENDIX A

Honors Student Retreat Itinerary Saturday, September 12th 2015

- 1:00 pm Welcome to Honors Student Orientation
- 1:15 pm Icebreaker Activities
- 1:45 pm Breakout Session One (Nametag Groups)
- 2:20 pm Information Session One: “How to get involved in Honors”
- 2:55 pm Breakout Session Two (Nametag Groups)
- 3:30 pm Information Session Two: “Honors and your Major”
- 4:00 pm Information Session Three: “Reflection”
- 4:35 pm Breakout Session Three (Nametag Groups)
- 5:30 pm Skits
- 5:45 pm Fear in a Hat
- 6:00 pm End Notes and Optional Survey for Prize
- 6:00 pm Dinner: All Honors Cookout

APPENDIX B

Global Citizenship Activity—Barnga

Equipment

- 3–4 sets of playing cards
- List of rules printed out for playing Barnga (each slightly different)
- Tournament rules

Setup

Label tables 1, 2, 3, etc. For ‘Five Tricks’: Divide the group into teams of three or four (depending on group size): need at least 3 teams. Each group will get a deck of 28 cards (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and Ace in each suit). Groups will sit at a labeled table. Pass out basic rules for ‘Five Tricks’ to each group. (Do not let them know that each have a slightly different set of rules! Example: Ace is high in one group and ace is low in another.)

Procedure

1. Allow students about 5 minutes to play and practice ‘Five Tricks’ (Rules attached)
2. After 5 minutes take up the rules and enforce a strict no verbal/language communication policy. No writing or using sign language
3. Will have another minute or two to play at home table in silence. (Facilitators need to uphold this policy)
4. Tournament rules:
 - a. Reinforce that there is no speaking!
 - b. Scoring begins at the start of the tournament
 - c. 5 games will be played. This makes up a round. Each round lasts a few minutes (based on overall group finishing times)
 - i. Game winner: Player that wins the most tricks in one hand
 - ii. Round winner: Player that wins the most games in a round (5 games)
 - iii. If game not finished by end of round then the player who has won the most games at that time wins the round

- d. Moving tables in the tournament
 - i. The player who has won the round will move up to the next highest table number
 - ii. The player who has lost the round will move down to the next lowest table number
 - iii. Winning players at the highest table will remain, and vice versa for the lowest tables
 - iv. Players who do not win or lose will remain at current table
 - v. Ties will be resolved by rock, paper, scissors

For the Facilitator

Will notice that participants will be getting confused and some frustrated. Most of the rules are the same, but only slightly different in one way. Some will understand that the rules are different but not sure exactly how. And even if there is understanding, bridging the gap of communication can be difficult. Will be a spark for discussion after game is finished and how applies to real life situations.

Debriefing Topics—Can use any form of reflection (Q&A, skits, art, metaphors, etc)

- What happened during the game/tournament? What emotions did it provoke?
- What were some of the ways you tried to communicate? What worked? What did not?
- Did you try to compromise? What approach did you take to find the best solution?
- What thoughts went through your mind when you realized someone was different than you? Or when you realized you were different from the group?
- What does the game suggest about what to do when you are in a similar situation in the real world?
- How does this game focus our attention on the hidden aspects of culture?

APPENDIX C

Fall Retreat Survey

1. Name
2. On a scale of 1–5 how well do you feel this event built your honors community?
3. On a scale of 1–5 rank your understanding of the three competencies
 - a. Research
 - b. Leadership
 - c. Global Citizenship
4. How many new people did you meet?
5. What is the most significant piece of information you learned today?
6. What would you like to hear more about the Honors Program that you didn't learn about today?

APPENDIX D

2015 STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

Community	Research	Leadership	Global Citizen	New People	Most Significant Piece of Information	Like to Hear More About?
5	4	5	4	Many	Information on research	Volunteer on/off campus
5	3	5	3	Everybody	Everyone has leadership skills	Nothing
4	4	4	4	10	Competency specifics and how other students manage	All are answered for the moment
5	3	3	3	At least 6	To not feel overwhelmed with everything	How to build our e-portfolio
4	4	5	4	About 35–30	A lot about global citizenship	More about research
4	3	5	4	6	Research	Connect major to research
4	3	5	4	5	Examples of research	Study abroad and research
5	4	5	5	A lot	Differences on three competencies	More student projects on research
5	4	5	5	Everyone there	Get involved	Nothing
4	3	5	4	Lots	How important communication is	Reflections
5	4	5	4	100	There are four years to complete everything	What is our role at MNSU?
4	2	3	4	24	Research doesn't have to be done right away	Get involved with honors?
5	4	5	4	10	It's more than just school	Language requirements

4	4	4	5	3	Lots	Loved being with the mentor of my major	All are answered!
3	4	4	4	4	A bunch	Different things needed for the program	Opportunities in honors
4	3	5	5	3	23	Research project	The research project
4	4	4	4	3	A bunch	Better understanding of the competencies	Honors groups for leadership?
3	4	5	5	5	3 to 5	Research is very doable	Honors graduation distinctions?

2014 STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

Community	Research	Leadership	Global Citizen	New People	Most Significant Piece of Information	Like to Hear More About?
4	2	3	4	10	Who to ask for help	What to do now to affect competencies
4.5	3.5	5	5	7	Requirements for competencies	Nothing
4	4	4	4	10	When to research. Fills each competency	Language qualification
4	5	4	4	A lot	How to do research	More on global citizenship
4	3	4	4	A lot	Everything is flexible and people are cool	Other honors activities
4.5	4	5	5	15	Don't have to retake gen. ed. courses	Summary of e-portfolio
5	n/a	5	4	10 plus	Short/Long-term benefits. Worth the work	Managing with athletics
5	3	5	5	20 plus	Being patient and asking questions	Nothing. Really happy I came!
4	5	4	3	7 to 8	Research competency	Nothing
4	4	4	4	15 plus	4 years to fit everything in	Global citizenship experiences
4	5	3	5	5 plus	Research can be done abroad	Leadership competency
4	3	4	4	5	How to start research	Studying abroad opportunities w/honors
4	4	4	3	A lot	A lot about research	More on global citizenship

4	3	4	4	4	6	Don't need class for language competency	Nothing
3	4	4	4	4	10	More information on my foreign language	Nothing
4	4	4	4	4	20	How to fulfill competencies	How to start e-folio
4	5	4	4	4	10	How to fulfill competencies	E-folio

Honors in Practice

**PRACTICAL AND INNOVATIVE
IDEAS FOR HONORS**

The Challenge of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Honors Programs

SUSAN YAGER

Iowa State University

In the early summer of 2006, an intense, dark-haired woman glanced around the conference table where I sat with a number of advisors from the Iowa State University College of Engineering. The speaker, a PhD in animal science, was interested in efficient design for handling animals, a topic of interest to professionals in both engineering and agricultural fields, but she was also deeply concerned about education at the college level. Her remarks were as focused as her demeanor while she urged her listeners to “Take care of my Aspie boys . . . take care of my Aspies.” The speaker was Colorado State University professor Temple Grandin, arguably the most famous person with autism in the United States. She was referring, of course, to engineering students with Asperger’s Syndrome, now called high-functioning autism.

Grandin’s message was memorable and inspiring, especially coming from a woman who has done perhaps more than anyone to raise awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and its challenges, as well as of the contributions

to society that can be made by people on the autism spectrum. Both as a child and as an adult, Grandin courageously overcame sensory overload, cognitive differences, and social impediments. She claims that her expertise in animal behavior stems partly from an empathy with animals and her tendency to “think in pictures,” strengths that are directly related to her disability (Grandin, *Thinking* 19). Grandin gained a high degree of national fame through the 2010 HBO film that bears her name, but she became known originally for her 1986 autobiography, *Emergence: Labeled Autistic*. At the time of its publication, it provided a unique insight into the life of an autistic person.

As her achievements suggest, a great deal of Grandin’s fame has derived from the fact that for much of her life she was, without doubt, a rarity: a woman who was highly intelligent, academically ambitious, and autistic. However, as both Grandin and the general public are now aware, autism is no longer a rare or seldom-recognized condition. Students with autism are increasingly present on college campuses, and because many young adults with autism are cognitively gifted, it follows that honors programs and colleges are obliged to be aware of this “invisible” disability and be ready to accommodate, and educate, honors students on the autism spectrum.

When Grandin spoke to the College of Engineering’s advisors on my campus, I was working as associate director of the university’s faculty development center. Not long before, I had attended a conference in Tucson, the National Faculty Center Institute for Facilitating the Success of Diverse Learners, where I first realized what seems obvious now: that freedom from discrimination on the basis of disability, including social disability, is a matter of civil rights, on a par with freedom from racism or sexism. While at the faculty development center, I also learned about the concept of universal design, that is, the creation of processes or structures that work for everyone because they are designed for the diverse and unpredictable “universe” of users. Electric-eye doors provide a simple model of universal design: no one, with or without a shopping cart, child in arms, or wheelchair, needs to worry about opening them. Universal design, as the work of Sheryl Burgstahler and others makes clear, is a powerful concept in higher education. Put simply, it is of great value to students to have their teachers keep in mind the needs of every person in the classroom. These two basic ideas—respect for the rights of students with disabilities and the value of course planning for a diverse group of students—have shaped my thinking about students with autism in higher education.

SYMPTOMS AND INCREASING PREVALENCE OF AUTISM

Since the early 1990s, increasing numbers of children in the U.S. have been diagnosed with ASD. According to the Centers for Disease Control's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network, roughly one in 150 American children born in 1994 and thus now of traditional college age is on the autism spectrum. By 2008, the ratio had increased to 1 in 88 (Pinder-Amaker 125). According to the American Psychological Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), children with autism are likely to have problems with social and emotional interaction, difficulty with nonverbal communication, and sometimes difficulty with relationships (50). Although a substantial proportion of children with autism also have intellectual impairments (DSM 51), many do not (Rutter 396). In numerous school districts, children with symptoms of autism are offered intensive, behavior-based early education, which can benefit children both socially and intellectually (ASAT). Quite a few of these children grow up "twice-exceptional," as described by the University of Iowa's Belin-Blank Center; bright and high-functioning, they may have an Individualized Education Program, tailored for students with disabilities, yet also be enrolled in a talented-and-gifted program. As was clear in the 1990s and is clearer now, many cognitively gifted students with mild to moderate social disabilities are currently in college or are on their way.

Because the number of college-bound students with autism will certainly continue to rise, educators need to prepare for this ongoing demographic shift. Of course, for years many "Aspies," as Grandin called them, perhaps never formally diagnosed, have been enrolled in college; some few, at the milder end of the spectrum, have become professors (O'Shaughnessy). In my years in faculty development, I could not imagine precisely how, other than through raising awareness and discussion, those in higher education could prepare for such a different and challenging cohort. While undoubtedly some people with autism thrive in an academic setting, I worried—as a faculty developer and also as the parent of a child with high-functioning autism, or HFASD—about how the presence of students with ASD in college classrooms would affect both faculty and students.

AUTISM IN POPULAR CULTURE

Fortunately for educators who may have been caught unaware by the increasing prevalence of ASD in the U.S., the student population of the new

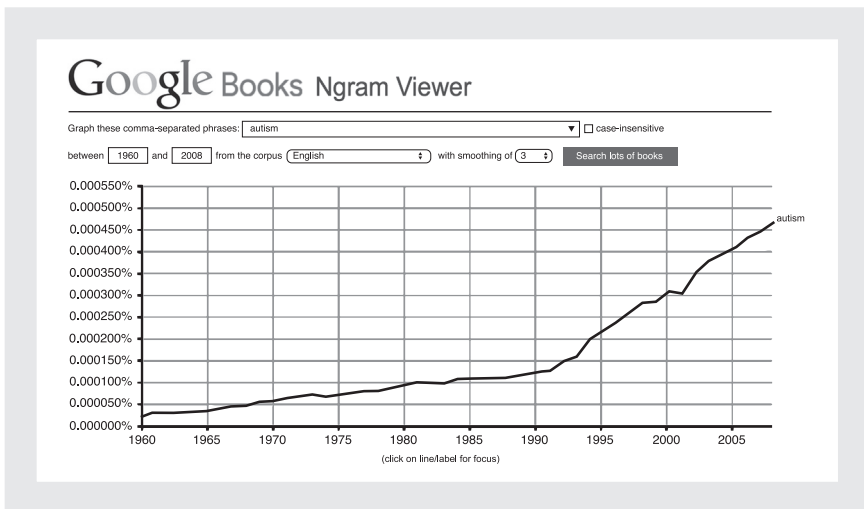
millennium has been well-prepared to encounter autism in their daily lives, although encountering autism is not the same thing as being accepting of it (Nevill and White 1619). Popular culture did a great deal of this preparation by means of film, television, and fiction, especially books for children. In the early 1990s, many Americans' primary point of reference regarding autism was Barry Levinson's 1988 film *Rain Man*, in which Dustin Hoffman plays a sweet-natured, sometimes brilliant man who has been institutionalized for much of his life because of his autism. Hoffman's character is a savant regarding numbers; he can see at a glance how many toothpicks spill from a box and counts cards at a Las Vegas casino. While many people with autism have substantial skills in memory, mathematics, and related areas (Rutter 396), the film, though groundbreaking, was nonetheless criticized for its superficial treatment of autism. A similar breakthrough into popular culture was Peter Hedges's *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* (1991) about a teen who cares for an autistic brother; this book became a popular film in 1993. In the ensuing years, the topic became a focus for many artists and writers, thus rapidly entering mainstream culture. For example, Jane Taylor McDonnell's *News from the Border* (1993) was among the first of a flood of so-called autism memoirs, many written by the mothers of children with ASD. These nonfiction publications were accompanied by increasing numbers of fictional treatments, such as Elizabeth Moon's *The Speed of Dark* (2002), featuring a protagonist with high-functioning autism, and Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (2003), narrated by a boy with Asperger's Syndrome. Autism became a theme for many children's authors, including Colby Rodowsky (*Clay*), Gennifer Choldenko (*Al Capone Does My Shirts*), and Jennifer Elder and Marc Thomas (e.g., *Different Like Me: My Book of Autism Heroes*). In the past four to five years, the number of new books for children on the topic of autism has skyrocketed. According to WorldCat.org, from 2010 to 2015 more than a hundred books were published on autism in the category of juvenile fiction alone.

A similar phenomenon occurred in television and was picking up steam at just about the time Grandin was visiting my campus. In 2003 Wally Stevens (his name is a play on the poet Wallace Stevens), a murderer who has Asperger's, surfaced on the crime show *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* ("Probability"); from 2005 to 2010, deeply introverted mathematician Charlie Eppes helped solve crimes on *Numb3rs*. References to autism in U.S. culture boomed in 2007, when Gregory House's colleagues on *House, M.D.* wondered if he had Asperger's but decided he was "just a jerk" ("Lines in the Sand"), and Jim Parsons began his Emmy-winning turn as geeky scientist Sheldon Cooper in

The Big Bang Theory. Add to these pop-culture references a flood of blogs, YouTube videos, and the emergence of national organizations such as Autism Speaks, and one can easily see why, according to Google N-gram, occurrences of the word *autism* increased eight-fold between 1970 and 2008 (see Figure 1 below).

For the cohort of traditional-age students now in college, then, *autism* seems a common word for an increasingly commonplace condition. With educational changes brought about since the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, many students with autism and other disabilities spend part or all of their K–12 days in the mainstream classroom. While they may be pulled out of class for special reasons, so are the very brightest students pulled out for talented-and-gifted programs or for college classes, so there is little or no stigma attached to leaving the classroom for part of the school day. Given the prevalence of the condition in the U.S., few if any grade schools or high schools have enrolled no students with autism. Although both the literature on autistic children and my teaching experience bear witness to the fact that some students with autism are bullied (see Hart and Whalon 277), and I know that the words *autism* or *autistic* are sometimes used pejoratively (often to mean “clueless”), I’m nonetheless confident that most neuro-normal students are likely to perceive a high-functioning autistic student as just another classmate. Millennials, in short, are becoming exposed to autism both in schools and in the media, and they are increasingly less likely to perceive it as

FIGURE 1. INCREASE IN OCCURRENCE OF THE WORD “AUTISM”



a rarity. In my view and (admittedly limited) experience, an older generation, now university teachers and administrators, is far more likely to be surprised by the presence of students with autism on campus. Professionals in honors colleges and programs need to be aware of, and prepare for, the presence of high-ability students with ASD.

AUTISM AND HONORS EDUCATION

While students with ASD can be found in all disciplines, many are attracted to STEM fields (Wei), so honors programs with sizeable numbers of students in science, mathematics, and engineering may already be enrolling substantial numbers of students with autism. Research-intensive institutions, because of their frequent STEM emphasis, may be most likely to see the numbers rise. Administrators of these programs, therefore, must be cognizant not only that these students are on campus but that they constitute an enormous variety and so may be found in colleges of business, design, and the liberal arts as well as STEM. In other words, while students with ASD are often found in STEM programs, limiting planning to STEM courses and programs is insufficient.

A first requirement for those working in honors programs is simply to recognize students with autism and investigate how to meet their needs. Such recognition should begin with the initial processes of recruitment and admission. If, for example, leadership is a key requirement for, or component of, an inclusive honors program, it should be assessed by means other than observation of posture, handshakes, or eye contact. In general, the principles of universal design are appropriate here as elsewhere, and diverse measures and methods are likeliest to appeal to neurologically diverse students.

In an attempt to gain further insight into the presence of students with ASD in the Iowa State University Honors Program, during the spring 2015 term I invited students to participate in a survey. This survey was emailed to all members of the program, inviting participation by any student at least eighteen years old who identified as being on the autism spectrum. Because the survey gave students the ability to self-identify as having ASD, and because of the difficulty of reaching students via email (our students are notorious for ignoring this medium), I make no claims regarding its statistical significance. Nonetheless, responses to the survey point to both the presence and the diversity of high-ability students with autism in our program. The survey also offers some suggestive illustrations of how autism does and does not affect the learning, ambitions, and needs of high-ability students, and it points to some potentially useful practices.

While the number of responding students was small—a total of 26 at least began the survey—given the size of our program, about 1130 students in all, I had an overall response rate of just over 2 percent. This figure is more than twice as high as one would expect from a survey of a general population as the prevalence of autism in this cohort (born about 1995) is roughly .6 to .8 percent (“Autism Spectrum Disorder”). Since not every student with autism is likely to have responded to the email, the total incidence of autism among students in our program may well be higher. Virtually all members of our honors program, and therefore all survey respondents, are of traditional college age. The participants had a median age of twenty and an expected graduation date of 2017, i.e., they were at about the end of their sophomore year.

Grades were not a problem for respondents, with a reported median GPA above 3.8; only one reported having a GPA under 3.5, the program’s minimum for students to remain in good standing. The largest proportions of respondents listed the College of Engineering (42 percent) and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (31 percent) as housing their primary major. This result is not surprising since these two of the institution’s six colleges enroll the most honors students overall. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences includes several STEM departments, including mathematics, physics, chemistry, and computer science, and these majors possibly attracted students with ASD to this college, but I did not ask students to identify their specific major[s]. The College of Agriculture & Life Sciences enrolled 12 percent of respondents, followed by Human Sciences and Business at 8 percent each. No respondents listed their primary major as being in the College of Design.

The distribution of all honors students across Iowa State’s six colleges does not differ greatly from the distribution of survey respondents, although—given my vivid memory of Grandin’s plea to the engineering advisors—I was surprised that the percentage of survey respondents with a primary major in the College of Engineering was smaller than the overall percentage of honors students in engineering (42 vs. 46 percent). The share of respondents with majors in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences was larger than its proportion of honors students overall (31 vs. 24 percent). A comparison of survey respondents compared to all honors students showed that the numbers were about the same in the Colleges of Agriculture & Life Sciences (12 vs. 14 percent), Human Sciences (8 vs. 6 percent), and Business (8 vs. 7 percent). The College of Design, which included none of the respondents’ primary majors, enrolls 3 percent of honors students overall.

While the distribution of primary colleges among the survey respondents does not greatly differ from the distribution among honors students as a whole, both differ substantially from the distribution of majors across our entire undergraduate population. The student body as a whole includes a much larger proportion of students in the colleges of Business, Design, and Human Sciences and far fewer students in the College of Engineering, for example (46 percent for honors; 26 percent for the university as a whole, according to the university's Office of Institutional Research). If this pattern appears frequently among honors programs, then we need to devote time and resources not only to the courses honors students are most likely to take but also to methods of teaching that are effective for all students, including those with ASD.

About two-thirds of the respondents reported receiving a medical diagnosis of ASD while a quarter received an educational diagnosis, a less rigorously defined category that opens the gates to early-childhood education or special education opportunities such as Headstart. Of those who reported a specific condition on the autism spectrum, the majority were diagnosed with Asperger's, the remainder with "autistic tendencies." These numbers are in keeping with the conflation, in the current *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, of the diagnoses of Asperger's and high-functioning autism (DSM 53). Only one survey participant reported having a learning disability in addition to ASD. That student has Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and receives two classroom accommodations, a low-distraction room and additional time in testing. No participant reported receiving academic accommodations specifically due to autism.

Most of the survey respondents who listed their education and career goals are aiming high, as is, in my experience, typical among honors students. The survey participants plan careers in such varied fields as medicine, veterinary science, industry, and both K-12 and higher education. Most are interested in attending graduate school either immediately after college or as part of a career plan. Those who reported that they intend to earn only a bachelor's degree are majoring in aerospace engineering, dietetics, and mathematics.

As I planned this survey, I had expected to receive more responses from men than from women as the condition is found four times more often among boys than girls (DSM 57). However, nearly half the survey respondents (12 of 26) were female. This detail, while once again of no statistical significance, is arresting even anecdotally. Among students entering Iowa State in the fall 2013 semester, a greater proportion of females enrolled in honors than in the

university as a whole (roughly 57 percent female for honors as compared to 43 percent of all entering students) even though our program disproportionately attracts students in the STEM disciplines. A recent study (White et al. 8–9) suggests that there may be more female students with high-functioning autism than would be expected given the gender distribution of ASD students overall.

The surveyed students were asked to describe their academic strengths and challenges; these were volunteered by the respondents, not selected from a predetermined menu. Again, the numbers are small but suggestive. Five of the eleven respondents who listed their strengths included skill in mathematics. Other strengths reported more than once included the ability to analyze or see the big picture, persistence, being organized and motivated, being able to focus, and being generally efficient at learning. These self-identified strengths are generally in keeping with a checklist of ASD students' strengths, which include being "out-of-the-box" thinkers," generally reliable and task-oriented, with "strong attention to detail" and an "ability to maintain prolonged, intense focus on subjects of interest" (Wheeler and Chapin). To this list of skills, Wheeler and Chapin add interest-driven motivation and "excellent long-term and rote memory." As I will explain in detail below, these skills are valuable for all undergraduates, perhaps especially those in honors programs. Among the survey respondents' reported challenges were being disorganized or easily distracted and having some problems communicating (one mentioned communication with strangers in particular). Problems with procrastination and time management were also reported, and at least one student reported a strong dislike of working in groups. Group work, distractions, and time-related problems are also among Wheeler and Chapin's list of challenges faced by students with ASD; however, procrastination and disdain for group work are characteristic of many honors students, whether neuro-normal or autistic, with whom I have worked.

EFFECTIVELY TEACHING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

If bright and ambitious students with ASD are on our campuses and will continue to arrive in increasing numbers, often enrolling in or having advanced skills in STEM disciplines, then honors educators have an obligation to optimize these students' learning experiences. What, specifically, can honors educators do for high-ability students on the autism spectrum? How can we effectively employ the principles of universal design to reach not only honors students with ASD but all students in our programs? The survey

respondents, when asked what faculty and others could do to help their learning, named several practices that are standard in universal design and that aim to increase student engagement. Their suggestions included smaller class sizes, clearly stated expectations, and professors' willingness to meet with students; as with the reported strengths and challenges, these were volunteered responses to an open-ended question. One respondent's plaintive request strongly reminded me of my years in faculty development: professors should face their students, not lecture while writing on the board. In addition to such fundamental actions, students with ASD can benefit from simple, universally designed classroom practices. Some students who have autism have difficulty focusing and thus benefit from receiving information in multiple media. They can profit from something as simple as a PowerPoint slide or note on the board with the day's goals, new terminology, or reminders of due dates. Such organizing aids clarify the day's tasks for all members of a class, those with or without attention deficits, sensory challenges, or sleep deficits. Other practices can help students with autism—and all other students—to process and clarify what they learn. A think-pair-share protocol, for example, allows students to mull over a problem or issue on their own and then discuss it in the relative privacy of pairs or small groups before sharing with the entire class ("Think-Pair-Share"). Another option employing universal design principles may be to consider online or hybrid courses when appropriate. Many honors educators prefer the interpersonal and cognitive growth experienced in intimate, face-to-face settings, but not every high-ability student will flourish in such circumstances. Depending on the specific nature of the class, so-called "flipped" classrooms, appropriately designed, can also benefit diverse groups of students.

A particularly valuable practice for students with ASD, in my view, is the assignment of specific, clearly defined roles in group work. While some students with autism will respond appropriately to a vague direction such as "Break into groups of four," others may have difficulty navigating the social complexities of this apparently simple task. For a student who cannot easily make eye contact or quickly decipher nonverbal cues, joining a group is daunting. In addition, vague or unspecified roles within the group activity, e.g., "Define the problem and decide how to split up your tasks," will leave some students with ASD—as well as a good many neuro-normal students—in the dark. In contrast, groups that have well-delineated goals as well as member roles and whose members have opportunities in the course of the assignment to perform different specific roles such as meeting chair, note-taker,

logistics chief, and so on, will optimize successful participation by students on the autism spectrum. Moreover, the cognitive differences between autistic and neuro-normal students in well-structured groups may lead to surprising insights through lateral or unorthodox thinking.

IN HONORS CLASSROOMS

Scott Robertson and Ari D. Ne’eman, educators who are themselves autistic, argue for increased services and support for the growing college population of students with ASD as well as “increased acceptance for their neurodiversity by college peers, professors, and other members of their school” (n.p.). One way to build such acceptance is via a system of peer mentoring, either mentoring by neuro-normal individuals (Adreon and Durocher 277) or by “students with ASD or related disabilities” that can “enable students with similar experiences to connect” (Nevill and While 1626). Another way to build acceptance for students with ASD is to increase others’ familiarity with the condition. When I taught a one-credit honors seminar called “Autism in Literature and Culture” nearly a decade ago, I was above all pursuing my own field and interests, but I have realized that such a course for honors students, using the children’s literature and popular culture mentioned above, artifacts of the students’ own childhood, can provide a useful means of learning and talking about autism.

In addition to accommodating the challenges of students with ASD whenever possible, educators should design options that build on these students’ often remarkable strengths. Further, some of the challenges of autism actually are strengths, as noted by Wheeler and Chapin above. For example, some people with ASD have a strong preference for routine or pattern (DSM 50). This tendency can be a great asset in fields where pattern recognition is important such as geology, biology, or computer science. Small alterations in data might be spotted most quickly by students who are sensitive to patterns or trends. Some students with ASD have acute sensitivity to sensory perceptions, a valuable skill in fields ranging from culinary science to interior design. Many students with autism have intense interests in particular fields, but what might easily be disparaged as a “fixation” (DSM 50) can also be praised as a valuable ability to concentrate. Students with ASD who have such focused interests can profit themselves and their peers in many ways, as tutors for example. At my university, such students could also lead Supplemental Instruction sections for courses with a high failure rate, such as mathematics or chemistry. Such opportunities may bolster the confidence of students with ASD, help

them practice social and interpersonal skills, and reinforce organization and clarity in their understanding of course material. Working with peers is both difficult and important for students with ASD (White et al. 3); many of these students are likely to prize the opportunity to give help as well as receive it in a peer-mentoring situation.

Another way to build on the strengths of honors students with ASD, especially but not only in STEM disciplines, is to keep in mind and consciously reinforce the student learning outcomes set by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). ABET, whose standards are crucial to any institution with an engineering program, currently articulates eleven learning outcomes, several of which are particularly suitable for honors education whether or not a student has autism. Among these outcomes are the ability to design and construct experiments, to analyze and interpret the resulting data, and to design systems, components, and processes. Since pattern analysis and other tasks are sometimes strengths for students with autism, these learning outcomes may well be easier for HFASD students to achieve than for neuro-normal students. Students with autism might have more difficulty with other outcomes, however, including functioning on multidisciplinary teams, understanding professional and ethical responsibility, and developing communication skills. Here, the standards of excellence in STEM education, especially engineering education, coincide with the challenges faced by many students, whether on the autism spectrum or not. To advance these learning goals, honors educators should develop thoughtfully designed team-based activities as well as oral or written reflection on the ethical aspects of their respective fields so that students may practice and master these more challenging skills. Because some students with ASD persist in either-or thinking, we should also insist on delaying the moment of closure on an issue or idea. Encouraging what psychologist Carol Dweck calls a “growth mindset” can be important in this regard (7). In other words, emphasizing problems and problem-solving, rather than teaching solutions, can benefit both STEM and non-STEM students as well as students with ASD and without, and it can also optimize the institution’s adherence to ABET outcomes for learning.

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Because some aspects of the honors experience are social and because students on the autism spectrum are frequently (though not always) asocial, reaching students with ASD outside the classroom is equally important. Here, the challenge of meeting the needs of all students is acute, yet honors

professionals, who may tend to be quite social, could have difficulty grasping the challenge intuitively. My survey of honors students identifying as having ASD included a drop-down menu of a variety of social events, and respondents were invited to select all that interested them. By far the most popular item selected was small, informal gatherings. These would exert relatively little pressure on largely asocial students. The next most popular choices were events specific to majors and then events specific to hobbies, especially video gaming but also card or board games. Such events naturally focus on ideas or things rather than on people, creating less stress for students who have difficulty with social or emotional interactions. Respondents also found residence hall events attractive along with live music, lectures, theater, and demonstrations of, for instance, a process or machine. Perhaps not surprisingly, dances and etiquette dinners received no support at all.

Especially in the social realm, honors professionals should reconsider practices that may inhibit or exclude participation by students with ASD. For such students, a noisy party held in a room with strobe lighting, to cite just one example, could be extremely unappealing. Variety in social options is key. One of my program's most highly successful student activities has been its Vegas-themed evenings. These events were not, as far as I know, universally designed on purpose, but they include music and dancing for those who want it, a murder mystery to solve, plenty of food, and, in a quiet area, poker and other games of chance for those who are interested. Such an event offers entertainment for a variety of students and by its very nature includes options for students with ASD. Another recent popular event was a game night, with students playing everything from Candyland to Magic: The Gathering, thus also offering multiple options to students with varied interests.

In thinking about such social events, organizers need to keep in mind that, like students everywhere, students with ASD are not all alike; they demonstrate no clear or predictable pattern of strengths and challenges, choices of majors or social activities, or types and frequencies of problems. Providing student autonomy and choices is, therefore, just as important as with any group of students. That being said, those who work with ASD students must be aware that "adolescents and adults with autism spectrum disorder are prone to anxiety and depression" (DSM 55). Any program likely to enroll students with autism should thus take care that leaders, in residence halls and elsewhere, are carefully trained in recognizing symptoms of anxiety or depression and in making appropriate referrals. Finally, honors educators need to realize and accept that HFASD students face unique and serious challenges. A

student with ASD, such as one respondent to my survey, has a problem when a professor says that learning “should be easy because you have a high GPA and can do anything.” Recognizing difficulties as well as celebrating student achievements, however small, is an important mark of respect.

Recently, as a faculty marshal at a commencement ceremony, I noticed a student who had been enrolled in one of my honors classes. He didn’t recognize me, but when his name was announced I knew he was the gifted young man with high-functioning autism I had met a few years before. He wore no high-GPA honor cords around his neck, just a plain graduation gown and mortarboard (with an orange tassel, symbol of the College of Engineering) like many others who shook the president’s hand. However, I knew that, for him, simply participating in a crowded, hectic commencement was a substantial achievement. What is more, he had earned a diploma while meeting the challenges of being one of Grandin’s “Aspies.” With thoughtful planning and openness to differences, honors educators nationwide can help many students like that young man use their valuable skills and abilities to society’s benefit.

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Varying Formats for Two-Year-College Honors Seminars

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Honors programs at two-year colleges vary substantially in scope, size, and structure depending on an individual college's mission, campus culture, and budget. One common curricular feature, however, is the honors seminar. Scholarly resources for creating honors seminars at two-year colleges include Luke Vassiliou's 2008 essay "Learning by Leading and Leading by Teaching," which provides an excellent discussion of constructing a two-seminar sequence in which the first seminar prepares the students to run a completely student-led second seminar (111). Directors wishing to develop seminars can also turn to the brief discussion of introductory interdisciplinary classes in two-year-college honors programs in Theresa A. James's *A Handbook for Honors Programs at Two-Year Colleges* (28–29). Additionally, they can adapt information from considerations of four-year college honors seminars such as Anne Marie Merline's discussion of guidelines for communication skills (81)

and Samuel Schuman's description of courses that are often interdisciplinary, sometimes team-taught, and "frequently . . . conducted on some variant of the graduate seminar model" (33–34).

Overall, however, little information is available on creating honors seminars at two-year schools. Our essay responds to this deficit by considering two seminar formats: the three-credit interdisciplinary courses offered at Mt. San Jacinto College and the four-credit, team-taught interdisciplinary seminars at Lane Community College. These formats address needs specific to the two-year-college honors population, which largely comprises returning students, veterans, parents, and economically disadvantaged members of the community who often are considering transfer to a four-year school and in many cases plan to attend graduate school. The seminar formats presented here were designed to support the students' success at transfer institutions by addressing several obstacles they face, including unfamiliarity with academic research, limited exposure to university campuses and resources, lack of confidence, and a limited sense of themselves as scholars.

HONORS SEMINARS AT MT. SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Mt. San Jacinto College (MSJC) is a moderate-sized community college founded in 1963 and located in Riverside County, California. MSJC has two large campuses, the original campus in San Jacinto and a second in Menifee, as well as two smaller satellite centers. Altogether the district serves approximately 18,000 students (unduplicated headcount) with just over 10,000 FTES (full-time-equivalent students). The MSJC Honors Enrichment Program is a district-wide program with a student population between 250 and 400 depending on the semester. Currently the program has two faculty Co-Directors, one housed on each campus. The program requires an honors seminar as the capstone honors course for those students wishing to complete the program. The seminar, Honors Studies, is an interdisciplinary course that focuses on a different topic each time it is offered. Faculty from across the college are invited to make presentations in the seminar on some aspect of the identified topic. Three different seminars can be offered to meet this requirement: Honors Studies: Humanities; Honors Studies: Social Sciences; and Honors Studies: Sciences.

The majority of honors classes at MSJC are "stacked" classes, which means that the honors section is limited exclusively to honors students (capped at five students) but is stacked on top of a regular section of the same class. For example, the honors section of Anthropology 101 is connected to

a regular section, and the honors students are expected to complete all of the assigned work for the regular section and also to meet outside of class with the instructor individually or as a group and to work on enrichment assignments. Students wishing to complete the program must complete a total of five classes for a minimum of fifteen units. Four of the classes must be in at least three different academic disciplines. The fifth class, the only required class, is the seminar.

The honors seminars at MSJC are full-semester, three-credit courses capped at eighteen students and open only to students who have been accepted into the Honors Enrichment Program. Typically one section of the course is offered at each campus; the day and time of the seminar changes from semester to semester to help students fit the class into their schedule. Ideally students take the seminar as their last honors class, but they can register for the class during any semester.

The class meets one day a week for three hours. Each semester, the class has a different topic and typically a different instructor of record. The instructor invites professors from different disciplines to make a presentation on how the selected topic can be studied or related to their particular discipline, allowing students to see how topics and problems are approached in an interdisciplinary context. The following are examples of past seminar topics:

- Legends
- Science Fiction, Science Fact
- The Legacy of Charles Darwin
- Power and Violence
- Victims of War
- Food as Culture
- Film and Culture
- Sexuality and Society
- Mental Illness among Adolescents
- Zombies
- Colonialism and Imperialism.

The instructor of record is almost always from a discipline that would most likely focus on the topic, e.g., a history teacher for Colonialism and Imperialism and an English teacher for Science Fiction, Science Fact.

The invited presenters often have considerable latitude in selecting their take on the topic although the instructor of record often provides advice or direction. Presentations run the gamut. For Legends, an anthropology professor looked at the legend of Sasquatch but used it as a way to incorporate and apply the scientific method. Very often English professors assign a short novel to discuss; in the seminar on the Legacy of Charles Darwin, for instance, an English professor had the students discuss Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, and in Sexuality and Society the faculty and students discussed Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*.

The opportunity for visiting presenters to select material beyond what they typically teach is a significant benefit. Because MSJC is a two-year college, most of the courses we offer are introductory or survey courses. The chance to present material that faculty rarely get to discuss helps provide much needed diversity in their research and teaching. MSJC also partners with a local museum in offering a lecture series to the public based on the seminar theme and invites four or five of the presenters to reprise their presentations for this series.

The visiting presenters often suggest readings that the students are directed to read before class (often available online or on reserve in the library) so that they are prepared for the discussion. Typically, any presentation by a visitor takes no more than an hour and a half, with the remaining time spent as discussion with both the instructor of record and the visiting presenter acting as moderators.

Although the instructor of record is responsible for determining how the students will be assessed and graded for the class, the Honors Committee expects that a significant portion of the overall grade will be based on a final project, which is typically presented as both an extensive paper (usually involving research) and an oral presentation. The final project, usually determined by the student in collaboration with the instructor of record, focuses on some aspect of the seminar topic. Often the student's interest is sparked by one of the visiting professors, who can act as another source of help for the student.

In California, the honors programs at many colleges have organized into a consortium called the Honors Transfer Council of California (HTCC). The HTCC has a number of components in its mission, one of which is to challenge and prepare students for the rigors of upper-division and graduate work. The consortium organizes a research conference every spring, held at University of California, Irvine. The Honors Enrichment Program at MSJC

encourages students who are taking the seminar to submit a presentation to the conference, which provides an incentive for the instructor of record to include both the paper and the presentation for the final project. MSJC students have an excellent record of being accepted to present at the conference and of having their papers well-received by the audience. For many of our students, this research conference is the first time they have been on a university campus and often helps solidify their desire to transfer to a major university.

While the final project typically makes up a large portion of the student's grade, a number of other assignments encourage critical thinking and the development of scholarly skills. Students are often required to complete a number of response papers in reaction to readings or visitors' presentations. In preparation for the extensive final research project, students typically complete a number of intermediate assignments, including a project proposal, an outline, and an annotated bibliography of a subset of the references that are likely to be used. In this way, students can learn that high-quality research papers are not completed at the last moment, and the instructor can make sure that the student is on track, help if the student is having difficulty, and be more confident in the overall quality of the work. The instructor's oversight during this process also helps students once they transfer. Upper-division students at a four-year college or university rarely get individual guidance in the various stages of writing research papers. Since many of our honors students are returning students, veterans, or students who underperformed in high school, helping them become academically adept is an important focus of the seminar and of all our honors courses.

Class participation also factors significantly into the class grade. Discussion is a major component of visiting presentations, and the instructor of record keeps track of student participation in terms of both frequency and quality, incorporate it into the final grade. Some students who are engaged with the material and have good ideas, though, are too shy to communicate in class. While instructors attempt to coax such students into developing the important skill of class discussion, many include an online venue for discussion. MSJC uses the Blackboard Course Management System, so incorporating an online discussion forum with due dates is convenient, and all students are familiar with that structure from other classes.

During the past seven years, faculty have occasionally been able to team-teach the seminar, with two professors serving as instructors of record for the class. Both professors attend every class session, participate in grading the students, and share responsibility for the final grades. Since both professors are

paid as if they were the sole instructor of record, this option is expensive, and recent economic troubles required the Honors Enrichment Program to cease offering it, but, when the seminar does run as a team-taught class, the benefits are significant to both the students and instructors. The students get to see the different perspectives that the instructors bring to the subject, including occasions when they might disagree and consequently model appropriate academic discourse for expressing difference of opinion. Team teaching also benefits the instructors by giving them insight into the different teaching styles of their colleagues and having the opportunity to bounce ideas off each other.

The honors seminar at MSJC offers a number of benefits to the students. Since the class is capped at eighteen students and is populated entirely by honors students, the seminar participants engage a topic at a higher academic level than they typically do in their other classes. Since all the other honors classes are stacked on top of regular classes, a student might have taken most of his or her honors sections with at most one other honors student. This class allows students in the program the opportunity to experience the high level discussion that they desire and in which they will be expected to participate when they transfer to a four-year college or university.

Another significant benefit of the honors seminars at MSJC is that students have an opportunity to see how a particular topic can be studied from a variety of perspectives. Very often students become so focused on their major that they use only that academic lens to examine a wide array of issues. The seminar shows them that multiple perspectives can be applied to one topic and that the disparate perspectives allow students and faculty to make significant observations.

Another benefit for the student is that, given the small size of the seminar, the instructor of record often creates a much stronger bond with them than with students in larger, non-honors classes. This relationship allows students to feel more comfortable with the professor and creates opportunities for the professor to write better letters of recommendation and to provide more detailed advice about their future academic careers.

Although the Honors Seminar is meant to be the capstone course, the reality is that students take the course at different times. For those students who take the seminar in the beginning or middle of their time at MSJC, the seminar is an opportunity to try out the visiting presenters to see if they might be interested in taking classes from them in the future. A number of students who have gone against the recommendation to leave the seminar for last have

said how useful it was for them in choosing future classes, allowing them to identify faculty with whom they wished to form a relationship in order to collect better letters of recommendation and obtain more directed advice.

The honors seminar is not only a benefit for professors as well as students. Visiting instructors often comment on how much they appreciated the opportunity to research their topic in greater depth than they do for their own classes; such research can then be used in lectures for their regular, discipline-specific courses. An additional benefit to the instructor of record is the opportunity to hear approximately a dozen colleagues presenting information on the topic from their disciplinary perspectives; they learn information and approaches to teaching that they can take back to their other classes.

The Honors Studies courses at MSJC are exciting and dynamic classes, providing advancement of intellectual curiosity for not only the students but also the faculty. Through the seminar, students are able to gain skills that help them progress through their academic careers, and they get to see a wide array of professional, academic behaviors modeled by their professors. The professors get to do research and make presentations on new topics and to interact with other faculty and students in an atmosphere that is rare at the community college level. The seminar helps to build better-prepared students and a more involved and engaged faculty.

HONORS SEMINARS AT LANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon, is an open-enrollment college serving 12,312 FTE students in 2014–2015 and with a student headcount of more than 33,000 in the fall of 2014. Students come from an approximately 5,000-square-mile district. Its main transfer schools are the University of Oregon, also in Eugene, and Oregon State University 45 minutes away in Corvallis. Smaller numbers of students transfer to Portland State University and Oregon Health Sciences University, both in Portland, and to Southern Oregon University in Ashland. The honors program, founded in 2011, includes a seminar sequence to support the goal of making sure students are well-prepared to undertake upper-division honors research at four-year schools. To this end, the seminar sequence has three emphases: hone students' research skills, increase their ability to think critically about academic research, and build their confidence level about being active members in the larger academic community of scholars.

The seminar sequence comprises two courses: Honors Invitation to Inquiry Seminar and Honors Capstone Seminar, each of which is a four-credit,

one-term class. While other honors classes are open to any student who has met the prerequisites and is willing to undertake honors-level work, the seminars are open only to students in the honors program and are required for completion of the program. The seminars offer a variation of the interdisciplinary and team-taught seminars described by Theresa A. James in *A Handbook For Honors Programs at Two-Year Colleges* in that they are team-taught not by pairing faculty in two classes but by having two faculty members from different disciplines teach each seminar together (28–29). Thus far, English and science faculty have taught the seminars.

Invitation to Inquiry is the prerequisite for the Honors Capstone Seminar. Ideally, students take the first seminar during their second term so that it can inform their work in all of their courses and not just in the Capstone Seminar. The course reviews the academic research process from an interdisciplinary perspective because two-year college students are often still deciding which major to pursue when they transfer to a four-year school. Students have to pass College Composition with a B or higher to enroll in the course, assuring that they have had some exposure to college-level research. The seminar builds on that knowledge by focusing on thinking critically about the research process itself. Students read an excerpt from Stephen Brookfield's *Teaching for Critical Thinking: Tools and Techniques to Help Students Question Their Assumptions* and then consider a series of questions throughout the term: What assumptions do the students have about scholarly research? What assumptions has the program made in building the seminar? In doing their research, what assumptions do they find other scholars making? The instructors ask them to test these assumptions to see if they hold up.

As students pursue their own line of inquiry, the seminar expands their knowledge of research resources. For instance, the class works closely with the honors librarian and has library research workshops held in class. The instructors also take the students to the University of Oregon's Special Collections Library for a workshop on archival research. Many two-year-college honors students are returning students who have been out of school for several years or did not complete high school but instead earned a GED. Their familiarity with scholarly research is often limited to what they learned in Invitation to Inquiry, and most of them have never explored the resources available to them through a university library.

A variety of guest speakers participate in the class throughout the term as well. For instance, a panel of faculty from different disciplines discuss what constitutes valid evidence in their respective fields. This panel pairs well with

the library workshops led by the honors librarian about conducting research in different disciplines. It also develops students' awareness of different fields, a significant benefit since they are often still deciding on a major and do not understand the differences between disciplines beyond a general sense of their different subject matters. Toward the end of the term, a guest speaker addresses how cultural paradigms influence one's assumptions. This lecture connects back to the Brookfield excerpt's discussion of paradigmatic assumptions the students read at the beginning of the term. It also broadens the students' perspective on scholarly research so that they can begin bridging the gap between an introductory understanding suitable for lower-division classes and a more complex understanding appropriate for upper-division courses.

The seminar also involves the students in local academic events in order to increase their familiarity with these opportunities and their confidence about participating in them. For example, the UNESCO chair from the University of Oregon, Steven D. Shankman, spoke with the students about a series of events taking place in Eugene addressing the death penalty. The students attended several of these events, including an international conference at the University of Oregon's law school, the *Dead Man Walking* opera, an artist's talk, and a lecture series.

At the end of the term, the students do not produce a research paper so that they focus less on completing a required final assignment and focus more on thinking critically about academic research. To this end, they instead write a four-to-six page, thesis-driven, reflective essay about the assumptions they held, encountered, and tested during the term. The essay allows them to recognize how much they have learned and increases both their critical thinking and their confidence about moving on to upper-division classes at a university.

Students also participate in a two-hour, student-led roundtable discussion in which they interrogate the concept of academic research, address the assumptions they tested during the quarter, and use their own research projects as evidence for the claims they make. Although students engage in discussion throughout the term and instructors describe the intensive discussions that can take place in upper-division seminars, actually participating in the roundtable discussion allows them to experience a version of these discussions first-hand. Additionally, the experience emphasizes their identity as scholars engaging in an academic event, an identity they rarely have when beginning the seminar and one that will help them be successful when they transfer.

The Capstone Seminar runs each spring and builds on the work done in the Inquiry seminar but with a focus on group research projects rather than individual ones. The students decide as a class on the related topics they want to research during the term. Each student pitches two topics and the class evaluates them. Once the final topics are chosen, students form research groups for each topic. Past topics have included health care options for two-year-college students, challenges and support services for single-parent students, the gender gap in STEM classes and professions, Take Back the Tap, and the impact of food choices on a person's carbon footprint. Although students have opportunities for group work in other classes, this seminar places much more responsibility on the students in order to hone the skills they will need for collaborative work at their transfer institutions.

During the term, each group prepares a proposal, an annotated bibliography, and a progress report. In addition to choosing their topics, groups also determine the main audience for their research and the best way to present their research based on that audience. Presentation formats have included posters, PowerPoint presentations, panels, and papers.

While the students are conducting their research, they also explore research opportunities at four-year schools in the area. They attend the University of Oregon's Undergraduate Research Fair and discuss this experience in class. The instructors also take them to Oregon State University's Honors College Research Fair so that they can examine work by other honors students. These experiences increase the students' comfort level on university campuses. Seeing that their research parallels what other honors students are doing at four-year schools also builds their confidence.

As with the Inquiry seminar, it is important to provide specific types of support to the groups as they conduct their research. The honors librarian leads workshops on finding sources specific to their projects and on gathering evidence. The online Moodle site contains a variety of documents on conducting interviews and public speaking. Faculty give presentations to the class about how best to organize hard copies of materials and electronic resources during the research process.

The seminar concludes with a two-hour symposium organized by the students. They are responsible for the format of the symposium, again making their decisions based on the relevant audiences for their work and the best ways to present their research findings. For instance, in the first year the students invited experts in the field to participate on panels. The students also formed panels and used their research findings to question the experts. In

the second year's symposium, the students each presented a paper or PowerPoint presentation and invited a keynote speaker. The symposium event also includes information tables and a reception following the presentations. The Lane Honors Program is relatively new and has only had four Capstone Seminars so far, but attendance has averaged around fifty people per symposium, and the audience has comprised students, faculty, and members of the community. After the symposium, students realize they are capable not only of conducting group research but of presenting their findings to a relevant audience in an academic setting. They leave with an awareness of their ability to continue this work as juniors and seniors at a university.

The Inquiry and Capstone seminar model has worked well for Lane. Students develop research skills comparable to those necessary for upper-division honors coursework. They also increase their ability in Lane's five Core Learning Outcomes: think critically, communicate effectively, engage diverse ideas, create solutions, and apply learning. Additionally, students demonstrate increased confidence in their abilities and increased acceptance of their own inclusion in a community of scholars. Students' anecdotal feedback acknowledges the positive impact the seminars have on their work in other classes and in classes once they transfer.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING TWO-YEAR COLLEGE HONORS SEMINARS

Implementing and designing a seminar requirement in any honors program requires consideration of several elements, and some particular elements need to be considered at two-year-college programs. These elements include support from the campus community, selection of faculty to teach the seminars, and ways to raise student awareness of the seminars.

Administrative support is a significant issue. In the current economic climate, many community colleges are increasing enrollment in their courses and cancelling courses that are under-enrolled. Due to financial aid restrictions, students are also limited in the number of electives they can take. Because the honors seminars are often capped at lower enrollments than other classes (both MSJC and LCC cap their seminars at eighteen students), the college must be willing to offer them even though they are more costly. Since the seminars are required for program completion, a program needs assurances that the administration will allow the classes to run even if they are under-enrolled. Furthermore, since the seminars transfer as electives, the

college needs to get the message out to students, through advisors and faculty, about the importance of taking the seminars in lieu of other electives.

Another consideration is the selection of faculty to teach the seminar. Given the mentoring role of seminar instructors, they have to understand their outside-of-class responsibilities such as extra meetings with students, repeated input on rough drafts of assignments, and, most especially, troubleshooting when obstacles arise. Two-year-college students can face a variety of crises in any given term ranging from childcare to divorce to illnesses to losing their jobs, and the intensity of the honors seminars can make it difficult for students to manage personal challenges and seminar work. Because faculty at two-year colleges typically have heavier teaching loads than faculty at four-year schools, they need to recognize and plan for the responsibilities that come with mentoring honors students in this population.

Finally, scheduling the seminars requires special attention. Two-year-college students may leave school for a term or more if they cannot afford tuition or if personal issues arise. They may also be scheduling classes around their job and also, in many cases, around childcare. Planning ahead to take the seminars is therefore especially important. If the program moves the seminar around in the schedule, changing the day of the week and the time of day it is offered as at MSJC, it is necessary to have an effective way to advertise the class for students in advance of registration. MSJC places all honors students into a BlackBoard shell and then updates them on the topics and scheduling of the upcoming seminars.

At LCC, the Inquiry and Capstone classes are scheduled for consecutive terms. Some students may need to take the seminars during different years, but in general students are more successful if they take the classes back to back. Not only is there less chance that they will run out of elective credits or transfer without taking the second seminar, but the students will also carry over the knowledge, momentum, and confidence from the first seminar to the second. Students are encouraged during Orientation and in the Honors Student Handbook to plan to take the seminars in the winter and spring of their first year in the program, and the program also emails students to remind them of the upcoming seminars. If students leave the program for a time, then additional advising is necessary when they return to make sure that they fit both seminars into their schedules.

CONCLUSION

Any approach to creating seminars, whether at two-year or four-year schools, will involve some degree of trial and error, and the willingness to evaluate and revise the seminars over time is an important part of the process. The approaches at Mt. San Jacinto College and Lane Community College respond to fairly consistent needs among two-year-college honors-student populations and address obstacles that face these populations; however, they can also be modified to meet more specific needs of students at other programs. Seminars are a valuable part of the honors experience and contribute significantly to students' determination to transfer and their ability to succeed when they do transfer. They are worth the time and investment it takes to make sure that they play a central role in a two-year-college honors program.

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A Global Endeavor: Honors Undergraduate Research

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INTRODUCTION

Like many other universities of its kind, the University of Maine has a centralized body, the Center for Undergraduate Research (CUGR), charged with engaging motivated students in independent learning and in the creation of new knowledge. UMaine furthermore has an honors college that is likewise committed to fostering undergraduate research, particularly research that is rooted in active learning under the guidance of a faculty mentor (University of Maine Honors College Mission Statement).

Consistent with national trends, UMaine highly values the work that both CUGR and the honors college do in promoting undergraduate research. UMaine's current strategic plan lists the advancement of cutting-edge undergraduate research as one of its twelve primary objectives, and CUGR received a three-year, \$300,000 presidential stimulus grant in spring 2012 that funds a number of research fellowships for students and faculty. The same strategic plan also articulates a commitment to strengthening the honors college,

recognizing its similar importance in the development and implementation of novel models of undergraduate research that include preparing students for “meaningful jobs and for life” (University of Maine Blue Sky Plan 31).

Though CUGR and honors both advance undergraduate research in significant ways at UMaine, we would like to argue that honors is especially well positioned to fulfill the strategic plan’s goal of preparation “for life.” On its website, CUGR contends that participation in undergraduate research will make individuals more “competitive” in a global society, which is an important objective. However, what we found through a recent honors undergraduate research experience was that honors research can make individuals more decent as well as competitive in a global society.

DEFINING HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

For our definition of honors undergraduate research, we blend several sources and ideas. In a 2010 article on “50 Best Colleges: Undergraduate research/Creative projects,” *US News and World Report* defined “undergraduate research/creative projects” as independent or small-team experiences led by a faculty mentor in which “students do intensive and self-directed research or creative work that results in an original scholarly paper or other product that can be formally presented on or off campus” (qtd. in Grobman 29).

We agree with this characterization but would add two components that we find essential in honors undergraduate research. The first is the development of critical-thinking skills over the course of the research endeavor. In their article “Helping Honors Students Improve Critical Thinking,” Julie Fisher Robertson and Donna Rane-Szostak describe critical thinking as “the power to do something under circumstances in which there are no constraints to thinking critically and the individual possesses the appropriate background knowledge to apply these abilities” (41). We found unconstrained thinking, along with comprehensive background information, to be crucial to the undergraduate research project that we will describe. Further, Robertson and Rane-Szostak cite arguments that certain individuals have a disposition for thinking critically. According to the authors, natural critical thinkers tend to be truth-seekers who are open-minded, analytical, systematic, self-confident, inquisitive, and mature (42). Through our experience, we found such critical-thinking qualities to be indispensable for both honors undergraduate researchers and their subjects, preparing them for scholarship and “for life.”

The other component that we would add beyond critical thinking is that the honors undergraduate research project ought to be an integrative

learning experience. Integrative learning is about connection, reflection, and then action, enabling students to put their knowledge to use through responsible application of lessons learned and skills developed, particularly in new settings involving complex issues (López-Chávez and Shepherd 58). A 2007 Report by the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise deems integrative learning a main objective of higher education for the twenty-first century (López-Chávez and Shepherd 57), and we believe that it should likewise be a primary objective for honors undergraduate research.

We would further argue that honors, as a community of dedicated and diverse scholars, has a particularly well-suited disposition toward the sort of meaningful undergraduate research that is intensive and self-directed, that spawns critical thinking, and that results in integrative learning. The UMaine Honors College espouses the motto *Studium eruditionis ardescens*, “Igniting a passion for learning,” as the college works to inspire—through community and honors undergraduate research—better scholars and better global citizens.

Employing language such as “better” and “decent” suggests a moral component to honors that we have found embedded in various aspects of our program. The UMaine Honors Civilizations courses explore how cultures have developed, how they have interacted with each other, and, most importantly, what it has meant to be human in the midst of it all. As students and faculty question the impact of development and the character of cultural interactions over time, we inevitably discuss ethical notions such as honor, justice, and values, in turn assessing issues like rightness, fairness, and equality.

Honors thesis work similarly calls for ethical considerations, above all in the communication, collaboration, and respect necessary for a successful student-advisor relationship (University of Maine Honors College Thesis Handbook 14). The handbook requires that students, as they engage critically in their research and form their own insights, continually ask themselves key questions:

- Why am I writing this thesis? (8)
- What are the assumptions, biases, and ethical considerations I must address? (59)
- What is the “value” of my thesis and the “significance” of what I have discovered? (60)

Thesis writers are also required to understand “the big picture” and to develop a thesis idea that recognizes a problem and then proposes causes as well as possible solutions (Handbook 62).

The UMaine Honors College steers students toward thesis projects rooted in academic arenas that focus on moral concerns, such as the Margaret Chase Smith Center for Public Policy, the IDEa Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE), and the UMaine Sustainable Food Systems Research Collaborative. The honors college also holds an annual Rezendes Ethics Essay Competition that explicitly invites students to reflect “on moral principles, right and wrong actions, virtues and vices, moral values and moral goods” (University of Maine Honors College Website).

Finally, the honors college encourages students to think globally, stating on its website, “We want you to go away!” Students are urged to use a study abroad experience as a substitute for the Junior Honors Tutorial, and the honors college offers a Charles V. Stanhope ’71 Study Abroad Fellowship Award and a Rezendes Global Service Scholarship for students “who wish to make a difference, both locally and globally . . . [and] to take part in a service opportunity far from America’s shores”; past recipients have travelled as far as Ghana, Tanzania, and Peru. We also send a student each year to the Conference on World Affairs in Boulder, Colorado.

Students who are informed and inspired by honors lessons and opportunities often generate honors undergraduate research with an ethical thrust. A former Stanhope Study Abroad Fellowship awardee is currently writing her honors thesis on the importance of *organipónicos* (organic farms) in Cuba; a 2014 graduate and inveterate traveler wrote his mechanical engineering honors thesis on “The Finite Element Analysis and Optimization of a Circumcision Device for HIV Prevention in Sub-Saharan Africa”; another 2014 honors graduate and attendee at the Conference on World Affairs wrote a thesis titled “What Shapes Our Attitudes Toward Outgroups?: Measuring Implicit and Explicit Homosexual Prejudice.” These honors students are thinking critically and learning in an integrative, global way that indicates sensitivity to the character and quality of human interaction, to decency, and to betterment in their scholarly preparation for life.

THE HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECT

We would like to offer a recent example of an honors undergraduate research project that broadened, deepened, and shaped two honors scholars in critical, integrative, and ethical ways. In the fall of 2013, I (Mimi Killinger)

served as the faculty advisor to UMaine honors student Kate Spies as she applied to the Elie Wiesel Ethics Essay Competition. Kate, an English major and pre-med minor, wanted to address a topic that had concerned her for several years: the plight of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I suggested that Kate meet honors student, Daniella Runyambo, who immigrated to Maine from the DRC, is also pre-med, and will be graduating with Kate in 2015. They began an oral history research project based on Kate's interviews with Daniella. These interviews informed not only Kate's Elie Wiesel essay, "How I Helped the Women of the Congo," but also her winning submission to the 2014 Honors College Rezendes Ethics Essay Competition, "Voices: Morally Addressing the Conflict in the DRC through Kantian Ethics," and her honors thesis, "On Becoming a Butterfly-Wrangler: A Narrative of Two Voices."

What follows are some examples of a "Narrative of Two Voices," each illustrating a benefit of honors undergraduate research.

HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AS ORIGINAL SCHOLARSHIP

Kate

Working independently with Mimi and Daniella gave me a significant and powerful gift: an ownership and independence regarding my interests. There's something so special about engaging in a learning opportunity that's not assigned to you, that's outside of the classroom. I think this sort of research is akin to the experience—though on a bigger level—of taking a trip to the library and searching through all the spines to find THE book, the personally provocative book. I go home and crack open this book and learn more about a topic that interests me, and I also gain a personal connection to the topic because I explore it on my own and in my own way.

Having the opportunity to delve into a project about the Democratic Republic of Congo, whose people and history interested me personally, was similarly energizing, and having the chance to talk with Daniella, who possesses a powerful soul, connected me to this topic also on a personal level. Accordingly, I felt a deep ownership of my research and of my presentation of Daniella's story and what I had learned. The process was rousing, waking me up to the importance of honoring this kind of engagement and of acting upon personal interest and connection.

As I worked with Mimi, she always honored my thoughts and wonderings and encouraged me to explore them. Her guidance was perceptive and instructive. Additionally, with the creative nature of my initial piece, “How I Helped the Women of the Congo,” I think I was able to explore several different questions: not only “How do we understand a global conflict like the issue in the DRC?” but also “What can we learn from a person like Daniella?” and “What is the role of voice in engaging with communities in conflict?” Thanks to Daniella’s thoughtful time and help and to Mimi’s oversight, we were able to grapple with a few different topics.

In the process, I became more skilled at crafting questions, asking about certain stories or moments in order to learn about a deeper issue. Memories and anecdotes can be powerfully illustrative. I learned the importance of note-taking and recording while collecting an oral history. I also learned to value and collect small details; some of the small details Daniella shared with me ended up being integral to my pieces.

Daniella

When I was asked to help Kate with her project, my assumption was that it was going to be one of those interviews where people want to know a few things about my country and move on with their lives. I did appreciate that at least someone out there thought about my country enough to do a little research on it.

When I met Kate, though, she was different. She looked very timid and quiet, which is the opposite of my personality, so I got interested in her as a person. Then we started with the interview. Her initial research was about women in DR Congo. I told her after our first meeting that I could give her general information about the area where I am from, but if she had more questions, my parents would be the perfect people to help her. They both had done a lot of work with women in South Kivu, DR Congo.

Kate had more questions, however, and these questions started shifting from women in DR Congo to me and my views, to my experiences as a girl from DR Congo, to my family, my values. These interviews became more personal, and that’s where I can say that my life started changing. I started opening up to Kate and to myself without noticing it. I started saying out loud many things that had been kept inside of me because no one had cared enough to ask. I started finding a voice that I never thought I had.

HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AS CRITICAL THINKING

Kate

I expected to learn about the Democratic Republic of Congo—about how to craft an essay that would combine facts with my personal voice, about how to pull from secondary sources as well as from an individual's story—in order to write a piece that, I hoped, might offer insight into a complex issue and how one could address it. But I also began to understand the power of listening in conducting my research. I discussed the importance of story-sharing in engaging with a global conflict like the one in the DRC in both of the essays I produced as a result of my research. Through my fact collecting, investigating, and article crafting, I also found that open ears are good ears. Throughout our series of interviews, the moments when I could simply listen to Daniella were the most informative and would invariably end up being the moments that yielded the most relevant data for my articles.

Daniella

I have been through so much in life, and I always thought that it was normal because that's all I had known. Talking to Kate made me question myself. One of the subjects we talked about was finding a voice. I had never thought about finding my voice because it wasn't an option given to me in the life and the place where I grew up.

I would compare myself with other kids who went through worse things than I did, and this comparison had always stopped me from saying much. I would ask myself, "Who am I to say anything when I still have both parents and my whole family, when others have lost all?" Talking to Kate made me realize that finding my voice wasn't just for me but for all of the women, men, and kids who still suffer.

HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AS TRUTH-SEEKING

Kate

I had arrived at my first meeting with Daniella armed with questions, and some questions had multiple parts. I wanted to be fully prepared to be an active researcher, never to let the conversation wane. By the time of our

last scheduled interview, though. I asked Daniella maybe three or four of my planned questions, and that was all. We spent the rest of the time in back-and-forth conversation, or—best of all—Daniella talked as I simply listened. As a result, I was privy to Daniella’s anecdotes, biographical details, and insights in a way that my string of pre-planned questions would not have allowed. Moreover, as Daniella shared stories and thoughts, I could follow up with responsive questions according to what I wanted to learn more about; simply moving over and making room for her to speak spontaneously enabled me to reach specificity in my research.

Daniella

After talking to Kate, I started thinking about what I could do to help my own people and myself. I started thinking about my education and where I was going. One question that I began asking myself was, “How I can use my knowledge, the education and opportunities that school is providing me, to influence people’s lives?”

HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AS INTEGRATIVE LEARNING

Kate

My research experience has made me feel the possibilities that pulse all around me as an undergraduate, the underground heartbeat at UMaine. There are other stories like Daniella’s to be heard—from the neighbors in my apartment complex, from the other students in my classes, from the professors and staff, from my honors friends. Listening and staying aware of the importance of these stories lead to learning and research opportunities.

Inspired by Daniella, I went to an on-campus charity banquet hosted by the African Students Association and sat at a table with two sisters from Argentina, a graduate student from Nigeria, and a Fulbright Scholar from Egypt. We talked about our different backgrounds, our varying interests, and our common love of cheesecake as dessert was served. Because of Daniella and Mimi, I ask more questions, and by the time Daniella and I reached our last interview in the fall of 2013, wheels were turning in our heads.

We decided that we needed to share the importance of engagement and of listening that we had both come to recognize. We also thought that it would be a meaningful next step to provide our campus community with

an opportunity to learn more about the DRC's conflict, as we agreed that research and education through simply listening and learning lead to personal connection and to action. To that end, we invited Georges Budagu, a Congolese asylee who now lives in Portland, Maine, to visit our campus and to give a presentation on his experiences and on current issues in the DRC.

Mr. Budagu is the author of the memoir *Ladder to the Moon: A Journey from the Congo to America*, and in October, 2014, he spoke to a gathering of about fifty UMaine students and faculty, delving into his experiences in the Congo and in the States, sharing the history of his home country and its current conditions. Daniella and I also spoke at the event about our collaboration and the lessons it taught us.

Daniella

I had just become President of the African Students Association when I began meeting with Kate, so I decided to use this leadership role to better myself and to create educational events that could be beneficial to the student body. Kate and I, with help from a woman I consider a mentor, Mimi Killinger, put an event together that featured an author from DR Congo, George Budagu. This event was very successful. I had invited members from Partners for World Health (PWH) to attend, and, inspired by our speaker, they decided to raise funds that will help take a container of medical supplies to the DR Congo, specifically to the region my father is from.

HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH, GLOBAL SCHOLARSHIP, AND DECENCY

Kate

I feel that conducting this undergraduate research was most beneficial to me in that it taught me important lessons about how to operate in and interact with the communities around me—not just my campus community but the larger global one that we all belong to. Not only did this project push me to recognize my role in both of these communities, but it also taught me how to engage with them. In particular, I've learned the importance of story-sharing, of validating and learning about individual experience, of listening, of educating myself about conflict, of waking up and recognizing the connections that tie each of us to one another.

I think about my identity as a global citizen. I am a part of this complex and interconnected community that stretches across our globe, and working with Daniella and grappling with the DRC's conflict helped me to understand what that means. I became more serious about studying abroad and living in a different cultural context (Ireland) for the spring of my junior year. I also enrolled in a public health class abroad; I learned about the zoonotic and communicable diseases that have a major impact around the world and that need widespread attention from health officials in all areas. I was pushed to think about the role I envisioned for myself were I to attain my goal of becoming a veterinarian, and I started to learn more about the "One Health" initiative, which promotes collaboration among experts in human, animal, and environmental health. To that end, I applied to the Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine, which operates under One Health and offers their veterinary students the chance to complete a certificate program in Global Animal Health. I've recently been accepted and am grateful for the stirring that started with Daniella and Mimi, the idea that one should engage as part of something bigger.

Daniella

After the Budagu event, I became more involved with Partners for World Health; now we are preparing to go to Senegal in May to do a medical mission, and in August I will be going to Rwanda on another medical mission. I will be taking the founder of PWH to visit Minebwe, South Kivu, DR Congo. We are working on putting together "Project 10,000," where we will be working with women in South Kivu, giving them maternal birth kits and educating them on maternal care. We are hoping to start this project in January 2016. I am also working with faculty in the International Affairs Department at the University of Maine to see how they can help me with all of these projects.

HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AS OPPORTUNITY FOR MORAL GROWTH

Kate

This undergraduate research shaped two different versions of me: the researching, writing student and the emotion-filled, moral human being.

As a researcher, I learned how to collect an oral history, how to develop interview questions, and how to better store and organize data. As a writer, I

learned how to make choices surrounding all of this material, how to develop unity among varying anecdotes and ideas within a piece, and how to combine my personal voice, Daniella's voice, and secondary sources in a single work.

Simultaneously, as I read and typed and scrawled notes while interviewing Daniella, I gathered insight related to my place as a human being who is part of many communities and ultimately of a single giant and important one. I learned that listening to the stories of the people who make up our social environments can be a reciprocal experience; both people have the opportunity to learn more about themselves and about something new. Engagement in this way can lead to recognition of the connections that tie all of us together—from Maine to Kinshasa.

Daniella

I have always known that I was born to serve and help. Then I moved to the United States, and I lost myself. Although I found refuge and peace, my drive and dreams were lost. Kate came to my life at the right time. She gave me hope and helped me find myself. During our interview, I realized many things that were wrong with my past life, and it was hard to re-visit those memories. But Kate's urging was all that I needed; I felt like something heavy was lifted off my shoulders. I have been invited to a couple of events and classes here at the University of Maine to talk about my country. Now I am living, I am doing what I love, I am hoping to go to medical school and live my dreams, which is to dedicate my life to serving others.

I learned many things from Kate, not only that I could find my voice through her but also that I was listened to, and that's as powerful. I will be forever grateful to Kate but also to Mimi for believing in me and for sending these opportunities my way.

CONCLUSION

Their undergraduate research project clearly ignited a passion for learning in both Kate and Daniella, and honors seemed the ideal hub for their collaborative work. The mentoring role mostly entailed connecting two natural critical thinkers who listened and learned from each other and who created the kind of intellectual exchange an honors community hopes to provide. Kate initiated an oral history project that gave voice to herself, to Daniella, and, more broadly, to women of Congo. Kate and Daniella integrated their collaborative learning into action by organizing the Budagu event at UMaine

and by continuing their efforts: Kate in her work on global veterinary issues and Daniella in her medical volunteerism with Partners for World Health. Both describe transformative aspects of the research experience that empowered them to apply their knowledge, to give voice to their concerns, and to bring about change as they embodied the ethic of care and global sensitivity that honors works to instill in its students, demonstrating a marked preparedness for “meaningful jobs and for life.”

The University of Maine and other institutions of its kind are justified in supporting undergraduate research given the potential intellectual and personal benefits it affords students. The experience of Kate and Daniella illustrates that an honors community may be especially well-suited to advancing student-driven, independent projects that foster critical thought and active learning. Honors colleges offer a special niche as interdisciplinary communities of scholars in which students are encouraged to engage with one another in novel ways, to think and act and change as citizens who are passionately preparing for life in a complex, global world.

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Honoring Controversy: Using Real-World Problems to Teach Critical Thinking in Honors Courses

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Many studies have found that a university education does not guarantee the ability to think critically (Arum and Roska; Bok) despite the fact that the community of honors colleges and programs constantly emphasizes that we teach critical thinking. My 300-level honors students, though, do not demonstrate critical thinking when they are easily swayed by the messages contained in one-sided movies about how our food is produced or how hydraulic fracturing (fracking) is an evil perpetrated only to line the pockets of greedy corporations. The simple exercise of showing students one-sided films such as *Food Inc* and *Gasland* and then discussing them has repeatedly proven that many honors students are either not noticing the biased nature of the reporting or are not influenced by it when forming their opinion about genetically modified foods or fracking. Some students are already convinced that genetically modified foods (GMOs) and fracking are bad for humanity because of previous media exposure, but many students have said they had no strong

opinion about the topics until they watched the two-hour films but could now see nothing possibly beneficial in these technologies. Suffering from the “availability bias,” i.e., relying only on what one has been told in forming an opinion, they are not yet open to the possibility of valid counterarguments. If my students might be representative of honors students elsewhere, then anecdotal evidence suggests that honors programs might not be succeeding at teaching critical thinking any better than many other departments and that we are contributing to the national problem of producing unskilled graduates.

Since 2000, fewer than a dozen articles have focused specifically on critical thinking in *Honors in Practice*, the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, and the NCHC monographs. In 2000, Laird Edman wrote an excellent general piece titled “Teaching Critical Thinking in the Honors Classroom,” reminding us that not even senior faculty achieve the ability to think critically once and for all; no one “gets there,” he writes (48). Faculty need to practice critical thinking throughout their careers, and students cannot learn it in a single class. Also in 2000, William Taylor offered techniques for improving discussion in order to teach critical thinking. In 2001, Julie Fisher Robertson and Rane-Szostak shared a study they did on teaching a course dedicated to critical thinking, lamenting the “paucity of literature on critical thinking within honors programs” (41). Subsequent discussions of critical thinking in NCHC publications include several chapters in the 2012 monograph *The Other Culture: Science and Mathematics Education in Honors*: “Information Literacy as a Co-Requisite to Critical Thinking: A Librarian and Educator Partnership,” “Confronting Pseudoscience: An Honors Course in Critical Thinking,” and “Recovering Controversy: Teaching Controversy in the Honors Science Classroom” (Buckner & Garbutt). What follows here might be seen as a continuation from this last piece, in which Richard England touts the virtues of controversy as “central to a liberal education” (75). Although his focus is on discussing scientific controversies and intelligent design in particular, I generalize the argument by asserting that controversy can and should be taught in most courses. All fields have controversies, and getting our students used to analyzing them consistently will contribute to their developing a disposition toward critical thinking.

REASONS FOR TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH CONTROVERSY IN HONORS COURSES

Many seasoned colleagues think that honors already successfully promotes critical thinking. As Greg Lanier reported, the phrase “critical thinking”

is among the most used in honors mission statements. But what if, as Dail W. Mullins, Jr., implies in his 2005 *JNCHC* article, our mission statements could “well have been produced by an ‘Honors Program Description Generator’” (19). Maybe people thoughtlessly grab catch phrases to insert in their mission statements. Perhaps a symptom of the overuse of a concept is under-reflection on whether we understand or achieve it. Mullins writes that “most honors administrators may find they have scant time left to reflect on the philosophical/political dimensions of their activities” after attending to financial and other problems (20). Honors administrators may be too busy to make sure that their curricula provide proper scaffolding for teaching critical thinking skills, but when we make the claim for critical thinking in our mission statements, we should make sure we teach it in our courses.

The National Collegiate Honors Council’s Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program indicates that courses should be “established in harmony with the mission statement,” yet, studies have revealed that “faculty’s knowledge . . . of concepts of critical thinking is severely lacking” (Stedman and Adams 9) and that “faulty perceptions of critical thinking” are common (Bailin et al. 269). Teachers might assume that critical thinking is being taught, but judging from the national data published in Arum and Roska’s *Academically Adrift*, maybe we should be questioning this assumption.

The value of teaching critical-thinking skills complements the movement of many honors programs toward teaching more than just disciplinary content. In their 2008 *HIP* article, *Honors 2025: The Future of the Honors College*, Scott and Frana find “honors colleges moving away from being defined by specific problems or disciplinary approaches and heading instead towards missions that convey flexible problem-solving skills” (29). Re-emphasizing the teaching of critical-thinking skills, especially in dealing with controversial issues, fulfills their call to teach the “ability to solve real-world problems collaboratively and creatively” (29–30).

At the same time, since interdisciplinary honors curricula often focus less on the specific content and methodology required in a disciplinary major, explicit instruction in critical-thinking skills is especially important in interdisciplinary honors programs that intend to serve leaders in all fields. Employer surveys suggest that what they want from college graduates is not people with specific knowledge but rather people who have skills in communication and critical thinking (Hart Research Associates 2). Critical thinking that focuses on controversy adds these skills to the interdisciplinary approach that is often a hallmark of honors teaching, maintaining “a tradition of critical inquiry that transcends disciplinary boundaries” (Carnicom 53).

Real-world controversies are necessarily interdisciplinary, pushing honors students out of their comfort zone and into intellectual risk-taking (Wintrol and Jerenic 49; Zubizarreta 16) and providing “ways to stretch boundaries.” (Bruce 20) By definition, critical thinking challenges and stretches the intellect. Analyzing controversies in a way that requires deep consideration of all sides of an issue induces the kind of discomfort that leads to serious thought.

DEFINING CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking has many definitions. Facione defines critical thinking as “the process of purposeful, self-regulatory judgment” (7). Norris and Ennis define it as “reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe and do” (qtd in Douglas 130). Halpern writes that it is “purposeful, reasoned, and goal-directed. It is the kind of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions” (5). Bok writes that what people often mean in using the phrase includes analytical thinking, problem solving, and reflective judgment (68). Gerald Nosich explains that some features are common to all the definitions and together reveal that critical thinking involves *reflective* thinking, has *standards* or criteria for making judgments, and is *authentic* because it is applied to real problems in real-life settings and not just brain-teasers (3). The easiest definition to remember is Richard Paul’s: “critical thinking is thinking about your thinking, while you’re thinking, in order to make your thinking better” (qtd in Nosich 2).

HOW TO TEACH CRITICAL THINKING

Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman has discovered how challenging it is for human beings to be habitually reflective and to follow sound standards. He views our minds as inherently lazy, preferring easy answers that impede critical thinking, and so we are readily swayed by persuasive rhetoric. Kahneman explains in Part I of *Thinking Fast and Slow* that no one can escape the mind’s proclivity to prefer the first message it encounters on a topic, to prefer an easy explanation over a difficult one, or to believe a message it hears more consistently than one it does not (19–105). Knowing that powerful forces fight our ability to be careful in thought reinforces our need to question the assumption that we are consistently practicing critical thinking.

Research on how to teach critical thinking is ongoing and will likely never be exhausted. Although honors courses are known for active learning and

discussion-style seminars, honors teacher William Taylor has written, “By itself, a classroom discussion about course content does not teach students how to think critically about that content” (78). He agrees with studies demonstrating that faculty need to be explicit with students in articulating the goal of thinking critically (Lloyd and Bahr; Van Gelder; Bailin). Ways to achieve this goal include listing critical thinking as a student learning outcome on syllabi and sharing definitions with students in class. Another useful strategy is assigning the inexpensive, pocket-sized publication by Paul and Elder, *Critical Thinking*, which provides seven dimensions of thinking and includes exercises for applying them to any problem or text: finding point of view, purpose, the problem, the data, conclusions, concepts, assumptions, and implications. Research has also shown that some kinds of student writing force more complex thinking than other kinds; essays based on independent research, writing that requires analysis more than description, rewriting, and writing on both sides of an issue require more complex thinking (Tsui “Courses” and “Fostering”). After determining some common ideas and language for critical thinking, honors teachers can easily begin promoting it more actively in their courses.

Analyzing controversial issues in honors courses allows teachers to use all the techniques of critical thinking. In addition to exposing students to different points of view and helping them see what constitutes a good argument, controversial topics typically create the mental tension and provocation that scholars since at least Aristotle maintain is necessary for establishing the path toward critical thinking (Mills; Shim and Walczak). As Browne and Freeman write, “thinking only begins when a state of doubt about what to do or believe exists” (306). Surely we should make it a practice to build moments of tension and doubt into all our courses.

One honors colleague warned me against teaching controversy in a small seminar because he feared discussions would become too heated. However, framing the classroom agenda in terms of learning critical thinking encourages students to focus on the authors’ arguments—describing what they are, how they were constructed, flaws in assumptions, biases, or poor data—and keeps the conversations on the research and on the process of making arguments. Students do nevertheless feel strongly about their conclusions. As England has written, it is important for students to arrive at a strong conclusion rather than sticking with a relativistic position that opinions are not right or wrong, that they just depend on which side you are on; a strong conclusion “may well be evidence that the conclusion has been thought through” (78).

Honors students who have learned critical-thinking skills are often aware that they have developed more nuanced opinions. Students often ask how they should deal with useful points made on the side they don't agree with, for example. In focusing on how arguments are constructed and which ones are sound, honors classes are able to discuss important controversies without necessarily arguing sides. That is, students describe the debate they are studying (usually revealing where they stand), but they avoid orienting the class around disagreements among themselves.

CASE STUDY

Monsanto's use of genetic engineering (GE) has proven to be an excellent topic for teaching critical thinking to honors students, who are advanced enough to appreciate the complex issues it raises. Discussing GE through the lens of Monsanto involves attitudes about corporations, food, and rural farming life. So that students have some common material to begin with, their first assignment is to watch a film, either *The Future of Food* or *Food Inc.*, without any commentary beforehand. These specific films are good examples of biased reporting, which makes them excellent teaching tools. I give them a questionnaire to fill out while watching the film in order to highlight some of the points that we will discuss later when we take a topic from each film to learn more about and then analyze the film's portrayal of it. In our first general conversation about one of these films, though, students mostly comment on all the disturbing feelings they have had. Even if they notice that the films approach the issues only from one side (many do not), they usually adopt all the negative messages about Monsanto and genetically engineered foods. In unpacking the issues over the next few weeks, their attitudes change, and they become aware of that change.

For example, we review the way *The Future of Food* presents the case of the Canadian farmer Percy Schmeiser, who was sued by Monsanto. The movie shows Schmeiser complaining that the multinational corporation sued him for having a little bit of GE corn in his crops, which he says was blown in from trucks filled with corn driving by. When we compare his remarks to the Monsanto website's explanation of what happened and also to the Canadian Supreme Court's decision on the case, we get a very different story about Schmeiser's involvement that suggests he knowingly planted the GE seed. It is true that he had GE corn that he didn't pay for, it is true that he got sued, but it is also true that he had about one thousand acres of it. The court cases determined that Schmeiser had to have knowingly replanted seed to reach

that amount. *The Future of Food* chooses to focus on the little guy getting sued and implies that the GE corn was present only in small and unwanted quantities, but with only a minimal amount of exploration the issue turns out to involve the farmer's right to save seed. The film does not explore the arguments presented before the courts. The class does not need to debate whether GE is good or bad at this point in order to see the filmmaker's (mis) use of the facts.

We then learn about global hunger by reading a few chapters from the book *Food Security* by Bryan McDonald. This text forces us to think about world food needs as opposed to just American food preferences, thus further transforming the conversation. Vast differences exist between the U.S., which has plenty of land to feed its people cheaply, and some places in Africa where people have not yet achieved the ability to feed themselves. Then we read peer-reviewed journal articles about the health and safety claims of organic and GE foods indicating that numerous academies of science have found the latter to be safe. Despite the billions of meals served that contain genetically modified foods, not one person has been reported to die from these foods. In contrast, people die every year from organic fruits and vegetables that carry *E. coli*. Although many students are aware of popular criticisms that GE is damaging to the environment, they are surprised to read about the devastating impact all agriculture has on the environment and the pros and cons of all planting methods, be they conventional, organic, or biotech, on soil health, land usage, and use of pesticides and water.

None of these examples or conversations solves any problem, but such examinations of arguments and sources force students to notice that some of their previous opinions were not based on research. Honors students are typically willing to learn from their mistakes and are often well prepared to recognize the difficulty of interpreting contradictory information. As we discuss these issues, students learn that some reasonable arguments can be made for using all three planting approaches in addressing world hunger. Students with anti-corporate views may not feel any better about Monsanto's role in the food chain (not my goal), but for many students their thinking on some of the topics are no longer simplistic (this is my goal). It is important for me, when teaching controversy, to explain that I grade students not on what opinion they hold but only on the way they argue it and how they handle their data in making their claims.

THE QUESTION OF TRANSFER

How can we be certain that learning to think critically about one topic will ensure thoughtful analysis of all problems? A recent author in *Honors in Practice* quotes research showing that “Learners acquire skills and knowledge in one situation and fail to make connections to other situations where those skills and knowledge would prove valuable” (Perkins & Salomon qtd. in Lindememann-Biolsi 72). Lindememann-Biolsi shares research that has shown how often students cannot reproduce a classroom-taught skill if they are tested in a different room from the one in which they learned it. She argues that we must do more to teach metacognition so that our students can recognize when another situation requires the same kind of information and skill taught in a previous course. As metacognition is the “awareness of one’s own thought process,” such thinking happens almost automatically when students study a controversy they have previously thought about. They notice that they are becoming better informed about their opinions or, more likely, that they are making some changes in that opinion. As one student said to me, “this class has me questioning everything!”

Having a class work on one problem together is a useful strategy for practicing some critical thinking, but more is required to instill the ability to transfer the skill. Kahneman teaches us that we have strong tendencies not to pursue information on topics that contradict our initial opinions because of the availability heuristic, i.e., we prefer information that is readily available rather than taking the time to ensure we get breadth of knowledge. Combine this availability preference with our bias for information that we agree with, and the need to constantly reinforce the skill of researching multiple perspectives becomes apparent. Most people never notice how quickly they accept one point of view on a controversial topic rather than seeking out multiple perspectives, but we want more from our honors students, especially because they are most likely to become thought leaders.

In my course, students present research to the rest of the class on controversial topics such as fracking, the US government’s use of drones that kill people, government spying on U.S. citizens, Edward Snowden’s leaks, vaccines, gun control, and raising the minimum wage. Through such presentations, students promote awareness among their peers of the deep structure that permeates so many of our contemporary issues rather than just informing each other about the surface structure of a single issue. Daniel Willingham argues that students cannot transfer critical thinking skills if they remain

focused on the surface characteristics of a problem (22). Through examining the deep structure, they can see that, although the topics are different, the qualities of strong and weak arguments are similar and that all controversial topics can be analyzed by determining factors such as authors' points of view, implicit assumptions, and selections of data. When different students work on various controversial topics in the same course, they learn that they are all using similar methods to approach different problems, thus also learning how to transfer such skills more successfully.

Both Willingham and Van Gelder maintain that the skill of transfer has to be explicitly taught and that it takes time, so I give my students six weeks to work on a single problem of their choice from a set list. They also write short papers in which they take different sides of an issue being studied in order for them to seriously consider a perspective they have never thought of or do not agree with. Nosich extends Paul and Elder's elements of critical thinking to include considering alternatives to an author's point of view as an essential skill; having witnessed how hard that is for some students, I am in full agreement about the necessity of teaching it.

CONCLUSION

Comments from the honors students taking my controversy and critical thinking course affirm the need for it. As one junior said, "When it comes to critical thinking, I pride myself as being fairly adept; . . . however, one of the most fundamentally important aspects of true critical thinking is humility, and understanding at any time you could be proven wrong and need to change your views slightly to continue being a critical thinker. I found myself time and again being humbled . . ." A philosophy student wrote, "This really made me think about how much I actually think things through, and how little I actually do that. I never realized how much we were affected by things that we aren't even conscious of. . . . I need to train myself to actually use my critical thinking more in daily life." Finally, another junior wrote, "I have never had a good grasp on how to critically think about a subject. . . . I took away how to receive information and be able to thoroughly examine it and think about it. I am able to form an opinion but I am also able to think of various points of views about the subject and why those views may exist. Critical thinking helps me keep an open mind to everything I come across. I have realized the things I hear are not the only sources of information on certain topics."

Discussing controversy is an important practice for living in a democracy. If we want to live in a pluralist society, then we have to accept differences and

be able to talk in light of them. In addition to examining opinions they do not hold, honors students, perhaps more than most other undergraduates, face the possibility of disagreeing with faculty and each other in the safe and controlled environment of the seminar classroom. Since respectful disagreement is not usually modeled in TV shows or the news media, it becomes morally imperative for us as honors teachers to practice it with our students who will be leaders in and outside of academe. Using controversy to teach critical thinking in honors classrooms accomplishes two important pedagogical goals: it helps our students who already have at least a rudimentary awareness of the utility of research learn to research differences (avoiding the availability heuristic) and to accept that sometimes good reasons exist for holding differing opinions on a topic. Teaching them such skills forces them to employ higher-order thinking not only in an honors class but beyond the classroom in their lives as twenty-first-century citizens of the most powerful and influential nation in the world.

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APPENDIX

Abbreviated Syllabus for *Why People Believe Weird Things*

Course Description

You know the media distorts information, you know that your own thinking can suffer from biases and prejudices, and you have certainly noticed that some people reason very poorly. This class is going to show you why this happens and how to arm yourself against assaults on your mind. You will also learn how to be a better thinker, thereby improving the quality of your life. Recent books written on the topic are clever fun, which make this class enjoyable (when not slightly frightening). The title of the class comes from one of the books we'll read, and in it we'll discuss why people believe in unusual phenomena from religion to UFOs. (This is not a negative claim about religion, just an acknowledgment that some religious beliefs are extra-ordinary.) We will examine the role of scientific reasoning, and numerous forms of illogical thinking that lead us astray. This course has potential to help you become an even smarter person.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course the student will be able to:

- Enumerate numerous biases that keep us from seeing facts clearly.
- Explain characteristics of scientific thinking and its strengths and limits.
- Make a public poster presentation.
- Define critical thinking.
- Demonstrate critical thinking in a research project.

Texts

- *Why People Believe Weird Things*, Michael Shermer (app. \$12)
- *Thinking Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman (app. \$9)
- Selections from opposing thinkers Richard Dawkins and Keith Ward (supplied)
- Additional books and articles based on your chosen research topic.

Note

For the first half of the semester we will learn about thinking. For the second half of the semester you will practice critical thinking by thoroughly researching and presenting

on both sides of a controversial topic. You will be able to choose from the following list of topics:

- Climate change
- Fracking (Hydraulic fracturing)
- Genetically modified foods
- Gun control
- Mandatory childhood vaccination
- Increasing the minimum wage
- Immigration in the U.S.
- U.S. use of enhanced interrogation techniques or torture during “war on terror”
- U.S. use of drones to kill people in the “war on terror”

Respectful and inclusive behavior is expected at all times. Differences of opinion are expected and welcome as long as the people holding the opinions are treated politely.

Garden Variety Experiential Education: The “Material Turn” and Environmental Ethics

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In most years, central Arkansas is blessed with a long and lovely autumn. Warm days, cool nights, and alternating periods of sun and rain supply conditions favorable to fall gardening. Cole crops like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts do well at this time of year, as do lettuce, spinach, carrots, radishes, Swiss chard, kale, and collards, among others. Out of the question are tomatoes, peppers, corn, or melons, but plenty of other possibilities present themselves, enough to give college students the experience of playing productively in the dirt.

“Productive play in the dirt” may be the hook that gets honors students at the University of Central Arkansas to take my junior seminar called Philosophy, Principles, and Practices of Organic Horticulture. They often express considerable enthusiasm for a class that gets them outside and working with their hands for much of the term, but this is not my primary reason for offering the course. With this seminar, I hope students will begin to learn, literally first-hand, the ecological reasons for an ethical relationship to nature. Organic gardening is one of the best courses for conveying such a message, largely

because ample evidence exists to suggest that its counterpart—conventional farming and gardening—can wreak significant ecological harm. Peripheral and uninteresting though agriculture (of any kind) may have become to many Americans, it nevertheless remains an excellent subject with which to raise Socrates’s age-old question “How shall we live?” Unlike the Sage of Athens, however, we must now pose the question with a twenty-first-century twist: How shall we live such that other life—that which is the source of our daily bread—and its supportive habitats can also flourish?

By no means is mine the only gardening course to be introduced to honors collegiate education. Readers are encouraged to investigate, for example, a similar project initiated at Longwood University by Michael Lund and Geoffrey Orth, whose article “From the White House to Our House: The Story of an Honors College Vegetable Garden” appeared in the 2010 issue of *Honors in Practice*. Like Lund and Orth, I have found gardening to be a fine pedagogical tool to encourage honors students to think deeply on the subject of manual skill as a means of connecting intellectual endeavor to the material world. A course requiring students to use both their heads and hands in pursuit of a concrete, material outcome (an edible one!) offers an opportunity to explore numerous questions relevant not only to environmental ethics specifically but also to the enactment of thought in the world through human bodies, the translation of ideas into material realities. How does theory lend itself to specific principles, and how do these in turn suggest particular courses of action? Or consider the reverse: if a given practice works in the material world to produce a desired result, does it suggest a truth that we should articulate in our principles and philosophy? How do we determine whether a practice yielding short-term success will also make possible an enduring one? Does the natural world present standards for quality, and, if so, what techniques are necessary to discover them and to achieve results that measure up? To what extent is an activity like gardening or farming a cooperative endeavor—more dialogue than monologue, more marriage than ego trip—between the artisan and the prevailing conditions and materials, such as weather, climate, water, soils, and seeds? What are the ethics of human attempts to modify any of these conditions?

Here I will pause to offer nuts-and-bolts information. The honors seminar I teach is always scheduled for late-afternoon, seventy-five-minute periods, twice a week. About a third of our meetings are held indoors for the purpose of focused discussion; the other two-thirds are spent working as a class in our campus garden. Each student must also put in six additional hours of outdoor

work, scheduled in an ad hoc fashion throughout the season as the garden itself presents specific demands: the radishes need weeding, for example, or everything needs watering, or frost is on the way and must be guarded against by putting down row cover. The space we use is located in one of the less-frequented campus quads and was made available to us by the university administration when several faculty and I proposed a garden be established and named for one of UCA's most famous alumni, Dorris Alexander "Dee" Brown, known best for his 1970 history, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. Although I teach Organic Horticulture only in fall semesters, the space is nevertheless kept productive and attractive for three seasons a year, thanks to the help of work-study students (often veterans of my course) who maintain it during the spring and summer terms. Although my seminar is, to date, the only teaching use made of the space, a colleague in anthropology used it for a time for research projects with his students, growing heirloom plants for their seeds. A grant of \$3,000 from a university development fund covered the initial costs of building a sturdy cedar shed and stocking it with tools. Nominal expenses that recur from year to year are funded by the honors college's budget.

Our fall semester begins in the third week of August. About a month ahead of that date, I start flats of seeds at my home to be sure the students will have seedlings ready for transplanting by about mid-September. I also provide students with seeds for quick-growing crops like lettuce and spinach to give them the experience both of planting and transplanting. The class spends the first few weeks of the term learning how to establish and manage a compost pile and how to prepare beds—pulling out old plants and weeds, turning and amending the soil, raking it smooth—at the same time that they begin reading from the "how-to-and-why" book they have purchased. A little later in the term, when the hectic pace of planting has abated, we turn to reading selections on the history of both organic and conventional agriculture as well as items of a more philosophical bent; these include portions of *Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening*; Michael Pollan's *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*; Matthew B. Crawford's *Shop Class as Soul Craft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work*; and *Organic, Inc.*, by Samuel Fromartz. Various essays by Wendell Berry and Barbara Kingsolver, among others, also appear on the syllabus.

As crops mature and become edible, we begin scheduling periodic class dinners, cooking our produce together in a kitchen located within the honors center and sharing it on site. These dinners—usually three of them, including

a harvest supper at the very end of the semester—are held during regularly scheduled class meetings, at which time we resume discussion of our reading and of our ongoing garden work. By early December the course is nearly over and the garden has about given out, succumbing to short daylight and near-constant cold. Getting in some last, hopeful planting of crops that can overwinter (garlic, for example), students then learn to put the garden to bed, that is, to cover it heavily with mulch. For a final exam, they complete an eight-page research paper on some aspect of sustainable agriculture or the larger cultural movement to which it belongs. Throughout the semester they have compiled a reading journal; now they add their final entry, a two- or three-page meditation on their personal harvest for the course.

The final meditations often yield expressions of gratitude for a course that has allowed students to explore a moral aspiration they often bring with them to the class: to live in harmony with natural rhythms or, in other words, to live as peacefully and nonviolently as possible. Without quite realizing it, they are saying exactly what I mean when I speak of an ethical relation to nature. They also express great happiness at having learned practical skills, as though learning how to grow healthy food while also creating an ecologically healthy, beautiful space has rendered them less fearful of adulthood, more confident in their ability to take care of themselves in daily life than they were before.

The students' reaction seems to confirm a central tenet of sustainable agriculture, articulated best by Wendell Berry, that careful gardening and farming are never done in the abstract. They are never done on paper or in a book or in one's daydreams but always in the real, physical world where human intention must be enacted using non-human materials like soil and seeds. Moreover, good work of this kind is never done in exactly the same way from one parcel of land to the next or even from one season to the next on the same plot of ground. The work is radically local, spatially and temporally bounded. "The standard [for quality] exists" in nature, Berry asserts, but the particulars of quality in horticulture must be discovered over and over again, virtually every time we handle seedlings or ply a shovel (266). If we want to do good work with quality results, then prevailing physical and biological realities must be studied and met with a certain humility, with an attitude something like admiring respect for their limits as well as for their possibilities. "What will nature allow us to do here?" becomes the operative question. Unspoken but generally assumed is the desire to do valuable work on this ground without doing inordinate violence to nature's own predilections—"inordinate" because we also recognize that neither a garden nor a farm is

truly natural; rather, it is a place that has been manipulated in the service of human ends, using the human knowledge, labor, and skill that collectively compose our technology. A certain degree of violation has indeed occurred insofar as the original conditions have been modified.

Sustainable agriculture's emphasis on its own localized, non-abstract, involved-in-the-world character appears to dovetail with recent thinking underway in a host of other, apparently unrelated arenas, from quantum physics to feminist theory, from environmental literary criticism to reconsiderations of the blue-collar trades and their place in the Information Age. "A 'material turn' is going on" at present, observes ecocritic Serenella Iovino, adding that it represents in part a rejection of the twentieth century's so-called "linguistic turn" and its offspring, post-structuralism. This contemporary "renaissance of matter," as Iovino terms it, "is conveyed by concepts such as 'agential realism,' 'vital materialism,' 'trans-corporeality,' 'intra-action,' 'post-humanist performativity,' [and] 'material ecocriticism.'" She cites such thinkers as Karen Barad, Bruno Latour, Andrew Pickering, Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, Stacy Alaimo, and David Abram, among others. To this list I would add Matthew B. Crawford, author of *Shop Class as Soul Craft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work*.

The claim common to these otherwise disparate writers is two-fold. First, the inanimate, material world is never so inert or passively receptive to human intention as one might like to believe; matter has properties that exhibit agency of a kind, however subtly or even inaccessibly to human comprehension. Second, human action in the world of matter is consequently never truly a one-sided affair, never strictly linear in the simple sense of a subject acting upon an object. As physicist-cum-feminist theorist Karen Barad puts it, "the primary ontological unit[s]" in the world are not even entities or things, as implied by terms like "subject" and "object," but rather "phenomena," by which she means things-in-relation (139). "In my agential realist elaboration," she writes, "*phenomena are the ontological inseparability/entanglement of intra-acting 'agencies.'*" That is, phenomena are ontologically primitive relations" (emphasis Barad's; 139). Her neologism "intra-action" is distinct from the more usual "interaction" because the latter, Barad insists, assumes a fundamental and complete separability of firmly bounded, isolate entities. For her and other thinkers on agential materialism, this assumption of separability may be a useful and necessary fiction in much of our daily lives, but we should learn to appreciate that it is only a fiction for at least one crucial reason: whenever intra-action includes human actors, it carries ethical import.

Furthermore, the ethical edge cuts more than one way, shaping all of the various agents involved in a given instance of “phenomena.”

As you might guess, all of this theory can get pretty heady, pretty fast. For mere mortals like college students, the more accessible writer to turn to—both for an appreciation of the agency of matter and for insight into the ethical ramifications—is Matthew B. Crawford. Himself no slouch of a philosopher, Crawford is never happier than when his hands are deep into the guts of a motorcycle engine in need of repair. I offer one representative passage, which follows a description he has given of the elaborate and physically demanding steps that riders of early-model motorcycles had to go through just to start them. Pointing out that the whole process required considerable judgment, Crawford extrapolates from the example to comment on what deep engagement with a machine can mean for the person involved:

The necessity of such judgment calls forth human excellence. In the first place, the intellectual virtue of judging things rightly must be cultivated, and this is typically not the product of detached contemplation. It seems to require that the user of a machine have something at stake, an *interest* of the sort that arises through bodily immersion in some hard reality, the kind that kicks back. Corollary to such immersion is the development of what we might call a subethical virtue: the user holds himself responsible to external reality, and opens himself to being schooled by it. His will is educated—both chastened and focused—so it no longer resembles that of a raging baby who knows only what he wants. . . . [T]echnical education seems to contribute to moral education. (60)

Thus we find “a paradox in our experience of agency: to be master of [our] own stuff entails also being mastered by it” (57)—mastered by it because stuff itself, matter outside ourselves, exhibits agency. We might hear in these simple statements an echo, still reverberating after almost two hundred years, of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s claim in his little book *Nature* that the world of matter is always, among other things, our disciplinarian, in the richest sense of the word (26).

It may seem that we have, in just a few pages, left far behind honors students’ “productive play in the dirt.” After all, dirt is not a machine, not inanimate matter; on the contrary, it is riddled through and through with billions of life forms, all of them “intra-acting” out their own dramas. This very fact complicates the ethics of gardening and farming well beyond what Crawford

has in mind since to mistreat dirt—to bring to it an inappropriate “technical education”—is to do much greater harm than one does by mistreating a machine. To mistreat dirt is to invite, over time, truly serious hard realities that “kick back”: land and soil degradation, erosion, poor yields, nutrient-deficient crops, and loss of important wildlife such as pollinating insects. Complicating the picture Crawford paints by substituting soil for motorcycles may approximate the multi-directional ethics that Barad describes. One must tread carefully here; claiming that an ethics is underway in soil or by soil sounds, on its face, extravagantly anthropomorphic. Asserting that there is agency in matter, though, need not entail claiming that intention is present. “Compost Happens,” as a bumper sticker claims. Compost, dirt, soil, and earth happen, and because they do, other things happen as well, for good and for ill, especially when human agency is part of the mix.

Crawford and the other writers we study in my seminar offer insights into human engagement with matter that may help answer a question that many in honors education will raise: how is gardening an appropriate subject for high-ability college students? To the extent that efforts to raise plants by relatively nonviolent means teaches and disciplines students in an ethical way to be in the world, I feel no need to apologize for a seminar in organic horticulture. To the extent that honing gardening skills and sharing the fruits of a season’s labor contribute to the development of self-confident yet paradoxically humble adults who are inclined to greater thoughtfulness about the material enactment of their intellectual and ethical commitments, I am proud to be the creator and teacher of such a course and am grateful to my university for giving it a place in the honors curriculum.

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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.

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Beginning in Honors: A Handbook by Samuel Schuman (Fourth Edition, 2006, 80pp). Advice on starting a new honors program. Covers budgets, recruiting students and faculty, physical plant, administrative concerns, curriculum design, and descriptions of some model programs.

Fundraising for Honor\$: A Handbook by Larry R. Andrews (2009, 160pp). Offers information and advice on raising money for honors, beginning with easy first steps and progressing to more sophisticated and ambitious fundraising activities.

A Handbook for Honors Administrators by Ada Long (1995, 117pp). Everything an honors administrator needs to know, including a description of some models of honors administration.

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.

NCHC Monographs & Journals

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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